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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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London, E.C.4.

June, 1965:

We have now come to the time when our first Card Scheme "Monthly Newsletter" is to be sent out. I hope by now that most of you will have received your Kits and that you have found them satisfactory. Those who have only sent their membership form back comparatively recently will not yet have received their Kit because by necessity of weight we have had to send them surface mail. However, rest assured they will be arriving and then work can commence in earnest. For the others work should start as soon as this Newsletter is received and digested.

We have thought it best to make a set date per month when the Newsletter should be sent out - and the date chosen at this office is the 15th of each month. If for any reason this date does not strike you as very suitable, do please send in suggestions - always bearing in mind, however, that it will be difficult to "please all of the people all of the time". We are aiming to give you as much information as we can about the three prisoners chosen each month - sometimes their cases become urgent, however, simply because we have little news of them and are therefore not able to give them out for "adoption" to the AMNESTY Adoption Groups - they would, therefore, were it not for your efforts, remain "forgotten prisoners".

Although the scheme has started well, you will all fully realise that the more cards the prisoners and governments receive the better will be their accumulative effect - we would ask you for this reason to do your best to "recruit" others. Please do not lose friends on our account though!

We have rather full information about the three prisoners chosen this month and the reasons for their detention. We have purposely selected countries that are covered in your Kit south Africa, Spain and Yugoslavia. This will make the beginning days straightforward and will thus give you more time to get to know your Kit and to study the information on the countries outlined in it.

Do please read the sample messages and always bear in mind that our purpose is not to aggravate the situation but to make the government concerned think about the prisoner and put them in a frame of mind that will make it logical to release not only the prisoner you are writing about, but also others in similar circumstances.

I hope you will grow more sure as the months pass by that you are taking part in a worth-while effort and one which will be appreciated by prisoners and their families for as long as they live - even though they may never have an opportunity of conveying their gratitude to you all.

ROBERT MANGALISO SOBUKWE:

Robert Mangaliso Sobukwe was arrested on March 21st, 1960, at Orlando Police station and after a trial in which he refused to recognise the validity of laws passed by an all-white unrepresentative Parliament, was sentenced to three year's imprisonment for "incitement". He served his three year sentence at Witbank Prison and was at the end of this time transferred to Robben Island Prison (sometimes called South Africa's "Alcatraz") to be detained administratively. The South African Government has just applied to Parliament to prolong indefinitely the law authorising this detention.

He is confined to a 40 by 35 yard compound surrounded by barbed wire. Many of the prisoners, including such well-known names as Nelson Mandela and Walter Susuli, spend their time sewing prison clothes. Mr. Vorster, Minister of Justice, said that he would keep Robert Sobukwe in jail "until just this side of eternity".

Robert Sobukwe was born at Graaff-Reinet in the Cape, South Africa, in 1924. He was the youngest of six brothers, and was educated at mission schools, at Lovedale, and at the University College of Fort Hare, where he was elected first President of the Students' Representative Council, under a new constitution in 1949, and from which he received a Teacher's Diploma. He became a teacher in Standerton, Transvaal, but was dismissed for taking part in the Congress Defiance Campaign of 1952. In 1953, he was appointed Languages Assistant in the Department of Bantu Studies at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, holding that post until March, 1960, when he resigned. During the years from 1955 he associated himself with the African National Congress and became the Editor of its mouth-piece "The Africanist". He left the African National Congress in 1958 and in April 1959 was elected National President of the new Pan-Africanist Congress. In 1960 he announced and organised a national Anti-Pass campaign, during which his followers would surrender themselves at police stations without passes under the slogan "No bail, No defence, No fines", and this led to the disastrous day at Sharpeville when the police opened fire upon a protest meeting, killing 67 people.

Robben Island's 1,329 inmates are all "non-white" and of these 1,000 are being held for "subversive offences".

Robert Sobukwe is married and has four children eagerly awaiting his return home when the South African prison authorities think his "indefinite" sentence should be terminated.

Your card expressing concern should be sent to Mr. Robert Sobukwe,
Robben Island Prison,
P.O. Robben Island,
CAPE, S. Africa.

If you wish to take any further action you might consider writing a letter (not aggressive) to the Prime Minister of South Africa asking that Robert Sobukwe be allowed to leave South Africa and take asylum abroad. The address is given in your Kit under South Africa.

STEVEN DOROSLOVAC:(Yugoslavia)

Steven Doroslovac was born in 1941 and lived until his imprisonment in Novo Miloseno, Vojvodina. He is, like 15,000, others in that country, a Nazarene. That means he is a member of a Christian religious sect which refuses to bear arms. Steven Doroslovac was sentenced in Belgrade to EIGHT years imprisonment and in addition ordered to pay a fine of 20,000 dinars. He is serving his sentence in the island prison, Goli Otok, where reports have been received about forced labour in quarries .

At first refusal the Nazarenes were given six month to three year sentences and when called up again the sentence was longer. In many cases this procedure was repeated over and over again up to the age of 30 years when the obligation to do military service ceases. Sometimes sentences were as much as ten years. Later, however, after the War Resisters' International (the movement for the protection of Conscientious Objectors) had approached the Yugoslav Ambassador in London in 1961, they were told that the law would be altered so that a Nazarene, having served one prison term, could not be called upon to do military service again. They were also told that the initial sentences were not to be lengthened because of this amendment. However, it was soon learned that some young men were serving sentences of six and nine years for Conscientious Objection and once more the Ambassador was approached and correct information was promised. This, however, was never sent.

There has been news that some Nazarenes are having ten year sentences imposed on them. Because of these heavy sentences many young Nazarenes, despite the dictates of their consciences, are taking up arms and accepting military service.

Cards asking for this young man to be included on an early amnesty list should be addressed to:

Deputy Chairman of the Federal Executive Council,
Veljko Zekovic,
Belgrade,
Yugoslavia.

If you wish to take further action, you may consider writing to:

President Tito (whose address is in Kit)

asking that a law should be enacted to provide alternative civilian service for conscientious objectors in Yugoslavia.

FATHER ALBERTO GABICAGOGEASCOA: (Spain)

Father Gabicagogeasca, is a Basque priest who was sentenced on 6th June, 1965, to six month's imprisonment in Madrid and fined the Spanish equivalent of about 170 dollars for preaching a sermon criticising the government's treatment of Basques.

The Prosecution had asked for a three year sentence and a fine of approximately 4,300 dollars on Fr. Gabicagogeasca, who is aged 28, He was charged with "illegal propaganda" in a sermon in November in the village of Ajurias near Bilbao. He was said to have accused police of maltreating village youths who had replaced a Spanish flag on a primary school building with a Basque banner. He also allegedly called for more freedom for Basque culture in Spain. The sermon was translated and circulated in other countries.

The mysterious sudden illness of the presiding Judge delayed the trial indefinitely when it was scheduled to be heard on May 13th. Among the witnesses for the Defence were some Roman Catholic priests, and 140 priests waited outside to attend the hearing. This "sudden illness" is sometimes used to delay trials and it is to be surmised that the presence of the priests was not welcomed. It was thought that seeing they had paid their fares to come all the way from Basque country for the trial, that if the trial was postponed in this way they could not attend again.

Many of the political prisoners in Spain are Basques and Catalans. They are frequently being sentenced to between six months and six years six months for "illegal propaganda and association". The Basque and Catalans languages were at one time banned and even now children are not allowed to be taught these languages in schools. Only certain periodicals are permitted in these languages. The Basques and Catalans people were formerly self-governing and consequently resent these restrictions. The clamping down on them has tended to make the people more united and the languages even more prevalent.

Your cards asking the Head of State to grant a pardon should be addressed to:

Senor Manuel Fraga Iribarne,
Minister of Information & Tourism,
MADRID,
Spain.

(We have received quite a lot of help and advice from S. Fraga in the past and in order to safeguard this source of information and means of intercession, we would ask you to be sure that your letters are non-aggressive and polite).

If you wish to take additional action you might consider writing to the Spanish National Tourist Agency in your country, expressing regret that a priest should be denied free speech in church in Spain.