

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



MISSIONS

Egypt: Mr. John Platts-Mills Q.C. left London for Cairo on 16 September on a ten-day Amnesty mission. In Egypt he will be talking to defence lawyers and members of the tribunal which is conducting the trial of former Vice-President Ali Sabry and 90 others on charges of conspiracy. It is hoped that he will be able to go on from Cairo to Khartoum in order to discuss with the Sudanese Government and other interested parties the fate of persons arrested following the abortive coup in July. Mr. Platts-Mills will return to London on 25 September and a report of his findings will be in the November newsletter.

Ceylon: On 17 September Lord Avebury flew to Colombo to ascertain the facts about the imprisonment of some 14000 persons detained since the Emergency in March; and official plans for their release and trial. Lord Avebury is a well-known member of the British Liberal Party. The costs of his mission are being covered by the British Section.

ORGANISATION

Latin America: Tracy Ulltveit-Moe has taken over the Latin American desk at the International Secretariat. Tracy is an American, married to a Norwegian, and has been in Britain for the past two years. She studied Latin American affairs at Stanford University, California, and at Columbia University in New York. Tracy replaces Inger Fahlander, who has returned to Sweden for a sabbatical year. It takes time to learn, so groups are asked to be patient should there be some delays.

Greece: The following story comes from an Amnesty group member who recently visited Greece:- "A Greek political prisoner, who was on Amnesty's Christmas card list, received more than 100 cards. They were passed on to the prisoner because the prison-commandant was new and did not know the prison-rules. The other political prisoners, seeing the cards, asked why they had not been sent Christmas cards from Amnesty too. Consequently the prisoner who had received the cards decided to distribute them; and that Christmas every cell in the prison had an Amnesty card with the barbed wire and candle symbol. Later, the commandant realised what was happening and stopped passing on the cards. But a released prisoner said that as a boost to morale the effect of the cards was tremendous."

German Section: The German Section has published its plans for action during Prisoner of Conscience Week. They include: theatre, music or political cabaret; co-operation with churches; lectures; auctions and bazaars; information desks; school lessons; advertisements in newspapers; and press statements. For the Tenth Anniversary all German groups were asked to collect signatures from the population to show support for Amnesty's work. The groups worked in various ways, going from door to door, going into schools and churches, or setting up information desks in streets and universities. Some groups asked at newspapers and radio stations and others went to party meetings or to their local authorities. Altogether about 24000 signatures were collected, and letters reporting this were sent to the ambassadors of countries where political prisoners are held.

Rhodesia: We have learnt that the Review Tribunal, established in 1969, is to sit again in November this year. Last year it recommended the release of two prisoners and the conditional release of another 23. As before, Amnesty will make representations to the Tribunal for the release of all detainees. Since the Minister of Justice has indicated that no acknowledgement will be given to individual Amnesty groups, we suggest the groups concerned write to the International Secretariat, giving the case for the release of their adopted detainees. We will incorporate all information in a general memorandum. In addition groups might like to consider ways of passing their evidence to influential persons or organisations who are in a position to make submissions to the Tribunal.

Indonesia: The Indonesian Government has announced firm plans to release six thousand detainees by the end of September and a further twenty-two thousand by the end of this year. The official figure for the total number in detention - 45,000 - is considerably lower than Amnesty's estimate. This new policy was announced in the middle of August, by happy coincidence a few days after the publication of the Memorandum sent to President Suharto by Amnesty in February: in this, Mr. Sean MacBride had urged the release of all detainees except those who were to be charged with criminal offences and tried.

Iran: A large number of Heads of State are visiting Iran this month to celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire; and this is an appropriate time to raise the subject of political prisoners in Iran. Amnesty International has fifteen adopted prisoners in Iran. A list of their names has been sent to all National Sections for publicity purposes and this list, together with a covering statement, has also been sent to Heads of State on the Iranian Government's official invitation list. Amnesty has suggested to the Iranian Government specific steps to improve the situation. In order to provide the minimum protection for political prisoners during the period of pre-trial investigation, regular visits should be made by civilian magistrates. We also suggested that prisoners convicted by military courts should be allowed an automatic right of appeal to a civilian court. Amnesty has drawn attention to the article of the Iranian Civil Code which lays down penalties for officials responsible for causing physical harm to detained persons; and we are questioning the continuing use of military courts to try civilian defendants, a practice which is technically against the Iranian Constitution.

South Vietnam: A committee has been formed in South Vietnam to attempt to improve penal conditions. Named the Committee for the Reform of the Penitentiary System of South Vietnam it has set itself a far-reaching programme. It is demanding the release of all untried and acquitted offenders together with those who have completed their sentences, those who have received suspended sentences, juvenile offenders, old and disabled convicts and pregnant women. It calls for the end of unlawful arrest and imprisonment, and the abolition of torture. And it is requesting rehabilitation policies and prison reforms. Not content with making requests to the authorities the Committee has set up its own centre for ex-prisoners where it provides medical aid and other services. The Committee needs extensive funds and would welcome support from abroad. Details are available from the West German Amnesty Specialist Group on South Vietnam: Miss Monika Dressler, 53 Bonn, Wolfstrasse 32, Western Germany.

South Africa: Much newspaper publicity has been given to the trial of the Rev. Gonville French-Beytagh, the Dean of Johannesburg, who is adopted by a German Amnesty group. Less publicity, however, has been given to the trial of the 13 alleged members of the Unity Movement, reported in previous newsletters. A third case has received no press publicity at all. This is the case of six Africans, mostly professional workers, in the Orange Free State who are charged with membership of the Pan Africanist Congress, a banned organisation. Although they were arrested in May, Amnesty is only now beginning to get information about them, and so far none has been adopted. In the light of these trials, groups with adopted prisoners in South Africa are asked to be extremely cautious. All overseas mail is liable to police scrutiny and any individual in South Africa who distributes relief money or works for political prisoners runs the risk of prosecution. Groups should therefore not write indiscriminately to South Africa for information or assistance. Letters should only go to people who have indicated through the International Secretariat that they are willing to receive mail referring to our work.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

DUSAN HAMSIK: "Writers against Rulers. The Position of Writers in Czechoslovakia in 1967." Hutchinson 1971. £2.00. PHYLLIS AUTY: "Tito - a Biography." Longmans 1971. £3.00. UNITED NATIONS: "Apartheid in Practice." U.N. Publications 1971. 25p, but a limited supply available free on request from the International Secretariat. LIONEL KOCHAN (ED): "The Jews in Soviet Russia since 1971." Published for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, London, by Oxford University Press 1970. £2.50. NATAN LERNER: "The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination - a Commentary." Published for the Institute of Jewish Affairs, London, in association with the World Jewish Congress, by A.W. Sijthoff, Leyden, 1970. £2.10.

POSTCARDS FOR PRISONERS CAMPAIGNNews of Prisoners who have been on this Campaign:-

Vladimir Mijanovic - Yugoslavia (December 1970). His release has been confirmed.

Eleftherios Tsakos - Greece (May 1971). We have now heard that Mr. Tsakos' health is deteriorating even further and that it is imperative for him to be transferred to hospital in Athens. He has received no treatment since his operation at the beginning of the year.

Bob Eaton - U.S.A. (November 1970) - was reported due for release from Sandstone Prison on 10 September. We are awaiting confirmation that his release did in fact take place.

THIS MONTH'S PRISONERS:-Councillor Abu KANU - SIERRA LEONE

After a disputed election in 1967 a military coup overthrew the post-independence civilian regime in Sierra Leone. Military rule lasted just over twelve months and ended when another coup resulted in the return to power of Mr. Siaka Stevens, whose All People's Congress (APC) had in fact won the 1967 election. In 1968 and 1969 tension grew between the APC and the opposition Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) which had ruled the country from 1961 to 1967. During 1970 a number of APC members became dissatisfied with the government and a new party, the National Democratic Party (NDP) was formed, stirring up opposition to the APC with news-sheets and meetings. A crisis came in September when two cabinet ministers resigned from the government. Another new party was formed, called the United Democratic Party (UDP) and including most former NDP members as well as the new dissidents within the government ranks. There were violent clashes between APC and UDP supporters in various parts of the country. This crisis culminated in the banning of the UDP by the government, the Declaration of a State of Emergency, and the arrest of most of the UDP leaders. Writs of habeas corpus were denied, and those detained were held without trial.

Councillor Abu Kanu, a prominent UDP sympathiser and a member of the City Council of Sierra Leone's capital, Freetown, was one of the persons detained during a series of arrests early in October 1970. He was imprisoned in Pademba Road Prison, Freetown, along with other UDP members. Later that month the National Assembly ratified the State of Emergency, and the Emergency Regulations permitting imprisonment without trial were renewed in March and June of this year. Although some UDP members and leaders have been released, Councillor Abu Kanu and over forty others remain in detention.

Please send your cards to: President S.P. Stevens, State House, Freetown, Sierra Leone; or, Hon. L.A.M. Brewa, Attorney General, Attorney General's Chambers, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Father Julen CALZADA - SPAIN

Assistant priest of Yurreta-Duranzo (Viscaya), Father Julen CALZADA is serving two sentences of 10 and 12 years respectively in the special priests' prison of Zamora, Spain.

In May 1969 five priests from the Bishopric of Bilbao - including Father Calzada - went on hunger strike to draw attention to the suffering of the Basque people and to the torture of detainees at police stations. They appealed to the Minister of Justice that the Law of Banditry and Terrorism (under which political offences can result in heavy prison sentences by military courts) be abrogated and that the International Red Cross be allowed to investigate the allegations of torture; and urged the United Nations to condemn breaches of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For this they were accused of provoking rebellion, and Father Calzada was sentenced to ten years' imprisonment.

While serving his first sentence in Zamora, Father Calzada was summoned to the December 1970 Burgos Court Martial to be tried - together with 14 other Basques - a second time under the Law of Banditry and Terrorism, in connection with the 1968 shooting of Meliton

Manzanas, police chief of San Sebastian and notorious for the torture of prisoners carried out at his command. Police evidence during the Court Martial was used to prove that Father Calzada had maintained contact with the banned Basque nationalist organisation ETA, and was therefore indirectly implicated in Inspector Manzanas' murder. The true facts of the case have never been made satisfactorily clear, and there is considerable doubt that even those defendants accused of being indirectly responsible for the crime were actually guilty. In any event, Father Calzada himself did not participate in violence. However, he was found guilty of "aiding military rebellion" and was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment.

In April 1970 Father Calzada and 12 other priests in Zamora addressed a letter to the Minister of Justice, the Papal Nuncio and other civil and religious authorities declaring their rejection of a rumoured special amnesty for them or of any kind of treatment not also applied to all other political and social prisoners in Spanish jails. In accordance with their stand, therefore, appeals to the officials listed below for this prisoner's release should be accompanied by pleas on behalf of all Spanish prisoners of conscience.

Please send your cards to: General Francisco Franco Bahamonde, Head of State, Head of Government and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Palacio del Prado, Madrid, Spain; or Vice-Presidente del Gobierno, Admiral Luis Carrero Blanco, Madrid, Spain.

Bohumír KUBA - CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Bohumír Kuba is an engineer and school teacher from the industrial town of Moravska Ostrava. He is 46 years old. During the German occupation of Czechoslovakia he fought with the Resistance (he served in the partisan brigade led by Jan Žižka) and after the war he was decorated for his services. Little is known of him until 1968, when he became active in the reform movement of the Dubček period. He is reported to have organised a meeting in the town of Koprivnice in April 1968 where prominent members of the reform movement unveiled a statue of T.G. Masaryk, the first president of the Czechoslovak republic. Mr. Kuba is also reported to have been instrumental in the renaming of Lenin Square in the town of Nový Jičín to Masaryk Square.

The invasion of Czechoslovakia by armed forces of the Warsaw Pact countries did not put an end to the reform movement immediately, although those active in it found themselves in increasingly difficult circumstances. Bohumír Kuba was arrested in July 1970. It appears that the case against him was based on a private conversation in which he had criticised the presence of Soviet troops in Czechoslovakia.

At his trial in June 1971 Bohumír Kuba was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for alleged sedition. A letter which reached Amnesty International from a "Czechoslovak Socialist Society" stated that he had been arrested because of his political activities during the reform period. Mr. Kuba has a wife and four children. Please send your cards to:

EITHER

Gustav Husák,
First Secretary of the Central Committee
of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia,
Praha 1,
Nové Město,
Nábřeží Kyjevské Brigády 12,
Czechoslovakia.

OR

The Local People's Council in Ostrava:-
Místní Národní Výbor,
Moravská Ostrava,
Czechoslovakia.