

**THE
RUSSELL TRIBUNAL
ON REPRESSION IN BRAZIL**

A REPORT
AND
CALL FOR SUPPORT

From: COMMON FRONT FOR LATIN AMERICA/
COMMITTEE AGAINST REPRESSION IN
BRAZIL

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THE RUSSELL TRIBUNAL ON BRAZIL, WHAT IS IT?

In 1966, the philosopher Bertrand Russell created a committee for the investigation of war crimes committed in Vietnam. The trial of U.S. war crimes that followed had an intense impact on world public opinion. The Russell Tribunal was an important international instrument of denunciation of U.S. aggression at a time when the anti-war movement at home was just in its early stages of formation.

In October 1971, a group of Brazilian exiles in Santiago Chile interviewed Professor Lelio Basso, who had been the rapporteur for the Russell Tribunal on Vietnam, with the purpose of studying the possibilities for the convening of a session of the Tribunal to try the crimes of the military regime established in Brazil since 1964. In view of this request, Professor Basso decided to ask for the sponsorship of the Russell Peace Foundation in organizing a new body which, while keeping the name Bertrand Russell Tribunal and retaining among its members some of the elements of the past, would be more open to the participation of Communists, Christians and Social Democrats, which were not represented in the first Tribunal. Lelio Basso has written:

"After Vietnam, we have centered our attention on Brazil, because these two countries provide two different models of U.S. imperialism. In the case of Vietnam, it was and still is the most violent and brutal aggression which has ever been waged in history. In Brazil, we confront the subjection of an entire people through a military takeover and the exploitation of its resources in a new sub-imperialist development. We want to demonstrate that behind the face of Brazilian economic growth, which offers huge profits to American corporations, we find a situation of misery and oppression for the great majority of the people. This misery and this oppression are a necessary consequence of the imperialist exploitation and of the military regime which imposes it. Discontent and resistance on the part of the people, police repression with its record of assassinations and tortures on the part of the authorities are in their turn necessary consequences of this misery and oppression. The Brazilian 'model' has its own logic, similar to that of the Vietnamese 'model': aggression, invincible popular resistance, massacre, genocide, ecocide. The rule is that those who do accept the role of slave imposed by U.S. imperialism must be mercilessly eliminated; this applies to the Brazilian people as well as to the Vietnamese."

This meeting was convened in Rome on location of the Russell Tribunal General Secretariat July 14 and July 15, 1973. Representatives were in attendance from Italy, France, West Germany, Argentina, Puerto Rico and the U.S.A. (Representatives from CAIA, USIA and COFFIA/CARIB) A written report from Belgium was presented and a telegram of support from the Indictment Committee on Repression in Brazil (CDRB, Santiago, Chile) was read.

After a summary report of the activities of the General Secretariat (which included the maintaining of correspondence, coordination of contacts, gathering of documentation, publication and distribution of the Russell Tribunal Bulletin and the soliciting of support from numerous committees, groups and prominent individuals), and before the detailed reports of the activities of the various independent groups and national committees of support were given, by far the greatest amount of meeting time was given over to discussion of what Lelio Basso termed the "three great difficulties" to be overcome to guarantee a successful Tribunal. These were:

- 1) The need to arrive at an acceptable political formula.
- 2) The need to build a well-organized international network of support.
- 3) The need to secure the financial means.

Though there certainly was no optimistic euphoria that these three major difficulties would soon be overcome easily, the prevailing mood at the meeting was that they were not insurmountable either. And, in fact, some concrete steps have already been taken toward their resolution.

POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES.

From the outset one of the major political difficulties to be overcome was that of the uncertainty among the numerous Brazilian exile groups, political movements and parties as to how they should concretely respond to the Russell Tribunal initiative given their own ideological differences. The problem, stated simply, was that of defining an acceptable political formula that could forge a unity of resistance among divergent tendencies.

From the beginning all groups in question affirmed the real need to denounce the Brazilian regime's systematic violation of human rights as well as the need to investigate the internal and international aspects of imperialism to get to the root causes of the repression. Thus it evolved that the Tribunal would be convened for a double purpose:

- 1) To be an instrument against the spread of international fascism.
- 2) To be an instrument against the Brazilian dictatorship.

The objective of the Russell Tribunal on Repression in Brazil, then, is to start with a denunciation of the well-known facts of torture and repression because everyone is sensitive to the question of human rights. The goal, however, is to go beyond this to unmask the systemic mechanisms that continually produce such abhorrent crimes, and to stop the spread of fascism. It must be clearly stated, repression is more than police action.

DIFFICULTIES IN DEVELOPING A WELL-ORGANIZED INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF SUPPORT.

The degree of impact that the work of the Tribunal will have depends of course on the breadth of participation of political forces, but, most of all, it depends on the amount of serious work in preparation and organization of grass-root groups supporting the Tribunal and involved in the diffusion of its findings. From past experience Lelio Basso knows that this was one of the main weaknesses of the Russell Tribunal on Vietnam, and he is determined to remedy it. To this end, it is the Tribunal's intention to provide a wide international network of support committees, with a central base in the capital city of various countries and coordinated bases in other large cities. It is a goal to make these national and local support committees as broadly representative as possible, to include academic communities and trade unions, community organizations and service groups, churches and political movements and parties. The aim of these committees, with regard to the activity of the Tribunal, would be the following:

- 1) To provide the Tribunal with all kinds of information material on Brazil, and in particular on the matters to be dealt with by the investigation committees described below.
- 2) To seek endorsements from well-known personalities.
- 3) To make the activities of the Tribunal known to the public at large, especially through the distribution of the Russell Tribunal Bulletin (3 issues published as of August, 1973).
- 4) To prepare the launching of a vast campaign to raise funds through popular subscription to cover the expenses of the Tribunal.

Support committees have already been formed in many countries, like Argentina, Chile, Peru, Belgium, Denmark, England, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, West Germany, etc. The particular and varied organizational problems of the various support committees represented were discussed in detail at the Tribunal organization meeting of July, 1973. At this point it seems that the strongest and most active national committees are in Belgium, Italy and Holland. Possibilities also look very good for Argentina, Chile and West Germany. For example, the Jungsozialisten of West Germany has 400,000 organized students and workers in 20,000 base groups. Between 80 and 400 of these base groups have already been engaged in some activity on Brazil. Belgium's national committee has already raised enough funds to hire a journalist to be a national organizer. There are also movements in the U.S., Canada and other countries to form national committees of support where presently there are none active.

Many national and international organizations and individuals have also already given support to the Tribunal initiative, like the International Democratic Federation of Women, the Argentine Anti-Imperialist Movement of Latin American Solidarity (MAASIA), the Democratic Coalition of Venezuela, the Italian Communist Youth Federation, the Socialist Party of Chile, Nobel Prize winners Pablo Neruda and George Wald, the great Mexican painter Siqueros, Pham Van Dong Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, prominent church people such as Dr. George Casalis and Rev. Dr. Martin Niemoller, and many others.

FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES AND PROSPECTS.

First it should be clearly understood that the Russell Tribunal II on Repression in Brazil does not have disposition of the funds which made possible the functioning of the Russell Tribunal on Vietnam. The Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation is unable to finance it. Work so far has been done strictly on a voluntary basis and essential operating expenses have been covered by the contributions of some of the sponsors. (A list of sponsors who have signed the appeal as of July 7, 1973, as well as a copy of the appeal itself are enclosed).

It is projected that the Russell Tribunal II on Repression in Brazil have three public sessions: one each in Latin America, North America and Europe, preferably in that sequence. Each session will require the transporting on location of 50-100 people including the Grand Jury, consultants, witnesses and members of the General Secretariat. The sessions will be held at approximately six month intervals so all the necessary investigations and analysis of the social, economic, political, juridical and cultural conditions of Brazil, internally as well as internationally can take place between sessions so as to alert public opinion as to what is actually taking place.

Money is also needed for the publication and distribution of dossiers, diffusion of information on developments in the Tribunal proceedings, and the publication and distribution of the official Tribunal Bulletin.

Such an organization, as the Tribunal, which needs a properly adequate preparation and must succeed in attracting the interest of world public opinion in order to help the Brazilian people concretely, will have to have several hundred thousand dollars.

Because there are no major guaranteed official sources of income (i.e., foundations, churches, governments, political parties and the like), it becomes imperative that finances be procured through popular fundraising at the grass roots level. In this regard, many Italian industrial workers of Milan have set forth an inspiring example: They have voluntarily taxed their monthly incomes as their sign of solidarity with the oppressed working class of Brazil.

Lelio Basso is convinced that the first general session can be convened in Spring, 1974 with a minimum of \$50,000. if the Tribunal can be officially constituted in November of 1973. A complete itemized budget can be obtained upon request by writing to the Russell Tribunal General Secretariat.

Funds are just now beginning to trickle in, but the Tribunal's determination has not wavered. Basso has written in a letter to the Youth Federation of the Italian Democratic Political Parties:

"The financial aspect of this project continues to worry us for the reasons I have mentioned. But if it is true that we urgently need financial help and that we count most of all on popular subscriptions, it is also true that we are determined to carry on this project, convinced that it will be successful. The economic

II. Juridical Commission on Repression. (To prepare the procedural norms for the Tribunal as well as a chart designating the main laws on which it is based and the legal questions it must answer, to also give an analysis of Brazilian and international law providing a formal juridical content to accusations on torture)

- 1) Leo Matarasso (France)
- 2) G. Pinet (France)
- 3) J. J. De Felice (France)
- 4) L. Joinnet (France)
- 5) Prof. Rigaux (Belgium)
- 6) M. Salmon (Belgium)
- 7) G. Branca (Italy)
- 8) L. Cavalieri (Italy)
- 9) Warren Dean (New York University)
- 10) Pierre Mertens, Universite Libre de Bruxelles (Belgium)

III. Commission on International Politics. (Investigation of the U.S. government and the U.S. transnational corporations' propping up of the Brazilian military dictatorship, Brazil's interventions and role as a sub-imperial power in Latin America, and so on)

- 1) Hessischen Stiftung Friedens un Konfliktforschung in Frankfurt (Germany)
- 2) James Petras (State University of New York at Binghamton)
- 3) Michael Klare (NACLA)
- 4) Movimiento Argentino Antimperialista de Solidaridad Latinoamericano (Brazil and other countries of Latin America)

IV. ECONOMIC COMMISSION. (Investigation of the "Economic Miracle" etc.)

- 1) Istituto di Studi per la Transizione (Italy)
- 2) Paul Sweezy (USA)
- 3) Chicago Support Group
- 4) Torquat Iditella (Great Britain)
- 5) Horace B. Davis (Sandwich, Mass.)

V. COMMISSION ON THE CONFLICT BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE.

- 1) Charles Antoine (France)

VI. Commission on Internal Politics. (Analysis of the development of fascism in Brazil)

- 1) Instituto de Estudios Sociales y Economicos (IESE, Chile)
- 2) Other persons are enlisted for this commission who are in the interior of Brazil and cannot be named for obvious reasons.

- 3) How can we best mobilize various public opinion sectors?
- 4) How can we get the endorsement of well-known U.S. personalities in politics, the churches, the arts, and sciences, etc.?
- 5) To which prominent U.S. jurists should we extend an invitation to serve on the Russell Tribunal's Grand Jury?
- 6) Which members of the U.S. academic community should be requested to serve on one or the other of the Tribunal's Investigation Commissions?
- 7) How shall we go about launching a popular campaign to raise funds for the Tribunal's necessary expenses?
- 8) How can we best coordinate the input of U.S. research, information and documentation on Brazil and U.S.-Brazil relations for the Tribunal?
- 9) How can we deal with the logistics of the U.S. distribution of the Russell Tribunal Bulletin and all other forthcoming information on the Tribunal's proceedings?
- 10) What are the possibilities for having a session of the Russell Tribunal on Repression in Brazil in the U.S.?

We have advanced these questions to you as we wrestle with them ourselves, trusting that together we may reach some solutions, and confident that we can launch a dynamic campaign by Fall of this year.

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August 1, 1973

GOALS AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE RUSSELL TRIBUNAL ON BRAZIL.

The task of the Russell Tribunal is not limited to denouncing the most apparent manifestations of repression (tortures, assassinations), but instead to investigate the causes and the consequences of this situation, following a method of documentation of the highest scientific level. Tortures in Brazil will be the Tribunal's starting point, as American war crimes were the starting point of the sessions on Vietnam, because tortures and war crimes have the potential to mobilize wide sectors of world public opinion. But the Tribunal will also have to take upon itself an analysis of the social, economic, political, and cultural situation of Brazil, internally as well as internationally, because it is the only way to alert public opinion to what is actually taking place. And as the public sessions of the Russell Tribunal on Vietnam held in Stockholm and Copenhagen in 1967 contributed to informing international public opinion, including the American public, on the real situation in S.E. Asia, so the future sessions of the Tribunal should shed light on the role of the U.S. government and the U.S. corporations in maintaining and encouraging the current situation in Brazil, as well as that in other countries, like Uruguay and Bolivia, where Brazil is already exercising a strong influence, organizing coups and backing police repression, constituting thus a danger and threat to democracy in the whole of Latin America.

The work of the Russell Tribunal is divided among its various organs:

1. Promotion Committee: composed of Lelio Basso, Vladimir Dedijer, Jean Paul Sartre and the Russell Peace Foundation.
2. Grand Jury, to be convened for the plenary sessions.
3. Investigation Committees, composed of experts examining material, advising the Tribunal and preparing reports.
4. National Support Committees (whose functions are detailed below).
5. General Secretariat in charge of contacts, archives, documentation and administration.

All of these structures are in formation. The real work of the Tribunal and its various structural organs began in September of 1972.

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF JULY, 1973.

Given this background and the preparatory work of the Promotion Committee, the General Secretariat and the various National Support Committees during late 1972 and early 1973, Lelio Basso called upon representatives of the committees and groups of international support to hold a short meeting "to get a clear view together of the situation of the Russell Tribunal II on Repression in Brazil, to establish priorities in the tasks to be done, to distribute these tasks and to compare the initiatives taken in each country."

In a letter sent to Lelio Basso and the General Secretariat last year, the Indictment Committee on Repression in Brazil (CDRB) of Santiago, Chile formally announced their support for the initiative of the Russell Tribunal on Brazil. In a subsequent communication the CDRB made known the list of political forces and organizations represented in the committee. They are the following:

the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB);
 the Brazilian Revolutionary Communist Party (PCBR);
 Red Wing; Worker Policy (PO);
 People's Revolutionary Vanguard (VPR);
 National Liberation Alliance (ALN);
 Workers' Communist Party (POC);
 People's Action (AP);
 Leninist Group; Armed Revolutionary Vanguard (VAR);
 the 8th of October Revolutionary Movement (MR-8).

Similarly, the Brazilian Information Front with centers in Algeria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Holland, Italy, Sweden and Switzerland, in their general meeting held on March 10, 1973, voted to offer their material and political support to the activity of the organization of the Russell Tribunal on Brazil. They have since advanced a document to the Tribunal detailing in its conclusion four points of agreement on the objectives of the Tribunal. It is their will that the Tribunal:

- 1) Cite and denounce the known tortures and violations of human rights in Brazil.
- 2) Investigate and expose the system that produced these heinous crimes.
- 3) Denounce the international spread of fascism.
- 4) Investigate and denounce the social and economic conditions under which the oppressed majority of the Brazilian people live.

The Brazilians living in Paris made a strong bid for adding a fifth point:

That the Tribunal should not only focus on the negative aspects of denunciation but should also emphasize the positive nature of the popular struggle of the Brazilian people for their own liberation which is concretely taking place on many fronts.

Given the above points of agreement, it now appears that a number of initial reservations and doubts among the various Brazilian factions about the activity of the Tribunal have at least formally dissolved. It is to be underlined, however, that the main protagonist of the Russell Tribunal on Brazil, in the first instance, is not the various exiled groups and not only the political prisoners or those who have suffered torture themselves, but the Brazilian people as a whole--el pueblo oprimido. The important point is that given the political formula outlined above there is no Brazilian group to date that opposes the initiative of the Russell Tribunal, and in fact, a number of groups have requested it. Though all the political forces noted above have given their formal endorsement to the Tribunal initiative, presently no guarantee can be given of their concrete material support. This will become evident only in view of their practice during the next months of the Tribunal's organization. Until this time some have contributed more than others; participation has been uneven.

Nevertheless, the active support and endorsement of the Russell Tribunal on Brazil remains problematic for certain groups and individuals. Most notable among these are Amnesty International, the International Commission of Jurists, the World Council of Churches and the Vatican. Lack of official support from these forces is clearly based on objections to the political formula as briefly outlined above.

Lelio Basso has noted that in two years of discussions with churches, parties and other political forces there is a number of different positions that have surfaced, but in general there is only one basic division into which different groups fall:

- 1) There is a group who would prefer that the Russell Tribunal limit itself to the denunciation of tortures and other human rights violations, and
- 2) There is another group that requests the Tribunal to develop a global analysis and investigate the causes and reasons for repression.

When one asks certain church officials and representatives from other humanitarian organizations to condemn torture it is easy to receive an affirmative response. They do not generally agree, however, to go deeper into the systemic origin of the tortures, because in so doing they must make a political judgment and arrive at a political conclusion. It is clear that there are two distinct positions. The Russell Tribunal on Brazil has decidedly opted for the second. The consequences are that it must therefore start with a narrower platform, clearly identifying its political position. Not everyone can support this. This discussion ended with the mildly optimistic note that presently a number of prominent Catholic and Protestant church people were currently reviewing their position.

Another problematical area for gaining support for the Tribunal on Brazil is among the large European Communist Parties which for many years have been increasing their percentage of electoral support in France and Italy. The major obstacle appears to be Jean Paul Sartre's position on other political issues. (Jean Paul Sartre is one of the Russell Tribunal's Presidents.) Although the Communist Party of France will not support the Russell Tribunal initiative neither will it oppose it. At this time it prefers to remain neutral. The Communist Party of Italy has let it be known that although it approves of the Russell Tribunal's initiative, it cannot engage itself officially. Its members can therefore participate fully on the various committees of support, but only as individuals. This, in fact, is presently occurring.

Thus, as Lelio Basso has stated, it becomes evident that the work of the Russell Tribunal on Brazil will have to advance at this time without the full participation of all parties and other political forces. But as the independent and popular support for the Russell Tribunal initiative grows, those who have at first withheld their unconditional support will be under pressure to respond.

difficulties force us to proceed slowly. In a certain sense, this delay is a good thing, for it makes it possible for us to inform and reach a wider audience. But it is also a negative factor, because the Brazilian economic model, the pride of neo-colonialism in the Third World, is quickly gaining a growing number of allies in international economic power circles. Last November, we received the first faint signs of financial help. No matter how small it is, it is a step forward in the direction taken by our campaign."

PROPOSED DATES AND PLACES FOR UPCOMING RUSSELL TRIBUNAL SESSIONS.

Juridical constitution and inauguration of the Russell Tribunal II on Repression in Brazil:

DATE: November, 1973.

PLACE: Brussels, Belgium.

First public session and convening of the Tribunal Grand Jury:

DATE: May or June, 1974.

PLACE: Buenos Aires, Argentina
(if political conditions remain favorable).

Second public session of the Tribunal:

DATE: Autumn, 1974.

PLACE: Possibly somewhere in North America (subject to further investigation).

COMPOSITION OF THE INVESTIGATION COMMITTEES AND THE GRAND JURY.

Currently there are six investigation committees in various stages of formation. The direction that they take in the preparation of summary reports for the judgment of the Grand Jury at the public sessions of the Tribunal will largely depend on the working decisions of their membership. Their task is mainly one of coordination; and their gathering of data, interpretation and analysis should be augmented by the receipt of research, information and documentation from other cooperating independent groups and individuals as well as the support committees throughout the world. The names of the commissions and the personalities and organizations to whom an invitation has thus far been extended are the following: (Note that not all have yet responded.)

I. Scientific Commission. (To investigate the medical and psychological aspects of torture, the genocide of indigenous peoples, ecocide, etc.)

- 1) Sigmund Freud Institutes in Frankfurt. (Germany)
- 2) Instituto Mexicano de Sicoanalysis. (Mexico)
- 3) Dr. Matthew Meselson - Biological Laboratories, Harvard University
- 4) Science for the People (SESPA), Johnaton Beckwith (Boston)
- 5) Stichting Werkgroep Indianen Zuid America
- 6) Collectif de Sciences sur le Vietnam (Naples, Italy)

The following are the names and addresses of the people who have been sent an invitation to participate as a member of the Grand Jury of the Russell Tribunal II on Repression in Brazil:

Senator Lelio Basso, Via della Dogana Vecchia 5, 00186 Roma, Italy
(This is also the address for the Russell Tribunal General Secretariat)

Mme. Simone de Beauvoir, 11 Bis rue Schoelcher, Paris 14e, France
Dr. Georges Casalis, 11 rue Voltaire, 92 Antony, France
Prof. Noam Chomsky, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Mass. 02139, USA

Prof. Vladimir Dedijer, Gorkieeva 16/V, Ljubliana, Yugoslavia
Director Jean Marie Domenach, "Esprit", 19 rue de Jacob, Paris 75006, France
Dr. H. Gollwitzer, 1 Berlin 33 (Dahlem) Ihnestrasse 56, West Germany
Prof. Dorothy Hodgkin, OM, FRS, Somerville College, Oxford, England
Father Larrain, S.J. Director revista Mensaje, Santiago, Chile
Prof. Salvador Luria, Room 56-423, Dept. of Biology, MIT, Cambridge, Mass. 02139
Rev. John A. MacKay, Apt. 31-02 Meadow Lakes Village, Highstown, N.J. 08520 USA
Dr. J.B. Metz, Kapitelstrasse 14, Munster, West Germany
Rev. Dr. Martin Niemoller, Brentanostrasse 3, Wiesbaden 62, West Germany
Prof. James Petras, Sociology Dept., N.Y. State Univ. at Binghamton, USA
M. Jean Paul Sartre, 9 rue Delambre, Paris 14e, France
Prof. Laurent Schwartz, 37 rue Pierre Nicole, Paris 5, France
Prof. George Wald, The Biology Laboratory, Harvard Univ., 16 Divinity Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02138, USA

THE RUSSELL TRIBUNAL CAMPAIGN IN THE U.S.

The Common Front For Latin America/Committee Against Repression In Brazil (COFFLA/CARIB) proposes to enjoin its efforts with all other organizations and individuals willing to develop a broad campaign of denunciation of U.S. complicity with the Brazilian dictatorship and its crimes against human rights, and initiate the foundation of a National Committee of Support for the Russell Tribunal II on Repression in Brazil. The COFFLA/CARIB representative in his report to the Russell Tribunal General Secretariat at the July meeting in Rome expressed his confidence about the possibilities to mobilize numerous forces within the U.S. around the Russell Tribunal campaign. He noted, however, although concrete interest had been previously shown by a number of groups and individuals, there formerly was a lack of leadership and direction because of insufficient information as to the status of the Tribunal and its varied initiatives. This paper has been drawn up and circulated in an attempt to fill that gap. And in circulating it among the various people we are in contact with, COFFLA/CARIB would like to raise the following questions for discussion:

- 1) How can we best organize a broadly representative U.S. National Committee of Support for the Russell Tribunal on Repression in Brazil?
- 2) What concrete steps should be taken to mobilize all possible U.S. movements and organizations?