

monthly newsletter from amnesty international



postcards for prisoners campaign

DECEMBER 1970

This month's prisoners:-

Vladimir Mijanović - YUGOSLAVIA

Before his arrest Vladimir Mijanović, who is 24, was a postgraduate student at Belgrade University. He was active in student politics and was president of the Faculty Committee of the Student Union. It is thought that in his ideas Mijanović could be compared with radical student leaders in Western Europe, believing in a revitalised form of revolutionary socialism and being opposed to capitalism, social democracy and Soviet Communism.

In June this year he organised a hunger strike among Belgrade students as a gesture of sympathy for striking miners in the province of Bosnia and for other poor people who, he claimed, had not enough to eat. He then organised a demonstration against the American invasion of Cambodia and protested that Yugoslavia was importing U.S. capital and that the presence of Yugoslav workers abroad was supporting "American fascism". The most significant factor behind his arrest appears to be his actions in publishing a satirical student newspaper and distributing leaflets condemning the suppression of student newspapers and limitation on free speech. At his trial in mid-October this year Mijanovic was convicted of "maliciously and inaccurately presenting social conditions in Yugoslavia" and sentenced to 20 months imprisonment.

While there is a far greater degree of freedom of expression in Yugoslavia than, for example, in the USSR, the government has always taken decisive action against people who have opposed its policies in print - for example the imprisonment in former years of Djilas and Mihajlov. It is interesting that while these people met with little overt sympathy, the Mijanovic trial led to strikes at Belgrade university and some opposition from other sections of the population.

According to information given to the Amnesty observer at Mijanović's trial, he had been kept in solitary confinement in a dark cell with only two hours electric light a day. The last report states that he was removed to the prison hospital after a deterioration in his health caused by a hunger strike.

Please send cards to:

EITHER

His Excellency Josip Tito,
President of the Socialist Federal
Republic of Yugoslavia,
Bulevar Oktobarske Revolucije, 70,
Beograd,
Yugoslavia.

OR

The Minister of Justice of the
Serbian Republic,
Drzavni Sekretarijat,
Pravde Savezne Republika Serbia,
Beograd,
Yugoslavia.

General George Iordanidis - GREECE

Under an agreement between the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Greek Government the I.C.R.C. representative in Athens had the right to visit political prisoners who were serving their sentences in the prison. This agreement has now been cancelled by the Greek Government .

One of the prisoners whose health had been causing, and is causing, increasing concern is General George Iordanidis.

George Iordanidis, who is 68 years old, was a widely respected liberal officer. He was at one time Greece's representative at NATO. He first incurred the displeasure of the Colonels in a series of articles written in March 1967 (a month before the military coup), where he predicted the coup which took place a month later. He was arrested on the night of the coup and held for eight months without trial before he was released.

In September 1969 he was again arrested during investigations into a resistance group, The Democratic Defence, and was finally tried in May 1970. During the months before the trial General Iordanidis was held in an underground cell in Averoff prison. As no evidence could be produced against him, he was promised release, but three weeks later a court martial sentenced him to eight years imprisonment for being a member of the "Democratic Defence". No evidence was produced in court.

In August this year, General Iordanidis was transferred to the very old and till then unused prison of Corfu. Reports coming out of Greece indicate that he is kept in a basement cell with no window, no water and no heat.

As the general has angina pectoris and high blood pressure, and also eye cataracts he recently asked for a doctor. The Ministry of Defence, to whom he sent his request, never replied, but eventually a doctor visited him and recommended that he should be transferred immediately to a prison with better conditions.

A petition signed by 218 prisoners has been smuggled out of Greece. The petition is addressed to the I.C.R.C. and in it are listed the names of 17 political prisoners whose state of ill health is very serious. General Iordanidis is one of the 17.

Letters pleading for the immediate release of General George Iordanidis should be sent to:

EITHER

Mr. George Papadopoulos,
Prime Minister,
Palatia Anaktoria,
Queen Sofia Avenue,
Athens.

OR

Mr. Kyriakopoulos,
Minister of Justice,
Socratous and Piraeus Street,
Athens.

Ntsu Mokhehle - LESOTHO

Mr. Mokhehle is leader of the Basutoland Congress Party, the principle political party of Lesotho (formerly Basutoland). Aged 52, he was born in Lesotho and completed his education at the University College of Fort Hare in South Africa. He was an active member of the African National Congress Youth League during his residence in South Africa in the late 1940's, and returned to Lesotho as a teacher to found that country's first modern political party, the Basutoland African Congress, in 1952.

Mr. Mokhehle led the independence movement in Basutoland during the 1950's and his party won a majority of all seats in the District Council Election of 1960. He was also active in the Pan-African movement and travelled widely in Africa and Europe. Pan-Africanism to Mr. Mokhehle represented tiny Basutoland's only hope of escaping from the overwhelming economic and political influence of South Africa.

At the 'independence election' of 1965 Mr. Mokhehle's party, the Basutoland Congress Party (BCP) was narrowly defeated by Leabua Jonathan's Basutoland National Party (BNP). The BCP formed a powerful opposition party, highly critical of the regime's increasing dependence on South Africa. When it appeared that the elections held in January 1970 were going to be a victory for the BCP, Prime Minister Jonathan intervened in a 'coup d'etat', cancelling the elections and declaring a State of Emergency in Lesotho. BCP leaders and supporters were imprisoned, and large numbers of people are still being held without trial, including Mr. Mokhehle. Some inconclusive talks were held during the spring between Prime Minister Jonathan and Mr. Mokhehle and other party leaders, but they ended when the British Government re-opened diplomatic relations with the Jonathan regime during the summer.

The BCP has throughout the crisis instructed its members not to resort to violence, and to operate only through constitutional means. During the years in opposition (1965 - 1970) the BCP suffered from internal divisions. Mr. Mokhehle, however, remained its leader and now enjoys the support of all anti-BNP factions - especially since the events of January 1970.

As leader of his party, Mr. Mokhehle at first enjoyed certain privileges in detention. He was moved from his cell to an official house in the prison yard (enabling the Lesotho authorities to describe his detention as 'house arrest'). His wife and children were allowed to visit him. This has since been stopped and he is now forbidden visits by his personal doctor. There are disquieting reports about his state of health, due perhaps to the prison diet. He has been subjected to lengthy interrogations: being a prominent figure, he has escaped the physical ill-treatment apparently received by other prisoners. There have also been subtle attempts to disgrace him in the eyes of BCP adherents and to create rifts between him and the deputy leader of the BCP, who is also under house arrest at his residence.

Mr. Mokhehle has declared himself fully prepared to negotiate a way out of the present BNP-BCP stalemate. So far, all discussions have been between the Prime Minister, Leabua Jonathan, and his prisoner, Mr. Mokhehle. His release is essential before any thought of a settlement can be entertained. It is for this reason that we have chosen to publicise his case rather than those of many others held without trial in Lesotho's prisons.

Please send your cards to:-

EITHER

Prime Minister,
Chief Leabua Jonathan,
Prime Minister's Office,
Maseru,
Lesotho.

OR

Commissioner of Police,
Maseru,
Lesotho.

News about prisoners who have been on this campaign:-

Farrokh Negahdar - Iran (February 1970). Released October 1970.

Dr. Abdul Rahman Al-Bazzaz -- Iraq (August 1969) has been released.

Father de Andrade -- Portugal (Angola) (September 1970). The trial of Father de Andrade and other Angolans accused of support for the Angolan liberation movement, MPLA, which was scheduled for November has been postponed and no new date has been fixed.

Bob Eaton -- U.S.A. (November 1970) -- has been refused parole because the Parole Board considers him "a threat to society".

Salia Jusu -Sheriff -- Sierra Leone (December 1968). The trial of Salia Jusu-Sheriff, a released prisoner, on charges of incitement has been adjourned sine die; that is, without a date being set for its resumption. In effect this means that the prosecution is unwilling to press the charges against him.

Oto Filip -- Czechoslovakia (October 1970) -- was released on November 4th.

Rudolf Battek -- Czechoslovakia (May 1970) -- was released in mid October, although it is not clear whether proceedings against him have been dropped or not.

Ludek Pachman -- Czechoslovakia (October 1969) -- is reported to have been freed although his imprisonment caused a mental breakdown, for which he is now receiving treatment in a psychiatric hospital.

THE AMNESTY NEWSLETTER

It was decided at the International Council Meeting in Oslo in September that AIR -- the quarterly Amnesty International Review -- should be discontinued. We are therefore circulating as a separate document the decisions of the International Council Meeting, which would have appeared in the November 1970 edition of AIR.

The quarterly review is being replaced by a monthly Newsletter which will incorporate the Postcards for Prisoners Campaign material. Besides giving the three prisoners of the month and news of other prisoners the Newsletter will provide regular notes on the work of the International Secretariat. In this way we hope to provide a more up-to-date information service for members, groups and national sections. To compensate for the loss of the more general background articles which formerly appeared in AIR the Annual Report will be expanded to cover events more widely than in the past.

The first edition of the Newsletter will be produced in January 1971.

Members who subscribe directly to the International Secretariat will in future pay £3 a year. For this subscription they will receive the Newsletter each month. They will also receive the decisions of the International Council and the Annual Report.

Groups will also receive the Newsletter, the decisions of the International Council Meeting and the Annual Report, and the charge will be covered by their group subscription. Where it can be arranged groups will receive the Newsletter through their national section. Other groups will receive it direct from the International Secretariat.

National sections will be able to obtain copies of the newsletter in bulk, in English, at 2/- a copy. They may prefer to re-stencil it or distribute a translation to their individual members. If so, they can purchase a single copy of the newsletter for this purpose for a charge of 6s per year per member. Each national section will decide on the subscription rate for its own members.

Postcards for Prisoners

The change-over in publications does not, of course, mean that there is any major change in the Postcards for Prisoners Campaign. We hope that more members than before will now take part in this. The only alteration in procedure is that the International Secretariat is no longer providing special cards, and members are asked to use their own cards or write letters. However, some sections may still decide to supply cards to their members.

It will be appreciated if as many sections as possible take over the responsibility of servicing their Card Campaign members. The Secretariat will arrange with the sections concerned for the transfer of membership records. A leaflet providing instructions for the Card Campaign -- with sample messages -- is being printed and will be sent to sections. This will replace the "kit".

We should be glad if national sections would communicate the contents of this note to their members as soon as possible.

Martin Ennals
Secretary General.

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London E.C.4.

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