

monthly newsletter from amnesty international

postcards for prisoners campaign

July 1968

Here is some news about previous prisoners:

Father Frantisek Kucera, Czechoslovakia (January 1968) is reported to have been released in that same month. However, in spite of the recent democratisation, five Catholic priests and one layman are still held in the prison at Valdice near Jicin, a fact deplored by the Czech paper 'Lidova Demokracie' on June 26th.

Wole Soyinka, Nigeria (November 1967). There have been persistent rumours that Wole Soyinka is dead. Writings have been smuggled out of prison purporting to be his, but his wife has said the style is not her husband's. Whether or not this is true, Mr Soyinka has not been seen by his friends, family or by the general public since November and this is causing considerable concern. Please write again to the Nigerian authorities (either to General Gowon or to the Nigerian Ambassador or High Commissioner in your own country) urging them to allow Mrs Soyinka to be allowed to visit her husband so that these disturbing rumours may be quelled.

Yury Galanskov, U.S.S.R. (December 1967) is reported to be seriously ill. After his trial, while still in the Lefortovo Prison in Moscow, he was suffering from stomach ulcers. Since being moved to a corrective labour camp near Ozerny in the Mordovian autonomous republic, his condition has worsened and it is reported that fellow prisoners are afraid for his life. According to information available he is being denied medical attention and the special diet normally prescribed for his condition. Disturbing reports of the systematic undernourishment of prisoners in the Mordovian camps reinforce fears for Yury Galanskov's health.

Sheikh Majibur Rahmar, Pakistan (January 1968) is now being tried on charges of involvement in a conspiracy to bring about the secession of East Pakistan by force. The trial is expected to last several months and no appeals should be made on his behalf while the trial is sub judice.

Low Tai Thong, Singapore (March 1968) The government has now forbidden Mr Low to receive letters from abroad. His only remaining contact with the outside world is through his mother, who is still allowed to visit him once a fortnight.

Captain Howard Levy, U.S.A. (July 1967). Members of the Roger Baldwin Foundation of A.C.L.U. had visited Fort Leavenworth in early April when Dr Levy was still in 'disciplinary segregation'. As a result of their visit Dr Levy was restored to normal prison status the following day and the Army promised not to read their correspondence with Dr Levy in future. His mail is still censored, however, and apart from letters from authorised correspondents, very few letters are passed on to him. Dr Levy is now eligible for parole, should the Army see fit to grant it.

Here are this months prisoners:

Dora Constantinou, Greece.

Dora Constantinou is 21 years old. She is a student at the High School of Commercial Studies in Athens. On 9th December 1967, she was arrested by the police and taken to the Asphalia in Piraeus, just outside of Athens. She was interrogated under torture for some time and later transferred to the big Athens prison, Averoff, where she is still held. No formal charge has been brought against her, nor has she appeared in court, although it is now seven months since her arrest. She is reported still to bear physical and psychological marks from her interrogation.

Miss Constantinou appears to have fallen under police suspicion solely because of her friendship with a man thought by them to have been active in political opposition to the Government. In early December he was arrested and Miss Constantinou went immediately to his house so she could look through his papers and remove any which might endanger him, before the police came to make an official search. When the police arrived, they heard from his family that she had been to the house and promptly arrested her too.

In prison she has been accused verbally of having belonged to left-wing organisations before, as well as after, the 1967 coup by which the present Greek Government took power. She has been asked to sign a Declaration of Loyalty renouncing all left-wing beliefs, but has consistently refused to do so. This may be the reason for her continued detention.

Letters should ask for Miss Constantinou's immediate release, or for a trial before an open court.

Send your card to:

EITHER

The Minister of Public Order,
Mr P. Tzevelekos,
3 Setembriou Street,
Athens,
Greece.

OR

The Greek Ambassador
in your own country.

Professor Sukirno, Indonesia.

Professor Sukirno is Indonesia's leading histologist (Histology is the study of the minute structure of the tissues of organisms) and before his arrest was Professor of Histology in the Medical Faculty at the University of Indonesia in Djakarta. He was arrested towards the end of October 1965 and since then has been held in Salmeba Prison, Djakarta. He has not been tried and no formal charge has ever been brought against him. His health is reported to be bad.

The presumed reason for Professor Sukirno's arrest is that he was Chairman of the H.S.I. (the Indonesian Scholars' or Intellectuals' Association), a Communist-affiliated organisation, but one which also received government subsidies, for example, the government provided money for it to

establish a library. Professor Sukirno is a Javanese Muslim and is not a member of the Communist Party, although he may have been a sympathiser. He is a man of considerable social prestige, highly cultured and steeped in both Javanese and European (particularly French) culture. He speaks and reads English. Professor Sukirno is married and has several children. His wife is a member of Wanita Murba - WANU - the women's section of the Murba (Proletariat) Party in which the Foreign Minister, Adam Malik, was for long a leading member.

If Sukirno were released, this might well pave the way for the release of other members of the H.S.I. Many of these people are under detention for reasons which would not now be considered cause for arrest. Since people who have a similar marginal involvement in the Communist movement would not be arrested in Indonesia today, there is a reasonable hope that detainees might be released.

Send your card to:

EITHER

President Suharto,
Sekretariat Negara,
Djalan Veteran 17,
Djakarta,
Indonesia.

OR

The Foreign Minister, Adam Malik,
Depatemen Luar Negri,
Djalan Pedjambom,
Djakarta,
Indonesia.

Georgi P. Vins, U.S.S.R. (Ukraine)

which Georgi P. Vins is a pastor in the section of the Russian Baptist Church broke away from the official All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists in 1961, in protest at the increasing state control over its religious life. In 1963 his congregation in Kiev elected him as its representative on the dissident "Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists". After this Pastor Vins began to experience difficulties of all kinds - vicious attacks on him in the Soviet press, threats of arrest, his wife even lost her job.

On May 17th 1966, about 500 dissident Baptists called on the Central Committee of the Communist Party to present a petition asking for a halt to the persecution of Russian Christians by the State. The petition was accepted, but a request for an interview with Mr Brezhnev was refused. The gathered Baptists resolved to wait, hoping that the interview might after all be granted. After more than 24 hours the gathering was broken up forcefully by the police and many people were arrested. Two days later Pastor Vins went back to ask for their release and was himself arrested. The following November he was tried in secret in Moscow and sentenced to 3 years corrective labour, according to Article 142 of the Penal Code. The precise charges are not known, but among other things he was probably accused of having given religious instruction to children.

In February 1968 the same Kiev congregation composed a letter which was sent to official Soviet governmental bodies and to the press. The papers did not print the letter, but copies of it reached the West last month. It appears that Vins was sent to a labour camp in the Ural Mountains in February 1967. Although a qualified electrician and engineer, he was not allowed

to do this type of work and instead was set to dragging logs from the forest for the construction of railway buildings. Each day he had to walk 9 kilometers under guard through the mountains from the camp to the work site. According to reports the daily diet of the prisoners consists of poor quality food with a nutrition value of between 1900 and 2400 calories. By the end of the first year Vins was suffering from exhaustion, heart disease and hernia trouble, while his body was covered with boils. In spite of his poor state of health, he was refused exemption from work.

This news dates from February. In the meantime Vins' condition may have improved, he may still be struggling along as best he can or he may have died. There is great concern about him because there have been cases where imprisoned Baptists have died during their imprisonment in unknown circumstances.

Send your cards to:

EITHER

Mr Alexei Kosygin,
Chairman of the Council of Ministers
of the USSR,

Kremlin,
Moscow,
U.S.S.R.

OR (to the Camp Commandant)

Permskaya oblast,

g. Kizel,

p/o Taly,

I.T.K. Taly,

zamestitelyu nachalnika Tesovu,

U.S.S.R.

George P. Vins, U.S.S.R. (Ukraine)

which George P. Vins is a pastor in the section of the Russian Baptist Church... In 1953 his congregation in Kiev elected him as its representative on the district Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists. After this pastor Vins began to experience difficulties of all kinds - attacks on him in the Soviet press, threats of arrest, his wife even lost her job.

On May 17th 1966, about 500 dissident Baptists called on the Central Committee of the Communist Party to present a petition asking for a halt to the persecution of Russian Christians by the State. The petition was accepted, but a request for an interview with Mr. Brezhnev was refused. The father of Baptists resolved to wait, hoping that the interview might after all be granted. After more than 2 1/2 hours the gathering was broken up forcefully by the police and many people were arrested. Two days later Pastor Vins went back to ask for their release and was himself arrested. The following day he was tried in secret in Moscow and sentenced to 5 years corrective labour, according to Article 141 of the Penal Code. The precise charges are not known, but among other things he was probably accused of having given religious instruction to children.

In February 1968 the same Kiev congregation composed a letter which was sent to official Soviet governmental bodies and to the press. The papers did not print the letter, but copies of it reached the West last month. It appears that Vins was sent to a labour camp in the Ural Mountains in February 1967. Although a qualified electrician and engineer, he was not allowed