

monthly newsletter from amnesty international



postcards for prisoners campaign

March 1970

First some news about prisoners who have been on this campaign:

Sadi Alkilic, Turkey, (January 1967), has been released on grounds of ill-health, for an initial period of six months. Members who would like to do so are asked to write to: President Sunay, Ankara, Turkey expressing their appreciation of this act of clemency.

Mihajlo Mihajlov, Yugoslavia, (November 1966) was released on the 4th March after serving a three and a half year term of imprisonment for "engaging in hostile propaganda". This sentence was imposed in April 1967 (it was originally four and a half years but was reduced) and followed a term of imprisonment of one year for similar "offences".

Dr. Fricis Menders, U.S.S.R. (January 1970). An Amnesty group in Sweden has been informed by the Praesidium of the Supreme Soviet of Latvia that Dr. Menders has not been sent to a labour camp. While confirming that the offence for which he has been convicted is normal punishable by labour camp, the letter stated that in view of Dr. Menders' advanced age, and acting on humanitarian principles, the Supreme Court of Soviet Latvia decided instead to deport Dr. Menders from the city of Riga for a period of 5 years. The letter goes on to say that he is living somewhere in Latvia, supported by the state, and that he is in good health.

So far it has not been possible to obtain any confirmation of the news in this letter but we are reasonably optimistic that the facts stated are correct. Dr. Menders remains, however, a prisoner of conscience according to the terms of reference of Amnesty International because he has been subjected to restriction of movement simply for alleged anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda. From the information available there appears to be no evidence that Dr. Menders has committed any crime in the ordinary sense.

Eleni Voulgari, Greece, (February 1967). We have received disturbing reports of a deterioration in Eleni Voulgari's state of health due partly to inadequate medical treatment and also to anxiety about her child, who was with her in prison for two years after its birth but is now being cared for by relatives.

Noureddine Ben Khader, Tunisia, (July 1969). In accordance with an amnesty passed in December 1969, all but nine of our adopted Tunisian prisoners were released in January 1970. It was announced that other groups of prisoners would be released in March and June. It is therefore to be expected that Monsieur Ben Khader, still in prison, will be released by June 1970 at the latest. Of those released in January

however, only some were granted full amnesties, others receiving provisional releases. This means that they are kept under supervision and have to report to the police at regular intervals - conditions which are not regarded as satisfactory by Amnesty International.

Abu Mayanja, Uganda, (November 1968). All the political detainees have been denied visits from their families since the abortive attempt on President Obote's life in December and they have not been allowed to send or receive letters. On the occasion of a previous assassination attempt, the long-term political prisoners were all moved to the punishment cells in solitary confinement.

News Item

James Becket, one of the authors of the Amnesty report on torture by the Greek police in 1968, has just published a book on this subject. Its title is "Barbarism in Greece". The publishers are Walker and Company, 720 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019.

Orders should be directed to the attention of Mr. Henry P. Durkin, Director of Publicity and Subsidiary Rights, at Walker and Co., and accompanied by a \$95 cheque or banker's order, payable in U.S. dollars to Walker and Company. Books will be shipped by sea mail. If air mail is desired, add \$3.00.

THIS MONTH'S PRISONERS

Eli de Gortari. MEXICO

Eli de Gortari is the former Dean of the Institute for Philosophical Research of the University of Mexico, and was a Professor in the Faculty of Philosophy. He is the author of numerous works on mathematics and philosophy and is also a well-known translator.

He was arrested at his home at the time of the university disturbances in September 1968, when about 180 other intellectuals and students were also arrested. Accused of a long list of crimes, ranging from inciting rebellion to robbery and damage to property, he has now been in Lecumberri Prison for a year and a half. (Virtually all the accused face the same blanket list of charges).

The trouble started just before the Olympic Games, when President Diaz Ordaz ordered the Army to invade the National Autonomous University and take punitive action against students demanding the release of political prisoners. Arrests of University students and staff have occurred intermittently since then, and well over one hundred people are still in prison because of their sympathy with the student movement.

Although Mexican law stipulates that every trial must be completed within a year of the prisoner's arrest, Eli de Gortari has never been permitted to testify or even to be present at a hearing of his case; nor has his long list of improbable offences yet been substantiated. The authorities base their charges entirely on Professor de Gortari's membership of a teachers' organisation which supported the students at the time of the demonstrations.

In protest against their unconstitutional detention, he and some 85 other prisoners went on a month's hunger strike in December 1969, as a result of which his already poor health (he suffers from diabetes) continues to deteriorate, with no proper medical care.

Send your cards, pointing out that he is now detained contrary to the provisions of the Mexican Constitution to:

EITHER

Presidente de la Republica
Mexicana,
Lic. Gustavo Diaz Ordaz,
Palacio Nacional,
Mexico 1. D.F. MEXICO

OR

The Mexican Ambassador or
Diplomatic Representative
in your own country.

"The Mountaineers" - Maciej Kozlowski, Maria Tworkowska, Krzysztof Szymborski, Jakub Karpinski and Malgorzata Szpakowska - POLAND

During February the trial took place in Warsaw of five non-Jewish post-graduate students, said to have been members of a climbing club in the Tatra mountains. Several charges were brought against them, but the prosecution's case is based on the contacts which they had with the emigre publishing house "Kultura", near Paris. It appears that the accused smuggled material out of Poland on such subjects as, for example, the 1968 student revolt, and the anti-semitic campaign by a nationalist faction within the Polish Government. These documents are believed to have been used by Kultura for their own publications on current developments in Poland, and some copies of these were then smuggled back into Poland for distribution. Other "illegal" documents smuggled into the country include the "2000 words" manifesto from Czechoslovakia; the Polish groups had wide contacts with Czech liberals during the Dubcek era, and some of the latter are reported to have been arrested in January, in connection with the Warsaw trial.

At the trial, Miss Szpakowska denied that articles written by her had been "tendentious, demagogic and untrue". Her opinion that "the anti-semitic campaign in Poland had been devised to distract the public from problems caused by the 1968 student revolt" was her own, and she had not exhorted other people to agree with her. The other accused also defended themselves eloquently, although one of them refused to answer questions.

Foreign observers see the trial as an attempt to discredit the Kultura publishing house. Previously, political trials had always been held in secret, but on this occasion a significant exception was made, in that a French journalist was invited to attend. The sentences passed ranged from three to four and a half years' imprisonment.

Send your cards to:

EITHER

Wladyslaw Gomulka,
First Secretary of the Polish
United Workers' Party,
Ul. Nowy Swiat 6, Warszawa,
Poland.

OR

RADA PANSTWA P.R.L.
Warszawa,
Poland.

(The Supreme Council)

Carlos Fenol, SPAIN

This prisoner was arrested early in 1963. He is a Jehovah's Witness who refused military service: his first sentence was for six months and a day. Shortly after release he was called up once more, refused and was sentenced a second time, for two years. On completion of his second sentence in 1965 he was again called up and again refused. The third sentence was for three years and one day. When he came out of prison in April 1968 the same procedure occurred and he is now serving his fourth sentence this time for six years and one day. He has now served almost seven years in prison and still has another four years to complete before presumably being released and sentenced yet again.

This is the situation which faces all Jehovah's Witnesses in Spain, where the principle of conscientious objection is not recognised and recurring sentences are imposed for refusal to accept conscription. To Amnesty's knowledge there are today more than a hundred Jehovah's Witnesses in prison for this reason. For the past five years, Amnesty has exerted continuous pressure on the Spanish Government to recognise the principle of exemption from military service for conscientious objectors. It is believed that there has also been pressure from within the Catholic Church, in which the issue of conscientious objection is now being raised. There is also evidence within Spain itself of a more liberal attitude to the question. Indeed, in December 1967 a clause was added to the Code of Military Justice, mentioning "alternative sanction" - presumably alternative service. This clause was to become effective on the 1st February of the following year and, it was hoped, implied the acceptance of the principle of conscientious objection. The wording of the clause is extremely ambiguous, however, and so far no change in the application of the law has occurred.

Carlos Fenol is 29 years of age. He is held in Santa Catalina Prison, Cadiz, Spain. He was a jeweller by profession and his father is a baker.

Send your cards to:

EITHER

Lt. General Juan Castanon,
Minister of the Army,
(Ministerio de Ejercito)
Madrid.

OR

Ex. Don. Gregorio Lopez Bravo.,
Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores,
Plaza de Santa Cruz,
Madrid.