

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Turnagain Lane, Farringdon Street, London E.C.4.

NEWSLETTER FOR GROUPS (No.2)

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Requests to all Groups

- 1) Please include your group number/^{or name} in all correspondence and mention your prisoners by name in all reports.
- 2) We would like all Sections and Groups to let us have a telephone number where they can be contacted should we need to get in touch with them urgently.
- 3) When sending cheques or money orders to the Secretariat please indicate what the money is for. If you instruct your bank to transfer money to us please include the following wording in your instructions "Advise and pay to Amnesty International the sum of" followed by our full address. (NOT BRITISH GROUPS).

Latin American Roundup

The Research Department has lately re-organised and intensified its work on Latin-America where it is hoped to send a representative later this year.

Argentina The well-known trade unionist Eustaquio Tolosa was released in January on conditional liberty until January 1970. The arrests of other trade unionist leaders are reported.

Bolivia As a result of an amnesty in December 1968 many political prisoners were released. This amnesty, however, did not include those who had been found guilty of crimes in connection with guerilla activities.

In January a state of siege was imposed by the Government which claimed to have uncovered a plot to overthrow the Government and kill the President. About a hundred persons were summarily arrested, including some journalists who were later released as a result of threats of strikes from the journalists' association. The President, Rene Barrientos, died in an air plane crash at the end of April and was succeeded by the Vice-President, Luis Adolfo Siles Salinas.

Brazil - Co-ordination all groups. Brother Andrew of the Cheltenham/Gloucester (UK) group has offered to act as a co-ordinator for all groups with adopted Brazilian prisoners. Groups are asked to send a detailed up-to-date report on their work to him with a copy to the International Secretariat. Please indicate all the persons and organisations you have written to and the outcome of your letters. Copies of letters received should be included in the report. Brother Andrew's address is:- The Priory, Stratford Park, Stroud, Gloucestershire, England.

A trial has just started in Brazil where 29 students are accused of forming a Communist Party cell in Rio de Janeiro before the coup in April 1964. Several other persons are reported to have been arrested, on related charges. Amnesty Investigations are now being carried out on arrests of two priests and the Former Minister of Education and Culture, Professor Darcy Ribeiro.

Colombia In December the President ended the state of siege that has existed for $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. A trial is going on now of 285 persons (200 in absentia), which has as far as we know not been reported in the European press.

Panama About a hundred political prisoners were released at the beginning of March this year. 400 persons are still detained, many of them arrested at the time of the coup in October 1968. At the moment we are collecting more information on these cases.

Paraguay Some of the prisoners adopted by Amnesty International are now apparently free. There are comparatively few political prisoners in Paraguay but some have been imprisoned for 10 years without trial.

Peru The biggest political trial in the history of the country took place in January and February this year at a military tribunal in Lima. 36 peasants were accused of having helped the guerillas in 1965. They had been held in custody since then. Sentences were given ranging from 2 to 15 years. The International Secretariat has received very detailed information on the trial.

Venezuela During the last months of his presidential mandate, Mr. Raul Leoni, released 300 political prisoners, among them several leaders of the Communist Party (which has recently been legalised) and of MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left). According to official figures there are 90 political prisoners still detained. From other sources, however, we have been informed that the number of political prisoners is much higher.

Africa

Kenya Groups are sending money to prisoners' families and paying for study courses for detainees - the first time this has been possible in independent African countries. New arrests have however taken place recently - mostly of individuals in possession of Maoist literature, and we are experiencing some difficulties in making the same arrangements for these newer prisoners.

Rhodesia The Rev. Sithole, who has been in restriction or detention since 1963, was convicted and sentenced to 6 years imprisonment in February on charges of conspiracy to assassinate the Prime Minister and two other senior members of the Rhodesian regime. The charge was based on a letter allegedly written by him which had been smuggled out of prison. Expert hand-writing evidence in our view makes it clear that Sithole was not the writer. He also made a public statement in court firmly disassociating himself from violence. The International Executive, therefore, decided to retain the Rev. Sithole as a prisoner of Conscience.

Syria As a result of the recent shift in power within the Syrian Government it is very probable that most of those detained last year have now been released. Several groups have had confirmation that their prisoners are now free. We would ask other groups to keep their cases until they too receive individual confirmation of release. We shall be sending a circular to groups with Syrian prisoners shortly.

Sierra Leone After a State of Emergency was declared in November nearly 400 people were detained. Amnesty groups took up many of these prisoners as Investigation Cases and the International Secretariat had discussions with the Prime Minister. The State of Emergency has since been lifted and 292 people have been released. The leader of the opposition, Mr. Jusu Sherriff, one of those detained (who was also put on the post-cards for Prisoners Campaign) wishes to thank all those individuals 'through whose efforts our release was made possible'. He makes clear in his letter the effect an international expression of concern can have on a government which cares for its reputation for justice.

Middle East Iraq The International Secretariat's negotiations to send an official observer into Iraq had to be abandoned when the execution of alleged spies took place. The Iraqi government refused to grant a visa and did not reply to the cable sent deploring the executions and urging discussions with our representative. A report was, however, made by an unofficial observer, which could be made available to any groups who are interested. Because of the tense political situation no adoptions are being made at present although information continues to be collected.

Greece - facts and figures. About 1,800 people remain in detention, the rump of the 6,000 arrested two years ago at the time of the 1967 coup d'etat. Added to these are an unknown number of people serving prison sentences, held by the police for interrogation and exiled to remote parts either of the Peloponnese or to the less inhabited islands. At the moment 175 are under adoption. Releases now are rarer than in the immediately post-couperiod, but all the evidence suggests that pressure does have an effect. A recent Government notice announcing reductions in the sentences of 7 of those court martialled after the Papandreou funeral demonstrations last November, contained the names of 6 prisoners adopted by Amnesty groups.

U.S.S.R. The list of imprisoned Baptists mentioned in the last newsletter can now be obtained from the International Secretariat, translated into English. There are also some copies of a letter from the Council of Prisoners Relatives, dated August 11th 1968, and addressed to Soviet leaders, the International Red Cross, U Thant and A.I.

Asia

A National Section has now been formed in Ceylon. This means that formal Amnesty Sections exist in 3 Asian countries - India, Pakistan and Japan.

In Pakistan the resignation of President Ayub Khan has led, indirectly, to the release of numbers of prisoners including the accused in the Argatalla conspiracy trial but one of the first acts of his successor, General Yahya Khan, was the imposition of martial law throughout Pakistan to curb the widespread demonstrations, strikes and breakdown of law and order which had marked the last months of Ayub Khan's regime. As yet few new arrests have been reported, although under the new martial law freedom of speech and political freedom in general are severely limited.