

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



## MISSIONS

East Africa: John Humphreys, a member of the Secretariat research staff, returned from his mission on 1 March. During his visit he represented Amnesty as an observer at a conference on Southern Africa called by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in Dar-es-Salaam. He was able to meet members of various liberation movements, and also spoke to officers of the OAU in Dar es Salaam and Addis Ababa, including the Secretary General, Mr. Diallo Telli. Mr. Humphreys met representatives of the governments and judiciary in Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Uganda, and contacted various United Nations bodies concerned with the problem of refugees in Africa. The mission yielded useful information concerning prisoners in all three countries visited, and helped to establish closer ties both with the OAU and the various governments. Groups with prisoners in these countries have received a detailed report.

## ORGANISATION

International Executive Committee: The International Executive Committee met in London during the weekend of 20-21 March. A full report will be sent to National Sections, giving the decisions reached. The Committee gave tentative approval to a budget which will require fund raising to the amount of at least £9,000 over and above normal group subscriptions and other regular contributions from the National Sections. Although generous contributions from German groups during the current financial year have enabled the International Secretariat to bridge the financial gap for 1970/71, greater efforts will be required in the coming year. Concerning Prisoners of the Year, it was agreed to recommend to the International Council that in the year 1971/72 National Sections should be invited to choose independently from among prisoners adopted by groups in their own countries, subject in each case to the approval of the International Secretariat.

Visit to the United Nations: This year's Prisoner of Conscience Week ties up with the United Nations "Year for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination." To emphasise Amnesty's relationship to the United Nations and to create publicity for our work we are proposing to organise a charter flight to New York. If enough members are willing to participate the trip will follow the International Assembly in Luxembourg which takes place from 24 to 26 September. A bus service will be provided to Frankfurt, where the flight will start. The participants will have a week in the U.S.A. before returning to Frankfurt. During this week they will be free to carry out their own plans except for one day when an Amnesty programme will be organised involving a visit to the U.N. The trip can only be arranged if enough members are willing to participate. At least 40 people are needed, but the limit is 260. The air fare will be approximately £58 (DM 500), return from Frankfurt. Those who would like to participate are asked to write immediately to the International Secretariat. National Sections are particularly asked to encourage their members to join this project.

South Africa: Relief for families of many prisoners in South Africa is distributed through the Port Elizabeth office of the South African Council of Churches. The authorities are fully aware that all of the Amnesty relief funds come from Amnesty groups and despite recent reports we do not feel that there is any need for us to suspend payments.

Annual Meetings: The Secretary General, Mr. Martin Ennals, and the Head of Research, Dr. Zbynek Zeman, have been able to attend the groups' meeting of the Dutch Section. The Secretary General also attended the annual meeting of the Swedish Section.

Red Cross: We have been asked to remind groups and members once again that they should not write to the International Committee of the Red Cross. The Red Cross cannot generally intervene on behalf of individual prisoners, their purpose being to obtain access to all prisoners. If there are requests that they can deal with, these must be channelled through the International Secretariat. It would be helpful if National Sections could mention this in their national bulletins as it is important to stop any further enquiries being sent to the ICRC.

South Vietnam: Groups with South Vietnamese prisoners might like to know that the complete address of the Ministry of Justice is: 47 Dai Lỗ Thống Nhút, Saigon, Republic of Vietnam. The Minister is Mr. Le Van Thu; the Director of the Cabinet of the Minister is Quách Đồng Đức; and the Secretary-General is Nguyễn-Vang-Tho,

Rhodesia: Many groups with adopted Rhodesian prisoners help the families by contributing to school fees. Since the decision of the Rhodesian Government to cut by 5% the amount it spends on teachers' salaries, parents are expected to take on a heavier burden. It was thought that the local councils would subsidise the teachers' salaries in future, but it is now becoming clear that this is not likely to happen. In Mrewa, for example, it has been decided that the parents should pay the extra cost. This decision is likely to be reflected in other areas and school fees will consequently be even higher than before. Groups who are concerned might like to find out from their prisoners' families the amount of the increase and, if possible, offer to help towards meeting this new cost. On another matter: owing to the reduction in the number of detainees and restrictees in the last year or so, the work of Christian Care can be done by one office. The Salisbury office is therefore closing in May. In future all letters should be addressed to the Bulawayo office: The Secretary, Christian Care, 66 Exchange Buildings, Selborne Avenue, Bulawayo, Rhodesia. The Rhodesian Review Tribunal on Detainees has recently made recommendations in respect of 119 detainees, and is considering a further 18 cases. It is understood that in 95 cases the Tribunal recommended continuation of the detention order.

### COUNTRIES

Indonesia: For several years there has been international concern at the vast scale of political imprisonment in Indonesia. But in the period immediately after the coup and counter coup of 1965, Amnesty felt that no practical purpose could be served by making public criticism and demands which, in the prevailing economic and political situation had no chance of being met. The Government has at last announced a release programme to reduce the number of suspected communists in political restriction from 116,000 to some 20,000. In October 1970, Mr. Sean MacBride S.C. (Chairman of Amnesty International) visited Djakarta as a representative of the ICJ and of Amnesty. In the course of his meetings with Government officials, he was asked to submit Amnesty's practical proposals for releases and for the improvement of prison conditions. Consequently, in February, a memorandum making a number of specific suggestions was sent to President Suharto and senior Indonesian officials. This will be sent in April to National Sections so that they can publicise it in their own newspapers. One main proposal put forward by Amnesty concerns the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. The Indonesian Prison Department is well-informed about the Rules, but unable to implement them since political detention camps are the responsibility of the Army. The memorandum lists seven fundamental requirements. These are the provision of adequate food; qualified and regular medical care; the prohibition of cruel and degrading treatment; regular family communication; the prison authorities' obligation to inform relatives of death or serious illness; the family's right to know that a relation has been imprisoned; the right to reading material; and legal access. Now that the International Committee of the Red Cross has visited Buru, we hope that their regular visit will be extended to other places of detention and that conditions will be brought into line with the humanitarian principles laid down by the United Nations.

Spain: There have been recent reports that the Spanish Government has agreed to introduce alternative service for conscientious objectors. Those who refuse to carry arms would be permitted in certain circumstances to work with the Spanish Red Cross. These reports are awaiting official confirmation from Spain. The arrangement would probably not cover Jehovah's Witnesses who refuse to register and who would probably refuse alternative service. A further visit from the Secretariat to Madrid is planned for April when it is hoped to obtain further clarification.

### RECOMMENDED BOOKS

"Trial by Torture", produced by the International Defence and Aid Fund and obtainable from their office at 2 Arden Court, London E.C.4. 5p. "Sierra Leone: Experiment in Democracy" by Gershon Collier, University of London Press, £4.30. "Soledad Brother. The Prison Letters of George Jackson". Jonathan Cape £2.50 and Penguin Books 35p. "Nightmare in Athens" by Margaret Papandreou. Prentice-Hall \$8.95. "Africa and South Africa" by Robert Molteno. Africa Bureau Pamphlet, available from their office at 2 Arundel St., London WC2R 3DA. 24 p.



## POSTCARDS FOR PRISONERS CAMPAIGN

Some news of prisoners who have been on this campaign:

Dr. John Karefa Smart -- Sierra Leone (March 1971). News of this prisoner's release reached the International Secretariat shortly after publication of the March Newsletter. Members were immediately informed that he had been released on 25 February together with 28 other members of the banned United Democratic Party.

Grace Biringira -- Uganda (September 1967) and Balaki Kirya -- Uganda (November 1970), were both released under a general amnesty for political detainees following the coup at the end of January.

Quintin and Rizal Yuyitung -- Taiwan (June 1970). The two journalists, brothers Quintin and Rizal Yuyitung are being held at #3 Ching Sui Kung, Too Cheng Hsiang, Taipeh, Taiwan (Republic of China). They are allowed to receive postcards.

### This month's prisoners:

Carlos Esguerra Castro - MEXICO

Carlos Esguerra Castro -- leader of the Union of Temporary Workers of the Mexican National Petroleum Company PEMEX (Trabajadores Transitorios de PEMEX) -- was arrested in August 1967, shortly after his union had staged a hunger strike in Mexico City. The authorities charged him with attempted homicide for having allegedly forced his fellow-members to carry on the strike at risk to their health; and with fraud. Despite clear evidence presented at the trial that the action of the strikers was entirely voluntary and that the charges of fraud were false, he was sentenced in 1969 to 7 years' imprisonment.

Among the Mexican political prisoners whose release had figured high on the list of demands formulated by the 1968 Student Movement in Mexico City, Carlos Esguerra submitted a request in April 1969 to appeal against his sentence. This request was not answered until more than a year later, although Mexican law stipulates a 3-month limit for resolution of such petitions. Even after the courts agreed to review the case, the actual appeal proceedings were subject to further delays and manoeuvres. In November 1970 he was placed incommunicado and threatened with internment in an insane asylum because he had been seen in the prison patio without a shirt -- all in an effort to prevent the courts from deciding on his appeal. It is evident that the prisoner is being penalised because of activities which challenged the authority of the main, State-controlled union. His own union, the Trabajadores Transitorios, because it represents workers who are not permanently employed, is not recognised by the Government. Although it tries to function as an independent union, its members are frequently denied the benefits and rights given to those within the official system. Mr. Esguerra's case was taken up by the World Confederation of Labour, whose special interest in his situation resulted in the International Labour Office interceding with the Mexican Government on his behalf. However, as the court's final ruling early in 1971 was a slightly reduced 6-year sentence, his fate now rests entirely with President Echeverria, who alone can grant his release.

Please send your cards to: Licenciado Luis Echeverria, Presidente de la Republica, Palacio Nacional, Mexico 1, D.F., Mexico; or to the Ambassador in your own country.

Vladimir Skutina - CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Vladimir Skutina, a Czech author and a well-known television commentator during the Dubcek period, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment at his trial in Prague in February 1971. He was convicted of "agitation", and writing and planning to distribute two documents - "The Invaders and the Five Channels" and "The Russians are really coming". Skutina denied that the documents slandered the state and that he planned to distribute them. The prosecution justified the charge of "agitation" by saying that the documents had been shown to four people - his wife, two typists, and a friend.

Vladimir Skutina served a sentence of sixteen months' imprisonment in 1962 for "impugning the dignity of the President of the Republic". He was alleged to have said that the Stalinist Czech President Novotny was "an ass". At his trial he denied the charge, but continued: "Novotny is an ass. I didn't say it before, but if I am going to be punished for it, I might as well say it now".

There is concern for Vladimir Skutina's health. First arrested in 1969, he was released from prison after a while in order to receive treatment for a condition which is believed to be cancer of the pancreas. Friends present at his trial were shocked at his appearance after six months in prison: they estimated that he had lost 25 kilos in weight. Prison doctors are reported to have certified him as being in good health, but this is denied by his friends, who fear that he may die in prison.

Please send your cards to:

Gustav Husak,  
First Secretary,  
Communist Party of the Czechoslovakian  
Socialist Republic,  
Ustredni vybor KSC,  
Kyjevske Brigady 12,  
Praha 1,  
Czechoslovakia.

OR

Jan Nemec,  
Minister of Justice of the Czech  
Socialist Republic,  
Praha - Nove Mesto,  
Vysehradska 16.

#### SIAUW Giok Tjan - INDONESIA

Siauwa is a journalist and parliamentarian. He is Chinese but was born in Indonesia and has worked consistently through his public life to encourage the Chinese community to commit themselves as Indonesian citizens. From 1945 until his arrest in November 1965 he was a member of Parliament, and from 1959 a member of the Supreme Advisory Council. He is now 57 years old and has been in prison for more than five years on suspicion of holding communist beliefs, but without charge or trial.

In the pre-war colonial period Siauwa worked as a journalist on papers which supported the Indonesian Nationalist movement. During the Revolution, from 1945 to 1949, he was a member of the first Nationalist Parliament and was one of the few Chinese regarded by Indonesians as completely loyal to the Republic. In 1951, after independence, he founded a newspaper which was initially independent but later taken over to become the official organ of the Indonesian Communist Party. He left the paper in 1953. In 1954 he founded Baperki, an organisation which aimed to represent the interests of ethnic minorities, and became increasingly identified with the Chinese for whom it worked as a protection agency against official and unofficial discrimination. Baperki began on a liberal basis, but moved sharply to the left and by 1965 was regarded by the army as pro-communist. In 1966 it was proscribed. Although some of its members were communist, many were not, and in any case the Sukarno Government's pro-Peking foreign policies gave official encouragement to the Chinese community to develop friendly relations with mainland China.

It seems that Siauwa himself was never a communist. But he is detained, with perhaps 60,000 others, on the blanket accusation that he supported the pro-communist coup attempt made on 30 September 1965 and put down by the Army under General (now President) Suharto. During 1965 and 1966 many thousands of people were arrested solely because they belonged either to the Indonesian Communist Party, until then a large and legal body, or to its affiliated trade union, youth and cultural organisations. Some releases are now taking place, and members should appeal for a review of Siauwa's case on the grounds that he has already served, in effect, a five year sentence, he is in poor health, and has been convicted of no legal offence. He is in Salemba Prison, Djakarta, which has a bad record for overcrowding and inadequate food and medical provisions.

Please send your cards to: President Suharto, President of the Republic of Indonesia, Sekretariat Negara, Djalan Veteran 17, Djakarta; or to the Indonesian Ambassador in your own country.