

monthly newsletter from amnesty international



postcards for prisoners campaign

April 1970

First some news about prisoners who have been on this Campaign:

Noureddine Ben Khader, Tunisia, (July 1969). Mr. Ben Khader was fortunately among the nine Amnesty prisoners released by the Tunisian Government on 20th March. All the prisoners adopted by Amnesty in Tunisia have now been released.

Mrs. Solveig Körner, East Germany (November 1969), was released from prison on March 12th this year. This release was quite unexpected. Her health is reported to be reasonably good.

King Moshoeshoe, Lesotho (February 1970). It is reported that King Moshoeshoe has arrived in Holland where he is to live for an indefinite period. The Lesotho High Commission in Britain has stated that the King is in Holland "to rest and relax and looked forward to returning to his country after six months." The High Commission stated specifically that the King had not abdicated. Allegations have been made that the King left Lesotho under duress and did not believe that he would ever be allowed to return under the present regime. King Moshoeshoe had been under house arrest in Lesotho since Chief Jonathan, the Prime Minister, seized power on 31st January.

Dr. Abiezeri Kyabasinga Kibaya, Uganda (June 1968). Dr. Kibaya has been re-arrested, again without charge, under the preventive detention legislation. Large numbers of Baganda who were arrested previously have been re-detained in the months following the unsuccessful assassination attempt on President Obote's life. The trial of five men accused of taking part in the attempted assassination is currently proceeding. (All five pleaded guilty before the trial opened. None of them were previously known politically and all are of very humble origin).

Major-General Pyotr Grigorevich Grigorenko, USSR, (August 1969). A diary, said to have been kept by Major-General Grigorenko in prison, was published in extract form in Paris on 2nd April. The diary describes the ill-treatment he received after he went on hunger strike in June 1969. He mentions beating, blows deliberately aimed at a war injury and forcible feeding. In February this year a Tashkent court found him guilty of anti-Soviet activities but 'insane'. He is now reported to be detained in a mental hospital in Kazan. His family and friends reject the charge of insanity and maintain he is detained for his defence of the right to freedom of expression and opinion. Please renew your appeals for Major-General Grigorenko.

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This month's prisoners:-Dr. Fransisco Salgado ZENHA - PORTUGAL

Dr. Zenha, aged 45, is a well-known lawyer who has defended many political prisoners in Portugal. He was arrested at his home on the 19th February 1970 and has not yet been brought to trial. The reason given for his arrest was that he had "persisted in holding a meeting at the Faculty of Law in Lisbon, where he would deliver a lecture on 'colonial policy'". This was the first political arrest since Dr. Caetano came to power 18 months ago.

One of the most brilliant lawyers in Lisbon, he was a Socialist Party candidate in the elections last autumn. He is a prominent member of the political group of which Mario Soares, the Delgados' family lawyer, is the best-known leader. Dr. Zenha, who has been imprisoned several times by the Salazar Government, is the theoretician of the CEUD (Electoral Committee of Democratic Unity) which grew out of the old moderate democratic and socialist opposition movement. On the 5th anniversary recently of the disappearance of General Delgado, a group of Portuguese lawyers including Zenha signed a protest demanding that an inquiry be made into the murder of General Delgado and his secretary. This may have been one of the reasons for his arrest.

Dr. Zenha is the author of a number of legal works dealing with human rights issues. One of these is a book called 'Quatro Causas' which contains the documents relating to four political trials and raises the question of the 'security measures' which allow the Portuguese authorities to hold political prisoners after the completion of their sentences on the advice of the secret police. This book was confiscated by the authorities. Other books published by Dr. Zenha, whose titles are self-explanatory, are:- "Application of security measures without crime" (1967); "The University - a case of disciplinary expulsion" (1967); "Notes on criminal instruction" (1968); "Statute of press" (Lisbon 1968); "5th Trial. - Catholics and the Rights of Man".

After Caetano came to power it was hoped that the regime might become more liberal. A few changes have been made but the liberalisation is more apparent than real. Arrests have started again, and are becoming more numerous. Recent arrests have on the whole been connected with the campaign against conscription and the wars in the Portuguese colonies of Angola, Mozambique and Portuguese Guinea, in which students have been particularly active. Dr. Zenha has strongly and publicly opposed Portugal's present policy in Africa.

Send your cards asking for the nature of the charges against him to:

EITHER

Presidente de Conselho
Prof. dr. Marcello Caetano,
Lisbon,
Portugal.

OR

The Portuguese Embassy in your country.

Miss LOW Miao Gong - SINGAPORE

Miss LOW Miao Gong, who is 36, was the full-time, paid secretary of the Singapore Journalists' Union and at the time of her arrest in October 1963 was a Member of Parliament. She had previously been arrested in 1956 and released in 1959 when Lee Kuan Yew became Prime Minister.

Miss Low is a member of the Barisan (Socialist) Party, the main opposition party in Singapore. She has now been held without charge or trial for more than six years. There was a certain amount of violence in Singapore at the time of her arrest in 1963 and the authorities might reasonably have been suspicious of many of their opponents. Nothing, however, has been proved against Miss Low nor has any direct evidence been brought against her.

Miss Low's arrest needs to be seen in the general political context. In 1963 Singapore was part of the Malaysian Federation to which the Barisan was bitterly opposed. Since the Indonesian Government actively opposed the Federation and armed raids were being made into Malaysia, the Barisan were in effect allies of a national enemy at this time.

Roughly 120 members or sympathisers were detained in February 1963. In October, partly as a protest against these detentions, the Barisan together with the Singapore Association of Trade Unions organised an illegal general strike. Seventeen of the organisers were arrested. Miss Low was one of them. It is alleged that she has been subjected to three weeks or more of solitary confinement on more than one occasion. She has apparently been informed that if she will agree publicly to denounce her former views she will be released. She has also been threatened that if she does not co-operate she will be detained "until her hair grows grey".

Send your cards to:

EITHER

His Excellency Lee Kuan Yew,
Prime Minister of Singapore,
City Hall,
Singapore 6.

OR

His Excellency Lim Kim San,
Minister of Interior and Defence,
Pearls Hill,
Singapore 2.

Dr. Johannes BRAUN - EAST GERMANY

Dr. Braun is a dentist, aged 60, who was arrested in Zwickau in June 1969 and charged with helping his daughter to leave East Germany illegally. He was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment.

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His daughter Beate wanted to marry a West German and settle down in West Germany. It is almost impossible for East German citizens to obtain permission to emigrate to Western countries, and most people who go to the West must do so illegally. Miss Braun travelled legally to Czechoslovakia where she was met by her fiance who managed to smuggle her across the border to West Germany.

The basis of the charge against Dr. Braun was that he aided the escape by (a) going with his daughter to Zwickau Town Hall to collect her exit visa, and (b) by transporting her luggage in his car. It is not know whether he was aware of his daughter's plans. However, Amnesty International regards as prisoners of conscience all those who help East Germans to get to the West illegally, providing that no violence or financial gain are involved. The East German ban on travel outside the communist countries by their own citizens clearly conflicts with the basic right to freedom of movement guaranteed by the Declaration of Human Rights.

Dr. Braun appeared confused at his trial and unable to answer properly the questions put to him. In addition to his prison sentence confiscation was ordered of his car and of his money to the extent of 27,000 DM.

Dr. Braun has now been detained for nine months. His health is poor and he remains disabled from war injuries. He has lost weight dangerously since his imprisonment.

All applications by relatives for a reduction in sentence have been refused.

Send your cards to:

EITHER

Walter Ulbricht,
Vorsitzender des Staatsrates der DDR,
Berlin-Niederschönhausen,
Ossietzkistrasse,
German Democratic Republic.

OR

Kurt Wünsche,
Minister der Justiz,
DDR 108 Berlin W 8,
Clara-Zetkin-Str. 93,
German Democratic Republic.