

## THIRTY YEARS ON THE ASBESTOS FRONTLINE

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In 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years of incarceration, the reunification of East and West Germany took place and Margaret Thatcher resigned as Prime Minister – also, the first issue of the British Asbestos Newsletter was published. There is a reason that issue number one is not available online; the typeface, layout and content were pretty basic, embarrassingly so, if I were being honest; nevertheless, some of the information contained was pretty interesting, including a fragment from Turner & Newall's (T&N's) Chairman's Speech at their AGM on January 13, 1938:

**"It is only within comparatively recent years that the Directors have become aware of the danger to health which arises from continuous contact with asbestos dust."**

One wonders how the Directors could have been in such ignorance as late as 1938, considering that:

- in 1898, Lady Factory Inspector Lucy Deane described the “evil effects of asbestos dust” in a workplace setting;
- in 1906, Dr. Montague Murray informed Parliament of the asbestos death of a worker from the carding room of an asbestos factory who was the last of ten workers from the same department to die; he was 30 years old;
- in 1924, the death of asbestos textile worker Nellie Kershaw was the first to be officially recognized with the Coroner ruling her death was due to “asbestos poisoning.” Mrs. Kershaw had worked for Turner & Newall at their Rochdale factory;
- in 1930, the seminal *Report on the Effects of Asbestos Dust in the Lungs and Dust Suppression in the Asbestos Industry* was published;
- in 1932, the British Parliament implemented the world’s first Asbestos Regulations.

T&N's 1938 statement pleading ignorance was yet another deception. The Directors of Turner & Newall – a multinational corporation that not only processed but also mined asbestos – were under no misapprehensions about the deadly hazards posed by exposures to asbestos. From as early as the 1920s, the company knew that asbestos was a health hazard.<sup>1</sup>

T&N, and its counterparts in the UK and abroad, honed to a fine art many of the strategies used so successfully throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries to prioritize corporate profits over public health so that sales of toxic products could flourish despite a growing body of evidence detailing the deadly effects of exposures on workers, family members and communities. Measures pioneered by asbestos vested interests, and used thereafter by tobacco and pesticide lobbyists, included:

- the establishment of industry-backed bodies, camouflaged as research or independent organizations, to control national asbestos agendas. Dozens of organizations were set up for this purpose including: The Asbestos Information Committee (Belgium); the

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<sup>1</sup> BBC Scotland. *Don't Hold Your Breath: Transcript*. November 8, 2000.  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/1011706.stm>

Danish Asbestos Information Group; the Asbestosis Research Council, UK; le Comité Permanent Amiante, France; the Chrysotile Institute – formerly the Asbestos Institute – (Canada); and the Asbestos Information Association of North America.

- the commissioning of “hired gun” scientists to publish and promote industry-friendly material regarding the toxicity of asbestos: to name but two – the ABC theory (Anything But Chrysotile) and the role in mesothelioma causation of simian virus 40 found in contaminated polio vaccine in the 1960s.
- the use of public relations (PR) companies and consultants to:
  - deliver pro-asbestos propaganda such as the slogans: “Where would we be without asbestos?” (1970) and: “Asbestos – it’s a natural” (1971);
  - negotiate as seemingly “neutral parties” in discussions with national governments and regional bodies, such as the European Union and United Nations agencies; in 2011, PR company APCO Worldwide interceded in discussions with the Malaysian government to forestall plans to implement an asbestos ban;<sup>2</sup> in 2013, lawyer Emiliano Alonso – a representative of Alonso & Associates, a Brussels-based lobbying company – appeared to be acting on behalf of the International Chrysotile Association (ICA) at a meeting of the UN’s Rotterdam Convention;<sup>3</sup> Alonso also represented the ICA in July, 2016 at a UN Rotterdam Convention workshop in Latvia.
- the use of law firms to intimidate critics and campaigners in Brazil, the UK, Switzerland, Italy and France.<sup>4</sup>
- the development and dissemination of “fake news” to create confusion in the minds of government decision-makers and consumers; classic examples were:
  - asbestos can be used safely under controlled conditions;
  - once incorporated within a cement matrix, asbestos fibers cannot be liberated and therefore pose no risk;
  - the adoption of safer working practices eliminated any hazards once posed by asbestos.
- the vilification and intimidation of industry critics such as medical doctors Irving Selikoff (US), Robin Rudd (UK) and Metoda-Dodic-Fikfak (Slovenia) and international ban asbestos activists.<sup>5</sup>
- covert espionage operations to infiltrate ban asbestos networks and report on strategies, opinions and plans of activists.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Kazan, S. *Malaysian Asbestos Industry Allegedly Uses PR Firm to Fight Asbestos Ban*. July 20, 2011.

<https://www.kazanlaw.com/malaysian-asbestos-industry-allegedly-uses-pr-firm-to-fight-asbestos-ban/Kazan-Allen,L.Chrysotile%20Cowards%20Shun%20Spotlight>. July 18, 2011.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-chrysotile-cowards-shun-spotlight.php>

<sup>3</sup> Ruff, K. *International asbestos lobby campaigns to undermine UN Convention and deny asbestos harm*. March 21, 2019.

<https://rightoncanada.ca/?p=4345>

Also: *Workshop to support the intersessional work on the process of listing chemicals in Annex III to the Rotterdam Convention*. 2016.

<http://www.pic.int/Implementation/TechnicalAssistance/Workshops/WorkshopRiga,Latvia2016/tabid/5213/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> Kazan-Allen L. *Asbestos Industry Offensive*. January 29, 2011.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-asbestos-industry-offensive.php>

<sup>5</sup> Letters containing offensive and suspicious materials were received by leading ban asbestos campaigners in Europe, Asia and Latin America in 2013-15. Verbal attacks by Russians representing industry interests were made on ban asbestos activists at an ILO conference in Seoul, Korea 2008 and UN meetings in Geneva, Switzerland in 2013 & 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Kazan-Allen, L. *Eternit vs. The Victims*. Chapter 11 in *The Great Asbestos Trial*. 2012.

<http://www.ibasecretariat.org/eternit-great-asbestos-trial-chap-11.pdf>

Many of these ploys are still being used to silence opposition and create a favourable climate for asbestos sales by marketing and lobbying groups, such as the International Chrysotile Association (Canada), the Fibre Cement Products Manufacturers' Association (India), Confederation of Employers of Kazakhstan, International Alliance of Trade Union Organizations "Chrysotile" (Russia), Vietnam National Roof Sheet Association and others.

Over the last 30 years, there has been a seismic shift in the global discourse on asbestos, a formerly obscure subject filed away during the 20<sup>th</sup> century under occupational hygiene. In 2019, the subject of asbestos is part of the mainstream dialogue on human rights, environmental justice and sustainable development. International agencies, including the World Health Organization, the International Labor Organization, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, agree that all types of asbestos are carcinogenic and that the best way to protect people from hazardous exposures is to end asbestos use.<sup>7</sup> With recent bans on asbestos achieved in New Zealand (2016), Brazil (2017), Canada (2018) and Colombia (2019), asbestos markets continue to shrink at an astonishing rate; whereas global production in 2000 was 2,035,150 tonnes(t) with 67 countries using more than 500t/year, in 2016 it was 1,370,000t with only 26 countries using more than 500t/year.<sup>8</sup> The United States Geological Survey has estimated that in 2017 and 2018 global asbestos output fell to 1,170,000t and 1,100,000t respectively, less than production achieved in 1950 (1,266,929t).

## The Winds of Change

How did we get from a situation in which asbestos was lauded as the magic mineral into one in which it is known as "the deadly dust," from a time when asbestos factory workers were told to drink half a pint of milk to prevent illnesses<sup>9</sup> to a point where researchers are pioneering treatments and possible cures for those fatal diseases; from a political climate which allowed asbestos conglomerates belonging to an international cartel to fix prices, engage in "restrictive practices"<sup>10</sup> and divide global asbestos markets to outlawing of asbestos use in 34 out of 36 member countries (~95%) of The Organisation for the Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), with Mexico and the United States the only OECD non-ban countries.

The revolution which transformed the public perception of asbestos was conducted on battlegrounds all over the world and engaged the services of forces drawn from asbestos victims, grieving families, affected communities, trade unions, non-governmental organizations and campaigning associations; support for the efforts of ban asbestos activists

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Kazan-Allen, L. *The Spy, His Handler & Me*. November 27, 2018.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-blog.php#a148>

Kazan-Allen, L. *Corporate Deceit: At Home and Abroad*. March 18, 2019.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/lka-corporate-deceit-asbestos-espionage-at-home-and-abroad.php>

<sup>7</sup> *Asbestos Policies of Major International Agencies*. Accessed July 26, 2019.

[http://ibasecretariat.org/lka\\_asb\\_polic\\_maj\\_int\\_agencies.php](http://ibasecretariat.org/lka_asb_polic_maj_int_agencies.php)

<sup>8</sup> USGS. *Asbestos*. February, 2019.

<https://prd-wret.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/assets/palladium/production/s3fs-public/atoms/files/mcs-2019-asbes.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Duggan, E. *Asbestos: A Shameful Legacy*. The Independent. November 22, 2009.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/asbestos-a-shameful-legacy-1825554.html>

<sup>10</sup> Monopolies Commission. *Asbestos and certain Asbestos Products: A Report on the Supply of Asbestos and certain Asbestos Products*. See Attachment 2, pages 123-124. 1973.

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C1731531>

was provided by politicians, medical, legal, engineering, scientific and technical experts. While each and every campaigner played a crucial role, the work of four extraordinary individuals, three of whom I was privileged to know, was transformative: Dr. Irving Selikoff (US), Nancy Tait (UK), Fernanda Giannasi (Brazil) and Sugio Furuya (Japan).

Dr. Irving Selikoff (1915-1992) was a general practitioner in Paterson, New Jersey, having undertaken his medical studies in Australia and Scotland because of an existing US quota on Jewish medical students. In the 1950s, having become a medical advisor to the Asbestos Workers Union,<sup>11</sup> he was perplexed by a sudden increase in mesothelioma diagnoses amongst his patients; all of those affected had been asbestos workers. The investigations which followed, the research he conducted in collaboration with trade union members and the academic papers he published, dramatically changed the asbestos landscape in the US. In 1964, Dr. Selikoff organized a conference entitled “Biological Effects of Asbestos,” under the auspices of the New York Academy of Sciences which:

“brought together a Who's Who of international scientists who had conducted and reported on experimental and human studies of the effects of asbestos... by bringing together a compendium of knowledge of the adverse effects of asbestos, it served further notice to asbestos-using industry of the major public health problem that they had created... Today [2003], asbestos is no longer seen as a material indispensable on technical grounds and a mainstay of industry and the economy. Its progressive banning in developed countries may be seen as the consequence of the momentum initiated in New York in 1964.”<sup>12</sup>

The industry quickly took note of the impact Selikoff was having; in 1965, an industry correspondent wrote:

“Our present problem is to find some way of preventing Dr. Selikoff from creating problems and affecting sales. A direct approach (attacking his character) might be more damaging than helpful and I am only suggesting that we explore, at this time, all avenues open to us.”<sup>13</sup>

A few years later, a Vice-President of the US asbestos giant Johns-Manville commented:

“The man Selikoff is an excellent presenter; he is in constant command of the situation and he is convincing. If you'd like to hear how convincing – I'll gladly let you have a set of the tapes to listen to.”<sup>14</sup>

They couldn't bribe him so they tried to repudiate his statements through a “positive aggressive approach” (widely circulating detailed critiques of Selikoff statements) and attack his integrity by claiming that his medical qualifications were invalid. He was “a victim of a sustained and orchestrated campaign to discredit him.” Despite the industry's efforts,

<sup>11</sup> New Jersey has always been one of the US's most highly industrialized states and many residents worked in occupations or at sites where high levels of asbestos exposures were routine. A study published in the American Journal of Public Health suggested that since World War II began up to 486,400 individuals had been substantially exposed to asbestos in New Jersey workplaces.

<sup>12</sup> Greenberg M. *Biological Effects of Asbestos: New York Academy of Sciences 1964*. Am. J. Inc. Med. 43:543-552, 2003.

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12704628>

<sup>13</sup> McCulloch J, Tweedale G. *Defending the Indefensible. The Global Asbestos Industry and its Fight for Survival*. Oxford University Press 2008. Page 92.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Page 92.

Selikoff's integrity remained unsullied<sup>15</sup> and the Environmental Protection Agency – an independent agency of the United States federal government tasked with protecting citizens from environmental hazards – took steps to ban asbestos, introducing legislation in 1989 phasing out asbestos use over the next ten years. Unfortunately, litigation brought by asbestos vested interests from the US, Canada and elsewhere effected an overturn of the EPA's ban in 1991.<sup>16</sup>

Like Dr. Selikoff, Nancy Tait's enlistment to the asbestos fight came about by a happenstance:<sup>17</sup> her husband William was diagnosed with mesothelioma in 1967 (he died in 1968). Although he had been exposed to asbestos whilst employed as a telephone engineer for the General Post Office during World War II, the authorities denied liability for his illness. Mrs. Tait, an experienced civil servant, began the fight to obtain recognition for his disease; her efforts to prove that the inhalation of fibers in his "downstream" occupation was sufficient to cause the asbestos cancer were met by official obstructionism which she described as "completely unscrupulous and ruthless". It took her four years to force the Post Office and the Department of Health and Social Security<sup>18</sup> into submission but the experience of that fight turned her into a tireless activist and a determined adversary of asbestos companies.

Having been awarded a Churchill Travelling Fellowship in 1976 to study asbestos issues abroad, she published a booklet, entitled *Asbestos Kills*, detailing the hazards posed by the use of all types of asbestos including chrysotile (white asbestos) and highlighting the hazards to downstream users and the environment. According to researcher William McDougall:

"These warnings were not welcomed by the asbestos industry or the government. The leading asbestos company, Turner & Newall, described her as a 'self-appointed meddler', while scientists and the government dismissed her work as alarmist. However, when the asbestos industry launched an advertising campaign Tait (outraged at the sight of one poster that claimed "Asbestos Protects") stepped up a gear. In 1978, she founded the Society for the Prevention of Asbestosis and Industrial Diseases (SPAID), later renamed the Occupational and Environmental Diseases Association (OEDA)."<sup>19</sup>

By 2007, Mrs. Tait had handled 3,000 cases – some lasting more than ten years – for UK asbestos victims, often representing family members at hearings where she successfully disputed evidence provided by "expert" witnesses. Her work contributed to: the UK banning asbestos in 1999; the introduction in 2002 of regulations that accepted the dangers of downstream risk; and in 2005 the promise of improved compensation for asbestos-related lung cancer.

As the foremost campaigner for asbestos victims of her time – and the person who set up the world's first society supporting asbestos victims – Mrs. Tait set a precedent which has been

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<sup>15</sup> Tweedale G, McCulloch J. *Shooting the Messenger: The Vilification of Irving J. Selikoff*. International Journal of Health Services, Volume 37, Number 4, Pages 619–634, 2007. doi: 10.2190/HS.37.4.b

<sup>16</sup> Kazan-Allen, L. *October 18, 2011: A Bloody Anniversary*. October 2011.

<http://ibasecretariat.org/Ika-a-bloody-anniversary-2011.php>

<sup>17</sup> Nancy Tait born Enfield, London on February 12, 1920; died February 13, 2009.

<sup>18</sup> McDougall, W. *Nancy Tait and the Pursuit of Justice*. British Asbestos Newsletter, Issue 100, pages 38-39.

[http://britishasbestosnewsletter.org/ban100\\_web.pdf](http://britishasbestosnewsletter.org/ban100_web.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

replicated all over the world;<sup>20</sup> turning their anger into activism, bereaved relatives have founded campaigning groups to support victims, provide a voice for the injured and change political landscapes. At last count, there were scores of such groups and charities in 20+ countries in Europe, North and Latin America, Asia and Australia.

By 1995, civil engineer Fernanda Giannasi had been working as a Labor Inspector in São Paulo, Brazil for 12 years; she was the founder and administrator of São Paulo State Labor Ministry's asbestos program. That same year, trade union leader Carlos Aparicio Clemente denounced the illegal dumping of asbestos-containing waste from the 155,000 square meters redundant asbestos-cement factory in Osasco, the largest factory in the Americas owned by the Swiss Eternit asbestos group. Some of the toxic debris was being dumped in the lake of Carapicuíba City; pieces of asbestos corrugated tile and old asbestos-cement water tanks were being “donated” to the inhabitants of local shanty towns (favelas). Clemente demanded action by the authorities. As Ms. Giannasi was the manager of the asbestos program and as she had proved to be a thorn in the side of her bosses for the high-profile nature of her work and her unbending views – always prioritizing occupational health over corporate profits – it was decided to exile her to Osasco on a permanent basis. This transfer was considered a demotion as the biggest asbestos factory in the city had already closed and the daily commute, given the density of São Paulo’s traffic, was not an attractive prospect.

For decades, Osasco had been the heart of the Brazilian asbestos-cement industry and it was not long before Ms. Giannasi came across injured workers from the asbestos-cement industrial sector. The local media coverage of the scandal concerning the clearance and redevelopment of the factory site attracted the attention of injured Eternit workers and bereaved families who contacted Ms. Giannasi. As the list of names continued to grow, it was clear that there was a huge unmet need in Osasco for a group to bring together those affected by asbestos exposures. The (Brazilian) Association of the Asbestos-Exposed (ABREA), the first asbestos victims’ group in Brazil, was founded in 1995 and since 1998 under the leadership of President Eliezer João de Souza has flourished.<sup>21</sup> The Association now has chapters in Osasco and São Caetano do Sul (São Paulo State), Rio de Janeiro, Curitiba and Londrina (Paraná State), Recife (Pernambuco State), Pedro Leopoldo (Minas Gerais State), Simões Filho e Bom Jesus da Serra (Bahia State), Sapucaia do Sul (Rio Grande do Sul State) and is recognized as an important voice in the national dialogue on asbestos. In 1999 ABREA colleagues and international partners, at the behest of Ms. Giannasi, began work on plans for the world’s first gathering of asbestos victims’ groups; the Global Asbestos Congress: Past, Present and Future (GAC 2000) which took place in Osasco in September 2000 marked a turning point in the international asbestos discourse and was pivotal in the establishment of the 21<sup>st</sup> century ban asbestos network.<sup>22</sup> Like the 1964 New York Asbestos Conference spearheaded by Dr. Selikoff, the GAC 2000 put the asbestos industry on notice that their dirty secrets had been exposed and their policies rejected.

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<sup>20</sup> Mrs. Tait was never paid for her work on asbestos and faced formidable obstacles to obtaining funds to run SPAID and then OEDA; the fact that she managed to acquire and run an electron microscope is little short of miraculous.

<sup>21</sup> The choice of Eliezer João de Souza as President of ABREA was inspired; Eliezer was a former councillor from Itapevi City, a founder of the Worker’s Party in that region, a trade unionist, a human rights activist and a follower of Liberation Theology: a Christian theology developed by the Catholic Church to address problems of poverty and social injustice as well as religious matters.

<sup>22</sup> Kazan-Allen, L. *Osasco Conference Report*. November 10, 2000.  
[http://ibasecretariat.org/osasco\\_report.php](http://ibasecretariat.org/osasco_report.php)

Working with its partners ABREA totally revolutionized Brazil's asbestos debate; by bringing human faces and stories to the fore, ABREA provided a countervoice to industry propaganda designed to maintain the status quo. With political support in the federal parliament firmly pro-asbestos, ABREA began grassroots efforts to ban asbestos in towns, cities and states culminating in asbestos bans in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Pernambuco and Rio Grande do Sul States and São Paulo city which were challenged at the Supreme Court by lawyers working for the asbestos industry. The litigation which followed finally resulted in a decision by the Brazilian Supreme Court in 2017 declaring the government's asbestos policy unconstitutional and validating the asbestos ban legislation.

ABREA's grassroots activities reached out to ordinary people and consumers via novel methods including: comic books; summer rallies in local parks using characters such as the Chrysotile Witch and free balloons and water bottle promotions with slogans such as "Amianto Mata" (Asbestos Kills) emblazoned across them; the distribution of information material; and the use of advertising billboards to display messages such as:

- Cigarro Mata - Amianto Também! [Cigarette Kills - Asbestos Also!];
- Quais Produtos Contêm Amianto? [What Products Contain Asbestos?];
- Por que o Amianto ainda não foi Banido? [Why Isn't Asbestos Banned Yet?].

ABREA's lawyers instigated litigation concerning: extrajudicial agreements signed by workers which gave away their rights to compensation in return for cheap watches and baseball caps; false advertising and claims by the industry; the federal government's pro-asbestos policy which failed to uphold the right to live a healthy life enshrined under the Brazilian constitution.

As the co-founder of ABREA, its chief strategist and technical advisor, the work of Ms. Giannasi has been pivotal in the creation of a national network of victims, politicians, trade unionists, medical and scientific experts and legal specialists. For her efforts she has been physically threatened, verbally assaulted, sued in criminal and civil courts, victimized by her former employer and targeted by asbestos lobbyists from North America and Europe. Despite all the attacks she endured her commitment never wavered and her public interest advocacy not only expedited the banning of asbestos in Brazil but also immeasurably improved the healthcare of victims and the legal outcomes for the injured. On the international stage, she has worked closely with asbestos victims' groups in Latin America, Europe, Asia and North America on initiatives to expose the machinations of asbestos vested interests, has spoken at high-profile meetings in the European Parliament and the British Parliament and published papers in peer-reviewed academic journals. It is of interest to consider whether Ms. Giannasi would have played the role that she had in the global asbestos war had her disaffected boss not exiled her to Osasco – there is a case to be made that, like Dr. Selikoff and Nancy Tait, Ms. Giannasi's role in her country's asbestos revolution had been assured by serendipity rather than design.

When Sugio Furuya became the Secretary-General of the Japan Occupational Safety and Health Resource Center (JOSHRC) in 1990, little could he have imagined that his career path would result in him: being targeted by an undercover agent working for Kazakh asbestos interests; receiving hate mail from an anonymous pro-asbestos correspondent; and being dubbed "The General" by asbestos pushers who paid close attention to his campaigning activities. In 1996, nine years after the Ban Asbestos Network of Japan (BANJAN) had been formed, Mr. Furuya became its Secretary-General. A few years later, he was one of only a

handful of delegates from Asia to attend the ground-breaking Global Asbestos Congress in Brazil (2000). He was so enthused by the presentations he heard at GAC 2000 and the contacts he made there, that he and his Japanese colleagues started making plans on the airplane back to Tokyo for the next Global Asbestos Congress which would bring the ban asbestos fight to Asia in 2004.<sup>23</sup>

Understanding the dynamics of the Japanese asbestos discourse – Japan was a significant asbestos user well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century<sup>24</sup> – Mr. Furuya realized the importance of strengthening the grassroots network to support GAC 2004 and set about doing so. On February 7, 2004, the Japan Association of Mesothelioma and Asbestos-Related Disease Victims and their Families was founded; this group was to play a prominent and high-profile role in the organization, fund raising and promotion of GAC 2004 which took place just nine months after the Association had been formed.<sup>25</sup> The impact of GAC 2004 in Japan and throughout Asia was incendiary. Within months of the Congress (June 2005), the “Kubota Shock” exploded Japan’s deadly asbestos legacy onto the public consciousness as respected companies, including the Kubota Corporation, Japan Eternit, Nichias, Taiheiyo Cement and Toyo, admitted the occurrence of asbestos epidemics amongst their workforces.<sup>26</sup>

As in Brazil, four years earlier, the Tokyo GAC – which was attended by 800 participants, mostly from Japan but including 120 international delegates from 40 countries of which 42 delegates were from 13 Asian countries and regions – was a landmark event. Building on the networking in Tokyo, discussions and strategizing on asbestos issues in Asia were progressed at conferences in Thailand (2006), Japan (2007), Korea (2008), Hong Kong (2009), Indonesia (2010), India (2011), Thailand (2012), Indonesia (2013), Bangladesh (2016), etc.

At the Asian Asbestos Conference in Hong Kong (2009), the Asian Ban Asbestos Network (ABAN) was formed and Sugio Furuya was named its Coordinator. It is almost certainly the work he has done in this role leading high-profile ban asbestos delegations to Canada (2010) and Brazil (2019), participating in multilateral UN meetings (2013), engaging with grassroots activists throughout Asia at dozens of events between 2009 and 2019, taking part in information sessions and training programs and collaborating in the publication of government submissions and academic papers that has made him a person of such interest to the asbestos lobby. The importance of Asian asbestos markets cannot be overstated: according to the latest available data, more than 70% of asbestos used every year is consumed

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<sup>23</sup> *What is really happening in Thailand?* Undated.

<http://nochrysotileban.com/archives/175#more-175>

<sup>24</sup> Despite discussions, surveys, committees and consultations by Japanese government agencies in 2002/3, it was not until October 1, 2004 that affirmative action was taken when the revised Occupational Safety and Health Enforcement Order – which the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare said was a “total [asbestos] ban in principle” – became enforceable. In 2005, regulations prohibiting asbestos fiber imports were implemented and finally in 2012, Japan achieved a comprehensive national asbestos ban with the elimination of remaining derogations.

Furuya, S., Takahashi, K. *Experience of Japan in Achieving a Total Ban on Asbestos*. 2017.

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/14/10/1261>

<sup>25</sup> Kazan-Allen, L. *Global Asbestos Congress*. February 11, 2005.

[http://www.ibasecretariat.org/lka\\_gac\\_2004\\_online\\_report.php](http://www.ibasecretariat.org/lka_gac_2004_online_report.php)

<sup>26</sup> *Japanese Asbestos Scandal*. March 1, 2005.

<https://www.amrc.org.hk/content/japanese-asbestos-scandal>

Also see: Kazan-Allen, L. *Japan: Total Asbestos Ban by 2008!* August 1, 2005.

[http://www.ibasecretariat.org/lka\\_japan\\_tot\\_asb\\_ban\\_by\\_2008.php](http://www.ibasecretariat.org/lka_japan_tot_asb_ban_by_2008.php)

in Asia. Should even a few more Asian countries ban asbestos, then it is likely that the asbestos industry will no longer be sustainable.

## Discussion

This paper began with a discussion of the contents of the British Asbestos Newsletter (BAN) and segued into the history of the international struggle against asbestos. One might wonder what part BAN played in the activities which took place outside our borders. To the extent that knowledge of the British experience of asbestos use and misuse could contribute to global action the editor/publisher of BAN (Laurie Kazan-Allen) was well placed to be of assistance. Whilst attending an art exhibition entitled: *Breath Taken: The Landscape and Biography of Asbestos* in San Francisco in 1992 she had an epiphany about the nature of the asbestos battle: as Britain had no asbestos mines, a conscious decision had been made to import asbestos into the country. Tracing the steps along the trail from UK end users back to asbestos producers in Canada, South Africa, Australia and elsewhere were cohorts in manufacturing, transportation, shipping, milling and mining, all of whom had been exposed to the same deadly hazard. Her involvement in global efforts to obtain justice for asbestos victims grew throughout succeeding years and in 1999, Mrs. Kazan-Allen, in collaboration with colleagues from Europe, North America and Latin America, formed the International Ban Asbestos Secretariat (IBAS) to tackle the profusion of challenges involved in addressing the multi-faceted, multi-jurisdictional asbestos threat. Therein lies a tale for another day.

## Concluding Thoughts

In 1990, when the British Asbestos Newsletter was started, information of use to asbestos victims was locked away in corporate archives, stored in insurance companies' records and hidden in government files. There were no search engines, online archives or websites to consult. The objective of the newsletter was to locate and circulate resources of use to asbestos victims and those who represented them. By opening out the discourse on asbestos in Britain, the newsletter provided a public space for the exchange of information and helped stimulate the country's asbestos dialogue. The voice of asbestos victims is now heard and the political impact of the injured has been maximized by the formation and representation of the Asbestos Victims' Support Groups Forum (UK) and regional victims' groups, asbestos charities and action groups. It is significant that the most amazing front page asbestos articles in recent decades were published on July 5, 2019 in The Guardian<sup>27</sup> and on July 14, 2019 in The Sunday Times (Scotland).<sup>28</sup> We believe that the British Asbestos Newsletter played a crucial role in stimulating the country's asbestos agenda, assisting victims by providing information not otherwise accessible and serving as a conduit to like-minded individuals and experts in other countries.

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<sup>27</sup> Perraудин, F. *700 English schools reported over asbestos safety concerns*. July 4, 2019.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/jul/04/700-english-schools-reported-over-asbestos-safety-concerns>

Perraудин, F. *Revealed: the asbestos risk at hundreds of schools*. July 5, 2019. [Not online; hard copy only – front page and page 7.]

Perraудин, F. *Asbestos deaths reach peak after ‘past criminal failings.’* July 8, 2019. [Not online; hard copy only – page 5.]

<sup>28</sup> Alba, C. *Revealed: the Scottish links to asbestos trade*. July 14, 2019. [Page 1, Subscription only.]  
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/revealed-the-scottish-links-to-asbestos-trade-wvh25gwjg>

Alba, C. *UK firms trading in deadly asbestos*. July 14, 2019. [Page 7, Subscription only.]  
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/uk-firms-trading-in-deadly-asbestos-sw8k7tkn6>