

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



MISSIONS

Vietnam: Mr. Sean MacBride, S.C., Chairman of Amnesty International, has been asked by the International Executive Committee to visit both North and South Vietnam on a government-level mission. The terms of reference of the mission are: "To discuss and examine the treatment of political prisoners in North and South Vietnam; to make representations to the respective governments for the release of prisoners of conscience; and to discuss and examine the conditions, treatment and possible release of civilian and other prisoners detained as a result of the existing armed conflict."

Portugal: In last month's Newsletter we gave the result of the trial of Father Joaquim Pinto de Andrade. Since then we have received a report of the proceedings from Dr. Leopoldo Torres Boursault, the lawyer and Professor of Law from Madrid who attended as an Amnesty observer. The co-operation of the Portuguese government was minimal; and although Dr. Boursault and other international observers were allowed into the courtroom, the status of observer was not officially recognised. Dr. Boursault reported that the trial was no more than a formality: the preliminary proceedings had already been carried out by the police; and the most the defendants could hope for was to influence the final decision on the length of sentence. Despite the fact that the trial was formally public, more than thirty of the fifty available seats were occupied by plain-clothes policemen.

Morocco: Mr. Lennart Aspegren, Assistant Judge at the Stockholm Appeals Court, was to attend as an Amnesty observer the trial of 130 prisoners at Marrakech, Morocco. The accused, who were arrested during a twelve month period beginning early in 1970, are all said to be members of the Union Nationale des Forces Populaires (UNFP), founded by Mehdi Ben Barka. Two of them, Mohammed Ajar and Ahmed Benjelloun, were deported to Morocco from Spain at the end of January 1970, in spite of the absence of an extradition treaty between the two countries. There was considerable international interest in the trial, which was postponed at the last moment with no new date indicated.

ORGANISATION

Section Meetings: The Secretary General and two staff members attended the annual meeting of the German Section which was composed of some 600 delegates and Amnesty members. The assembly considered a number of resolutions and divided into working commissions on countries and on various technical problems. Zbynek Zeman, head of Amnesty research, visited the Annual General Meeting of the Danish Section. The meeting, which he addressed, helped to establish closer ties between Denmark and London. Two new members were added to the Danish Board. Dr. Zeman also attended a meeting of the groups in Århus and on his return journey was able to meet members of the German Board.

Strasbourg: The Treasurer and Secretary of Amnesty attended a conference of organisations in consultative status with the Council of Europe. Some fifteen organisations interested in human rights were represented, the purpose of the meeting being to exchange information in particular about programmes connected with the UN Year to combat racism and racial discrimination. The Council of Europe is convening a parliamentary consultative conference on Human Rights questions in Vienna from 18-20 October, and it is hoped to raise again the issue of conscientious objection as a human right to be protected by inter-governmental agreement.

Treatment of Prisoners: A draft resolution for consideration by the UN Assembly has been prepared on the international protection of prisoners in accordance with the Standard Minimum Rules. Copies of the draft resolution are being sent to National Sections and non-governmental organisations in order to seek support. A draft convention on the same subject is also being prepared.

Chronicle of Current Events: Issue No. 18 of the Chronicle is now being printed. There is now available a printed leaflet which can be used to introduce the publication to possible subscribers. The subscription rate is £3.50 (or U.S.\$10), reduced to \$3.00 for Amnesty members.

International Committee of the Red Cross: The I.C.R.C. convened a briefing meeting of organisations in Geneva to discuss the programme of the conference of government experts now being held to consider the revision and up-dating of international conventions to protect Human Rights in armed conflicts. Amnesty International was represented by Lothar Belck of the Swiss Section.

Note to groups: Groups adopting prisoners from the same trial often wish to be put in touch with each other. We would ask for these requests to be made only when a special campaign is planned, as supplying lists of group addresses can take up a considerable amount of the Secretariat's time. Any information received from a group is passed on to the other groups concerned, so there is normally no need for a list.

Prisoners in the Middle East and North Africa: Mrs. Juliette Spiegel, a Dutch Amnesty group leader, would like to be in touch with all groups working for prisoners in the Middle East and North Africa. She would be glad if they would write to her at: - Eastonstraat 102, Amsterdam-Osdorp, Netherlands.

COUNTRIES

Sierra Leone: Amnesty International Secretariat has written to Prime Minister Siaka Stevens with regard to the latest action taken against ten people originally sentenced to death at a treason trial which ended on 11 May. The ten appealed against the sentence and the Court of Appeal ruled that the court which had originally tried the case had no jurisdiction to do so: the appeals were therefore upheld. Immediately after this judgment however, the prisoners -- most of whom had been detained since the summer of 1968 -- were re-detained under the Emergency Regulations. It is now reported that the government intends to bring charges again. Also in detention are about thirty members of the opposition United Democratic Party who have been held since last October, without trial, in Freetown's Pademba Road Prison. Eleven of the cases have been taken up by Amnesty for adoption or investigation. A number of army officers are imprisoned too. They were arrested after an alleged abortive coup on 23 March and will probably be tried by court martial. (An Act has recently been passed by the Sierra Leone legislature to deny the right of appeal against a court martial verdict).

Mexico: Nine prisoners adopted by Amnesty were released from Lecumberri Prison in Mexico City at the end of April 1971. Comprising the fourth group of recent releases they were all forced, as the condition of their release, to leave the country immediately. Some flew to Uruguay, others to Peru, some to Chile and one to Canada. A fifth group of 23 prisoners, including seven Amnesty cases (among them the writer, Jose Revueltas), was freed on 13 May. These prisoners are still considered by the authorities to be guilty of two of the charges for which they were sentenced in November, 1970, the prosecution having dropped its other charges against them. The 23 have therefore been given conditional liberty and have been allowed to stay in Mexico. To date, 34 Amnesty adoption or investigation cases have been freed. Eleven remain in prison.

Rhodesia: Amnesty International has asked the British government to treat the release of political detainees in Rhodesia as a sine qua non in any future negotiations for a 'settlement' with the Rhodesian regime. The British Minister expressed personal agreement that in principle detention without trial of African opposition leaders was not compatible with the five principles laid down by successive British governments as conditions for any settlement.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

"Rhodesia: The British Dilemma", by E.E.M. Mlambo. International Defence and Aid Fund Pamphlet 1971. Obtainable from 2 Amen Court, London E.C.4. 15P. "Asian Minorities of East and Central Africa", by Yash Ghai and Dharam Ghai. Minority Rights Group 1971. Obtainable from 36 Craven Street W.C.2. 30P. "Prisoners in Vietnam" by Peggy Duff. International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace 1971. Obtainable from 6 Endsleigh St., WC1, 30P. "Brazil: A Giant Stirs", by Richard P. Momsen Jr. D. Van Nostrand 1968. £1.25. "Cancer Ward", by Alexander Solzhenitzyn, translated by Nichola Bethell and David Burg. Penguin Books 1971. 50P. "The Czechoslovak Political Trials 1950-1954; the Suppressed Report of the Dubcek Government's Commission of Inquiry 1968". Edited by Jiri Pelikan. MacDonald 1971. £6.

POSTCARDS FOR PRISONERS CAMPAIGN

First some news of prisoners who have been on this Campaign:-

Gabriel Dombal - Tchad (February 1971) - was released as part of a general amnesty on 18 April, 1971.

Andrei Sinyavsky - USSR (December 1965) - is reported to have been released from detention. It is not yet known whether he will be allowed to return to Moscow or whether he will be restricted to a specified provincial town.

Quintin and Rizal Yuyitung - Taiwan (June 1970). The Yuyitung brothers are still in prison despite a series of promises from the authorities to release them. The International Press Institute set a dead-line for the release which expired on 20 March and that organisation will now campaign intensively on the issue. Publicity on this case and appeals for release will therefore help to support IPI pressure.

Helen Joseph - South Africa (November 1967) - is reported to have been admitted to hospital for an operation. Renewed appeals for her freedom should be sent to the Minister of Justice, Mr. P.C. Pelser, House of Assembly, Cape Town. Cards and cables expressing good wishes could be sent to her home address: 35 Fanny Avenue, Norwood, Johannesburg.

Dr. Fricis Menders - USSR, Latvia (January 1970). Dr. Menders, whose release was reported in the May Newsletter, is reported to have died on 1 April.

Dr. John Karefa-Smart - Sierra Leone (March 1971) - came to England at the end of March. Both he and his wife have decided to become Amnesty members.

This month's prisoners:-Valery Ronkin - USSR

Before his arrest in 1965 Valery Ronkin, a chemical engineer, studied at the Leningrad Technological Institute. Here he formed a small Marxist group known as the "Union of the Communards", together with other students. The "Union of the Communards" in its short-lived existence published two type-written issues of a journal called The Bell, presumably in memory of the journal of the same name published in London by the nineteenth century revolutionary, Alexander Herzen. In this journal they criticised the leadership of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Party itself for allegedly diverging from the "true Marxist path" in its policies and accused them of being directly responsible for the tragedies of the Stalinist era.

The group was arrested in June 1965. At his trial in Leningrad City Court, Valery Ronkin was sentenced to seven years' labour camp with strict regime to be followed by three years' exile. The charges were "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, organisational activity directed to commission of especially dangerous crimes against the state and also participation in anti-Soviet organisations." Until July 1969 Ronkin was detained in one of the Mordovian labour camps. He was then moved to the prison at Vladimir near Moscow, where he is to this day. This was a punishment for participation in hunger-strikes and signing a petition to the Supreme Soviet about labour camp conditions. Conditions in Vladimir prison are harder than in labour camps, the chief hardships being malnutrition and cold.

Please send your cards to:

EITHER

Mr. A. Kosygin,
SSSR,
Moskva,
Kreml,
Predsedatelyu Sovieta Ministrov SSSR,
A. Kosyginu.

OR

The Governor of Vladimir Prison,
SSSR,
g. Vladimir - obl.,
p/ya OD/1 - st.2,
Nachalniku tyurny.

Ramogi Achieng ONEKO - KENYA

Mr. Oneko has long been a prominent figure in Kenyan politics. Before independence, he was a member of the Kenya African Union (KAU) and was detained by the British administration during the Mau Mau disturbances. He ultimately rose to the post of Secretary-General of the KAU, and both before and after his imprisonment by the British he was private secretary to Jomo Kenyatta, who was later to become President of Kenya.

Mr. Oneko is a Luo by tribal origin, and when tensions within the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) party led to the resignation of its leading Luo member, Mr. Oginga Odinga, in the spring of 1966, Mr. Oneko quickly followed suit. He resigned his portfolio as Minister of Information and joined Mr. Odinga's new left-wing party, the Kenya People's Union (KPU) which drew its support largely from the Luo and the trade union movement.

In the summer of 1969 tensions increased between the Luo and the Kikuyu (and hence between the KPU and KANU) following the assassination of Tom Mboya, the most prominent Luo member of the Kenyatta cabinet. In October the KPU was banned. The government arrested all KPU members of parliament and a number of its prominent supporters. Mr. Oneko was detained at that time although no evidence has ever been brought to connect him with involvement in tribal disturbances.

In August 1970, several of the KPU members detained in the previous October were released. Detainees have been gradually released in small numbers over the past few months including the KPU leader, Mr. Oginga Odinga. Only three former KPU supporters now remain in prison.

Kenya's policy towards its detainees compares favourably with that of many other countries. We suggest therefore that in your postcards you congratulate President Kenyatta on the release of Mr. Odinga and most of the other KPU detainees, and ask for the similar release of Mr. Oneko.

Please send your cards to:- President Jomo Kenyatta, P.O. Box 30510, Nairobi, Kenya; or to the Kenyan Embassy in your country.

LEE Ao - TAIWAN

The diary of a popular young writer arrested in early April 1971 by the political police in Taiwan has reached his friends in the U.S.A. Apparently suspecting that he might one day be arrested, the writer, Lee Ao, sent some manuscripts abroad last year, including part of his diary. Some parts of the diary describe in humorous style the activities of the political police, who kept him under 24-hour surveillance for a year before his arrest, the intelligence agencies involved, and the questioning and arrest of his friends. Besides following him wherever he went, the political police are said to have planted a number of listening devices in his house. Mr. Lee told a friend that he removed one of the "bugs" and sent it to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations.

The 37-year-old mainland-born novelist and essayist is well-known for his satirical and humorous essays, in which he makes fun of individuals, institutions and society in general. A magazine he once edited called Wen Hsing (Literary Star) was closed by the government in 1965 and his works were banned. No official charges have been stated against him. We have heard of 228 arrests in recent months, and there is a wide-spread belief that Mr. Lee and other intellectuals are victims of an increasingly repressive political atmosphere: at this time the Nationalist Government faces an uncertain future because of the relaxation of tension between the United States and Communist China, and because of its own declining support in the United Nations.

Please send your cards to: Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, President of the Republic of China, President's Office, Taipei, Republic of China (Taiwan); or to the Head of the Taiwan Military Garrison Command, General Headquarters, Taipei.