

*First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders.* Report prepared by the Secretariat, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (New York, 1956), pp. i-vi, 1-103. Price 9s. sterling.

This is a report of the first of a series of Congresses which, pursuant to a resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, are to be held every five years. The Congresses are intended to continue the work of those previously organized by the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission, the last of which was held in August, 1950. The Commission has now been dissolved and its work taken over by the United Nations.

The Congress was attended by delegates representing 51 governments, by observers representing a number of international organizations, and by other representatives of a number of non-governmental organizations; in addition 235 persons attended as individuals. In all, 512 persons from 61 countries and territories took part. It is pleasing to note that Australia was represented by three delegates—Mr Justice J. V. Barry of the Supreme Court of Victoria, Associate Professor N. R. Morris of the Department of Criminology, University of Melbourne, and Mr H. R. Vagg, Deputy Comptroller of Prisons of New South Wales.

The Congress had five major topics for deliberation. These were:

(1) the revision of the Standard Minimum Rules for the treatment of prisoners, (2) selection and training of personnel for penal and correctional institutions, (3) open penal and correctional institutions, (4) prison labour, and (5) the prevention of juvenile delinquency. In order to consider these matters the Congress was divided into three sections; Section I dealt with topics (1) and (2), Section II with topics (3) and (4), and Section III with topic (5). The procedure was for each section to consider draft recommendations placed before it by the Secretariat; after discussion, these recommendations and the Congress's views thereon were embodied in formal resolutions. The Report contains an account of the discussions on the draft recommendations, followed by the setting out of the resolutions passed.

It is scarcely possible in a review to offer any criticism of the formal resolutions which were passed by the Congress. A full discussion and criticism of them would indeed amount to a sizeable contribution to criminology. And, no doubt, in due course such a discussion and criticism will appear in works devoted to that topic.

For the casual reader, the main interest in this report lies in the discussion which took part in the various Sections of the Congress. This illustrates the great benefits which are derived by all countries from the holding of conferences of this kind. The Congress served to bring together representatives of a number of nations of widely divergent social, political and religious customs and habits, and to allow them an opportunity for a free and frank interchange of views and opinions. Such an exchange of views cannot but be of the utmost benefit to the officials who have to grapple with the problems presented in practice. Many of these officials will also be aided by the resolutions which were passed at the Congress and which will enable them to press for reforms in their individual countries.

It is, of course, only to be expected that agreement among delegates representing such a wide range of cultural and social characteristics and customs will be difficult to reach. One example will suffice to illustrate the point. The delegates from the Christian countries were at pains to

emphasize the role of the church in both the prevention and the treatment of delinquency. But their view brought emphatic disagreement from the representatives both of the Communist countries, where there is no official religion, and from the representatives of the countries of the East, where there is no religious organization similar to the Christian church, although religion, of course, plays a wide part in the life of the community.

Despite these difficulties, and the fact that only two weeks were available to the Congress for its deliberations, a considerable measure of agreement was in fact reached and recorded in the resolutions. The work thus done justifies the holding, not only of this Congress, but of those which remain to be held in the future.

PETER BRETT

*Sexual Offences: A Report of the Cambridge Department of Criminal Science*, edited by L. RADZINOWICZ. (Macmillan & Co. Ltd., London, 1957), pp. i-xxvii, 1-553. Australian price £4 10s. 9d.

This, the sixth volume of the English Studies in Criminal Science, published by the Cambridge Department of Criminal Science, is another example of the considerable extension of knowledge which has come from the impetus given to research by the willingness of the English Home Office to collaborate with university departments interested in research concerning crime and its treatment. Apart from five chapters on the law and practice concerning sexual offences in five countries (Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Belgium and the United States) contributed by authors from those countries, the book is a summary of a survey concerning sexual offences in fourteen police districts in England—the law, evidence, procedure, treatment and results of treatment in those districts. Its aim was 'to provide facts which have hitherto been difficult to come by, and to correlate them so as to throw some light on the many facets of sexual misconduct which seem to have escaped notice or could not be fully appreciated through lack of adequate data.' The aim is largely fulfilled, and the book can be recommended to any serious student of a difficult subject.

In 1954, a Departmental Committee on Homosexuality and Prostitution, under the Chairmanship of Sir John Wolfenden, was set up by the Home Office; its report is not yet to hand. It is known, however, that both the Church of England Moral Welfare Council and a group of Roman Catholic sociologists and priests convened by Cardinal Griffin have recommended to the Wolfenden Committee that consensual homosexual acts by adult males in private should not be subjected to criminal sanction. The information gathered by the Cambridge Department tends to lend support to this view, but the report cautiously avoids taking any firm position.

It is wholly beneficial that the problems of the definition, prevention and treatment of sexual offences are gradually coming to be considered by thoughtful and objective lawyers and sociologists; for too long these problems, if not cloaked by silence or concealed by euphemisms, have been considered only in the yellower organs of the weekly press or by periodicals devoted to cheesecake. The Cambridge Department of Criminal Science is to be congratulated on a painstaking and informative collection and analysis of important social data.

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