

monthly newsletter from amnesty international

postcards for prisoners campaign

March 1969

First some news of people who have been on the Campaign in the past:

Low Tai Thong, Singapore (March 1968) has been released on the condition that he leave the country. His release follows the discovery that he is a United Kingdom citizen, which was the result of a request from Amnesty to the British authorities that they look into the case. The Swedish Group which had adopted him has arranged to pay for him to do a law course in England, where he is expected to arrive on Sunday, March 16th. In a recent letter Low Tai Thong's mother wrote: "Since I last wrote to you I had not seen my son until today. However this morning I was allowed to see him and I was told that all arrangements for his air passage to London had been arranged and finalised by your Amnesty and the British High Commissioner here..... I am glad to thank you and your friends in Sweden for your generous help in arranging this trip to London possible. I shall always remember your kindness and generosity."

Sheikh Majibur Rahman, Pakistan (January 1968) is now at liberty. and leading a political campaign. The state of emergency has been lifted and most of Ayub Khan's political opponents have been released.

Aghar Kashmiri, Pakistan (April 1967) The group which had adopted Mr Kashmiri has heard that he is definitely free as a result of the ending of the state of emergency in Pakistan. It is very likely that Satya Sen and Ranesh Das Gupta have also been released.

Thai Kin Tat, Malaysia (January 1969) We have received a letter from Thai Kin Tat describing the conditions in which he is held and expressing his gratitude for the cards he has received and the appeals that have been made on his behalf.

Jusu Sheriff, Sierra Leone (December 1968) We quote from a letter received by Mrs Sheriff: "Yours to me c/o the Director of Prisons was never given to me until I was released and came down to Freetown. Together with over 80 letters from well-wishers all over the world, they were sent to me after my release. All had been opened and read. I was greatly strengthened by the encouragement from all these people. Many of them wrote straight to the Prime Minister. It was all sponsored by Amnesty International." Members will remember that Mr Sheriff was re-arrested after his release (when he wrote this letter). He is

out on bail at present and awaiting trial.

Ndabaningi Sithole, Rhodesia (December 1968) has now begun serving his sentence. He is still at Salisbury Remand Prison, but security there has been tightened up considerably - there is a new set of warders, Sithole is no longer allowed to see the other detainees and is reported being held in what is virtually solitary confinement. Many members have sent in replies they have received from the Rhodesia Political Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Don Baty, U.S.A. (February 1969) Many members have received letters from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Pardon Attorney, pointing out that Don Baty has not filed an application for Executive clemency.

Helio Fernandes, Brazil (August 1967), who had been released, was re-arrested in December 1968 and has since been sentenced to 4 months imprisonment for having insulted the Governor of the State of Cuanabara in an article published on March 8th 1967.

Sadi Alkilic - Turkey (Jan.67)

Members are particularly asked to concern themselves again with the case of Sadi Alkilic, a Turkish civil servant who has just started to serve a prison sentence passed as a result of an article, allegedly praising communism, which he wrote in 1962. Alkilic was first arrested on 24th December 1962, and since then he has spent two years in prison and the other five involved in the tortuous procedure of trial and appeal under Article 142 of the Turkish Penal Code which forbids the advocacy of communism. He is now 58 and suffers from a serious heart illness; he has just applied to President Sunai for pardon on the very real ground of ill health. You are asked to write to the President, through your Turkish Embassy, supporting the application. Alkilic's original article, entitled "Socialism: Turkey's One Road to Salvation" was written as an entry to an essay competition organised by one of the major Turkish newspapers, CUMHURIYET. Competitors were asked to submit articles on the theme "Liberalism, or Socialism?". Alkilic's article, which was then published by CUMHURIYET, was a vague and rather naive piece praising nationalisation of property, money and possessions; it made no mention of violence.

Here are this month's prisoners:

Alfonso Carlos Comin - Spain.

Alfonso Carlos Comin was one of the first people to be arrested after the declaration, on January 26th 1969, of a State of Exception (Emergency) in Spain. A number of friends who had met at Sr. Comin's house on the day of his arrest were taken into custody with him, but most have since been released.

Sr. Comin, who is in his mid-thirties, lives in Barcelona where he is well-known as a leader of the Catholic intelligensia. Trained as an industrial engineer, he gave up his career to devote his time to investigating and writing about social ills as he, a believing Catholic, saw them in Spain. After spending some months in Andalucia, a predominantly agricultural area in Southern Spain, he wrote "Espana del Sud", an analysis of the social problems of the province.

In January 1967 Sr. Comin wrote an article in Catalan commenting on the arrests in Spain after the December 1966 referendum. This article, illustrated by a photograph, subsequently appeared in translation in the French weekly "Temoignage Chretien" under the heading "After the Referendum, the Repression". Sr. Comin was arrested on charges of spreading 'illegal propaganda' and tried before the Madrid Public Order Court in January 1968. Sr. Comin and his defence lawyer, Don Carlos Jose Maria Caminals Sanchez, based

their defence on the fact that the article which appeared in the French press had previously been published in Spain and no action had then been taken against the author by the authorities. The judge of the Court refused to allow the Defence to call its witnesses or read out in court letters testifying to his client's good character. In view of this the defence lawyer protested that he could not obtain justice for his client and reserved his defence for the Supreme Court. Immediate application for an Appeal Court hearing was made against the lower court's sentence of 16 months imprisonment. Sr. Comin was at liberty pending the Appeal when he was re-arrested. He is now held without trial under the emergency regulations.

Appeals for Senor Comin's release should be sent to:

EITHER	OR
Generalissimo Franco,	The Minister of Justice,
Palacio del Pardo,	Don Antonio Maria Oriol y Urquijo,
Madrid,	Ministry of Justice,
Spain.	Madrid, Spain.

Additional cards can be sent to Senor Comin himself. He is held at:

The Provincial Prison of Barcelona,
Barcelona.

Edouard Chapuis - Malagasy Republic.

In 1968 Edouard Chapuis wrote a pamphlet called "Dix ans de Republique Malgache" which discussed the economy of the Republic and development since its creation in 1958. From the facts presented the conclusion that the country had been growing steadily poorer over the past 10 years was drawn.

Chapuis was attached to the Ministry of Finance. It is not clear to us whether he is a French citizen loaned to the Malgache government as a technical adviser or a Malgache national. He was arrested on December 3rd 1968 and charged with disseminating false information, insulting the government and endangering national security. The trial began on January 17th and judgement was given on the 24th. The judge found no evidence to support the third charge, which he described as completely subjective, but on the first two charges found Chapuis guilty and sentenced him to 10 months imprisonment. He has since been transferred from the prison in Tananarive, where he had been held since his arrest, to the island of Reunion.* There he was held at the prison of Saint-Denis and after a few days taken to the prison hospital. It is not known whether he is still in hospital.

The case provoked comment from local papers, one of which pointed out that while both imports and exports had dropped percentage-wise compared with the figures for 1958, the population of the country was increasing rapidly - the result being that most of the people were worse off than they had been ten years previously. The article concluded that if Chapuis's pamphlet succeeded in rousing people to an awareness of the seriousness of the situation, it would have accomplished 'no little benefit'.

The issue involved here is one of freedom of opinion and free expression of opinion. From the facts available to us it seems clear that the question discussed in "Dix ans de Republique Malgache" should be a matter of concern to all people who care about their country.

* Reunion: The island of Reunion which lies about 300 miles east of Madagascar is a French dependency.

Appeals should be sent to:

EITHER

M. Philibert Tsiranana,
Prime Minister of the Malagasy
Republic,
Tananarive,
Malagasy Republic,

OR

M. Jacques Rabemananjara,
Foreign Minister,
Government of Malagasy,
Tananarive,
Malagasy Republic.

Paul Fazekas - Hungary

Paul Fazekas, the manager of a State Farm, has been sentenced to 10 months imprisonment. The exact date of his trial is not known, but it is assumed to have taken place in late January 1969. The following is a translation of an article which appeared in the Hungarian newspaper "Szelnok Magyei Hirlap" on January 31st 1969.

"Is this freedom of speech?" asked Paul Fazekas from Szarvas before the court at Szolnok, where he was tried for agitation.

'Fazekas, manager of the Hek-er State Farm, scolded and slandered the Communists and insulted the Hungarian government and the Soviet Union.

'Who is this man Fazekas? He is from the capitalist past, formerly a mill-owner. In 1947 the Communists took away all his mills and property, as he himself admits, and they left him "only" 13 Hungarian acres of estate. He worked on his father's 9 acres till 1961. He then took a job for the sole purpose of getting an identity-card as a laborer. This was to the advantage of his daughter, a student, who could say that her father was a worker. He took his job in a place far from his home village where nobody knew him. For a few years till 1967 he was able to conceal his past and his real opinion about Communism. After that time he lost his self-control and in consequence of his behaviour he was taken into custody and sentenced to 10 months imprisonment.'

*In Hungary the children of former aristocrats and bourgeoisie can experience difficulties in getting higher education on account of their class background. Children of working class people, on the other hand, are the most privileged in this respect.

Card should be sent to:

EITHER

Mr Jenő Fock
Prime Minister of the Hungarian
People's Republic,
Ministerlnokseg,
Budapest,
Hungary.

OR

Mr Mihaly Korm,
Minister of Justice,
Igazsagugy Miniszterium,
Budapest V,
Szalay utca 16,
Hungary,

oooooooooooooooooooooooo

Amnesty International,
International Secretariat,
Turnagain Lane,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.