

NEWSLETTER FOR GROUPS.

No. 16

March 1967.

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY/INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT.

MALAYSIA, AND SINGAPORE.

70 prisoners in Singapore are ready for adoption as Investigation Cases. They were arrested in a massive series of detentions on 2 February 1963, in a combined effort of the governments of Singapore, Malaya, and Britain to silence opposition in Singapore to the formation of Malaysia.

A statement from the Internal Security Council alleged that all those arrested were guilty of sabotaging the formation of Malaysia and of supporting the armed insurrection in Brunei the previous December. It is known that in some cases there was never any advocacy of violence.

(Mary Macneil)

SOUTH WEST AFRICA.

As members may remember there was a report in the February issue of the Amnesty Bulletin on six South West Africans, who were arrested and removed to South Africa during the autumn of 1966.

Mr. Gottlieb Maxuiriri of SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) was released on the 20th December, the others are still held in detention, probably in Pretoria. Up to the present moment none of them have been brought to trial. One of them, Mr. Gershon Veii of SWANU (South West Africa National Union) is to be charged with making speeches "calculated to cause hostility among races". It is not known what charges the other four are going to face.

It is alleged that these five prisoners and 40 or 50 other South West Africans, referred to as "terrorists", have all been subjected to severe torture, including electric shock treatment during interrogation. Some of them are said to have become mentally disturbed as a result of the ill-treatment.

Amnesty has written a letter to Sir De Villiers Graaf, leader of the Opposition in South Africa, asking him to make an inquiry into these charges. Another letter has been sent to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, who have set up an expert group to investigate charges of torture of prisoners in South Africa.

(Karen Hamberg)

BURMA.

General Ne Win announced the release of over 50 political prisoners from protective custody in February of this year. So far it has been impossible to learn the names of these men but in this figure it is known that there are 26 politicians and journalists, 13 Shan leaders and 18 Buddhist monks. This news presumably follows Ne Win's promise in December of last year that he would release all those with a 'clean sheet', and is a most encouraging sign of some relaxation in the regime.

All groups with Burmese prisoners should make persistent and courteous enquiries at their local Burmese embassies as to who these men are and should report any information to Head Office.

(Sarah Richardson)

RHODESIA.

Mr. Lardner Burke, Minister of Justice in the Smith regime,

Cont.....

.....

recently published figures for restrictees, detainees and terrorists in Rhodesia. The figures for restrictees are confirmed as accurate by the Christian Council although it is harder to check the accuracy of figures for detainees and terrorists, (if indeed they are terrorists) because of the blanket of censorship which covers them.

The figures are as follows:

100 trained terrorists caught or killed in the last nine months.
480 restrictees. (The Christian Council information is that there are 362 at Gonakudzingwa, approximately 100 at Wha Wha and the remainder are at Sikombela, a recently re-opened camp in the Gokwe district.
170 detainees. (This figure may only account for those still detained since November 1965).

On the Christian Council registration lists of Bulawayo alone there are currently 336 cases; 226 receiving regular aid in the form of monthly grants, rent or school fees, and a further 110 cases receive occasional supplementary help on the grounds of release or re-employment. Those helped by the Christian Council are both restrictees and detainees although poor communications with the detention centres make it harder for detainees to make applications for relief from the Christian Council offices.

The withdrawal of Government aid for the education of restrictees has placed a tremendous burden on the voluntary bodies concerned with education in the camps and has created a further problem of inactivity for the men themselves. Groups are therefore asked to make a special effort, where possible, to raise money for courses for the men and should always consult the appropriate office of the Christian Council before enrolling them in courses. There seems to be a fairly good supply of general reading matter in the camps although there is still a scarcity of text books and exam papers. These can be sent direct to the camps.

I would once again like to thank all groups for their unfailing generosity and support towards their prisoners and their families in Rhodesia.

(Sarah Richardson)

SPAIN.

The ambivalence of the situation in Spain is again marked. There are now suggestions that the Penal Code will be amended to give the authorities larger powers, specifically vis-a-vis the Press.

The Spanish Judiciary has remained remarkably independent of government control and, on the whole, more liberal in outlook. On several occasions the Supreme Court has interpreted the law so as to mitigate the severity of sentences imposed for political offences. Recently they have taken advantage of the unclear distinction in Spanish law between offences against the regime and offences against the state (which carry heavier penalties) to reduce or reverse sentences imposed by the lower Public Order Courts. It seems likely that the proposed amendments to the Penal Code will include more precise definitions of these two categories of offences, thereby making it more difficult for the Judiciary to interpret them to the advantage of the accused.

Another development has been the decision to try 12 students before a Military Court instead of the normal Public Order Court. This alternative to normal procedure is presumably an outcome of the seriousness of the demonstrations and disturbances led by students and workers in Madrid, Barcelona and other cities in Spain at the end of January and early February this year. We are also now beginning to receive

Cont.....

.....

reports of trials and sentences of people who published propaganda advocating the boycott of the December Referendum.

On the other hand the Minority Rights Bill is now before the Cortes and should substantially improve the rights of non-Catholics in Spain. Also a short while ago a Military Court dismissed charges against two Basque Nationalists.

(Mrs. Eva Blumenau)

GREECE.

Miss Hellen Ohlin, member of the Board of the Swedish Section has recently visited Athens and has sent back the following suggestion:-

Groups with Greek prisoners (Not Jehovah's Witnesses) are advised to send money for their prisoners through the Association of Prisoners Families in Athens. Their address is:-

Patission 14 (Stoa Fexi)
Athens.

Mrs. Kotsaki, the General Secretary of the Association has asked that money should, if possible, be sent through a bank, and her name and the address of the organisation should be used. You are advised to write at the same time to Mrs. Kotsaki telling her for whom the money is intended. Money is much more useful to the prisoners than medicine and clothes (which apparently seldom fit).

Letters in English can be sent to prisoners as there is already somebody available to translate.

Groups are encouraged to inform Headquarters of any kind of publicity - newspaper articles etc. which they manage to get for Greek prisoners in order that we may keep in very close contact with Mrs. Kotsaki and others who have useful press contacts in Athens.

(Elizabeth Gordon)

HUNGARY

The Rev. Karl Fabian of Radio Free Europe's Hungarian Administration in Munich, Germany, has written to say that he cannot answer all the letters he receives from Amnesty groups. We have arranged that he will pass on any information that he receives to London Head Office. Groups with Hungarian prisoners are therefore asked not to write to him direct.

(Bruce Laird)

BRAZIL

New Constitution and Press Law.

On March 16th President Costa e Silva took office in succession to President Castelo Branco. The military government now appears to be firmly entrenched. The most prominent Opposition leaders, including ex-Presidents Kubitschek and Goulart are in exile and the leaders of the banned Communist Party and the Peasant League are in hiding, in exile or in prison. Other critics of the government have been deprived of their Civil Rights and a large number of Trades Unionists, intellectuals and peasant leaders have been sentenced by military courts. The new Brazilian Constitution now in operation extends the powers of the executive at the expense of the Congress, giving it wide powers to declare a "state of seige", provides for the election

Cont.....

.....

of the President by indirect means instead of popular vote, and most important of all, destroys with one blow the traditional liberties of the Brazilian Press.

In the past, the Brazilian press has publicized the treatment of prisoners including the practice of torture and cases of alleged murder by the political police during interrogation.

The new press law is designed to deal with these and other "abuses of the press", as the military government and its civilian supporters have long wished to bring the press into line with their design for Brazilian society. Under this law, penalties of up to four years may be imposed by military courts on journalists who are found guilty of a wide variety of "press crimes". These include making any criminal accusation against the President, the leaders of Congress and members of the Supreme Court, whether the allegations are true or not; the publishing of any material defamatory of the armed forces or other public institutions; the publication of any statement by political opponents of the government and the publishing of any statements prejudicial to national security or the Brazilian financial system. It now becomes illegal to publish any anonymous article, and the provisions of the law extend to all mass media.

There have been widespread protests against this law. A meeting of representatives of 41 associations of Brazilian journalists passed a petition condemning the law and describing it as "an immoral measure incompatible with the dignity of man", and associations of journalists abroad, led by the International Press Institute in Zurich, have added their protests to the volume of criticism in Brazil. 50 amendments were tabled when the Bill was debated in Congress, but there was never any real hope of its rejection.

The Constitutional Law and Press Law were placed before Congress for ratification with the proviso that if they were not passed before midnight on January 22nd they would become law by Presidential decree. In the event, the clocks in the Congress chamber were stopped for twenty minutes so that the law could be passed within the allotted time.

There is no indication that the new government in Brazil will pursue a more liberal policy than its predecessors and it remains to be seen whether this government will be able to deal with Brazil's economic problems. Despite the repeated promises of the military rulers to return to civilian government, most of the members of the Cabinet are military men. The new Minister of Justice is Gama e Silva.

Amnesty has adopted approximately 100 Brazilian prisoners of conscience and has the names of several hundred others about whom we are endeavouring to obtain further information.

Communications with Brazil are unsatisfactory as the postal service is extremely inefficient. Amnesty groups often find that letters to Brazil, although sent by airmail, can take weeks to arrive and Brazilians are somewhat erratic correspondents. They should not be disheartened if they do not receive prompt replies to their letters to Brazil. Within the last month we have had letters from several prisoners who have been released and have written to acknowledge the help and encouragement they received when letters from Amnesty reached them. Groups should continue to write letters of protest to the authorities and should urge the new government to exercise clemency on their assumption of power.

(Margot Levy)

BACKGROUND PAPERS.

Background Papers are now available on:

Burma
Cuba

amended

1964
1966

Cnt.....

March 1967.

Malaysia.

Czechoslovakia	1966
Germany Democratic Republic	1966
Guinea	1965
Hungary	1966
India	1964 and 1966
Iraq	1964
Japan	1967
Jordan	1966
Mexico	1964
Nepal	1965
Paraguay	1964
Pakistan	1967
Portugal	1966
Spain	1967
Tanzania	1966
Albanian Minority in Yugoslavia.	1966.

(Mary Macneil)

New Background Papers on Rhodesia and South Africa should shortly be available.

All groups who have adopted prisoners in these countries should have copies of these Papers. Groups who would like to order copies may do so at the cost of 6d per Paper.

(Elizabeth Gordon)

It is alleged that these five prisoners and 40 or 50 other South West Africans, referred to as "terrorists", have all been subjected to severe torture, including electric shock treatment during interrogation. Some of them are said to have become mentally disturbed as a result of the ill-treatment.

Amnesty has written a letter to Sir D. Villiers Graaf, leader of the Opposition in South Africa, asking him to make an inquiry into these charges. Another letter has been sent to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva, who have set up an expert group to investigate charges of torture of prisoners in South Africa.

(Karen Hanberg)

BURMA.

General Ne Win announced the release of over 50 political prisoners from protective custody in February of this year. So far it has been impossible to learn who some of these men but in this figure it is known that there are 3 politicians and journalists, 13 Shan leaders and 16 Buddhist monks. This news probably follows Ne Win's promise in December of last year that he would release all those with a "clean sheet", and is a most encouraging sign of some relaxation in the regime.

All groups with Burmese prisoners should make persistent and courteous enquiries at their local Burmese embassies as to who these men are and should report any information to Head Office.

(Barbara Richardson)

RECENT

Mr. Lardner Burn, Minister of Justice in the Welsh region,

Cont.....