

Sept
June 1966

THREES NEWSLETTER No. 14.

INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY 1966 - COPENHAGEN - An account of the Assembly will appear in the November issue of the Amnesty Bulletin. The resolutions accepted by the Assembly are enclosed. The reports and recommendations of the Committees will be circulated to all Groups within the next month.

NEWS FROM BRITISH SECTION

HUMAN RIGHTS DAY - Many of you will be in the middle of making preparations for the celebration of Human Rights Day. Plans here in London are well ahead for the national celebration at the Mermaid Theatre on Sunday 11th December 1966. The tickets will be limited as the theatre only holds 498 seats. Final details will be published in the next Bulletin.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY - On Sunday 9th October 1966, at 3 p.m. there is to be a Special Service for Voluntary Organisations working in the International Field. This is in connection with the 900th Anniversary of the Abbey's Foundation. We have been allocated 10 seats and if you wish to attend, please let us know immediately.

CANDLE BLOCKS - May we please urge the Groups who have borrowed the blocks from Head Office to return them immediately.

SPEAKERS' CONFERENCE - There will be a conference on Saturday 5th November 1966, in Kingsway Hall, Kingsway, London from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. We have many requests from organisations wanting speakers on Amnesty and there are a number of Group members willing to help. This is not intended to be a high-powered Conference for public speakers, but is designed to give assistance to those asked to address small local meetings. Head Office can cover travelling expenses if needed and limited overnight hospitality can also be found if necessary. A provisional programme is enclosed. Please let us know immediately names and addresses of members wishing to attend.

STUDENTS' CONFERENCE - This is a preliminary notice for University/College Students of a conference to be held during the weekend 19th/20th November 1966, most probably in Oxford. Fuller details later.

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY/INVESTIGATION DEPARTMENT

HUNGARY

We have received a letter from Dr. Eugene Benedek, Secretary General of the Hungarian Lawyers Association giving a list of the 34 letters he has received since June 1966 from Amnesty Groups about their Hungarian prisoners. He says that the International Red Cross at Geneva have also requested information from the Hungarian Red Cross and that the International Red Cross has now received information. He suggests that Groups should get in touch directly with the International Red Cross. We are asking the International Red Cross whether they are prepared to give such information to Groups, if in fact any detailed information has been sent by the Hungarian Red Cross, and will let Groups know as soon as the International Red Cross replies. Meanwhile we suggest that you should not, for the moment, write to Dr. Eugene Benedek.

INDIA

(Robert Swann)

Widespread hopes in India that Mrs. Gandhi would be persuaded on her election to lift the security legislation of October 1962 (The Defence of India Act, Ordinance and Rules - DIAR) seem now unlikely to be realized in the near future. By contrast a new Ordinance was promulgated on June 17th providing for 10 years' rigorous imprisonment for anyone found guilty of advocating, preaching or promoting secession in any part of India. Since, under the Preventive Detention Act of 1950 the government already had the power to detain people without trial should

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their actions endanger the security or defence of the country, the additional preventive detention powers of DIAR and the rigorous provisions of the new Ordinance would seem unnecessary in peace time. The Indian government would perhaps claim that they are justified by the continuing unrest or the government's fear of the threat of unrest in the disputed border areas of Nagaland, the Mizo Hills and Kashmir.

Only a few of the less important of the Kashmiri prisoners have, so far, been released. Discussions about the proposed release of the Kashmiri opposition leader, Sheikh Abdullah, who has now been detained without trial for over a year, have ground to a halt. For his colleagues and supporters there are similarly limited hopes of clemency. Two of these - Mirza Afzel Beg and Miss Mridula Sarabhi - have recently written to Amnesty members and have mentioned that, though detention itself is inevitably irksome, their actual conditions of detention are comparatively fair. Those who are in prison and not, as are these, under house arrest might however not agree with this statement.

(Elizabeth Gordon)

PAKISTAN

Pakistan now has similar security legislation to India although the Defence of Pakistan Rules appear to have been used not only to detain prisoners without trial but also severely to limit the freedom of public speech and of the press.

The separatist demands of the Awami League in East Pakistan have evidently caused alarm in West Pakistan. After a popular demonstration in Dacca in early June in support of the League's proposals for a referendum to determine the future of East Pakistan, widespread arrests have been taking place. Those arrested include Sheikh Kajibur Rahman, the leader of the Party, all other leading party officials and several journalists known to advocate autonomy regardless of their political affiliations. The best-known of these, Mr. Toffazal Hussein, also had his printing press seized and his newspaper, Ittefaq temporarily suppressed.

The actual numbers of prisoners are impossible to estimate and in the light of the general absence of information from East Pakistan it is also difficult to know how many of these arrested would be defined as "Prisoners of Conscience" in the Amnesty sense. Violence is by no means unknown amongst Pakistanis and the difference between a peaceful demonstration inspired by wholly non-violent ideals and a full-scale riot is sometimes remarkably small. On the other hand, indiscriminate arrests may be expected to take place wherever a government has and uses widespread arbitrary powers of preventive detention. For this reason, and in view of the difficulty of obtaining reliable information and contacts in Pakistan the Investigation Department would particularly welcome the assistance of any members with specialist or up-to-date knowledge of this part of the world.

(Elizabeth Gordon)

KENYA

The whole political picture in Kenya is rapidly changing, and it is with the greatest interest that Amnesty is studying the arrests and deportations made there recently.

The unrest started in April this year, when the then Vice-president, Mr. Oginga Odinga suffered a defeat in the Kenya African National Union (KANU) Party elections. Together with 29 other Ministers and M.P.s, he handed his resignation to President Kenyatta. Kenyatta answered by forcing the dissidents to stand for by-election. Mr. Odinga became the leader of a new opposition party - the Kenya People's Union (K.P.U.). In the by-elections the KPU managed to gain only 9 seats compared to 21 won by the KANU.

On May 30th 1966, the House of Representatives was asked to approve a bill to amend the Constitution, thereby giving the President powers to make special regulations in the interest of public security, (covered by the Preservation of Public Security Act). The Constitutional Amendments involved clauses dealing with the protection of the fundamental rights and freedom of the individual. The main amendments passed enable the President to invoke special powers similar to those

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provided by emergency regulations in many other countries with an internal security problem. Under the new bill only the President will be able to invoke these special powers, which will not be available for any deputy acting on his behalf.

The Bill was passed on June 6th, and was subsequently followed by the arrests of members of the KPU. Allegations have been made that 19 KPU members have been detained under the new legislation, but the Kenyan official figure is nine. Members of Amnesty met some Kenyan delegates at the Commonwealth conference in London recently and discussed the latest developments. An official letter has also been sent to the Kenyan Minister of Justice, Mr. Tom Mboya.

There has also been friction between different racial groups in Kenya, which resulted in the recent deportations of six Asians because "they had shown themselves by act and speech to be disloyal and disaffected towards Kenya". According to some sources the deportees were supporters of the KPU.

(Bengt Albons)

EAST GERMANY

The East German report has now appeared and is being distributed to all Groups with East German prisoners. As we had 110 of them on September 1st it will be appreciated that a contribution of 4/- from each Group (the price of the report) will go a long way towards helping cover some of the posts. Particular attention should be paid to the appendices on page 63 ff., where you will find paragraphs from the East German Supplementary Penal Code which mostly concerns Prisoners of Conscience.

Recently there have been quite a few releases of prominent prisoners, including Harry Seidel and Bruno Hirschmann; the former had been sentenced to life imprisonment for building a tunnel under the Berlin Wall.

(Bruce Laird)

U.S.S.R.

In the Soviet Union legislation has been passed, which, although allegedly intended to clarify the position of religion and believers, will in fact mean heavier sentences for such offences as teaching religion to minors and "performing acts with the object of giving rise to religious superstition among the masses of the people". The latter can obviously be interpreted fairly freely.

(Bruce Laird)

YUGOSLAVIA

There have been two main developments in Yugoslavia. The position of those Nazarenes imprisoned for refusal to bear arms has improved greatly since the beginning of this year. Official practice is now to release prisoners after only 5 years, whatever their sentence. Moreover, while serving their sentences on Goli Otok some Nazarenes have been allowed visits from their families to the island, and others have been able to go home for up to a fortnight during the latter part of their sentence. Working conditions have also radically improved, in that Nazarenes are no longer compelled to work in the quarries and are able to practise their trades even while in prison.

In the last few days the Yugoslav government has admitted that members of the security police were guilty of mistreatment of Albanians in the Kosmet. This confirms reports of torture and even death in prison which Amnesty has been receiving since 1964. The Yugoslav inquiry into this is part of the reform of the security forces which has taken place since the dismissal of Mr. Rankovic, and we very much hope that this will mean the release of those Albanian nationalists at present imprisoned in Pristina. Groups have been asked to write to the Yugoslav authorities as a renewed initiative on behalf of these prisoners.

(Stephanie Grant)

WEST GERMANY

West Germany has been in the news recently in both East and West due to the trial in Karlsruhe of the West German Communist Emil Bechtle, who had been kept in prison for 8 months awaiting his trial and Mr. Christensen of the Norwegian section agreed to go. He was well received by both the prosecution and the defence, and

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WEST GERMANY Continued

made some interesting contacts; the trial was attended by large numbers of journalists from both East and West Germany.

The verdict was one year's imprisonment, which was disappointing, but the eight months imprisonment before the trial are being taken into account. In fact he was allowed to go free provisionally to serve the four remaining months of the sentence. As with all the cases we deal with in West Germany he was convicted of working for the banned West German Communist Party.

(Bruce Laird)

SPAIN

A paper commenting on the present situation in Spain is now available from the Investigation Department. It clarifies the struggle which is taking place to some extent in Spain now and appeared recently as two leaders in "the Times". All Groups with Spanish prisoners have been sent this paper. Others are available for those who are interested.

All Groups with Spanish prisoners should continue to write to the authorities in Spain on behalf of their prisoners. The struggle between the authorities and the many opposition parties is becoming more open, particularly among the students, the workers and - more recently and most interestingly - among the junior members of the Catholic Church, particularly in Catalonia.

Wherever possible, if Groups know of trials or appeals in court of their prisoners, these should be attended by observers. In the recent past three observers have gone to trials, two from Groups and one briefed by the International Secretariat, and in each case foreign observers appear to have been not only appreciated, but also have helped some way towards more lenient sentences.

(Eva Blumenau)

INDONESIA

The Extraordinary Military Court (Mahmillub) is used very sparingly (about ten sessions in Djakarta so far and one or two in Medan and Djskarta), mostly to try military officers directly implicated in the September 10th affair. It is ad hoc and extra-constitutional, and its judgement is final, except for an appeal for clemency to the President. Its relation to the Supreme Court (in the new Cabinet no longer under the Executive) is undefined, a fact which slightly embarrasses army lawyers and infuriates civilian ones.

The defendant is allowed counsel, (normally this will be a communist lawyer, or one may be appointed by the court), and the trial is open to the press, although reports are carefully censored. The sentences have all been either death or life imprisonment, most of them the death sentence.

Clearly the court is primarily a political weapon, designed to keep the events of last September in the public mind and maybe, ultimately, to discredit Sukarno. So the Mahmillub is only a showpiece. Far more serious, however, because of the numbers concerned and the doubtful legality behind it, is the treatment accorded to thousands of PKI cadres and PTI (Peasants Front) officials, who do not even get a trial.

(Bridget Mellow)

SOUTH AFRICA Banished people.

The Human Rights Welfare Committee in South Africa, which until very recently was run by Helen Joseph, is carrying on its work for the banished people, though with difficulty. It is a legal, but not a registered Fund and may thus, by recent law, receive money from overseas. Thus, Groups which have banished people adopted, should send money to the Human Rights Welfare Committee, a/c No. 779520, Barclays Bank, D.C.20) Troye Street, Johannesburg, S.A. It should be state who the money is for.

NO ENQUIRIES ABOUT THE BANISHED PEOPLE OR ANY OTHER POLITICAL QUESTIONS MUST BE MADE THIS COULD DO THE COMMITTEE GREAT HARM.

IT SHOULD FURTHER BE NOTED THAT HELEN JOSEPH IN NO CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD BE CONTACTED BY GROUPS AS THIS MAY JEOPARDISE HER ALREADY DIFFICULT POSITION

(Benet Albons)

SOUTH AFRICA Comment

Headlines in the South African Sunday Times, "State pays ex-180-Day Detainees during their stay in Jail". The story goes on to say that "180 day detainees were paid the State Witness fee for all the time they were in jail". White witnesses - 15/-, Coloured, Asian, or Africans who are 'headmen or chiefs recognised by the government' - 7/6, 'Ordinary Bantu' - 5/-.