

monthly newsletter from amnesty international



postcards for prisoners campaign

OCTOBER 1970

This month's prisoners:-

Manuel Mendes COLHE - PORTUGAL

Born in 1935 Mr. Colhe was an agricultural worker in Ribatajo, a fertile province where, however, low wages and an uneven distribution of land create economic and political discontent. He was arrested in October 1965 and charged with 'subversive activities' among marble workers in a neighbouring district and membership of the Portuguese Communist Party - illegal as are all other political parties in Portugal except for the ruling party National Popular Action.

In Portugal strikes are forbidden by law, and matters related to workers and employers are dealt with by so-called 'corporations'. These are state-run agencies used by the Government as a substitute for independent trade unions. They are run by the Ministry that also embraces Health and Social Welfare.

At the trial in February 1966 Manuel Mendes Colhe and eight marble workers were accused of involvement in a strike among the workers in the stone industry of Pero Pinheiro, not far from Lisbon. The public prosecutor claimed that the nine defendants took part in secret meetings, paid money into a common strike fund, received and distributed pamphlets among the workers which incited strikes, and that they belonged to the Portuguese Communist Party. It was alleged at the trial that Manuel Mendes Colhe joined the Communist Party in 1958. As an official of the party he directed the stone-cutters' strike of 19th May, 1965, aiming at a pay rise of 10 escudos per day (less than three shillings). On the first day of the strike a meeting was held in front of the office of the Lisbon branch of the official National Trade Union of workers in the Marble Industry and the quarries. According to the prosecution Manuel Mendes Colhe distributed money among the workers to enable them to continue the strike as long as possible. The strike lasted for 12 days.

Manuel Mendes Colhe was sentenced to three years and 'Security Measures'. 'Security Measures' are a legal provision which was imposed 20 years ago by Decree Law 37 447 and are applied to the majority of the political prisoners. As they enable the sentence to be prolonged by decision of the political police (DGS), for six months to three years for an unlimited number of times, the length of imprisonment has no upper limit. Most prisoners, however, serve only one period of Security Measures. The Security Measures have been strongly criticised by Portuguese lawyers and even in government circles.

Please send your cards to:

EITHER

Exmo Senhor
Primeiro Ministro,
Marcelo Caetano,
Lisbon,
Portugal.

OR

The Portuguese Ambassador in your own
country.

Willy D. MUSARURWA

Restricted in 1964, detained since 1967 in Gwelo Prison, P/O Box 1, Gwelo, Rhodesia.

He was formerly editor of the paper "African Daily News" and had visited the U.S.A. In prison he is studying sociology. His wife is a qualified nurse and there are four children.

In terms of the Emergency Regulations the Rhodesian Minister of Justice has power to detain indefinitely - the detainee is not charged, tried or convicted.

Send cards of good wishes to him at Gwelo Prison and appeals for his release to:-

The Minister of Justice,
Private Bag
704, Causeway,
Salisbury,
Rhodesia.

Oto FILIP - CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Mr. Oto Filip is a little known Czech novelist and journalist who, prior to his arrest in August 1969, lived in the industrial town of Ostrava in Northern Moravia. He worked there as an editor in the publishing house of Profil, which specialised in modern prose. He himself had written two books, one entitled "A Fool for Every Town", and the other "The Cafe on the Way to the Cemetery" published in 1969. These were translated into German and published in West Germany by S. Fischer Verlag.

Opinion varies as to how far Oto Filip contributed to the liberalisation movement. It is said that he did not contribute to the famous weeklies in Prague at that period like Literarni Listy and Reporter. However, the act of indictment accused him of slandering the socialist regime and the President of the Republic in a coarse way and working systematically against the State and social order in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. In February 1970 he was sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact countries did not produce the large number of political arrests that were expected. To date the number of political arrests has been very small. It seems safe to assume that Oto Filip has been imprisoned simply because he is a lesser known writer and isolated from the centre of events in Prague. As regards what he actually did to incur the jail sentence, it appears that most of the evidence against him was based on a few unknown published articles, a radio programme which he wrote for a West German radio station and a letter which he wrote to the East German Communist Party newspaper, Neues Deutschland. It is possible also that Oto Filip was an obvious target for the local security authorities. In 1960 he was expelled from the Communist Party after a year's membership and was forbidden to publish further. Until 1968 he had to earn his living as a workman and was twice arrested and sent away for forced labour during that period. The exact reason for these penalties is not known but it is reported that during that time he fought for the rights of the miners and metal workers in Ostrava.

Oto Filip is married and has two children.

Please send cards to:

EITHER

The Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia,
Lubomir Strougal,
Paraha-Mala Strana,
Nabrezi kpt. Jarose 4,
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

OR

Mr. Jan Nemeč,
The Minister of Justice of the Czech
Socialist Republic,
The Ministry of Justice,
Praha-Nove Mesto,
Vysehradská 16,
CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

Some news about prisoners who have been on this campaign:-

Dr. Frīcis Menders -- Latvia (U.S.S.R.) (January 1970). According to recent information Dr. Menders is being restricted to an isolated village 250 kilometres east of Riga. He shares a room with several other old people and his heart condition is reported to have become worse. He has made it known that he suffers from the isolation and from the fact that he has nothing to do and no books to read. It is not known whether any communications would reach him, but for those who wish to try and send him cards at Christmas for example, his address is: Pasta stacija Kapini, Kraslavas rajons, Latvijas PSR.

Caio Prado, Junior -- Brazil (May 1970). On September 3rd, 1970, the Supreme Military Tribunal in Rio de Janeiro decided to shorten to 18 months the sentence of four and a half years previously passed on Dr. Caio Prado.

Mrs. Helen Joseph -- South Africa (November 1967) -- has had to ask police to patrol her home where she has been held under house arrest since October 1962. She has been suffering threats and harrassment and her call to the police followed a "death threat" telephone call which she received. Mrs. Joseph was placed under house arrest for allegedly "furthering the aims of communism".

Greece - Twenty-two of the women held in Alikarnassos prison have now been released and the remaining 20 have been moved to Oropos camp in Attica. Eleni Voulgari was not one of the women released.