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# THE PAPERS OF ERIC BAKER: collection description

*A Commonweal Archive  
Special Collections, J.B. Priestley Library*

**Reference code**

GB 0532 CWL EB.

**Title**

The Papers of Eric Baker.

**Dates**

1956-1976.

**Level of description**

Fonds.

**Extent**

0.78 metres.

**Name of creator**

Eric Baker, 1920-1976, Quaker, pacifist, and human rights campaigner.

**Administrative/biographical history**

Eric Baker was born in London in 1920 and educated at Nether Edge Grammar School, Sheffield. Already a pacifist, he joined the Society of Friends while still at school. He was a conscientious objector during World War II, registering in 1941. At Downing College, Cambridge, from 1939-1942, his degree was in English and Moral Sciences. After taking a Diploma in Education from Leeds University, he became a lecturer, initially to the WEA in Yorkshire. He and his wife, Joyce, whom he met as a Young Friend in Sheffield, were appointed Joint Secretaries of the Quaker Centre in Delhi in 1946. The family moved to Edinburgh in the late 1940s, where Baker worked for the University and the Education Authority.

Baker made several visits to Cyprus, Greece and Turkey between 1958 and 1975 on behalf of the Friends' Service Committee. His 1959 trip included a visit to Sicily to study the work of Danilo Dolci.

Lawyer Peter Benenson was a key contact in Cyprus; he and Baker found they shared concerns about those imprisoned for their beliefs. Eric Baker played an important part in the founding of Amnesty (later Amnesty International) by Benenson in 1961 following the overwhelming response to the latter's article in the Observer. Baker was acting Director-General of Amnesty from 1967-1968, after Benenson's resignation, and chairman of the British section of Amnesty International from 1965 to 1971.

From 1959 to 1963 Baker was study secretary of the Home Service Committee at Friends House. His later teaching career took him to the South-East Essex Technical College, Dagenham, as lecturer in Liberal Studies, then to the North-East London Polytechnic as head of the Department of Social Work, Health and Nursing. He had just left to take up a new post in Chelmsford when he died, in July 1976.

As Amnesty's work progressed, Eric Baker became increasingly aware of the issue of torture. In 1973, he organised the Conference for the Abolition of Torture, held in Paris, following the publication of Amnesty's first report on the subject ("Report on torture". Duckworth, 1973). In 1974, he addressed the Friends Yearly Meeting at York on "The Contagion of Torture". Following his death, a world gathering of Friends in Canada responded to the concern, commending it for action to all Friends in "The Hamilton Declaration".

### ***Immediate source of acquisition***

Donated to Commonweal in 1981 by Joyce Baker.

### ***Scope and content***

The main sections of the Archive:

- Visits to Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, Malta and Sicily (Danilo Dolci): correspondence, photographs, notebooks, reports and press cuttings.
- Amnesty International, mainly correspondence, and particularly with, or concerning, Seán MacBride.
- Campaign against torture, mainly correspondence, some press coverage.

### ***Appraisal***

Published material has been removed from the Archive. It is probable that further weeding will be appropriate when more detailed cataloguing is carried out.

### ***System of arrangement***

Eric Baker's system has been retained where this can be ascertained. We have also retained the alphabetical arrangement for the material on Cyprus, Turkey and Greece created by Clifford Crellin, who used this part of the Archive to help research education in Turkey.

## ***Access conditions***

Access to archive material is subject to preservation requirements and must also conform to the restrictions of the Data Protection Act and any other appropriate legislation. Most sections of this archive contain personal data on individuals and access is therefore restricted under the Act. More detailed cataloguing may make it possible to refine this restriction. Researchers should contact the Special Collections Librarian for information about the status of the material they wish to view.

## ***Copyright/conditions governing reproduction***

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## ***Language of material***

English.

## ***Physical characteristics***

Newspapers and press cuttings are fragile.

## ***Finding aids***

Unpublished boxlist.

## ***Related units of description***

The Archives of the Amnesty International International Secretariat are held by the International Institute of Social History.

## ***Publications***

Baker, Eric. "Public policy and the use of torture". Quaker Peace & Service, in association with Amnesty International, 1980. Published as a tribute to Eric Baker.

## ***Archivist's note***

Described by Alison Cullingford.

## ***Rules or conventions***

ISAD(G) 2nd ed.

## ***Date(s) of description***

April 2010.

## ***Indexing***

### **Persons**

Baker, Eric.

### **Corporate Bodies**

Amnesty International.

Society of Friends.

Friends Service Committee.

### **Subjects**

Cyprus.

Turkey.

Greece.

Human rights.

Torture (International law).