

En este tomo II sobre **Historiografía Inmediata** ponentes y congresistas reflexionan y debaten, desde la historia, sobre la democracia, los derechos humanos, la inmigración, el multiculturalismo, las historias oficiales, las transiciones, la sociedad civil; se estudian tendencias actuales como la Idea Histórica de España y la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica, así como diversos grupos y redes de historiadores.

En el tomo I (**Reconstrucción paradigmática**) trata de tendencias internacionales, cuestiones como la objetividad, "historia total" y usos de la historia, protagonistas individuales y colectivos de la historia y la historiografía.

El tomo III (**Historiografía global**) contiene ponencias sobre las diversas formas de hacer historia global, por un lado, e historia inmediata, por el otro.



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E TURISMO

CARLOS BARROS, editor

# HISTORIA A DEBATE

HISTORY UNDER DEBATE • HISTOIRE EN DÉBAT

Tomo II

## HISTORIOGRAFÍA INMEDIATA

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**Mesa G****Grupos, redes, movimientos historiográficos****Against Oblivion:****The Activities of the Network of Concerned Historians****Antoon De Baets**

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The Network of Concerned Historians (NCH) was established at the History Department of the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, in October 1995. It serves as a link between concerned historians and the international human-rights movement. NCH seeks to be universal, impartial, and independent. It conducts activities in three fields: action, information, and research, in that order of importance. First, NCH forwards to its participants urgent actions for persecuted and censored historians (and others concerned with the past) issued by international human-rights organizations<sup>1</sup>. Second, it publishes electronic annual reports with history-related news from these organizations and other sources. Third, it collects data on persecuted and censored historians that it forwards to the appropriate human-rights organizations. NCH does not, however, produce action-oriented information itself<sup>2</sup>.

**Origin of the Network of Concerned Historians**

The idea crystallized as the result of the convergence of several factors. The first of these was my research on the censorship of history in the early 1980s. While working at Amnesty International's former publication office in San José, Costa Rica, from 1980 to 1982, I regularly came across cases of persecuted historians. A historian myself, I was very interested in the fates of Hasan Kakar (Afghanistan), Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba (Zaire/Congo), Walter Rodney (Guyana), Maina wa Kinyatti (Kenya), and Raúl Cariboni (Uruguay). I noticed that in every corner of the globe historians were among those who suffered from political persecution because of their historical work, other activities, or both. I also realized that human-rights reports contained a great deal of useful information about these historians, much of which was probably unknown to their colleagues around the world, a particularly sad fact as organizations such as Amnesty International have long emphasized that campaigns waged by victims' colleagues are the most effective. In addition, comparative analysis of the cases of persecuted and censored historians constituted a largely unexplored empirical base for interesting and important research into the relations between history, power, and freedom. In 1982 I began collecting material that caught my eye. I was

1 These organizations are the American Association for the Advancement of Science (Washington), Amnesty International (London), Article 19 (London), Human Rights Watch (Washington/New York), Index on Censorship (London), International PEN (London), the Network of Education and Academic Rights (London), and Scholars at Risk (New York, formerly Chicago). World University Service International (first located in Geneva, then Amsterdam) was also on this list until it ceased to exist.

2 See circular #1 (mandate) on the website of the Network of Concerned Historians <http://www.let.rug.nl/nch/> or its mirror site <http://dit.is/nch>.

See Antoon De Baets, Jan Bart Meyer, and Wilma Mik, eds., *Palimpsest: De geschiedenis geschript* [Palimpsest: The Erasure of History] (Groningen: Stichting Mensenrechten Noord-Nederland, 1991), 135 pages.

forced to interrupt this research project for many years, but it always remained at the back of my mind. In September 1988 I took it up again, more systematically this time. After two years I began lecturing on the topic before an audience of history students at the University of Groningen. This resulted in a 1991 publication in Dutch entitled *Palimpsest*, for which students and I collaborated with a local human-rights center. In correspondence with the journal *Index on Censorship* in 1992 and the Global Campaign for Freedom of Expression *Article 19* in 1993, I launched the idea to create a working group called "Palimpsest", "Historians without Borders", or "Historians for Human Rights"<sup>3</sup>. In January 1995 I started research for a book on the censorship of historical thought between 1945 and (eventually) 2000<sup>4</sup>. This research included current events. In other words, while many cases I investigated were closed, others were still ongoing. This situation appealed to me, not only as a researcher but also as a member of the community of historians. The ongoing cases clearly called for more than research; they called for action also.

The second factor leading to the formation of the NCH was the escalating use of electronic mail in academic milieus in those years which facilitated communication with colleagues. The third and final factor was the 1993 announcement that the 18th International Congress of Historical Sciences in Montréal intended to organize a special roundtable on "Power, Liberty, and the Work of the Historian". This provided a new and lasting impetus to the idea. At the opening session of the congress in September 1995, the Secretary-General of the International Committee of Historical Sciences, the late François Bédarida, spoke about the social responsibility of historians<sup>5</sup>. At the round table, I presented a paper, *The Organization of Oblivion: Censorship and Persecution of Historians in Africa, Asia, and Latin America*. Here is the final section.

### What Can We Do?

[My] report demonstrates that history is an important, dangerous, and fragile subject. We now have to ask ourselves what historians whose academic freedom is not in danger can do to help their persecuted colleagues. We should join the efforts of human-rights organizations already campaigning on their behalf. Before we consider the affinities of human-rights work with the work of historians, it may be useful to distinguish three stages. First, the "time of repression", a period in which human-rights violations take place. Second, the "time of memory", the time span during which the persecuted and their contemporaries remember past abuses. Third, the "time of history", when victims and perpetrators have

3 Correspondence of author with Philip Spender (*Index on Censorship's* director), 5 and 13 February 1992, and with Susan York (*Article 19's* information officer), 5 April 1993. Spender wrote "Your idea of a group of historians working for human rights for historians elsewhere should be followed up without hesitation. The falsification of history is a universal problem and no-one is better placed to understand and publicise this than historians. Just as journalists, writers, filmmakers, psychiatrists, doctors write globally to monitor their colleagues, so should historians" (13 February 1992).

4 See Antoon De Baets, *Censorship of Historical Thought: A World Guide 1945-2000* (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2002).

5 See, among his many publications on the subject, François Bédarida, ed., "The Social Responsibility of the Historian" *Diogenes*, 1994, no. 168.

Vilém Precan, "Bound, Gagged and Robbed", *Index on Censorship*, 1975, no. 4, 53-57, here 57, German original in Idem, *Die Sieben Jahre von Prag 1969-1976: Briefe und Dokumente aus der Zeit der "Normalisierung"* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1978), 214-22. See also his follow-up letter in *American Historical Association Newsletter*, September 1976, 15.

died and the memory of the abuses is kept alive only by historians. It is clear that from stage to stage the efforts of human-rights organizations generally diminish and those of historians increase. Their efforts thus complement each other.

Human-rights organizations work for everyone's freedom of expression, including historians and those who commemorate past abuses. They also provide part of the source material for future historians who want to study the "time of repression". Historians share the most important aim of surviving victims of persecution and human-rights organizations: to know the full truth. Historical truth is the natural extension of living truth, i.e. the truth pursued by the victims and their allies while still alive. Historians should study the history of persecution. "[T]he memory of past human-rights abuses and the struggle waged against them must be kept alive. When historians fail to do so, the "time of history" may turn into a "time of oblivion and denial". The present report testifies to the fact that historians have engaged in human-rights activities during the "time of repression" and the "time of memory". They have occasionally campaigned together for their censored or persecuted colleagues.

The time has come to give these efforts a structural basis. We hope that the following proposal will be discussed at the Congress and elsewhere:

1. The establishment of *A Network of Concerned Historians* prepared to participate in solidarity campaigns.
2. The formation of a *Working Group* to serve as a link between this Network of Concerned Historians and human-rights organizations in order to provide action-oriented information about persecuted colleagues. The information could be disseminated by electronic mail or fax. The present author is prepared to function as a temporary contact person and coordinator.

With a structure such as this, protests could be lodged with the relevant authorities, contact could be established with persecuted colleagues by inviting them to give lectures, write papers, exchange letters, or become members of a committee or editorial board, by supporting them financially, or facilitating the publication of their banned work. Cases could be publicized in newsletters, professional journals and at conferences, even when held in the country responsible for the persecution. Drawing attention to the fate of persecuted historians gives them some degree of immunity and protection. At the very least, it warns governments that their actions do not go unobserved and uncondemned in the outside world. Twenty years ago, the Czechoslovak historian Vilém Precan sent an Open Letter to the participants of the 14th International Congress of Historical Sciences in San Francisco. In 1970 he had been dismissed from the Historical Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Czechoslovakia on the grounds of "political unreliability". In his letter of July 1975 he wrote "I declare my determination to realize myself as a human being and as a worker in the field of historical science anywhere in the world, on one condition only: freedom of scientific investigation. I ask you, esteemed colleagues, not to refuse me your solidarity and to help me as far as you possibly can. I say this quite openly. Without your solidarity and your support I have no chance of remaining free to resume my work as a historian". Precan went into exile in West Germany in 1976. When our colleagues' right to history is in danger, ours is too.

It is our responsibility to use our academic freedom on behalf of those to whom it is denied. Only then can the organization of oblivion be successfully challenged<sup>6</sup>.

After the congress, the time for action seemed to have arrived. I attempted to unite colleagues I had met in Montréal who were willing to campaign for their persecuted colleagues in this *Network of Concerned Historians*<sup>7</sup> Scott Harrison, Amnesty International's Urgent Action coordinator in the United States, revised the draft mandate I wrote in the days after the congress. On Friday 13 October 1995, historian George Welling, a colleague at the University of Groningen, created a website. He has continually updated and adapted it. Ingrid Sennema, another historian and colleague at my university, volunteered to revise the language of the longer annual reports, a task she has performed unflinchingly<sup>8</sup>. NCH sprang from this informal cooperation with no central office, no personnel, no budget, no board, and virtually no meetings. NCH's only assets were and are a clear mandate, spare time, e-mail, the Internet, and daily perseverance. NCH's goal was and is to function as a discreet bridge between human-rights organizations and the community of historians. Five years after its establishment, I briefly reported about NCH's activities at the 19<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Historical Sciences in Oslo. This time my paper was a tribute to all those historians who had resisted the censorship of historical thought in the twentieth century. I concluded as follows:

#### A Tradition To Strengthen

Although human-rights organizations emphasize that campaigns waged by colleagues of the victims of human-rights violations are most effective, it should never be forgotten that many outside the historical profession have made efforts on behalf of persecuted historians, as they apply the principle of universality not to their colleagues alone, but to all human beings. Moreover, novelists, playwrights, journalists, storytellers, and singers often preserved historical truth, keeping it alive when the collective memory was in danger because silenced and silent historians were not able to refute the heralded historical truths of official propaganda. Even in the darkest hours of tyranny the distorted past was challenged by versions whispered at home or written down by those who replaced silenced historians. At times these alternate versions were equally distorting, but through them the flame of plurality continued to burn.

In this tribute to courageous historians from vastly different countries on all continents, the basic principles of the historian's ethic become visible. A precondition for the work

6 Antoon De Baets, *The Organization of Oblivion: Censorship and Persecution of Historians in Africa, Asia and Latin America* (Groningen 1995), 11-12 (slightly adapted), paper published as "A Organização do esquecimento: Historiadores perseguidos e censurados na África, Ásia e América Latina", *Revista de história* (São Paulo), no. 134 (1996), 95-103, here 102-3.

7 This is what I wrote immediately after the congress to Frederiek de Vlamming, Human-rights Officer of World University Service: "I have just come back from the 18th International Congress of Historical Sciences in Montréal, where I made public the proposal to establish a *Network of Concerned Historians*. The response to my appeal was very warm. As I had the chance to speak first in the Special Session on 'Power, Liberty and the Work of the Historian,' other speakers from Japan, South Korea, and Russia publicly supported the idea and at the end of the Session even the two chairmen from Spain and Russia did the same. The two remaining speakers, [both] from the USA, and, subsequently, historians from many countries including Canada, the USA, Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Tanzania, Israel, China, and Australia expressed their support in private" (15 September 1995).

8 For many years, historian Joop Koopmans was in charge of circulating paper copies of NCH's action and news circulars to interested colleagues not yet connected to the Internet. The staggering increase in e-mail traffic enabled us to cancel that service in January 2002.

of historians is that they defend their human rights, particularly the freedom of information and expression central to their profession. Without these freedoms historians cannot discharge their first professional obligation—the pursuit of historical truth—nor their social obligation to past, present and future generations. Looking back at the twentieth century as historians and human beings, the record of commitment and integrity inspires hope and pride. Despite the vulnerability of the historical profession there is a stubborn tradition among historians to be aware of, to care for, and to strengthen freedom<sup>9</sup>.

Early in 2000 I became involved in a UNESCO initiative to establish a network of networks for academic freedom. In June 2001 NCH consequently became one of the founding members of the Network of Education and Academic Rights (NEAR), a global watchdog for academic freedom. NCH has developed close ties with NEAR<sup>10</sup>. Since 2003 NCH has also had a fraternal relationship with *Academia Solidaria*, the academic-freedom initiative of *Historia a Debate*, established in 2000<sup>11</sup>.

#### Activities of the Network of Concerned Historians

Examining NCH's mode of operation, we distinguish between activities, principles, and criteria. Table I provides an overview of the types of activities and the way in which they are (ideally) performed.

**Table I: Mode of operation of the Network of Concerned Historians (NCH)**

Activities	Principles and criteria
	* Principles: universality impartiality independence distance (disclaimer) presenting information does not imply that NCH shares the views of historians (and others) mentioned in it

#### \* Daily activities

**Campaigns:** reading and selecting urgent appeals from international human-rights organizations

- \* Selection of history-related appeals
- \* Writing of introductory letters, summaries, and background notes accompanying urgent appeals
- \* Urgent appeals format: standardized and simple

**Annual reports:** reading of sources

- \* Selection of history-related items
- \* Use of sources that are reliable and identified for each item
- \* Writing of factual items with accurate time indicators
- \* Insertion of cross-referencing to earlier annual reports
- \* Annual report format: standardized and simple

9 Antoon De Baets, "Resistance to the Censorship of Historical Thought in the Twentieth Century", in Sølvi Sogner, ed., *Making Sense of Global History: The 19th International Congress of Historical Sciences, Oslo 2000, Commemorative Volume* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2001), 389-409, here 402-3 (slightly adapted).

10 NEAR is a membership-based, non-governmental clearing house for information on academic freedom and education rights established by more than twenty human-rights, educational and professional organizations to facilitate joint action. It receives reports of academic rights violations from its member organizations and from credible media sources which are posted as alerts on the NEAR website [<http://www.nearinternational.org>]. It is hosted by the Council for Assisting Refugee Academics (CARA) and based at South Bank University in London. See *NEAR Declaration* (Paris: UNESCO, 19 June 2001).

11 See <http://www.h-debate.com>

**Network logistics: digital and paper**\*Website maintenance (<http://www.let.rug.nl/nch/> and <http://dit.is/nch/>)

\*Address book management

\*Correspondence

\*Archives

\* **Network mobilization:** *ad hoc* (for urgent appeals) and annually (for report)

\* Urging members

to write urgent appeals in their professional capacity,

to forward information (urgent appeals, annual reports) to colleagues

\* **Membership participation:** number of members on 13 October 2004 450<sup>12</sup>

\* For membership

no conditions

\* For membership management

strict Internet etiquette<sup>13</sup>

It is useful to review some of the characteristics of NCH activities in summarized form. Tables 2 to 6 present some quantitative and qualitative indicators. As table 2 shows, NCH has been activated 60 times since its inception. Circulars are of two kinds: information-oriented (annual reports) and action-oriented (campaigns).

**Table 2: NCH circulars per year (1995–2004)**

Year	Annual reports	Campaigns		Total
		Originals	Follow-ups	
1995 (13 October) <sup>14</sup>	2			1
1996	1	2		3
1997	1			1
1998	1	4		5
1999	1	3	1	5
2000	1	4	4	9
2001	1	3	3	7
2002	1	4	5	10
2003	1	3	2	6
2004 (13 October)	1	3	8	12
<b>Total<sup>15</sup></b>	<b>11</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>60</b>

The question arises as to the nature of the correspondence between the campaigns in which NCH has participated and the real level of persecution of historians and others concerned.

12 In May 1996 165, in December 1998 250, in January 2000 300, in October 2003 400 members. Many members have e-mail addresses omitting their countries of origin, but most live in Western Europe and North America. In addition, some members from the South often “disappear” after some time on account of bounced e-mail.

13 NCH’s standard text is: “This message was first circulated to persons on the Network of Concerned Historians mailing list. You have been included on this list either because you indicated your wish for updates on the NCH, or because it was suggested to us that you or your organization might be interested in this initiative. If at any time you would like to be removed from the list, simply send us a reply stating your request. We invite you to forward information about NCH to other individuals and organizations who may be interested.” There are, then, two types of members: subscribers (requesting to be put on the list) and addressees (put on the list). Remarkably, the number of members, either subscribers or addressees, willing to unsubscribe is very low. Most deletions from the list occur when NCH messages appear to be repeatedly undeliverable (at least three consecutive times).

14 The first circular—explaining NCH’s mandate—was included.

15 The distribution of a UNESCO *International Petition to Safeguard Afghanistan Cultural Heritage* (February 2001) was not included.

with the past. This difficult question leads to two considerations. First, correspondence is certainly not total, although degrees of completeness are difficult to gauge. It is certain that information about persecution from human-rights organizations and from historical societies—two sources of information in which NCH is interested—overlap only partly and that, until very recently, NCH reported only information from the former<sup>16</sup>. I regularly come across cases of censorship or persecution in the 1990s of which I was not aware and about which the international human-rights organizations (despite their well-staffed and reputed research departments) did not report at the time. Even so, after many years of research it is my strong conviction that the cumulative campaigns of these international human-rights organizations reflect the real situation rather well as far as the cruder cases are concerned. Second, of the campaigns these organizations send me daily and from which I make a selection (the result of which can be seen in table 4 and in the appendix), I recall at least twice having regretted that NCH did not join an appeal. The first time concerned the case of a Colombian who was abducted in April 1999 (and later murdered), for at the time of the appeal I did not know he was a historian, in the second instance an Austrian case involved a political scientist who had made a historical comparison that was allegedly defamatory; I underestimated the importance of the case<sup>17</sup>. It was sometimes possible, however, to report about a case which was overlooked in the next annual report. It is my hypothesis, then, that the accumulated campaigns and annual reports of NCH give a fair impression of the real situation as far as the cruder and more visible forms of censorship and persecution of historians are concerned. As for the less visible types—from harassment to hidden forms of discrimination—NCH’s ignorance is huge. It includes lack of data on many cases of dismissal—perhaps the most common sanction against historians around the globe.

Table 3 details the geographical distribution of NCH annual reports. Almost 120 countries (out of 193 on all continents) have been the object of an annual report item. The increase noticed in the post-2000 years is not due to any real increase of the persecution index, more efficient and experienced consultation of sources is the decisive factor.

**Table 3: NCH annual report items: geographical distribution (1995–2004)**

Region	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total of different countries	
											countries	countries
Africa	1	1	1	5	7	10	12	14	13	15	79	23
Americas	3	2	8	9	7	8	14	15	15	12	93	20
Asia/Pacific	4	7	7	10	9	9	16	11	13	13	99	23
Europe/ Central Asia	9	12	15	17	12	13	12	11	14	17	132	35
Middle East/ North Africa	0	6	2	5	4	8	12	8	10	8	63	16
<b>World</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>117</b>

**Notes**

\* Country entries were counted regardless of their length or the number of items cataloged under them.

\* Country entries without any item (referring to other country entries only) were excluded.

\* Countries covered in 10 reports: 4 (China, Guatemala, Japan, USA), in 9: 5 (Croatia, Iran, South Africa, Turkey, Vietnam), in 8: 1 (Argentina), in 7: 7, in 6: 11, in 5: 16, in 4: 17, in 3: 18, in 2: 16, in 1: 22.

16 One may appreciate the difference when comparing the passages about 1995–2000 in De Baets, *Censorship*, with NCH circulars of the same period.

17 For Anton Pelinka (Austria), see De Baets, *Censorship*, 56–57, and NCH #17, #23, for Darío Betancourt Echeverry (Colombia), see De Baets, *Censorship*, 135–36, and NCH #17.

Table 4 details action-oriented information. The increase of the numbers of circulars sent in later years is due primarily to the increase of campaign follow-ups. Indeed, it is part of NCH's philosophy to follow a case as long and closely as possible and renew efforts as needed. Initiating campaigns is one thing, showing tenacity with repeat campaigns another.

**Table 4: Geographical distribution of NCH campaigns (1995-2004)**

Region	Number of different countries covered	Campaigns		
		Originals	Follow-ups	Total
Africa	2	3	1	4
Americas	3	6	1	7
Asia/Pacific	4	8	5	13
Europe/Central Asia	4	5	4	9
Middle East/North Africa	3	4	12	16
<b>World</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>49</b>

Note

Countries covered in four campaigns: China, Guatemala, in two: Ethiopia, Myanmar, Palestinian Authority, Turkey.

Tables 3 and 4 may be interpreted as proof of NCH's professed universality principle. They also illustrate the impartiality principle to the extent that countries with diverse political and ideological regimes are included.

Turning from quantitative to qualitative impressions, we can draw tentative conclusions about the type of topics and victims to which NCH is attentive. Among the topics regularly appearing in annual reports and campaigns, the following main groups are identified in table 5.

**Table 5: Issues in NCH annual reports and campaigns**

Issue	including:
history	* historical research and sources, archives, archeology * history teaching and textbooks * popular history channels (film, television, theater, novels, Internet )
memory	* commemorations
freedom of information and expression	* freedom of information laws * censorship, defamation, secrecy
impunity	* forensic anthropology, truth commissions, reparations
activism by historians and others concerned with the past	* politics, journalism, human-rights work

Most categories are self-explanatory, although the fourth category, impunity, deserves some comment. Impunity (exemption from punishment) is a "hot" issue within the United Nations and one of paramount importance for historians because it implies a crucial time dimension and a broad conception of who the victims of human-rights violations are. Regarding time, it is increasingly acknowledged in international law that grave abuses of human rights (genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes) are imprescriptible, regarding the victims, those directly subject to violations are not the only victims, but those who survive them, their relatives, friends, and society at large are as well.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Impunity is the subject of Antoon De Baets' "A Duty To Remember or a Right To Historical Truth?" (paper for the Third International Congress *Historia a Debate*, University of Santiago de Compostela, July 2004).

Historians were obviously best represented among the victims featuring in the campaigns. Table 6, however, shows that related categories are also well-represented. Three victims enjoyed a certain reputation beyond their country (Guatemalan bishop Juan Gerardi, Chinese history student Wang Dan, the foremost student leader at Tiananmen Square in 1989; and Iranian historian Hashem Aghajari, a close ally of President Khatami), but the others are generally only known locally.

**Table 6: NCH campaigns according to occupation and gender (1995-2004)**

Occupation	Total	Male	Female
Historians	11	9	2
Forensic anthropologists	several	yes	yes
Writers	5	5	
History students	3	3	
Authors of historical novels	2	2	
Archeologists	2	1	1
Archeology students	2	1	1
History teachers	1		1
Archivists	1		1
Truth commission members	1	1	
Others	1		1

Notes

\*One historian is also an anthropologist, one also a librarian, and one also a political scientist.

\*One archeologist is also an art historian.

\*One archeology student is a member of a team of forensic anthropologists.

## Conclusion

Perhaps the main characteristic of the Network of Concerned Historians (NCH) is continuity. NCH's mandate has remained basically the same since inception and the rhythm of activities has been steadily increasing. NCH is light and flexible, but also small, vulnerable<sup>19</sup>, and without power or authority. Only when NCH members write in their professional capacity is influence exerted. It is far from easy to determine the extent to which NCH members participate in campaigns. Although we have received encouraging signs of participation from historians worldwide in the past<sup>20</sup>, and although some deeply appreciated colleagues participate in every campaign, NCH's impact is difficult to measure<sup>21</sup>. It is probably small and NCH is a long way from constituting an effective weapon. Naturally, NCH is neither alone nor lonely: it joins and inten-

<sup>19</sup> As far as I am aware, reactions to NCH have generally been positive, sometimes critical (especially the first year), but never negative, except for one instance. In 1997 I discovered an anonymous attack in the Nizkor website guest-book (dated 17 April 1997) calling NCH "the Network of Concerned Neo-Nazi Propaganda Artists" apparently because in one of NCH's annual reports a news item from *Index on Censorship* about a Holocaust denier was mentioned (probably NCH #2 under Germany). We never replied to this anonymous and nonsensical attack.

<sup>20</sup> The list of historians and others who encouraged NCH's work is too long to reproduce here. We are very grateful to all of them. Let me just recall two generous examples. The Association of History Students of Ghent University (VGH), Belgium, announced their willingness to participate collectively in NCH campaigns (e-mail 22 January 2002), the steering committee of the Norwegian Historical Association (HIFO) unanimously decided that HIFO would become a NCH member. "We hope" HIFO wrote, "that our small organization can contribute to the release of persecuted colleagues around the world", (e-mail 8 June 2004). Two months later, the Swiss Historical Society (SGG-SSH) followed. Other signs of support came from Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, India, Israel, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Uruguay.

<sup>21</sup> For the current status (13 October 2004) of cases on whose behalf NCH campaigned, see the appendix to this essay, see also the "Results" section on the NCH website.

sifies existing initiatives and coordinates its own efforts with others, such as the Network of Education and Academic Rights (NEAR) and *Academia Solidaria*. Perhaps its prime importance is that it spreads awareness among historians of the difficulties with which their colleagues and others concerned with the past must live.<sup>22</sup> NCH's work amply demonstrates that persecution of historians has not been consigned to the past and does not take place only in distant countries. In the future, *ceteris paribus*, NCH will continue that work. Before I conclude, I want to take the opportunity to cordially invite the international network of *Historia a Debate* to affiliate itself to NEAR, as the Norwegian Historical Association (HIFO) and the Swiss Society of Historians (SGG-SSH) did before.

Why should we fight for historians' rights? For three good reasons. The first is solidarity: we should use our academic freedom on behalf of those to whom it is denied. Our professional rights are meant for *bona fide* historians everywhere, regardless of where they live, in democratic or non-democratic countries, and regardless of who they are, mainstream historians or their opponents. The second reason is self-interest: When our colleagues' right to free expression is in danger, then our own right to information is also endangered because we are deprived of the rich works produced by our colleagues. In the longer term, our own right to free expression will be damaged as well for we shall have to write history based on an impoverished array of information sources. The third reason is an extension of the second, but switches the focus from the historian to historiography. The integrity of historiography must be safeguarded, organized forms of oblivion should be prevented. What George Orwell said almost six decades ago, remains true: "At present we know only that imagination will not breed in captivity."<sup>23</sup>

22 For my earlier short writings about NCH, see Antoon De Baets, "Contre l'oubli. La solidarité avec les historiens persécutés", *Clio. Revue de l'Association des Historiens de l'UCL* (Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium), 1996, nos. 108-9, 53-55 (an early assessment), "Historians" in Derek Jones, ed., *Censorship: A World Encyclopedia*, volume 2 (London/Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 1056-59, here 1059 (also my essay "Resistance", quoted above, 401-2). Brief reports of other historians on NCH appeared, inter alia, in Brazil (Nanci Leonzo, "A Morte do Contrapoder", *Revista Adusp*, May 1996, 39-40), Switzerland (Dietrich Seybold, "Betroffene Geschichtsschreibung: Das 'Network of Concerned Historians'", *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 25 February 2003, 58), and the Netherlands (Remco Visschers, "Historici met de dood bedreigd", *Historisch Nieuwsblad*, October 2003, 4).

NCH was also mentioned in Japan (Kasahara Tokushi, "Power, Liberty and the Work of the Historian", *Rekishigaku Kenkyu* [Journal of Historical Studies], no. 683 [April 1996], 26) and Spain (Carlos Barros, "Defensa e ilustración del Manifiesto historiográfico de Historia a Debate" [Santiago de Compostela: *Historia a Debate*, 2003], note 155). See UNESCO, *Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel* (adopted by the General Conference at its 29th session, Paris, 21 October-12 November 1997), Article 44: "There should be provisions to allow for solidarity with other institutions of higher education and with their higher-education teaching personnel when they are subject to persecution. Such solidarity may be material as well as moral and should, where possible, include refuge and employment or education for victims of persecution."

23 George Orwell, "The Prevention of Literature" [originally 1945], in John McCormick and Mairi MacInnes, eds.,

### Appendix: Overview of Circulars Issued by the Network of Concerned Historians (October 1995–October 2004)

Year	#	Country	Name (gender) (date of birth) profession (number of appeals) [sources] * reason for persecution [persecuted previously yes=y] + charges ~ history of persecution, probable current status
1995	1	Mandate	
	2	Annual Report 1995	
1996	3	Albania	Elvira Shapplo (f) historian, Vladimir Qiriaqi (m) archeologist, et alii (1) [AI] * published photograph of former Communist ruler Enver Hoxha in guide book + distributing anti-constitutional writings ~ detained, case dismissed, probably released
	4	China	Wang Dan (m) (?1969-) history student (1) [AAAS] * leader of 1989 Tiananmen protests, signatory of pro democracy petitions [y] + conspiring to subvert government ~ detained, incommunicado 17 months, 11 years' prison, 2 years' suspension political rights, expelled after 18 months, living in USA
	5	Annual Report 1996	
1997	6	Annual Report 1997	
1998	7	Rwanda	Philomène Mukabarali (f) (?1943-) college director (1) [AI] * possessed leaflets expressing support for (pre-1959) monarchy + endangering state security ~ detained, tried, shortly imprisoned, released
	8	Burma/Myanmar	Ko Aung Tun (m) (1967-), U Myo Htun (m) (?1949-), historians (2) [AI/PEN]  * wrote 7-volume history of Burmese student movement [y] + collaborating with terrorist groups ~ solitary confinement, tortured, 17 (later 13) and 7 years' prison respectively
	9	Palestinian Authority	Wael Ali Farraj (m) (?1975-) history student (1) [AI] * allegedly supported Islamist group + no ~ detained, ill-treated, not tried, release ordered in 1999, possibly still in prison
	10	Annual Report 1998	
	11	Mexico	Andrés Aubry (m) (French) historian, anthropologist, Angélica Inda (f) archivist (1) [AAAS]  * compiled archives about Maya Indians, assisted in peace talks between government and Zapatistas [y] ~ intimidated, harassed, archives confiscated, current status unknown
1999	12	Ethiopia	Gamachu Malka Fufa (m) (?1957-), Garuma Bekele (m) (?1960-), Tesfaye Deressa (m) (?1959-), writers (all interested in Oromo past) (1) [PEN] * journalism, human-rights activities on behalf of Oromo minority + armed conspiracy and involvement with Oromo Liberation Front ~ imprisoned without trial, solitary confinement, all released and exiled

	13	Guatemala	Juan Gerardi Conedera (m) (1922-98) auxiliary archbishop (1) [AI] * coordinated Catholic truth commission report Guatemala <i>Nunca más</i> (detailing abuses in 1960-96 civil war) [y] ~ assassinated, witnesses, lawyers, prosecutors, judges involved in trial threatened, guilty verdicts of four perpetrators under review, one perpetrator killed in prison
	14	Annual Report 1999	
	15	Palestinian Authority	Abdulsittar Qassem (m) (?1949-), historian, political scientist, et alii (4) [AAAS] * signed petition accusing government of corruption [y] + no ~ arrested, released, rearrested, released
2000	16	China	Song Yongyi (m) (1949-), (Chinese born American) historian, librarian (3) [AAUP] * collected published documents on Cultural Revolution [y] + purchase and illegal provision of intelligence to foreign people ~ detained, 6 months' prison, released, expelled
	17	Annual Report 2000	
	18	Burma/ Myanmar	Ma Khin Khin Leh (f) (?1966-), history teacher, et alii (1) [AAAS] * (with others) planned pro-democracy march on Martyr's Day ~ detained instead of spouse, life imprisonment, place of detention unknown
	19	India	Anonymous (m), historian (1) [SAR] * coordinating editor of series on independence struggle (1938-47) ~ dismissed, current status unknown
	20	Ethiopia	Badada Bayene (m) history student, et alii (2) [AI] * fight between Oromo and other students after Tigrayan student presented paper, in which historical book with derogatory term for "Oromo" quoted ~ arrested, fear of torture, released
2001	21	Turkey	Emrullah Karagoz (m) (?1978-), archeology student (4) [AI] * membership in legal pro-Kurdish political party HADEP [y] + aiding illegal organization ~ detained, tortured, released, rearrested, current status unknown
	22	China	Tohti Tunyaz (m) (1959-) historian (3) [PEN] * research into Uighur history, received copy of 50-years-old list of documents on 1944 East Turkestan Independence Movement + illegally acquiring state secrets for foreign persons, inciting separatism (national disunity) ~ detained, tried, sentenced, appeal, 11 years' prison, 2 years' suspension political rights
	23	Annual Report 2001	
	24	Guatemala	Matilde Leonor Gonzalez Izas (f) historian (1) [AI] * research into mechanisms used by military to control local communities [y] ~ threats after hiding, current status unknown
2002	25	China	Xu Zerong (m) (1954-) historian (1) [PEN] * sent photocopied classified documents from Korean War abroad, active as publisher in Hong Kong + leaking state secrets, economic crimes ~ detained, held incommunicado, 13 years' prison, appeal pending
	26	Guatemala	Members of forensic anthropology foundations (2) [AI] * exhumation of civil war victims to serve as evidence in genocide trials [y] ~ threats and intimidation, threats continue

	27	Annual Report 2002	
	28	Iran	Hashem Aghajari (m) (1957-) historian (6) [AI/PEN/AAAS] * speech called for religious renewal Muslims should not "blindly follow religious leaders" + apostasy, blasphemy ~ 74 lashes, 8 years' internal exile, 10-year ban on teaching, death penalty repealed, commuted to 4 years' prison, death penalty reimposed, again revoked, 3 years' prison, released on bail
	29	Argentina	Fernanda Sanssone (f) archeology student, et alii (1) [AI] * exhumation of graves of disappeared ~ threats, current status unknown
2003	30	Kazakhstan	Anonymous (f) (1956-) (Armenian born) art historian, archeologist (1) [SAR] * research unrelated to Kazakhstan and Kazakh nationalism not approved ~ dismissed, unemployed
	31	Guatemala	Fredy Peccerelli (m) forensic anthropologist, et alii (1) [AI] * exhumation of civil war victims to serve as evidence in genocide trials [y] ~ threatened and intimidated, threats continue
	32	Annual Report 2003	
	33	Kuwait	Yasser al-Habib (m) (?1973-) writer (5) [AI/PEN] * lectured on Islamic (also Wahhabi) historical issues to private audience + defaming companions of Prophet, attempting to overthrow regime ~ abducted, detained, ill-treated, amnestied, in hiding, sentenced in absentia to 10 years' prison, home raided
2004	34	Turkmenistan	Rakhim Esenov (m) (?1926-) (Russian) author of historical novel, et alii (2) [AI/PEN] * imported copies of historical novel banned and criticized by president [y] + inciting social, national, and religious hatred ~ detained, released after 16 days, forbidden to leave country
	35	Bangladesh	Humayun Azad (m) (?1947-) author of historical novel (1) [PEN] * novel on religious groups who collaborated with Pakistani army in 1971 independence war ~ death threats, stabbed, coma, attacks and injuries, new death threats
	36	Turkey	Hakan Albayrak (m) journalist (1) [PEN] * wrote article saying that Ataturk was buried without funeral prayer + insulting memory of Ataturk ~ sentenced to 15 months' prison (of which 5 to serve)
	37	Annual Report 2004	

## Abbreviations

AAAS (*American Association for the Advancement of Science*),AAUP (*American Association of University Professors*),AI (*Amnesty International*),PEN (*International PEN Writers in Prison Committee*),SAR (*Scholars at Risk*)