

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWSLETTER



MISSIONS

Turkey: On 29 January Mr. Muir Hunter Q.C., went as Amnesty's representative to Ankara where he met the Turkish Minister of Justice, Professor Suat Bilge. Mr. Hunter explained Amnesty's terms of reference and raised topics such as capital punishment and inhuman treatment during interrogation. During his stay in Ankara Mr. Hunter also had the opportunity of talking to the Turkish Director of Information and of meeting people outside the government. His report is being sent to all National Sections and Turkish prisoners of conscience are to be adopted by Amnesty.

Northern Ireland: The International Executive Committee has decided that the report of the Amnesty Commission of Enquiry should be sent to the British Government and then published. The exact publication date is not yet known, but it will be within the next month.

Sudan: Mr. John Platts-Mills Q.C., who travelled to Cairo last month on behalf of Amnesty, was not able to obtain a visa for the Sudan, where he had hoped to carry out a further mission.

ORGANISATION

International Executive Committee: The International Executive Committee met on 4 - 6 February: a report will be sent to National Sections. The next meeting is to be held on 7 - 9 April and National Sections will receive a draft agenda.

International Council Meeting: This year's International Council Meeting will be held in Holland from 8 - 10 September. It will be preceded by a Treasurers' meeting on 7 September and an International Executive Committee meeting. The International Council is largely for delegates from National Sections, unlike the International Assembly, and is only open to a limited number of observers. We hope that all National Sections will arrange to be represented.

New groups: There have been a considerable number of new groups formed in recent weeks and at the same time an exceptional number of adopted prisoners have been released. Both of these events are welcome but one result is that at present there is a shortage of case sheets for groups.

Note to groups with prisoners in Paraguay: Four prisoners in Paraguay have recently been released. Apparently one of them, Antonio Sotomayor, an Argentinian adopted by Amnesty, was freed after someone spoke about him to the Argentinian ambassador at a cocktail party. Another prisoner was helped in the same way, while a third was released because her son was able to speak to the President. The details of the fourth prisoner are not known to us. Telegrams and letters of congratulation to the Paraguayan authorities might result in further releases (for official addresses see the background paper which has been sent to groups). Include a special plea for similar clemency on behalf of your prisoner, and for the release of ten women prisoners whose cases, we understand, are shortly to be reviewed.

Amnesty-sign: The German Section has produced a white cotton banner with the words Amnesty International written on it in black. The size is 3.34m by 0.49m and the cost DM25. Address of the German Section: 2 Hamburg 52, Cranachstr. 39.

Luxembourg Section: The new address of the Luxembourg National Secretariat is: 63, av. Gaston Diderich, Luxembourg, LUXEMBOURG. The secretary is M. Antoine Seck.

Chronicle of Current Events: The first issue of the Chronicle this year will go out soon, and we should be glad if groups and National Sections renewed their subscriptions at their earliest convenience and tried to get new subscribers. We should like to interest members of Communist Parties and other socialist organisations in this Amnesty publication.

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(Secretary General: Martin Ennals - Director of Research: Zbynek Zeman - Executive Secretary: Martin Enthoven)

Prisoners on Zanzibar: Groups receiving letters from prisoners or their relatives on Zanzibar should not assume that it is safe to send an answer. These letters are sent out under cover and a direct reply would endanger the recipient. On receipt of any such letter please consult the International Secretariat for advice.

COUNTRIES

Greece: On 21 April it will be five years since the military coup took place in Greece. It has been decided that Amnesty should mark the day with a request for a general amnesty for all political prisoners in Greece. Further details will be sent to all National Sections.

United States: A re-trial has been ordered in the case of Lee Otis Johnson, a black American sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment for passing a marijuana cigarette to an undercover policeman at a party. Johnson was one of the prisoners chosen for Amnesty's Prisoner of Conscience Week, 1971, because his sentence was so long as to suggest racial persecution. A federal district court in Houston has now ruled that 32-year-old Johnson must be re-tried before the end of April or given his freedom. The Judge declared that Johnson's trial should have taken place in a different city because of the hostile feelings in Houston's white community, and he noted that the unusually long sentence indicated that some outside influences had affected the jury. He also listed several trial errors, including denial of a request by the defence to examine jurors privately, dismissal of a motion to quash the entire jury panel, and denial of the change of venue motion. It has been reported that the district attorney's office will either appeal this ruling, or re-try the case.

In the case of Angela Davis, a German journalist who is attending the trial has agreed to act as an Amnesty observer.

Togo: The news of the release of all political prisoners has been confirmed.

South Korea: We have received a report from our representative in South Korea who observed the second trial, at the Appellate Court in Seoul, of 17 people charged with "espionage" and "inciting the people against the government". One of the main defendants was in hospital and will be tried separately. The result on the other cases was announced on 31 January: a principal defendant had his death sentence commuted to life imprisonment; a 15-year sentence was cut by half, and two others were substantially reduced. Amnesty had appealed both by letter and through the observer. In the light of the little evidence presented in court to substantiate the charges, the sentences still appear extremely high.

South Africa: There are now only 10 Africans still in banishment under the terms of the Bantu Administration Act, 1927, according to a reliable source. At one time there were 120. Most of those originally adopted by Amnesty groups have now returned to their homes. The power to banish political opponents has been conferred on chiefs by the South African government; but a chief may banish his 'subject' only to a place within the same Bantu Homeland. The banished man remains among friends and people of his own language group, and is not deprived of his family. He does not suffer the same hardships as were imposed on the original 120 in the early 1960's.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

ATHENIAN: "Inside the Colonels' Greece". Translated and with an introduction by Richard Clogg. Chatto and Windus. London. 1972. £1.00 paperback, £2.50 hardback. GORBANEVSKAYA, NATALYA: "Poems". Also the transcript of her trial, and a report on her prison. Edited and translated by Daniel Weissbort. Carcanet Press. Pin Farm, South Hinksey, Oxford. 1972. 90P paperback, £2.00 hardback. GORBANEVSKAYA, NATALYA: "Red Square at noon". Translated by Alexander Lieven. Andre Deutsch. London. 1972. £2.95. GRANT, G.C.: "The Africans' predicament in Rhodesia". Minority Rights Group Report No. 8. London. 1972. 30P. REDDAWAY, PETER (ED): "Uncensored Russia". The annotated text of the unofficial Moscow journal 'A Chronicle of Current Events'. Jonathan Cape. London. 1972. £5.00.

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

Eleftherios Tzakos -- Greece (May 1971), was released on 20 December, 1971, and is at present in hospital in Athens for an urgently needed operation.

Fernando Granados Cortes -- Mexico (December 1971), was released on 20 December, 1971.

Alexander Ginsburg -- USSR (February 1967). Alexander Ginsburg returned to Moscow in January after completing his five-year prison sentence for "anti-Soviet activities".

Mihajlo Mihajlov -- Yugoslavia (November 1966), who was released in 1970, was sentenced at the beginning of February 1972 to 30 days in prison for writing in the New York Times. Banned from publishing his articles in Yugoslavia for four years after his release, he maintained that he had the right to publish abroad.

This month's Prisoners:-Roberto FLUXA Reyes - CUBA

Unfortunately, we have very little information about this prisoner. It is difficult to obtain details on Cuban prisoners and even reports of numbers are vague and conflicting. What is of greatest concern about Roberto Fluxa is the length of his sentence: he was sentenced in 1961 to 15 years, which means that he is not due for release until 1976; and there is no guarantee that he will be freed even then.

Although the exact charge against him is not known it is clear that he was one of the many caught up in the events following Castro's revolution. Fidel Castro and his followers overthrew the regime of Fulgencio Batista in January 1959. Little more than a month after assuming power, the new government replaced the Constitution as such by the Fundamental Law, incorporating the Laws of the Sierra Madre. These provided, among other things, for a governmental programme to promote workers' rights, public order, freedom and progress, and the punishment of all Cubans guilty of collaborating with the Batista regime. Revolutionary tribunals were set up and a vast number of former military and civil officials were sentenced to long terms of imprisonment or execution. The defendants also included persons who had no direct roles in the dictatorship but were accused of "counter-revolutionary activities" - which ranged from suspected disapproval of the government and the increasing influence of the Communist Party to acts of armed rebellion. In spite of the very real threat to the Revolution, both within Cuba and abroad, there is no doubt that the accused had minimal opportunity to defend themselves; and many were condemned on the basis of inconclusive or non-existent evidence. The trials took place in the midst of a great deal of publicity, protest and confusion and it is likely that at least some of those who remain in prison today are innocent.

Roberto FLUXA was probably charged with "attempts against the security of the State". His case was brought to Amnesty's notice in August 1962 by the Cuban Christian Democrat Movement who told of some 15 members of Catholic Action apparently arrested in Oriente for anti-Castro activities. The prisoner has a wife and two children, aged 10 and 11, now in the U.S.A. According to his wife he is not allowed to receive correspondence, visits or food from outside. He is held in Boniato-Oriente (East Cuba) prison.

Please send cards to: Prime Minister Fidel Castro, Havana, Cuba; or to the Minister of Justice, Alfredo Yabur Maluf, Havana, Cuba.

Guilio HASSAN - LIBYA

Guilio Hassan is a 31-year-old engineer with a wife and two small children. A Jew, he was arrested 'for his own protection' at his home in Tripoli in September 1969. The background is that on 1 September the pro-Western constitutional monarch, King Idriss, was overthrown by a military coup led by Colonel Khaddafi, a fervent Moslem and nationalist. Xenophobic -- particularly anti-Israeli -- feelings ran high and Mr. Hassan was the victim of an attack

by a group of local Moslems. Two days later he was taken from home by security officers, and after a week he telephoned friends to say that he was in Bab Ben Gashir prison. After vigorous campaigning for her husband's release, Mrs. Hassan finally received a reply from the authorities saying that no charges were to be brought against him but that he was being detained for his own protection. In prison, he was, however, asked whether he had ever visited Israel and whether he had a radio transmitter. Mr. Hassan has neither been to Israel nor owned a transmitter: he is in no way politically motivated.

Mr. Hassan has not answered any letters from his family. Attempts to telephone him from Rome have been unsuccessful and medicine sent by his father in Italy has been returned. His wife and children, who after the arrest suffered insults and attacks by neighbours, joined his parents in Rome in September 1970. For some time, his family was inhibited from seeking outside assistance because they believed that previous efforts to enlist help had resulted in harsher treatment for the prisoner. At a recent meeting with the Libyan Ambassador in London, the International Secretariat was assured that group intervention would not be detrimental to prisoners in Libya. We have been informed by the Chief Justice in Libya that any information about this case must come from the Chief Prosecutor's office. Therefore, please send your cards, protesting at the length of time that this prisoner has been held without trial, to: Mr. Omar El Mheshi, Director, Prosecutor-General's Office, Libyan Arab Republic, Tripoli, Libya; or His Excellency Colonel Mu'ammr El Khaddafi, Chairman of the Libyan Revolutionary Command Council, Prime Minister, Commander General of the Libyan Armed Forces, Libyan Arab Republic, Tripoli, Libya.

Gerassimos NOTARAS - GREECE

Mr. Notaras, who is 36, is married with no children. He studied at the Ecole des Sciences Sociales et Politiques, Geneva, and then obtained his PhD at the University of Lausanne, where he also taught as an Assistant Professor over a period of eight years. He was the co-author with Professor Jean Meynaud of the book Les Forces politiques en Grece. Returning from Switzerland to Greece in 1966 he worked as a research fellow at the Centre of Sociology Studies in Athens.

He was arrested in Athens in late October, 1967, and was eventually brought to trial in a Military Court with 20 other people. According to an Amnesty observer at the trial most of the charges against these people were not proven and the main allegations concerned publications produced by the organisation Democratic Defence, of which Mr. Notaras and some of the other defendants were members. A member of the International Commission of Jurists was also present at the trial as an observer and it was stated at the time that the trial violated many articles of the Convention of Human Rights. Mr. Notaras submitted a written statement during the trial claiming that he had been tortured during the course of the interrogations. The most remarkable aspect of the case was perhaps the fact that after marshalling all the evidence against the 21 defendants, the prosecutor only requested the conviction of four of them. Mr. Notaras was one of these and he was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. He is now held in Trikala prison, Trikala, Thessaly, among common law prisoners. The conditions in this prison are known to be very bad. Please send your cards to: H.E. Mr. George Papadopoulos, Prime Minister, Palaia Anaktora, Queen Sofia Avenue, Athens; or H.E. Mr. Anghelos Tsoukalas, Minister of Justice, Socratous and Piraeus Streets, Athens.