

air

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Greece's Prisoners

Democracy in Greece has disappeared—and it is not clear when, how or even if it will be restored. The group of army colonels who seized power on the night of April 21st as yet show no signs of readiness to relinquish it. In reply to a journalist's question the new Minister of the Interior, Brigadier Patakos, recently asked:

"Why should we think of elections? We believe that we have restored normal conditions in this country after the revolution. Why should we hasten to go back to abnormal conditions?"

Nor is the commission established to reform the constitution now expected to produce its report for another six months.

It may be that, in the meantime, King Constantine is working behind the scenes to restore normal political conditions in Greece and it may be that the civilian lawyers co-opted into the government are similarly trying to exercise some checks on the more extremist tendencies of the army officers. The fact remains that the policy of the new government to date has been one of extreme repression. Severe inroads have already been made on the political and intellectual freedom of the individual. To the original bans on political parties and trade union organisations have now been added numerous press restrictions. All newspapers now have by law to publish, "at least one commentary a day referring to the government and its work" and to print all official communiqués in full. Numerous books have been banned and the "Themelio" publishing house closed. Censorship of the theatre has also been reintroduced with bans on the work of the popular composer Miki Theodorakis. Another recent Act provides for the instant dismissal of any university professors whose "actions and behaviour witness that they are not inspired by the appropriate spirit of the existing social regime and national ideals."

3,000 Still in Prison

Most serious of all from AMNESTY's point of view is that, of the many thousands of people arrested at the time of the coup almost 3,000 are, according to the official figures, still in prison. None have so far been

tried; and of those released only one (a poet of 80) is known to have been freed unconditionally. "Statements of loyalty" have been exacted from others, regardless of their position, age or health. An example is the case of Mr. Nicolas Kitsikis, an 80-year-old deputy of the left-wing E.D.A. Party and Rector of Athens University who was among the first people arrested and who has now been made to sign a statement promising to "accept the new government, refrain from subversive activities and renounce all political activity in future."

Some of the political leaders released, including the former Prime Minister, Canellopoulos, remain under surveillance in their homes. A number of people arrested after the "coup" have been sentenced by court martial to prison terms of up to five years for such offences as: "harbouring communists", "insulting the authorities" and "spreading false rumours". The rest of the detainees, including both those who refuse to sign statements and those whom the government consider "dangerous" remain in detention. The majority are on the island of Yioura in the Aegean; others, including most of the arrested Centre Union deputies, are on the island of Folegandros; and others still are in prisons on the mainland.

In his public statements Brigadier Patakos has described these detainees as "dangerous communists". The delegation from the Socialist International who visited Athens in May reported that Brigadier Patakos told them that, "in his view the political prisoners were not men, only beasts". In fact the prisoners include among their number those of all political persuasions as well as some of the best known lawyers, writers and artists in the country. Among them are the former Minister of Justice, Constantin Stefanakis; the President of the Athens Bar Association, Alex Sakellaropoulos, a lawyer widely respected both in Greece and abroad; Manolis Glezos, the war-time resistance hero, journalist and E.D.A. leader; and two poets, Kostas Kouloufakis and Yannis Ritsos, who are suffering from tuberculosis. The American philosopher John Dewey once wrote that a country can best be judged by those who are in her prisons.

Conditions on Yioura

Many of those on the island of Yioura are known also to be old and ill. According to a letter smuggled out of the island at the end of May there were then 400 people over the age of 60; a total of 2,144 who were ill (some with T.B., heart or kidney trouble); 129 cripples; and 81 mothers (21 with children under three years old). One mother is believed to have her three-and-a-half-year-old child with her on Yioura, another has had to leave a three-month-old child with relatives, while others were arrested without having time to make any provisions for their children. The island itself is barren, windswept and without fresh water. Drinking water, it seems, is being imported from Piraeus but a prisoner writes:

"We cannot keep ourselves clean. The situation is made worse by the lack of a sewage system. An uninhabited place that found itself suddenly inhabited by 6,500 inhabitants is becoming a source of infection."

There is a concrete penitentiary which was used after the Civil War but closed some time in the late '50s, partly as a result of international protest and partly, it seems, because of the difficulty of finding warders prepared to endure the conditions. Although built for 600 there were apparently some 1,700 prisoners (including women) there at the end of May with others living in tents.

Since the above information was received large-scale releases have taken place. The government has also promised to build a reservoir and a hospital on the island and to move the women to a more comfortable place but there is no evidence that this has yet been done. Brigadier Patakos, on the other hand, claims that the prisoners are living in "idyllic conditions" and that he has been overwhelmed by letters of thanks from released prisoners. In view of the contradictory nature of these reports and the absence of specific charges against any of the detainees on Yioura, AMNESTY is trying to arrange for an observer to visit Greece to examine the situation at first hand.

PETER BURNS

The Trial of Jan Benes and Karel Zamecnik

As we go to press we have just heard that the Czech writer Jan Benes, who was being tried in Prague with his friend Karel Zamecnik, has been sentenced to five years imprisonment. Benes, a married man aged 31, was accused of subversion, speculation and attempted fraud while Karel Zamecnik was charged with damaging Czechoslovak interests abroad. Benes appears to have been acquitted of the speculation charges and Zamecnik to have been acquitted altogether. The charge of subversion against Benes involved his alleged contacts with Czech emigrés in Paris through whom he is said to have had his works published. The charge of attempted fraud is best described by the evidence of a witness at the trial, a publican, who said that Benes had suggested to him that he might like to buy a picture said to be by Toulouse-Lautrec. Although the publican said in his evidence that Benes had told him to get the authenticity of the picture checked for himself the court took the story as proof that Benes had tried to defraud him. As regards the charge of speculation Benes is supposed to have sold in Paris some pictures by his wife. We do not know whether this story is true: certainly Mr. and Mrs. Benes were not well off and they had to support his parents. He published many short stories which were well received by the critics and the reading public, yet many of his stories were turned down by the H.S.T.D. (Hlavní správa tiskoveho dozoru, Main Office of Press Control).

Less is known about the case against Karel Zamecnik, a 27-year-old film director. He had gone to France in June 1965 to work for French television with the consent and approval of the Czechoslovak authorities. In August 1966 he was summoned to Prague allegedly for business discussions and was arrested soon after his arrival. Unlike Benes who spent over 9 months in custody before the trial Zamecnik was granted bail after five months in prison and his case is clearly of secondary importance. One reason for his arrest lies perhaps in the correspondence which he maintained with Benes while he was in Paris—letters which the censor no doubt found to contain too many political remarks, jokes and witticisms disrespectful to the Czechoslovak government.

Party and Writers Conflict

The trial of Benes and Zamecnik should be seen in the context of the current struggle between the "old guard" of the Communist Party and the young intellectuals. The Union of Czechoslovak Writers held their annual congress at the end of June at which speakers criticised the government's policy on the Middle East, saying that it was out of line with public opinion; the congress as a whole refused to condemn American intervention in Vietnam and demanded the abolition of censorship. The Communist Party secretary, Hendrych, tried to veto the list of candidates for the new leadership of the Writer's Union, provoking statements from the opposition that the government knew little about socialism. Such opposition to Party policy is probably unparalleled and the Central Committee of the Communist Party may have decided to make an example of Benes and Zamecnik, hoping that their imprisonment may serve to discourage the more independent aspirations of the writers.

Benes had certainly made himself unpopular with the government. After the trial of Sinyavsky and Daniel in the U.S.S.R. last year, he raised the matter with the Czech Union of Writers who subsequently sent to Moscow a protest at the sentences of the two men. Benes also applied for a passport at that time and on being refused he filed a lawsuit against the Ministry of the Interior who, he claimed, were denying him his legal right to a passport.

AMNESTY first heard of the arrests of the two men last September and immediately had them adopted by Groups in Norway and the Netherlands. As time passed it became evident that the Czechoslovak authorities might be planning a show trial and we considered sending an observer. At the beginning of this year Mr. Paul Sieghart, a retired London barrister, kindly agreed to go and we immediately applied for a visa for him to travel as our official representative. After some time and further enquiries to the

Czechoslovak embassy in London Mr. Sieghart was told, verbally only, that his visa application had been refused. The months passed and we heard again and again that the trial had been postponed. In mid-June it was said that the trial would open early in July and that there would be no postponement. Mr. Sieghart applied again for a visa, again making the reasons for his visit entirely clear. In addition he cabled to the Ministry of Justice in Prague asking for support for his application. On Tuesday, July 4th, the day after the trial opened, he received his visa and left the following day.

The trial was officially public but on arrival at Prague City Court Mr. Sieghart found that admission was by ticket only. After some persuasion the President of the Court granted him an entry ticket and he was able to take his seat in the public gallery, empty apart from Benes's wife and mother-in-law and a few plain-clothes policemen (everyone else had been refused tickets, on the grounds that there was no room). Legal formalities were otherwise scrupulously observed; both Benes's state-appointed lawyer Dr. Taus and Benes himself were, for example, able to cross-examine witnesses and all the evidence was taken down by a typist. Mr. Sieghart spoke briefly to both the accused men and to their defence lawyers and was impressed by the fight they were putting up. He felt however that the trial was a foregone conclusion and that there was little chance that Benes would escape a prison sentence.

Amnesty Observer Expelled

Unfortunately Mr. Sieghart had to leave Prague on July 6th to attend to private commitments in Switzerland and before leaving he received a special exit and re-entry permit and an assurance from the Ministry of Justice that his visa was in order for re-entering the country. When he returned to Prague on July 9th he was stopped at the airport passport control, his luggage and his pockets were searched and his papers taken away. The papers were returned but after a six-hour wait he was told that he was being expelled from the country for misusing his tourist visa by attempting to interfere in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia. Mr. Sieghart's protest that his was not a tourist visa but a special visa issued by the authorities for the purpose of observing the trial was of no avail. He was driven at high speed to the Austrian border where he was deposited, in the rain, at one o'clock in the morning. Fortunately he was given a lift to Linz by some French travellers and was able to return to England from there. His expulsion received some publicity in the French and British press. Mr. Sieghart has since protested to the Czechoslovak Ambassador in London and we have also written asking for an explanation.

BRUCE LAIRD

Ingenuity in Isolation— The challenge for Mihajlov

On New Year's Eve 1966, Milovan Djilas, the Yugoslav political writer, was released after nine years in jail. With him he brought two large plastic bags, filled with piles of toilet paper—and told astonished press reporters: "Those are the manuscripts of my two new novels. When I was in prison I had to write on toilet paper because I couldn't get anything else."

Djilas is free. But his political sympathiser Mihajlo Mihajlov is still in prison and according to reports he, too, is allowed neither writing paper nor books. It is tempting to ask how Mihajlov is facing the twin hazards of the political prisoner's existence—enforced idleness and enforced isolation.

Early this century, the political prisoners who filled the jails of Vienna were regarded by their Hapsburg rulers as "intellectuals", and so as a special group with special privileges; life was better for them than for their criminal colleagues. But since then, throughout Eastern Europe, this situation has been so far reversed that present-day political prisoners are all too often given the bad conditions thought suitable for "enemies of the people": penal discrimination now favours the criminals. In many countries

Ingenuity in Isolation— The challenge for Mihajlov

all possessions have been forbidden—books, pencils, paper, string or a bent nail—and even the right to work is denied. The problem, then, for the prisoner in Rumania, in Hungary, in the U.S.S.R. and now for Mihajlov in Yugoslavia, is how to occupy 24 hours of each day, for years on end.

Djilas had no writing paper, yet he wrote two novels and translated *Paradise Lost* into Serbian—no small achievement. And the prison literature of post-war Eastern Europe reveals endless ingenuity in situations where one would think none was possible.

In Rumanian jails of the 1950s, a prisoner's life was so controlled that a regulation existed decreeing the side upon which he lay for sleeping. Yet, relatively undaunted, the prisoners managed to pursue their intellectual interests. They taught each other languages, using their rare bars of soap as writing tablets; they spoke to each other by tapping the walls in the prison alphabet—one of the first and most essential skills for a prisoner; they recited poetry, held discussions, told stories and—once—paid fitting tribute to Rudyard Kipling by simultaneously circulating three copies of his poem, *IF*, inscribed on soap. In 1955, they pulled a bird's nest down the chimney, un-stuck the pieces of newspaper which the occupant had gathered from the streets as insulation, and from them read of the Summit Conference. One Hungarian now lives in London with a wife whom he met—and courted—solely through lengthy discussions about books, food, music and philosophy which they tapped on their adjoining cell walls, meeting face to face only after they were free.

For many, total solitude must be a defeat. But for some, the battle to retain an identity despite isolation and idleness is itself a stimulant. One remarkable example of this is Edith Bone, a Hungarian-born doctor, who revisited Hungary in 1949 and was held for seven years in solitary confinement until the 1956 rising released her. Her activities in her 4 foot by 10 foot cell were, perhaps, simple ones; but few would have thought of them. During five months when she was kept in complete darkness, she paced up and down her cell, engaged in lengthy walks through the cities in which she had lived. Wandering along familiar streets led her to call on the friends who had lived in them, and whole hours passed in the imaginary conversations which took place. Denied scissors, she cropped her hair, strand by strand, snapping it with her fingers; the first attempt took three weeks, the second, a fortnight, and when the third six months came round, the Governor capitulated and sent a barber.

Clearly a woman of Edith Bone's exceptional intelligence, intellect and experience has an uncommon advantage. She had lived in eight European capitals—eight cities to walk through. She spoke six languages fluently—six vocabularies to count and cross-reference on the abacus which she had constructed from dried balls of bread, strung on straws from the broom for sweeping the cell. She had read widely, and she remembered well—and so she used her abacus to count the characters in novels by Dostoevsky, Stendhal, Thackeray, Tolstoi and Dickens (Dickens emerged victorious with 200 clearly remembered people). She composed poems in her head, and wrote them on her table with the 4,000 letters she had made from dried bread. And, for exercise, she walked her tiny cell incessantly, measuring out the distance—and geographical landmarks—from Budapest to the English Channel three times during her confinement.

Djilas' new novels deal with "the divisions and conflicts between Christians and Moslems in Montenegro". These will certainly make fascinating reading. But one would also hope that both he and Mihajlov will one day write another book—this time about their own prison experience.

STEPHANIE GRANT

Ghana: Arrests Follow the Coup

1967 has so far been a disappointing year for those who hoped that the overthrow of Nkrumah would provide easy solutions for Ghana's problems. Government remains in the hands of the National Liberation Council, the military/police council which took control after the coup of February 1966. For ordinary citizens all political activity is banned.

The N.L.C. has gone some way towards bringing order out of the confusion that it inherited from C.P.P. rule, but the outstanding economic and political problems remain—a high level of unemployment, rising prices, repayment of foreign debts, the fear of Nkrumah-inspired plots and popular demands for a return to civilian rule. The instability that arises from these problems has caused the N.L.C. to introduce anti-subversion decrees and detentions. The most severe decree was published in January 1967. It defined the offence of subversion and provided for the trial, before a military tribunal, of those accused of such an offence, including civilians. The tribunals have power to pass sentences ranging from 25 years' imprisonment to death by firing squad. There can be no appeal.

Subversion Defined

Subversion is defined as follows:

- (a) alteration in the law or the policies of the government by force,
- (b) unlawful possession or control of arms,
- (c) organisation or incitement of a general strike likely to cause the overthrow of the government or hardship to the public,
- (d) the making of statements known to be false and likely to undermine the people's confidence in the "permanence of their newly found freedom",
- (e) attempts or conspiracies to kill any member of the N.L.C. or any citizen of Ghana with a view to overthrow of the government,
- (f) failure to report any of these acts.

In spite of this decree, the situation in the early months of the year was not entirely gloomy. Those detained since the coup were gradually being released; there was open discussion about the introduction of civilians into the government; independent newspapers such as the *Legon Observer* criticised the government; and, perhaps most important, the judiciary strongly criticised the decrees of the N.L.C. and warned about the consequences of by-passing the ordinary processes of law. In March the Ghana Bar Association, in a Memorandum to the N.L.C., asked for the repeal of the January decree setting up military tribunals to try civilians. The Association maintained that most of the acts declared criminal by this decree were already included in Ghana's criminal code. It objected in particular to the abrogation of all rights of appeal which it said was one of the fundamental principles of the rule of law. In April, the Chief Justice, Akuffo-Addo, and four other judges, asked the N.L.C. to repeal a decree which allows the Attorney-General to detain in custody for 28 days "or such other period as the Attorney-General may determine" any person arrested without warrant. The judges warned against any return to the disregard for the rule of law which existed under the previous regime.

The Abortive Coup

Events took a turn for the worse on April 17th, 1967, when three young army officers led an abortive coup which brought about the death of General Kotoka, the most popular member of the N.L.C. Lieut. Arthur, who led the attempted coup, claimed to be its sole architect and said that he had neither monetary nor political backing within Ghana or abroad. Nkrumah (in exile in Guinea) was apparently not involved, nor does there seem to be any evidence to substantiate rumours of tribal animosities. The attempt would appear to be the result of dissatisfactions within the army.

The N.L.C. has taken steps to tighten the weak security arrangements which the abortive coup revealed. It also made use of the public outcry against Kotoka's death to deal harshly with those suspected of anti-government sympathies. Arthur and Yeboah, the two leaders of the

attempted coup, were publicly executed while another, Polu, was sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment. Trial has also taken place by military tribunal of three civilians and an army officer accused of plotting to overthrow the N.L.C. last January. On May 29th, three were sentenced to death for subversion while the fourth was sentenced to 25 years imprisonment. AMNESTY, which has been watching developments in Ghana, appealed to the N.L.C. to review these sentences. On June 4th, the death sentences were commuted to 40 years imprisonment with hard labour, while the sentence of the fourth man was commuted to 10 years imprisonment with hard labour.

Detentions have increased rapidly since April. The N.L.C. announced that over 500 people who "rejoiced prematurely" at the attempted coup had been put in protective custody to save them from angry crowds. According to a decree of May 31st, 3 officers and 210 soldiers were detained for their part in the attempted coup. Others, such as ex-Ministers Edusei and Bensah, who had previously been released were put back in detention. There are now more than 1,000 detained in Ghana's prisons. An encouraging sign, however, has been the Government's recent creation of a Commission of Inquiry into Prison Conditions. We have written to congratulate the N.L.C. for the concern with human rights which this decision illustrates and have requested the Secretary of the Commission to keep us informed about specific aspects of political imprisonment in Ghana. AMNESTY has also approached the Minister responsible for internal security with enquiries about the reasons for the detentions, asking the N.L.C. to bring rapidly to trial those against whom charges are to be made and to release the others. No adoptions have so far been made.

STELLA JOYCE

Burma's Forgotten Dictatorship

The xenophobic and oppressive nature of the military dictatorship in Burma has made it one of the most neglected and difficult countries in the world today. Rather than acting as a deterrent, this situation should provide the strongest reason why AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL should concern itself with the thousands of forgotten political prisoners in jails throughout Burma.

The Government of U Nu was overthrown on the morning of March 2nd, 1962, by General Ne Win's coup d'état. Since then the General has ruled as the Chairman of the 20-member Revolutionary Council and declared there to be only one party—The Burmese Road to Socialism Party. All other political parties are banned and all forms of opposition suppressed. All newspapers are state-owned but the General has encouraged a "People's Forum" in the columns of the press in which workers may criticise government policies. A policy of sweeping nationalisation has left previous owners without compensation and the country's economy, in the words of Ne Win, "in a mess". Unemployment is high and almost all goods are rationed and sold in the inefficient and corrupt people's shops which handle the nation's trade.

Internal Opposition

Insurgents continue to harass the regime, which has not yet managed to pacify the minority groups. Shan, Kachin and Karen rebels are fighting in the hills, reluctant to accept central rule from Rangoon. The two communist parties have gone underground and the pro-Peking "White Flags" have recently declared renewed hostilities as the result of the anti-Chinese demonstrations in Rangoon and Mandalay. Foreign nationals are unpopular with the regime and have either been driven out or expelled in an attempt to purge Burma of foreign influences. In international politics General Ne Win has insisted on a policy of "positive neutralism", which is further designed to isolate Burma from the rest of the world. No

visitor is granted anything more than a 48-hour transit visa through Rangoon with the result that all outlets of information are virtually sealed off from the outside world.

However we were able to learn much of what is going on in Burma from Mrs. Mabel Hkio, who arrived in England in April of this year after her expulsion from Burma. She is the English wife of a Shan, Sao Hkun Hkio, who was the former Foreign Minister and has been held in solitary confinement in Insein Jail for the last five years and five months. He has been allowed no visitors except his wife, who was given permission to see him only four times during that period. The last time was to break to him the news of her expulsion, which naturally upset him considerably. Mrs. Hkio says that he has aged and has been suffering from dysentery, for which he has only just been given treatment. After a question in Parliament by her Cambridge M.P., Mr. George Brown promised that Hkio would be given asylum in this country if the Burmese authorities would release him. Mrs. Hkio also reported that the former Chief Justice, U Myint Thein, is going blind in jail. His wife went mad and died soon after his arrest and he was allowed out only for one day to attend her funeral. Many wives have not been as lucky as Mrs. Hkio in that they have not seen their husbands since the day of their arrest. Many suffer from high blood pressure due to the worry and strain of having to look after their families without their husbands.

Amnesty Applies Pressure

Relying on the information given to us by Mrs. Hkio we now intend to adopt many more Burmese prisoners and to give their cases maximum publicity. Previously it was feared that this might compromise the families' position but it now seems clear that this would not be the case. When approached by AMNESTY groups, and even foreign governments, the Burmese authorities have maintained a determined and disheartening silence. However this is not to say that such approaches are without effect.

A faint glimmer of hope has lit the Burmese scene since the release earlier this year of U Nu and U Ba Swe. It was promised at the time that further releases would follow for those "with clean sheets", and in April the Burmese authorities announced the release of 116 political prisoners. So far it has been impossible to learn the names of these men but it is certain that among them are none of the important political prisoners. It can only be hoped that Burma will be able to bring her policies regarding political prisoners more in line with the U.N. Charter, to which she herself is a signatory.

SARAH RICHARDSON

Notice— International Executive Meeting

The International Executive has decided that in AMNESTY's present financial position, the Assembly should be cancelled for this year. In its place we are holding an "enlarged" Executive meeting for the four days, Friday, October 6th, to Monday, October 9th, at which National Sections will be represented. It will be held in or near London. Details have been sent to each Section.

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