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Exporting Amnesty International to the United States: Transatlantic Human Rights Activism in the 1960s

*Sarah B. Snyder**

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes Amnesty International's initial struggle to establish an American section. Amid the growing attention to Amnesty International in the scholarly literature, limited work exists on its national sections, including AIUSA, the American section. Understanding transatlantic disagreements about the efficacy of individual letter writing, funding, and the selection of prisoners of conscience illuminates the transferability of the Amnesty International model to the United States, the character of American human rights activism, and transatlantic relations among Amnesty's nongovernmental actors. Furthermore, the strained relationship between Amnesty International and AIUSA reveals different conceptions of nongovernmental activism in the 1960s.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the early stages of what would become an influential nongovernmental movement for human rights, Amnesty International's establishment in 1961 was a significant moment.¹ Over the subsequent two decades, it would become one of the most prominent groups to advance the cause of human rights. The organization's formation was precipitated by an opinion piece in the *Observer* in which British lawyer Peter Benenson profiled six "forgotten prisoners" who were suffering for their religious or political beliefs.² As it evolved, Amnesty International became an international movement, establishing chapters in Switzerland, Italy, France, and the United States, among other countries. Amnesty International's development fit into broader trends of increasing attention to human rights, incarceration, and racial discrimination as well as the rise of a global civil society in these years.³ However, Amnesty International was unique in that its model of activism primarily utilized letter-writing campaigns to secure the release of political prisoners. In addition to penning letters to government authorities, Amnesty members wrote to the prisoners directly and to their families, offering support to those relatives.⁴ Amnesty International also undertook fact-finding missions and reported on allegations of human rights abuses, in particular on Greek political repression in the late 1960s.⁵ Although human rights organizations such as the International League for the Rights of Man predated Amnesty International's establishment, political scientist Ann Marie Clark argues that before Amnesty's founding, little pressure was exerted on individual countries to change their human rights practices.⁶

In his recent book *The Last Utopia*, Samuel Moyn argues that Amnesty International and other human rights organizations were "practically un-

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1. Thus far, there has been little historical work on Amnesty International. Previous accounts have been written by journalists or political scientists. The one notable exception is Tom Buchanan who was drawn to the subject through his research on the influence of the Spanish Civil War on the British Left. There is even less available work on the American section of Amnesty International. See, e.g., JONATHAN POWER, *LIKE WATER ON STONE: THE STORY OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL* (2001); ANN MARIE CLARK, *DIPLOMACY OF CONSCIENCE: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL AND CHANGING HUMAN RIGHTS NORMS* (2001); Tom Buchanan, "*The Truth Will Set You Free*": *The Making of Amnesty International*, 37 J. CONTEMP. HIST. 575, 575–97 (2002); Barbara Keys, *Anti-Torture Politics Amnesty International, the Greek Junta, and the Origins of the Human Rights "Boom" in the United States*, in *THE HUMAN RIGHTS REVOLUTION: AN INTERNATIONAL HISTORY* 201 (Akira Iriye, Petra Goedde & William I. Hitchcock eds., 2012).
 2. See CLARK, *supra* note 1, at 5.
 3. See AKIRA IRIYE, *GLOBAL COMMUNITY: THE RISE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN THE MAKING OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD*, 112–13 (2002).
 4. See POWER, *supra* note 1, at 122.
 5. Harry M. Scoble & Laurie S. Wiseberg, *Human Rights and Amnesty International*, 413 ANNALS AM. ACADEMY POL. SOC. SCI., May 1974, at 11, 24.
 6. See CLARK, *supra* note 1, at 3.

known" until the 1970s, when they emerged "seemingly from nowhere."⁷ However, Amnesty International's activism on behalf of political prisoners in Greece, in particular, won it considerable attention in Europe and internationally by the late 1960s. Amnesty International's report, "Situation in Greece" outlined substantial repression and increased the international, and specifically European, scrutiny of the junta. The reporting spurred the European Commission on Human Rights to conduct its own investigation, which confirmed Amnesty International's findings on torture and prompted Greece to withdraw from the Council of Europe in December 1969 in advance of its likely expulsion.⁸ Furthermore, Amnesty International sections in continental Europe expanded rapidly during the 1960s. The organization's spread, however, was not uniform. Most notably, the membership of Amnesty International of the United States (AIUSA) remained small until the 1970s.

This article addresses the strained relationship between Amnesty International and AIUSA. The American section initially struggled to develop effective advocacy, attract supporters, and positively manage its relationship with Amnesty International's headquarters in London. Exploring this contested relationship offers an important avenue to examine the transferability of the Amnesty International model to the United States, the character of American human rights activism, and the transatlantic relations among Amnesty's nongovernmental actors.

II. APPEAL FOR AMNESTY

Benenson wrote that the impetus for Amnesty International was spurred by a piece in the *Daily Telegraph* describing the arrest and imprisonment of two Portuguese students who had "drunk a toast to liberty in a Lisbon restaurant."⁹ Benenson reports that he had an idea for a "World Year against political imprisonment," which was not unlike the World Refugee Year that helped move displaced persons out of their camps in Europe.¹⁰ To draw attention to the issue of political imprisonment, Benenson published an article in the *Observer* on 28 May 1961 that announced an "Appeal for Amnesty."¹¹ Benenson defined amnesty as supporting "any person who is physically restrained (by imprisonment or otherwise) from expressing (in any

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7. In Moyn's view, Amnesty International offered an alternative outlet for those disappointed by the intransigence of the Cold War. SAMUEL MOYN, *THE LAST UTOPIA: HUMAN RIGHTS IN HISTORY* 2–3 (2010).
 8. A second Amnesty International report based on a March 1968 visit to the country alleged the Greek government had condoned the use of torture. See CLARK, *supra* note 1, at 40–41.
 9. Buchanan, *supra* note 1, at 575.
 10. *Id.*
 11. See POWER, *supra* note 1, at 120–23.

form of words or symbols) any opinion which he honestly holds and which does not advocate or condone personal violence."¹² Interestingly, historian Tom Buchanan suggests that some of the established narratives of Amnesty's establishment "do not always stand up well to close historical scrutiny."¹³ In particular, Buchanan finds that no article describing the arrest of two Portuguese students could be found in the *Daily Telegraph* in the time frame that Benenson describes.

Nonetheless, Benenson's initiative garnered considerable support domestically and abroad. It was aided and supported by influential friends in legal and religious circles. In addition to Benenson, activist Sean MacBride, prominent Quaker Eric Baker, journalist David Astor, and influential politician Gerald Gardiner were all involved in Benenson's initiative.¹⁴ Eric Baker worked on peace and nuclear disarmament issues, including the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Baker assisted Benenson with launching his campaign, in particular by helping him define the term "prisoner of conscience."¹⁵ Benenson was likely drawn to the issue of political prisoners through observing a political trial in Spain and his establishment of JUSTICE, an organization focused on the rule of law and judicial due process.¹⁶

After Benenson's appeal was published in the UK and abroad, the first meetings were held to develop an international network of Amnesty groups. The first two in Luxembourg and Belgium led to the adoption of the name, Amnesty International.¹⁷ Once established, Amnesty International focused its efforts on what it regarded as a narrow sliver of human rights work. It was devoted to those imprisoned for their beliefs, including religious beliefs.¹⁸ It intended to make representations on those prisoners' behalf, to offer aid to them and their families, and to send fact-finding missions to investigate the prison and legal conditions in certain countries.¹⁹ At the beginning, Amnesty International focused on political prisoners in Ghana, Czechoslovakia, Rhodesia, and the German Democratic Republic. In addition, it reported on the plight of prisoners in Portugal, South Africa, Romania, and Paraguay.²⁰

12. Buchanan, *supra* note 1, at 585.

13. *Id.* at 576–77.

14. Sean MacBride had worked for human rights protections in his native Ireland and against racial discrimination in Africa as well as serving as Secretary General of the International Commission of Jurists from 1963 to 1971 and as the Chair of Amnesty International from 1961 to 1974. POWER, *supra* note 1, at 120–23.

15. See POWER, *supra* note 1, at 120.

16. See Buchanan, *supra* note 1, at 578–80, 585. JUSTICE was an acronym for Joint Union of Societies to Insure Civil Liberties in England and Elsewhere and was intended to be an organization separate from any political party or persuasion. JUSTICE became the British section of the International Commission of Jurists in 1957. *Id.*

17. At the outset, Amnesty (International Movement for Freedom of Opinion and Religion) was used instead. See POWER, *supra* note 1, at 123.

18. *Id.* at 120.

19. *Id.* at 123–25; Scoble & Wiseberg, *supra* note 5, at 24.

20. POWER, *supra* note 1, at 123–25; Tom Buchanan, *Amnesty International in Crisis, 1966–7*, 15 TWENTIETH CENTURY BRIT. HIST. 267, 272 (2004).

By the late 1960s, it was increasingly focused on allegations of torture in Greece and Aden.²¹

Amnesty International was committed to the participatory nature of its organization. In Amnesty's model, its 640 (as of 1968) groups would each adopt three prisoners, with one each imprisoned in the developing, communist, and Western blocs. Amnesty International groups were then tasked with securing their prisoners' release through individual and group activism. Most often, group members wrote letters to officials responsible for imprisoning their adoptee, pleading for the easing of their conditions and release.²² For its efforts, Amnesty International was awarded the 1977 Nobel Peace Prize.

III. ESTABLISHING AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IN THE UNITED STATES

As early as October 1961, the United States was listed in Amnesty International records as having three representatives of a national section: Christian Bay in Menlo Park, CA; Lewis Carliner in Washington, DC; and Ivan Morris in New York, NY. The three likely represented interested individuals, rather than a formal body, as little organization or activity ensued subsequently. In April 1964, the International Executive Committee (IEC) considered how it could form a national section in the United States to coordinate American groups and assist in fundraising.²³ In the view of Benenson, a national section was intended to act as a "co-ordinating body for the national groups. The National Section also distributes literature and generally keeps in contact with Head Office in London."²⁴ Several months later, Roger Baldwin of the International League for the Rights of Man suggested that Michael Straight, an author and former editor of *The New Republic*, attend a two-day Amnesty International conference at Canterbury, England, to examine its "world-wide campaign for political prisoners."²⁵ After the conference, Straight, who would become AIUSA's first chair, wrote to Baldwin,

My conclusions are that the US will not be an area where groups will spring up; Americans do not, by tradition petition foreign governments or intervene

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21. See Martin Ennals, *Amnesty International and Human Rights*, in *PRESSURE GROUPS IN THE GLOBAL SYSTEM: THE TRANSNATIONAL RELATIONS OF ISSUE-ORIENTED NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS* 63, 64 (Peter Willetts ed., 1982).
 22. International Council Meeting Minutes: Appendix A (1968), on file at Columbia University.
 23. In its early years, Amnesty International's governing body, the International Executive Committee, included delegates from the United Kingdom, Belgium, Denmark, France, and the Federal Republic of Germany.
 24. Letter from Peter Benenson, Pres., Amnesty Int'l, to Frieda Zimmerman, Int'l Exec. Comm. (2 June 1965) (on file at N.Y.C. Pub. Library).
 25. Letter from Roger Baldwin, Int'l League for the Rights of Man, to Michael Straight, author, (Sept. 1964) (on file at the N.Y.C. Pub. Library).

on behalf of individuals who have been tried, sentenced and imprisoned. Nor are [US] prisoners men who can be aided to any extent by AI. None-the-less some group can and should be organized, funds can and should be raised, and information can be gathered by someone acting as liaison between AI and US civil rights and civil liberties organizations, and sent to AI headquarters in London. I promised to do what I can.²⁶

Despite Straight's promise to do what he could, he had reservations about the transferability of the Amnesty International model to the United States. Such questions would continue to beguile AIUSA and its leaders in subsequent years.

The process of establishing a national section in the United States developed slowly. Early on, written communication between AIUSA and the IEC was difficult. Amnesty International considered sending a representative from Europe to meet with AIUSA members or employing a secretary to develop a network of groups over a six-month period.²⁷ In addition, the IEC hoped to find a prominent American who would lend their name to an American section.²⁸

The International League for the Rights of Man initially agreed to "take on the activities of Amnesty International" in the United States. Once established, AIUSA worked out of the League's offices, demonstrating the close connections between the nascent AIUSA and other American human rights organizations.²⁹ Similarly, AIUSA's first public meeting was scheduled to be held at the offices of Freedom House, a prominent US nongovernmental organization (NGO) devoted to promoting civil liberties.³⁰ As Baldwin was hosting AIUSA at the League's offices and had introduced Straight to Benenson, Benenson wrote, "It is with real appreciation that I write to thank you for your own encouragement and for the introduction to Michael Straight. Judging by his letters, Michael has been active and constructive in his approach."³¹ According to Benenson, he and Straight planned to hold an inaugural AIUSA meeting in late 1965 for which he would travel from London to attend.³²

A meeting was held aimed at forming an "American Section" of Amnesty International on 10 November 1965. Attendees represented groups as diverse

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26. Letter from Michael Straight, author, to Roger Baldwin, Int'l League for the Rights of Man (28 Sept. 1964) (on file at the N.Y.C. Pub. Library). Straight also had, at that point, unmasked himself as a former communist spy.
 27. See Minutes (1964) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).
 28. Minutes, Amnesty Int'l (20–21 Mar. 1965) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).
 29. See letter from Frieda Zimmerman, Int'l League for the Rights of Man, to Young, AIUSA (25 May 1965) (on file at the N.Y.C. Pub. Library); Letter from Frieda Zimmerman, Int'l League for the Rights of Man, to Peter Benenson, Pres., Amnesty Int'l (21 May 1965) (on file at the N.Y.C. Pub. Library).
 30. Minutes, Amnesty Int'l (12–13 Mar. 1966) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).
 31. Letter from Peter Benenson, Pres., Amnesty Int'l, to Roger Baldwin, Int'l League for the Rights of Man (2 June 1965) (on file at the N.Y.C. Pub. Library).
 32. *Id.*

as the Methodists, B'nai B'rith, the Ethical Society, the American Fund for Free Jurists, the Quakers, and the International League for Rights of Man.³³ According to the meeting's minutes,

Mr. Straight called attention to the need for forming a American Section of Amnesty International in the light of the success of national sections of Europe, and the response of some 750 persons in the U.S. to an article on the work of Amnesty International in the Readers Digest.³⁴

The goal in forming an American section of Amnesty International was "to coordinate such groups, to service them, and tie them into the international efforts."³⁵ By March 1966, the United States section had twelve members, six of whom had made donations.

AIUSA was managed by its executive director, Paul Lyons, who was based in Washington, DC, and a board of directors in New York City. In 1967, AIUSA began to take shape as a functioning organization, with Lyons focused on establishing an office, implementing filing and bookkeeping systems, beginning a newsletter, forming connections with like-minded groups, and contacting the Washington embassies of countries of concern such as Czechoslovakia, Turkey, and the Soviet Union.³⁶ Furthermore, Lyons and Straight traveled to Europe to forge connections with other Amnesty International national sections and the International Secretariat in London. In addition, the two worked on publicizing the mission and work of AIUSA through radio appearances and print press coverage.³⁷

The composition of the board of directors in January 1969 (when AIUSA began using letterhead that outlined the board's membership) offers a snapshot of the professional and ideological backgrounds of those that made up the organization. In addition to Baldwin and Straight, Frances Grant was active on Latin American affairs and women's issues. She had served as the head of the International League for the Rights of Man's Latin-American Committee and led the Inter-American Association for Democracy and Freedom. Millard Pryor and Nelson Bengston were businessmen, and Norman Schorr headed a public relations firm in New York City. Guy Nunn worked as a radio

33. Meeting Minutes (10 Nov. 1965) (on file at Columbia University).

34. In February 1965, *The Reader's Digest* published an article on Amnesty International, which heightened US interest in the organization and the plight of political prisoners. *Id.*; Saturday Review, *They Fight to Free the World's "Prisoners of Conscience,"* 86 THE READER'S DIGEST, Feb. 1965, at 131–35.

35. Minutes, *supra* note 33.

36. Paul Lyons has a degree from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and had previously worked in the Department of Commerce.

37. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Bd. Dir., AIUSA (12 Apr. 1967) (on file with Columbia University); International Executive Committee Meeting Minutes (6–8 Oct. 1967) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History); International Executive Committee Meeting Minutes (23 Mar. 1969) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

announcer for the United Auto Workers. Stephen Goldman and Benenson were lawyers.³⁸ Nathan Perlmutter was the Associate National Director of the American Jewish Committee, and Ivan Morris was a professor of Japanese literature at Columbia University.

IV. AIUSA: AN EXCEPTIONAL SECTION

In many ways AIUSA evolved as a very unique national section. First, rather than developing and coordinating adoption groups, AIUSA publicized human rights abuses for a broad audience. For example, AIUSA drew attention to the repression in Greece after the 1967 coup.³⁹ Lyons wrote to AIUSA board members,

Our speaking out clearly and persistently on a clear and important issue will also help us earn the privilege to grow as a meaningful organization.

Accordingly, I am doing everything I can to assure that there is an Amnesty presence at every major event in the US concerning the protests against Greek junta excesses.⁴⁰

In addition, AIUSA urged its members to contact members of Congress and the Greek government about the plight of political prisoners there.⁴¹ Interestingly, AIUSA, like the broader organization at this point, was focused on Greece, but did not seem particularly attentive to other countries where people were imprisoned for their political beliefs.

Second, in place of an adoption group model, AIUSA distributed a newsletter, *Amnesty Action*. In Lyons' view, *Amnesty Action* was "the principal rallying point of the Amnesty movement in the U.S."⁴² According to Lyons, "In the U.S., unlike in England, Amnesty has not excited press interest from the beginning. Hence, [*Amnesty Action*] has become the principal means for us to bring our work to the attention of the public. Much of what little press and radio coverage there has been has resulted from someone coming across our newsletter." It served as "the principal means by which . . . we have

38. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Bd. Dir., AIUSA, *supra* note 37.

39. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Bd. Members, AIUSA (10 July 1967) (on file at N.Y.C. Pub. Library).

40. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Bd. Members, AIUSA (2 June 1967) (on file at N.Y.C. Pub. Library).

41. See AIUSA Meeting Minutes (8 Aug. 1967) (on file at Columbia University).

42. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Bd. Members, AIUSA (14 June 1967), (on file at the N.Y.C. Pub. Library). In a special edition of *Amnesty Action*, AIUSA set forth an "indictment for torture and mistreatment of political prisoners by the Government of Greece."

been able to involve people in our work."⁴³ *Amnesty Action* profiled certain political prisoners and offered readers an address to which they could send letters of protest.⁴⁴ The prisoners that AIUSA initially championed, however, suggested it might have been more concerned with getting attention than with the conditions such prisoners faced. Those that Lyons proposed for a possible AIUSA mailing were among the highest profile of the late 1960s: Andreas Papandreou, Mihajlo Mihajlov, Andrei Siniavsky, and Yuli Daniel.⁴⁵ In addition, AIUSA emphasized using *Amnesty Action* to build a network of supporters. Lyons was focused on expanding AIUSA's mailing list with the hope that it would reach more people willing to return a contribution envelope to support the organization.⁴⁶

In addition to distributing its newsletter, Lyons saw lobbying as one of his purviews as executive director and at times disparaged the utility of other forms of activism. Lyons and AIUSA members sought to influence foreign representatives in Washington, DC, or at the United Nations. The IEC was increasingly frustrated with the AIUSA preference for lobbying over group work, and even Baldwin thought AIUSA should do "more personal work" on behalf of "important cases of persons imprisoned."⁴⁷

Over time, the divergent path taken by the American section led to increasing tensions with the IEC. Observers at the time noted that, "Until 1968 the stronger sections had often acted independently in sending their own nationals on missions abroad, both for fact finding missions in the field and for secret negotiations with the heads of repressive regimes."⁴⁸ This situation came to an end, and given the differences between the two groups, the relationship between Amnesty International and the American section was under regular discussion at IEC and AIUSA meetings. In July 1970, one observer at an AIUSA meeting wrote,

There is little doubt that the majority of those present had little faith in the judgment of the IEC, are very reluctant to accept its leadership and in general feel little loyalty towards it. Indeed any attempt by the IEC to assert authority over the American Section at this time will probably be met with suspicion that the IEC is trying to stamp out criticism, do away with dissent and curtail the proper independence of a national section.⁴⁹

43. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA to Bd. Members, AIUSA (14 June 1967) (on file at the N.Y.C. Pub. Library).

44. Amnesty Int'l., *Amnesty Action* II: 3, (Aug. 1968) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

45. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA., to Bd. Members, AIUSA (26 May 1967) (on file at the N.Y.C. Pub. Library).

46. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Bd. Dir., AIUSA (12 Apr. 1967) (on file with Columbia University).

47. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Martin Ennals, Sec'y Gen., Amnesty Int'l, (10 Dec. 1968) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

48. Scoble & Wiseberg, *supra* note 5, at 11, 24.

49. REPORT ON THE MEETING OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF AIUSA TO INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (20 July 1970) (on file at Columbia University).

At times it seems that the bureaucratic tension might have even overwhelmed work on prisoners' behalf.

The problems were manifold. First, in the view of the International Secretariat in London, the American section was focused on fundraising and public relations but not on establishing adoption groups.⁵⁰ In October 1967, there were fifteen ordinary adoption groups in the United States and seven affiliated with schools or universities. By late 1968, however, there were only two groups. This low number of groups remained largely unchanged in the subsequent two years. Only four more were formed by November 1970 bringing the total to six.

Rather than facilitating adoption groups, AIUSA's activities consisted of lobbying foreign embassies in Washington, assembling and distributing a newsletter, seeking press coverage, as well as reaching out to members of Congress and the State Department. According to Lyons, early efforts at developing adoption groups in the United States were a "complete disappointment."⁵¹ In his view, this is because group members felt frustrated that "all they could do was to write letters."⁵² Lyons wrote to Amnesty International's Secretary General Martin Ennals, "there is really no question of reintroducing the group system into AIUSA's structure."⁵³ His comments explaining AIUSA's approach suggest a fundamental divide in conceptions of the nature of Amnesty International as an organization.

Perhaps in a criticism of the British, Lyons noted that the United States was a country "lacking an idle class," suggesting that contributed to the problem of attracting significant numbers of volunteers.⁵⁴ In his view, however, AIUSA was a professional, efficient organization that "[does] more work for prisoners in a week than all our 30 groups did during their whole period of existence."⁵⁵ Lyons ended his defense of AIUSA to Sean MacBride, by writing:

I am very sorry that the American scene and AIUSA's operations as part of it have not been well understood by our European colleagues in the past. . . . But I still hope that we will somehow find a way for Amnesty to be ecumenical as well as international so that we can move ahead in a spirit of cooperation.⁵⁶

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50. Such a preference is confirmed in AIUSA documents. Lyons seemed particularly focused on garnering publicity for the American section of Amnesty International. See e.g., Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Mark Benenson, Bd. Dir., AIUSA (22 Jan. 1969) (on file with Columbia University); Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Mark Benenson, Bd. Dir., AIUSA (31 July 1969) (on file with Columbia University); Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Bd. Dir., AIUSA (12 Sept. 1972) (on file with Columbia University).
51. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Martin Ennals, Sec'y Gen., Amnesty Int'l, (10 Dec. 1968) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).
52. *Id.*
53. *Id.*
54. *Id.*
55. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Sean MacBride, Int'l Comm. Jurists (17 Dec. 1968) (on file at Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).
56. *Id.*

Ennals, however, criticized the “lack of letters begin sent from America to Governments regarding their prisoners as a very serious weakness in our international structure.”⁵⁷ In his view, “Individual approaches by national sections to Embassies provide only one subsidiary function.”⁵⁸ Instead, letters needed to be sent by “American citizens worried about prisoners of conscience” which served as “the basis of Amnesty pressure.”⁵⁹ Lyons and Ennals’ positions suggested very different models of human rights activism.

In March 1969, Lyons attended an IEC meeting with the avowed aim of improving relations with AIUSA. In that session, Lyons asserted it was difficult to develop AIUSA along the adoption group model used in other countries. In his view, individual members rather than groups were the best way to organize. He reported that all but two adoption groups in the United States had ceased to exist. 5,000 individuals, however, were paid subscribers.⁶⁰ Lyons did not convince the IEC that the United States should pursue such an exceptional course. An IEC meeting later that year addressed continuing frustration with AIUSA’s financial problems, refusal to adopt the group system, and nonattendance at IEC meetings. Even more troubling, *Amnesty Action*, which had previously served as the basis for individual correspondence on behalf of political prisoners had ceased to be published.⁶¹

Interestingly, Buchanan has suggested that as early as December 1961, Peter Benenson had come to doubt the “value of local work.”⁶² He wrote that the chance of converting the “emotional” response of volunteers and activists into prisoner releases was low, and he began to think that groups should focus instead on smaller projects such as education and fundraising.⁶³ But Benenson was no longer actively involved in Amnesty International at the time of this conflict with AIUSA and obviously his concerns had not been shared by Ennals or others in the IEC.⁶⁴

The Secretary General therefore undertook a mission to the United States in September-October 1969 to address the status of the American section. During a special board meeting in October, AIUSA agreed to welcome the establishment of adoption groups in the United States. In Ennals’ view, this

57. Martin Ennals, a “neutral Scandinavian,” who had become Secretary General in the wake of Peter Benenson’s resignation had come to Amnesty International through his work as General Secretary of the National Council for Civil Liberties from 1960 until 1966. Letter from Martin Ennals, Sec’y Gen., Amnesty Int’l, to Mark Benenson, Chair, AIUSA (5 Jan. 1969) (on file at Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

58. *Id.*

59. *Id.*

60. Meeting Minutes, Int’l Exec. Comm. of Amnesty Int’l (22–23 Mar. 1969) (on file at the Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

61. At this point, *Amnesty Action*, the AIUSA newsletter, had not been published in six months. Meeting Minutes, Int’l Exec. Comm. of Amnesty Int’l (1 Sept. 1969) (on file at the Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

62. Buchanan, *supra* note 1, at 592.

63. *Id.*

64. Peter Benenson left Amnesty International in 1966.

shift was due to a recognition that “the previous individual membership system had failed.”⁶⁵ Under the current system, Ennals noted, there was “no scope for membership participation,” which was a problem given that Amnesty International was intended to offer “a means for ordinary people to participate in an international human rights programme.”⁶⁶ AIUSA finally agreed that London could communicate with and support the new groups directly.⁶⁷ After Ennals’ mission to the United States, AIUSA and the IEC sought to find a way to bridge the differences between the two bodies. Ennals wrote, “It may be that the group system will have to be adjusted to meet the American political and social scene . . . it may be that we shall also pioneer through AIUSA a new type of organization relying on both groups and individual members.”⁶⁸

A visit by Amnesty International’s treasurer, Anthony Marecco, to New York several months later suggested to the IEC that adoption groups could be developed successfully in the United States. According to Marecco, AIUSA was doing “virtually no work of any kind for prisoners” at this point; in contrast, the Riverside Group, a New York adoption group, was working effectively on behalf of prisoners of conscience. In Marecco’s view, the Riverside Group was “a model of what an Amnesty Group working in a big city should be and . . . prove[s] decisively that the Group organisation which is the basis of the whole Amnesty movement can be made to work with immense success in America.” Strangely, according to Marecco, Straight and Lyons regarded the Riverside Group as “not truly American.” AIUSA argued that adoption groups are “too slow and too amateurish” for “the American temperament.” In Marecco’s view, however, such a characterization was untrue. He writes,

I have found a great deal of opinion in the US to the effect that the position taken to date by the Board of AIUSA is nonsense and can only have been informed by their desire to give priority to political lobbying in Washington, rather than undertake the hard and patient work . . . which Group organisation must require.⁶⁹

Marecco suggested the IEC require AIUSA to begin working with the adoption group model or risk “disaffiliation.”⁷⁰ Beyond the profound differences

65. REPORT OF THE SEC’Y GEN. ON MISSION TO US 29 SEPT.–9 OCT. 1969 (on file at the Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

66. *Id.*

67. According to Ennals, at the United Nations several people asked him why Americans did not write to governments on behalf of political prisoners. *Id.*

68. Letter from Martin Ennals, Sec’y Gen., Amnesty Int’l, to Mark Benenson, Chair, AIUSA (5 Jan. 1970) (on file at the Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

69. Agenda Item (9–10 May 1970) (on file at the Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

70. In very bellicose language, Marecco suggests that AIUSA’s tax-exempt status could be withdrawn by IEC initiative, which would leave AIUSA saddled with considerable debt and little means to retire it. He also proposed more conciliatory gestures such as sending a staff member from London to the United States for the year to assist the

that the American section's refusal to work with adoption groups implied, in London's view, it stymied the organization's effectiveness in a number of respects. In one instance, with the United States not adopting prisoners, the IEC was unable to utilize the pressure letters from American citizens might provide, such as in the case of Taiwan, where the Americans were seen, with Japanese and Australians, as likely offering the most leverage.⁷¹

By late 1970, however, AIUSA expressed renewed willingness to foster adoption groups, in part in response to interest spurred by an article in the *New Yorker*. In a stunning shift, by 1974, so many people were interested in participating in AIUSA that they could not all be placed in adoption groups. Therefore, a new type of group, Action Groups, was established. Action Groups would research projects, engage in fundraising, educate their communities, and undertake some, limited work on behalf of prisoners.⁷² By 1975, AIUSA was increasingly focused on grassroots organizing and how to grow the organization.

Lyons likely saw the United States model of individual memberships or subscriptions as more amenable to fundraising.⁷³ The two points of disagreement were likely interrelated. At an October 1967 AIUSA board meeting, members expressed resistance to the International Secretariat's decision to raise the dues owed by groups to London. The International Secretariat was said to be in "serious financial difficulties," but AIUSA viewed the higher dues to be "extremely difficult" for American groups to meet.⁷⁴ AIUSA attitudes toward the higher dues were also certainly tinged by resistance to direction from London as the minutes recorded that, "It was pointed out that in general the national sections would work harder if they were free to make their own decisions and that in Washington and New York City, information was accessible and investigative work could be carried out with more facility than in London."⁷⁵

Two other points of contention between the AIUSA and the IEC related to the selection of prisoners of conscience. The United States section wanted to have considerable input in the designation of American prisoners of

American section. In addition, he proposed the establishment of a "Prisoner Evaluation Subcommittee" of the IEC to inspire more confidence in the prisoner of conscience selection procedures. As Marecco noted, at this point, AIUSA "lacked confidence in the International Secretariat's judgment in recommending cases for adoption." *Id.*

71. See Agenda Item (Mar. 1970) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History); Letter from Anthony Marecco, Treasurer, Amnesty Int'l, to Chairman and Members of the Int'l Exec. Comm.
72. AIUSA imagined that Action Group members would be active in supporting the Prisoner of the Month initiative, urgent action appeals, and the Campaign for the Abolition of Torture. See AMNESTY INT'L OF THE UNITED STATES, HANDBOOK FOR ACTION GROUPS (1974) (on file at Columbia University).
73. AIUSA was initially supported by a seed grant from the William C. Whitney Foundation, which was funded by Straight's family.
74. Meeting Minutes (23 Oct. 1967) (on file at Columbia University).
75. *Id.*

conscience. In its initial years, Amnesty International had considered what prisoners of conscience it might adopt in the United States. It examined if there were communists imprisoned for their beliefs, conscientious objectors or those jailed for opposing the Vietnam War, and possible targeting of civil rights workers.⁷⁶ AIUSA was concerned about the potential political ramifications of the International Secretariat's selection of American prisoners of conscience without the national section's input.⁷⁷ In one instance, a conscience objector was adopted, which an AIUSA memorandum suggested undermined American support of Amnesty International. Therefore, AIUSA hoped to ensure American review of proposed domestic prisoners of conscience.⁷⁸ Later, two groups in Germany wanted to adopt political activist Angela Davis as a prisoner of conscience, and AIUSA indicated its disagreement with that characterization.⁷⁹

In addition, in contrast to other national sections, AIUSA wanted to choose the prisoners it championed. AIUSA was the only national section to initiate its own research on prisoners of conscience as opposed to waiting for cases to be assigned by London. In an example of AIUSA's sense of exceptionalism, Michael Straight sat in on a London Amnesty International meeting and in which American efforts to move away from the political prisoner adoption rules of "one-one-one" were discussed. The American section indicated it wanted "some flexibility"; but its proposal did not gain uniform support.⁸⁰ Disagreements about the adoption of prisoners of conscience were connected with ongoing financial disputes as AIUSA members believed their tax exempt status imposed strict limits on the prisoners they could adopt and the actions (such as writing to foreign governments or the press) they could take on the prisoners' behalf. Furthermore, AIUSA asserted it could not engage in relief efforts until it had addressed its own budget problems.⁸¹ Several years later, AIUSA ceased researching their own cases and closed its "investigation department" as a way to reduce its considerable debt.

Tension also developed surrounding financial matters, including fundraising, foundation and governmental support, as well as AIUSA and IEC debt. First, AIUSA wanted to be sure funding to Amnesty International or its national sections did not come from government sources. Amnesty International in London, however, was far more willing to accept the "discreet support" of

76. See Note to National Sections (12–13 Mar. 1966) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

77. Memorandum from the Chairman to All Officers and Directors (15 Mar. 1968) (on file at Columbia University).

78. Letter from Paul Lyons, Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Bd. Dir., AIUSA (12 Apr. 1967) (on file with Columbia University).

79. See Bd. Dir. to IEC (14 Jan. 1972) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

80. Meeting Minutes (24 Oct. 1967) (on file at Columbia University).

81. See Meeting Minutes (22–23 Mar. 1969) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

the British government and at times was willing to act even more closely with UK officials, including accepting covert funding in the 1960s.⁸² Such decisions, when aired in the press, created considerable difficulties for the organization.

Given the group's character and own financial problems, AIUSA resisted the idea that it should serve as a financial resource for the larger movement. In 1967, the IEC developed a plan to address its deficit. In its calculations of who should bear the heaviest burden, the United States was first (its five groups needed to contribute a total of £400). The distribution was assessed based on the relative wealth of the countries.⁸³ Not surprisingly, AIUSA at times bristled at funding mandates from London. IEC documents indicate that it saw the United States as fertile ground for its fundraising initiatives. In March 1970, the IEC expressed concern that tensions with AIUSA could imperil fundraising in the United States. Marecco wrote, "Apart from anything else it is essential that we get more financial support from America. When I arrive on April 1st, my primary task will be reconciliation with AIUSA."⁸⁴

Amnesty International's April 1970 report on Israeli torture further heightened tensions between AIUSA and Amnesty International in London. The report alleged Israeli "torture and ill-treatment of Arab prisoners."⁸⁵ AIUSA regarded the report as damaging to AIUSA's standing with Jewish people in the United States.⁸⁶ When it was published, Benenson, AIUSA's chair, and Nelson Bengston, AIUSA's treasurer, wrote a letter to the editor of *The Times* to convey their reservations. Their disavowal was connected with broader hesitations about Amnesty International's attention to torture of prisoners who are not prisoners of conscience. As the Arab prisoners described in the report were engaged in conflict with Israel, they did not meet the non-violent requirement set out by Amnesty International for considering someone to be a prisoner of conscience.⁸⁷ Mark Benenson later wrote, "The

82. KRISTEN SELLARS, *THE RISE AND RISE OF HUMAN RIGHTS*, 98–99, 108–11 (2002); Buchanan, *supra* note 20, at 267–89. In addition to controversies surrounding British covert support for Amnesty International, there were concerns that the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) might be funneling funds to Amnesty International through the International Committee of Jurists.

83. Sweden and Australia had the second highest burdens, and all other Amnesty sections were at a lower level.

84. Letter from Anthony Marecco, Treasurer, Amnesty Int'l, to Sean MacBride, Chair, Int'l Exec. Comm. of Amnesty Int'l (18 Mar. 1970) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History). During his visit to the United States, Marecco undertook considerable analysis of the foundation and individual donor possibilities for funding Amnesty International. See Agenda Item, *supra* note 69.

85. AMNESTY INT'L, *REPORT ON THE TREATMENT OF CERTAIN PRISONERS UNDER INTERROGATION IN ISRAEL* (Apr. 1970) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

86. Marecco suggested the report issuance during his visit to the United States complicated his mission in the United States. See Agenda Item, *supra* note 69.

87. See Mark Benenson & Nelson Bengston, *Letter to Editor*, *TIMES*, 17 Apr. 1970, at 13.

widening of Amnesty's field we think to have been a great mistake, and one which has led directly to the current embarrassment over the Israel affair."⁸⁸ MacBride expressed frustration at the unilateral nature of the United States disavowal of the Israel report, writing, "In Amnesty International, as in all democratically-run international organisations, there is a normal democratic method for dealing with complaints against the International Executive or Secretariat."⁸⁹ He further characterized the AIUSA action as "indefensible" and suggested it was one more example of the poor relations between AIUSA and the IEC.⁹⁰ In MacBride's view, Benenson's letter was "intended for ultimate publication by him with a view to damaging Amnesty or else it may be an attempt to force us to comply with the various suggestions in his letter under an implied threat of publication."⁹¹

In further demonstration of the interconnections among their disagreements, Benenson's letter to MacBride explaining AIUSA concerns about the Israel report introduced a new issue to the transatlantic divide—the question of funding for Amnesty International research trips. Benenson's letter implied a conflict of interest for Amnesty International in taking funds for its research on Israel from "an Arab or Anglo-Arab source."⁹² Faced with concerns regarding the maintenance of Amnesty International's independence, the IEC agreed it would allow only 50 percent of missions to be financed by interested donors.⁹³ For that and other reasons, Benenson urged a supplement to Amnesty's Israel report.

In a different response to the dispute, Ennals sent a letter to the editor of *The Times* disagreeing with the AIUSA letter. He wrote, "It is therefore regrettable that Mr. Benenson and Mr. Bengston, in their letter of 17 April on the Amnesty report on Israel, should choose to disagree in public before discussing in private."⁹⁴ Ennals continued by explaining that Benenson's letter was uninformed given that he was not a member of the International Executive Committee.⁹⁵ In addition to strong IEC disapproval of the AIUSA dissent, support for Benenson and Bengston was not uniform throughout the American section. Baldwin, AIUSA board member disagreed with their

88. Letter from Mark Benenson, Chair, AIUSA, to Sean MacBride, Chair, Int'l Exec. Comm. of Amnesty Int'l. (8 Apr. 1970) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

89. See Letter from Sean MacBride, Chair, Int'l Exec. Comm. of Amnesty Int'l., to Mark Benenson, Chair, AIUSA (20 Apr. 1970) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

90. *Id.*

91. See Letter from Sean MacBride, Chair, Int'l Exec. Comm. of Amnesty Int'l., to Colleagues (21 Apr. 1970) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

92. Letter from Mark Benenson, to Sean MacBride, *supra* note 88.

93. See Agenda Item, *supra* note 69.

94. Martin Ennals, *Letter to Editor*, *TIMES*, 20 Apr. 1970 (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

95. *Id.* In Benenson's view, however, AIUSA had made its concerns about the Israel report known as early as December 1969.

decision to oppose the Israel report, as it was not the “proper role of an affiliate.”⁹⁶ Baldwin’s letter addressed the crux of the transatlantic dispute: was AIUSA an affiliate or did it retain a degree of sovereignty regarding its international affairs? At the May 1970 IEC meeting, Benenson conceded that he should not have sent a letter to *The Times* without airing his dissent internally.⁹⁷

In a final attempt to address the broader context of the disagreement over the Israel report, AIUSA indicated that it did not fully support Amnesty International’s increasing attention to torture over maintaining an exclusive focus on political prisoners. In AIUSA’s view, “torture shall not be a central concern of Amnesty unless a substantial number of those tortured are political prisoners.”⁹⁸ Mark Benenson later reported, however, that AIUSA’s proposal garnered no support at the International Executive Committee meeting.⁹⁹

AIUSA was also frustrated that the IEC set up Amnesty International Development, Inc. (AID) in the United States to raise money for Greek prisoners of conscience. AID was intended to be a separate charitable organization with an independent board of directors. The reasons for the need for such a duplicative organization were not clear to AIUSA at the time or retrospectively from the IEC meeting minutes. AIUSA feared it could undermine the American section’s fundraising efforts or give Amnesty International an alternative base in the United States in the event that London severed ties with AIUSA.¹⁰⁰ AIUSA hoped to convince London to drop “Amnesty International” from the organization’s name to avoid confusion, but the IEC refused to do so. AIUSA pressed the matter further with a resolution opposing “the establishment in the United States by the International Executive Committee of any other organization using the name Amnesty International.”¹⁰¹ Rather than being resolved, the conflict decreased over time due to the resignation of Marecco, who had spearheaded the initiative.

A number of transatlantic disagreements were exacerbated by the conflict of personalities between Lyons, AIUSA’s Executive Director, and the IEC. By early 1969, the tensions had risen to such a point that the International Executive Committee communicated clear frustration with Lyons’ leadership.

96. Letter from Roger Baldwin, Int’l League for the Rights of Man, to Sean MacBride, Chair, Int’l Exec. Comm. of Amnesty Int’l. (30 Apr. 1970) (on file at the Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

97. Int’l Exec. Comm. Meeting Minutes (9–10 May 1970) (on file at the Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

98. Meeting Minutes from AIUSA Board (22 Sept. 1970) (on file at Columbia University).

99. Exec. Comm. of the Bd. Dirs. of AIUSA, Inc. Minutes (26 Oct. 1970) (on file at Columbia University).

100. See Meeting Minutes, *supra* note 98.

101. Meeting Minutes, *supra* note 98; Meeting Minutes of the Exec. Comm. of the Bd. Dirs. AIUSA (26 Oct. 1970) (on file at Columbia University).

In a letter to Benenson, Ennals wrote, "Strong feelings were expressed on the committee with regard to Paul's suitability as Executive Director of the American Section."¹⁰² Ennals had hoped that financial reasons would lead to Lyons departure but was nonetheless indicating the IEC's view to Benenson in a formal letter.¹⁰³ Later that year, the IEC saw it necessary to register its lack of confidence in Lyons, which significantly harmed its relationship with AIUSA.¹⁰⁴ In a letter to Benenson describing the no-confidence vote, Ennals wrote, "We do recognise that there are differences between countries and that one method is not necessarily completely right or another completely wrong, but it has long been our impression that Paul Lyons is not the person to carry an idealistic and practical administration on his shoulders."¹⁰⁵

AIUSA reported that it was "absolutely astonished that we were not notified that an action of such immense procedural and substantive importance, the formal condemnation by the IEC of an official of a national section, would be taken."¹⁰⁶ In Benenson's view, the IEC indicated little concern for "fair representation" and "the opportunity to answer charges" in its conduct.¹⁰⁷ Benenson asked the IEC to withdraw its vote of no-confidence.¹⁰⁸ In the view of Riverside Group leader Ivan Morris, the IEC's no-confidence vote was a factor in the decision to retain Lyons as program director at the March 1970 board meeting. According to Morris, "I am afraid that the I.E.C.'s vote of non-confidence in Lyons had exactly the opposite effect of what was intended: for many of the Board members here it had become a matter of national pride to retain him, and so they did."¹⁰⁹

Thereafter, tension between AIUSA and the IEC increased significantly as the American section recoiled at what it saw as interference by London. Benenson wrote to Ennals explaining why AIUSA would not send any representatives to an upcoming IEC meeting until the IEC had "cleanse[d] itself of this particular blot."¹¹⁰ Benenson and others at AIUSA saw the IEC's vote as representing a "direct order" to which it could not acquiesce. Benenson

102. Letter from Martin Ennals, Sec'y Gen., Amnesty Int'l, to Mark Benenson, Chair, AIUSA (5 Jan. 1970).

103. Letter from Martin Ennals to Mark Benenson, *supra* note 57.

104. See Meeting Minutes (29–30 Nov. 1969) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

105. Letter from Martin Ennals to Mark Benenson, *supra* note 57.

106. *Id.*

107. *Id.*

108. Letter from Mark Benenson, Chair, AIUSA, to Martin Ennals, Sec'y Gen., Amnesty Int'l (2 Feb. 1969) (on file at Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

109. Letter from Ivan Morris, Chairman, Riverside Group, to Martin Ennals, Sec'y Gen., Amnesty Int'l (8 Mar. 1970) (on file at Int'l Inst. of Soc. History). Benenson concurred in identifying the key role of the IEC vote in the retention of Lyons. See Letter from Martin Ennals, Sec'y Gen., Amnesty Int'l, to Int'l Exec. Committee (9 Mar. 1970) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

110. Letter from Mark Benenson, Chair, AIUSA, to Martin Ennals, Sec'y Gen., Amnesty Int'l (9 Mar. 1970) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

proposed that the IEC change its meeting minutes to reflect a more advisory tone.¹¹¹ MacBride, however, refused to amend the meeting minutes and argued such a prerequisite for American attendance to be “quite unrealistic.”¹¹² Benenson and AIUSA continued to resist the IEC no-confidence vote, suggesting in an April 1970 letter that the IEC was not following democratic practices when it “condemn[ed] an employee of a national section without a hearing.” Benenson suggested the IEC might revise its minutes to make clear that the action “was not intended as a direct action to us to discharge Lyons but merely as an expression of the IEC’s opinion as to his job performance.”¹¹³

V. EFFORTS AT RECONCILIATION

In an attempt to bridge the widening divide between the organizations, Benenson attended the May 1970 IEC meeting. There he reported that Lyons had been let go from any professional responsibilities at AIUSA, although he remained a member of the board of directors. In addition, AIUSA moved its office to New York where the majority of the board was located. Yet, those steps did not erase all of Amnesty International’s transatlantic divisions. AIUSA remained concerned about the shift in the organization’s focus away from working solely on behalf of prisoners of conscience, and Benenson continued to seek IEC amendment of its earlier action regarding Lyons.¹¹⁴

Lyons finally resigned from the AIUSA board in July 1970. In his resignation letter, he expressed frustration that London was unwilling to recognize AIUSA as “basically sovereign” over its internal organization, prisoner advocacy, and fundraising.¹¹⁵ His letter suggests his view of the role of AIUSA in the larger Amnesty International organization sharply diverged from those of the IEC and even American section members such as Baldwin. With Lyons fully separated from AIUSA, the organization shifted course, enjoying greater popularity domestically and easier relations internationally.

In September 1970, the IEC decided to correspond in the future with Morris, who had headed the successful Riverside Group and become the General Secretary of AIUSA. In addition, by April 1972, the IEC had decided it would be beneficial to have AI’s Secretary General visit New York annually.¹¹⁶ Thereafter, AIUSA was rarely an item of discussion in the International

111. Letter from Mark Benenson, to Sean MacBride, *supra* note 88.

112. *Id.*

113. Letter from Mark Benenson, Chair, AIUSA, to Sean MacBride, Chair Int’l Exec. Comm. of Amnesty Int’l. (24 Apr. 1970) (on file at the Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

114. See Meeting Minutes, *supra* note 97.

115. Letter from Paul Lyons, Former Exec. Dir., AIUSA, to Mark Benenson, Bd. of Directors, AIUSA, (23 July 1970) (on file at the Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

116. Int’l Exec. Comm. Meeting Minutes (7–9 Apr. 1972) (on file at the Int’l Inst. of Soc. History).

Executive Committee's meetings. Instead AIUSA increasingly struggled with its West Coast Office, made up of many scientists at Stanford that had been formed in September 1973. The two bodies disagreed on fundraising, issuing press releases, and communication with London.¹¹⁷

The US section was not the only national section to be in conflict with the IEC during the organization's first fifteen years. For example, in 1972, the Italian section expressed concern over what it saw as uneven balance in the types of countries targeted by Amnesty International. Furthermore, contrary to Amnesty International practice, the Italian section wanted to devote attention to human rights abuses in Italy.¹¹⁸ But, the conflict with the Italian section was confined, and after several exchanges, the IEC and the Italian Section were able to reach a mutually satisfying agreement. The terms of their disagreement were never as profound as with AIUSA, but perhaps the IEC and Amnesty International's Secretary General had decided to approach national section conflict in a more proactive manner after the protracted struggle with AIUSA.

VI. CONCLUSION

Examining the fraught relations between Amnesty International and AIUSA offers important lessons about the challenges in forming international and transnational nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Several prominent Britons conceived of a new model of human rights activism that they hoped would become an international movement. Yet, in the United States, many AIUSA board members and particularly its executive director were unconvinced of the most novel element of Amnesty International—its emphasis on letter writing by adoption groups. Lyons and others preferred to influence foreign officials in Washington and New York. AIUSA's resistance to the adoption group model may illuminate its members' understanding of the role of the United States in the world in the 1960s and early 1970s. Sending individual letters to prison officials in foreign countries likely seemed to be a relatively weak response given AIUSA members' close proximity to Washington's embassies and the United Nations in New York. AIUSA board

117. Letter from Dirk Burner, to Int'l Exec. Comm. (7 Apr.1974) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History).

118. See e.g., Letter from Guiliana Mieli, to Martin Ennals, Sec'y Gen, Amnesty Int'l (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History); Letter from Gustavo Combo, to Martin Ennals, Sec'y Gen., Amnesty Int'l (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History); Letter from Martin Ennals, Sec'y Gen., Amnesty Int'l, to Giuliana Mieli (1 Feb. 1972) (on file at the Int'l Inst. of Soc. History); Scoble & Wiseberg, *supra* note 5, at 25.

members, many of whom were active with other NGOs in these years, may have felt more comfortable with more traditional patterns of activism. Only after years of protracted struggle did the American section commit itself to both Amnesty International's issues and its methods.