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Amnesty International
British Section
Director: Cosmas Desmond

Nobel Peace Prize Winners 1977

GROUP:

6 April 1981

Michael Alexander Esq
Foreign Affairs Private Secretary
to the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

20 Queens Gardens
Ealing
London
W5 1SF

Dear Mr Alexander

Visit of Prime Minister of Romania: Mr Ilie Verdet

I understand that Mr Ilie Verdet, the Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Romania, will be a guest of Her Majesty's Government from 13 to 15 April 1981, and that he will meet the Prime Minister during his visit.

As you may know, Amnesty International is concerned about a number of human rights issues in Romania, and I have asked the Romanian Embassy in London whether it will be possible for members of Amnesty International (British Section) to meet Mr Verdet during his visit to this country to discuss these issues with him.

I would be very grateful if you could bring the attached briefing on human rights issues in Romania to the attention of the Prime Minister before her meeting with Mr Verdet. I realise that she has much to read and that I am sending this to you rather late in the day. But I would urge you particularly to ask the Prime Minister to raise the points on Father Calciu's imprisonment and the cause of the Jiu Valley miners with Mr Verdet. For her to do so could be of inestimable benefit to the people concerned.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Kennedy
(Executive Council, British Section, Amnesty International)

mk/dw

Copy sent to Mr E A J Ferguson, Foreign Office



Nobel Peace Prize Winners 1977

GROUP:

BRIEFING FOR THE PRIME MINISTER

POINTS TO RAISE

CASES

1. FATHER GHEORGE CALCIU-DUMITREASA

Concern at reports that Father Gheorge Calciu-Dumitreasa is on a hunger strike in Jilava Prison Hospital in Bucharest, despite poor health, in protest against his continued imprisonment and prison conditions and treatment. Urge that he be immediately released, both on grounds of ill-health and because he has been imprisoned for exercising his fundamental human rights.

2. SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS

Ion Anghel, Petre Anghelus, Viorel Ardelean, Lucian Bistriceanu, Mircea Dragonir were sentenced to imprisonment for refusing to perform military service on Saturdays (their Sabbath). They have been sentenced, by military courts, for insubordination, not as conscientious objectors.

3. CASES OF IMPRISONED WOULD-BE EMIGRANTS

Gerhard Kloos, Dumitru Ciocoi-Pop, Franz Heiberger, Matthias Hui, Anton Kampf, Josef Noll, Constantin Petrisori, Ioan Schira, Wilhelm Schlee, Ion Stefan.

4. THE JIU VALLEY MINERS

Ask whether miners who took part in the Jiu Valley strike of August 1977 are still being held under restrictive regulations. If so, urge that these restrictions be removed.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN ROMANIA

Ask if the following abuses of human rights are taking place in Romania:

- (i) the penalisation of Romanian citizens, in particular the imprisonment of would-be emigrants, Non-Conformist religious activists and human rights activists, who attempt to exercise internationally recognised human rights in a non-violent manner, by means of a) imprisonment, b) confinement in psychiatric institutions, c) forced labour (the last, officially termed 'corrective labour without deprivation of liberty',

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- being an alternative to imprisonment);
- (ii) cruel, inhuman and degrading conditions of imprisonment, including maltreatment of political prisoners;
- If so, urge that these practices be stopped forthwith.

BACKGROUND NOTE

FATHER GHEORGE CALCIU-DUMITREASA

1. Amnesty International (AI) understands that Father Gheorge Calciu-Dumitreasa, a prisoner of conscience adopted by AI, is an orthodox priest and was a lecturer at Bucharest Orthodox Seminary until he was dismissed in May 1978 for criticising atheist state philosophy. Father Calciu, now aged 53, was a political prisoner from 1949 to 1964.
2. On 10 March 1979, Father Calciu was arrested. His arrest coincided with that of two of his acquaintances who were spokesmen of members of an unofficial trade union movement which had declared as its aim the protection of human rights, particularly those related to work.
3. After his arrest, Father Calciu was reportedly forced to sign a declaration concerning a meeting he had had with a foreign journalist. On 10 May 1979, he was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment on charges of conspiracy in connection with the transmission of 'information which endangers state security'. Father Calciu is reported to have been on hunger strike since 11 November 1980, the date of the opening of the CSCE conference (Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe) in Madrid. He has been held in Aiud prison, and is reported to have been held in isolation for long periods, deprived of heating and adequate clothing during winter, and to have had his food ration severely reduced on several occasions. As a result of this treatment, his health is reported to have been severely undermined.
4. The Romanian authorities have accused the unofficial Free Trade Union of Romanian Workers, founded by a group of intellectuals and workers from Bucharest and Turnu Severin in February 1979, of being a fascist organisation. However, the demands of this movement have no connection with fascist ideology, but are demands for the respect of basic human rights, in particular, those associated with work conditions. After the broadcast of the movement's manifesto on a foreign radio station in March 1979, there was widespread arrests of members. The authorities have also claimed

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that Father Calciu was a member of the Romanian war-time fascist movement, although they have not attempted to demonstrate a valid link between these alleged activities and his present imprisonment.

NOTE

5. AI has welcomed the release in November of Gheorge Brasoveanu and Dr Ionel Cana, founder members of the unofficial free Trade Union movement and would urge that a similar clemency be shown to Father Calciu-Dumitreasa.

THE JIU VALLEY MINERS

6. AI understands that in August 1977 a strike took place among miners of the Jiu valley in south western Romania. The strike started on 1 August 1977 in the town of Lupeni, some weeks after a new Government pension scheme was introduced. Delegates of the miners submitted a petition to the Communist Party and state officials requesting the cancellation of the new pension scheme, the improvement of working conditions and job security, the replacement of the existing mine managers, free working clothes, the abolition of fines which amounted to a significant portion of the monthly wages for not fulfilling work norms and abolition of unpaid compulsory labour.
7. According to the information received by AI, President Ceausescu visited the area and promised substantial improvements in the miners' conditions. However, it has been reported that the promised reforms did not take place. On the contrary, it has been alleged that up to 4000 miners were later dismissed from their jobs, many of them being transferred to other mines. Those who had played a prominent part in the strike, in particular a twenty-member delegation that went to Bucharest to request an audience with the Communist Party Central Committee, were arrested on their return and sent without trial to work in other districts where they were demoted and put under police surveillance. AI understands that the two leaders of the strike died, one in a car accident and one allegedly in a street shooting, within a short time of the strike. It appears that neither accident was properly investigated by the police. Another source has claimed that many of the miners were diagnosed as mentally ill, pensioned off, and deprived of their rights to work.
8. In September 1978, AI took up the cases of 24 named miners who, according to the information available, had been forcibly resettled.

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HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN ROMANIA

9. Romanian authorities have told AI in the past that, although human rights abuses took place during the post-war Stalinist period, the situation has changed under the present leadership. However, AI continues to be concerned about a number of human rights issues in Romania:

- (i) AI believes that decree 153/1970 of Romanian law, which allows people to be imprisoned for up to six months on charges of 'social parasitism' (ie. refusal to take up employment or follow a course of training) is being applied to people who are not voluntarily leading a 'parasitic' life but who have attempted non-violently to exercise their human rights in a manner not approved by the authorities; in particular, would-be emigrants who are involuntarily unemployed through having been dismissed from their jobs as a reprisal for having applied to emigrate, religious dissenters and signatories to appeals drawing attention to violations of human rights in Romania.
- (ii) AI has stated publicly that a number of dissenters have been confined, in the majority of cases for periods of up to two months, to psychiatric hospitals for their non-violent exercise of their basic human rights rather than for authentic medical reasons and has cited specific cases in this respect. AI further believes that, in other cases, dissenters have been dismissed from their jobs and pensioned off as 'mentally unfit';
- (iii) The migration laws and the restrictions which may face those who seek to emigrate may also result in convictions for social parasitism when a person loses his post after having filed an application to leave the country. A number of persons have therefore felt constrained to attempt to leave the country illegally and have been imprisoned for this. In this context, AI is concerned about the applicability in Romanian law of the right to leave the country as provided under the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
- (iv) AI believes that, although in recent years, relatively few cases have been brought to its attention of persons sentenced to imprisonment on explicitly political charges, it is also clear that political and other dissenters have not ceased to be persecuted or prosecuted, but that they increasingly tend to be charged under non-political articles which ostensibly do not relate to their exercise of their human rights, such as

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- social parasitism, disturbance of the peace, and homosexuality;
- (v) AI has received, and continues to receive, numerous allegations that, during pre-trial detention and interrogation, the accused has been beaten and threatened by members of the State Security forces. These allegations occur with such regularity and from such a variety of sources that AI is compelled to conclude that police brutality is condoned by State authority;
- (vi) Finally, AI believes that, in some cases, satisfactory legal procedures are not adhered to during pre-trial detention - in particular, access to a defence lawyer of the accused's choice - or during the trial itself - dissenters have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment after a summary trial held in camera.