

Slavs enslaved in Yugoslavia

Amnesty International pointed to a sharp increase in the number of people imprisoned in Yugoslavia for criticizing official policies or expressing opinions disapproved by the authorities on Wednesday.

In a detailed new report, *Yugoslavia: Prisoners of Conscience*, the human rights organization noted that official figures showed political prosecutions had nearly doubled in 1980 over the previous year to 553; since then the number had risen sharply again, as more than 800 ethnic Albanians were convicted after nationalist demonstrations in Kosovo Province last year.

Many of the political prisoners in Yugoslavia were convicted under vaguely worded laws which punish expression of opinion.

While a majority are jailed for one or two months, Amnesty International stressed the severity of the sentences given to many, ranging up to 15 years in some cases.

Among those convicted of

non-violent political offences who were adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience or were under investigation for possible adoption, the average sentence was seven and a half years in prison, the report pointed out. Amnesty International worked for 65 adopted prisoners in 1981 and was investigating 25 other cases, but it believes there are many more prisoners of conscience.

People have been imprisoned under a law against "hostile propaganda" for comments they were alleged to have made in private conversations, for poems or articles and for interviews given to the foreign press.

The 50-page report includes descriptions of the laws under which political offenders were convicted — often in contradiction of Yugoslavia's commitments to international human rights agreements. It describes political trials in which defence evidence is often excluded, prison conditions which can leave the prisoners health damaged, and the problems of earning a living which face

some of the released prisoners. The prisoners include members of many of Yugoslavia's varied national or ethnic groups, often accused of expressing nationalist sentiments, clergy, and advocates of political change or simply of freer discussion.

Among them, for instance, is Dobroslav Paraga, a 20-year-old law student from Zegreb who helped collect signatures for a petition to the government for an amnesty for political prisoners. Arrested without a warrant, he later said he was deprived of food for five days while the security police questioned him and threatened to kill him. During this period, he signed a confession, which he later retracted. Evidence said by the authorities to show he had contact with an emigre and took part in "hostile propaganda" was said to have been found at the home of a friend. The friend was also arrested and, according to the police, committed suicide three days later. Dobroslav Paraga is serving a five-year prison sentence.

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For more information, contact the Student Awards Office (252 Athabasca Hall, 432-3221) or Elizabeth Lunney, Students' Union Vice-President Academic (259 Students' Union Building, 432-4236).

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