

International  
Women's Year  
1975



# UKRAINIAN WOMEN IN SOVIET PRISONS

NINA STROKATA-KARAVANSKA

IRYNA STASIV-KALYNETS

STEFANIA SHABATURA

IRYNA SENYK

NADIA SVITLYCHNA-SHUMUK

ODARKA HUSYAK

MARIA PALCHAK

AMNESTY FOR WOMEN  
POLITICAL PRISONERS

# UKRAINIAN WOMEN POLITICAL PRISONERS — A CASE FOR AMNESTY

The Ukrainian woman has historically played a central role in the development of her nation. She was not only the cornerstone of the family, but also the protectress of culture, tradition, and language. All Ukrainians had reason to welcome the declaration by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1972, that 1975 would be International Women's Year. But for Ukrainians, IWY could become meaningful only if it would serve as a source of hope for those Ukrainian women who are political prisoners in the Soviet Union.

Their exact numbers are not known, but Ukrainian women comprise two groups of political prisoners. There are those who participated in the national liberation movement during and after World War II. Some have served 25-year sentences and returned home. Many did not survive the Soviet concentration camps—on the night of June 25, 1954, 500 Ukrainian women were crushed by tanks in the political prisoners' camp in Kingir, Kazakhstan. Others are still imprisoned for such "crimes" as the organizing of Red Cross units for the Ukrainian resistance.

The more recent arrests and imprisonment of Ukrainian women grew out of their participation in the cultural and national rebirth of the 1960's and early 1970's. Political prisoners in the fullest sense of the term, these women are imprisoned because they wrote appeals in defense of Ukrainian intellectuals arrested by the KGB (secret police) and, in two cases, because they refused to denounce their arrested husbands.

The continued imprisonment of these women and the persecution of others in the Soviet Union for political reasons is in conflict with the spirit of IWY and incompatible with the Soviet Union's role as one of the principal supporters of the UN declaration. It is on these grounds that we base our appeal for amnesty for Nina Strokata-Karavanska, Iryna Stasiv-Kalynets, Stefania Shabatura, Iryna Senyk, Nadia Svitlychna-Shumuk, Odarka Husyak, and Maria Palchak. In asking for the support of world opinion on their behalf, we offer the following arguments:

- (1) These are women who reached a very high level of self-actualization, the principal objective of IWY, only to have their achievements voided by their imprisonment.
- (2) The treatment they received at the time of their arrests was brutal and demeaning, their sentences extremely harsh.
- (3) Conditions in the concentration camps have seriously undermined their health. Three of the women have discovered breast tumors and fear the possibility of cancer; yet diagnosis and treatment are denied them. Iryna Senyk has been an invalid since the time of her first imprisonment, from 1944 to 1954.
- (4) Iryna Stasiv-Kalynets and Nadia Svitlychna-Shumuk have been taken away from those who need them most—their children.

Both have husbands who are also political prisoners, and so the children have been growing up without parents. (5) Those Ukrainian women arrested in the 1970's are imprisoned for activity which was legal, for exercising rights guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution and the UN Declaration of Human Rights, to which the USSR is a signatory. On the other hand, the cases against them were fabricated, their trials closed and illegal.

## AN APPEAL TO THE UNITED NATIONS

The imprisoned Ukrainian women themselves look to the nations of the world for justice. On May 10, 1973, three of them, inmates of a hard-labor camp for female political prisoners in the Mordovian ASSR, the Russian Federation, sent the following letter of protest to UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim:

*To the Secretary-General of the United Nations:  
An appeal.*

*Stefa Shabaturo, born in 1938, sentenced to five years of prison camps and three years of exile, artist from Lviv.*

*Nina Strokata-Karavanska, born in 1925, sentenced to four years in prison camps, scientific researcher from Odessa.*

*Iryna Stasiv-Kalynets, born in 1940, sentenced to six years in prison camps and three years' exile, poetess from Lviv.*

*The day of January 12, 1972, marked the beginning of a new wave of repressions against Ukrainian intellectuals. We are being persecuted and imprisoned only because we, as Ukrainians, speak out in defense of the preservation and development of Ukrainian culture and language in Ukraine. All the arrests carried out in Ukraine during that year constituted violations by the Soviet government of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.*

*We are helpless against the lawlessness of the Soviet courts. We have been sentenced illegally and are presently confined in the Soviet political concentration camp No. 3 in the Dubrovlag complex in Mordovia. We are not guilty of a single charge that has been brought against us. We are not asking for any favors, only for a real, just, and open trial with the mandatory participation of a representative of the United Nations.*

*May 10, 1973, Barashevo.*

\* \* \* \* \*

The following are short sketches of those Ukrainian women imprisoned in Soviet concentration camps as of March 1975 whose names are known. Also included is the story of Alla Horska, who was murdered, presumably at the instigation of the KGB.

### ALLA HORSKA

(1929 - 1970)

Under conditions of forced Russification in Ukraine, many Ukrainian families exist in a totally Russified environment. It was into such a family that Alla Oleksan-



**ALLA HORSKA**

a stained-glass panel for the foyer of the Kiev State University. This panel was destroyed by Soviet authorities prior to its unveiling and resulted in Alla's expulsion from the Artists Union of Ukraine. The remainder of her life was spent in dedicated work in the field of Ukrainian culture and in the persistent defense of arrested Ukrainian intellectuals, on whose behalf she wrote many letters of protest to Soviet authorities. She herself was interrogated by the KGB and expelled a second time after reinstatement into the Artists Union. After 1968 she became active in defense of imprisoned Ukrainian historian Valentyn Moroz. On November 28, 1970, Alla Horská was murdered under circumstances which led to the widespread conviction that the crime was politically sanctioned. Her funeral became a mass gathering of Ukrainian intellectuals, many of whom were arrested for political reasons within the next two years. The underground journal *The Ukrainian Herald* dedicated its entire fourth issue to her memory.

## **IRYNA STASIV-KALYNETS**

**Sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment, 3 years' exile**

Born in Lviv in 1940, Iryna Stasiv attended and graduated from the University of Lviv, after which she became a teacher and subsequently a lecturer on Ukrainian literature and language at the Lviv Polytechnical Institute. During this period, she wrote numerous poems and stories for children. She met and married Ihor Kalynets, a young and talented poet, and together they became involved in the movement for cultural and human rights in Ukraine. As a result, Ihor was arrested during the 1965-66 wave of arrests against Ukrainian intellectuals, and although he was released without trial, he was prevented from publishing his works. Iryna was also unable to publish, though she had not been arrested.



**IRYNA  
STASIV-KALYNETS**

Furthermore, in 1970 she lost her job as lecturer at the institute. While working as a weaver in a textile factory, she continued to speak out with her husband in defense of Ukrainian political prisoners, especially in the case of Valentyn Moroz. Throughout 1971, Iryna Stasiv-Kalynets was unable to hold a job and in early 1972 she was ar-

rested. In July she was tried on a charge of "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" and received a sentence of 6 years in labor camps and 3 years of exile. Though in poor health, she has participated in hunger strikes by women protesting conditions in the labor camp. She suspects she might have breast cancer, yet proper medical attention has been denied her. A few days after her trial, Iryna's husband was also arrested and their daughter Dzvinka is being cared for by relatives.

## STEFANIA SHABATURA

Sentenced to 5 years' imprisonment, 3 years' exile

Stefania Shabatura was born in 1938. Her tapestries have been acclaimed throughout Ukraine and especially in the Kiev press. Her exceptional artistic talent has been acknowledged in an entry in the *History of Ukrainian Art*. However, a December 1971 exhibition in Kiev was the last occasion where Shabatura's works were publicly shown. She fell into official disfavor because she had allegedly introduced political motifs into her tapestry art and because she became vocal in defense of Valentyn Moroz, arrested for the second time in June 1970. Stefania Shabatura petitioned to be allowed admittance to his



STEFANIA SHABATURA

trial, then wrote appeals in his behalf to Soviet authorities, including the Soviet Supreme Court. This activity led to her arrest in January 1972. She is presently in the Dubrovlag labor camp complex in Mordovia, where she has participated in hunger strikes, written appeals to the UN, and protested the prohibition to paint. She has been repeatedly punished by solitary confinement in the camp prison.

## NADIA SVITLYCHNA-SHUMUK

Sentenced to 4 years' imprisonment

Nadia Svitlychna was born in the Donbas region of Ukraine. A member of the Komsomol during her youth, she studied philology at the Kiev State University, then worked at a Kiev radio station and later as a librarian (1968). After the 1965 arrest of her brother, literary critic Ivan Svitlychny, Nadia became active in voicing protest on his behalf and on behalf of other arrested Ukrainian intellectuals. After the murder of her good friend Alla Horska, Nadia Svitlychna vigorously demanded a thorough investigation. In 1969 she married Danylo Shumuk, a former political prisoner and member of the Ukrainian national resistance during World



SVITLYCHNA-SHUMUK  
NADIA

War II. After Shumuk was again arrested in 1971 and

sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment and 5 years of exile, Nadia resisted pressure to denounce him. She herself was arrested in April 1972, a few months after the second arrest of her brother. On March 23, 1973, she was tried in a closed court in Kiev on a charge of "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" and received a 4-year sentence. She is serving her term in a hard-labor camp near Barashevo, the Mordovian ASSR. Nadia Svitlychna-Shumuk is seriously ill; reportedly, she has breast cancer. Her son Yarema was at first placed in a state orphanage but is now being cared for by Nadia's mother.

## IRYNA SENYK

**Sentenced to 6 years' imprisonment, 5 years' exile**

Iryna Senyk was 21 years old when in 1944 she was first arrested for her participation in the Ukrainian resistance movement. She spent the next ten



**IRYNA SENYK**

years in the hard-labor camps of Siberia and the Mordovian ASSR; it was during this period that she contracted tuberculosis of the spine. In the early 1960's, she was politically rehabilitated and allowed to return to Ukraine. She was heard from again in 1965, when she signed a collective letter to Soviet officials, protesting against the arbitrary re-imprisonment of Svyatoslav Karavansky. In 1970, she was interrogated and her apartment searched by the KGB in connection with the case against Valentyn Moroz. Iryna Senyk was herself arrested again in October 1972. Though accounts of her trial are sketchy, it is known that the prosecution's "case" was built around the poems she had written during her first imprisonment, and her association with Moroz, Karavansky, and journalist Vyacheslav Chornovil. She is serving her 6-year term in a hard-labor camp for political prisoners near Barashevo, the Mordovian ASSR.

## NINA STOKATA-KARAVANSKA

**Sentenced to 4 years' imprisonment**

Born on January 31, 1925, in Odessa, Nina Strokata graduated with honors from the Medical Institute there, became a physician, and worked in micro-biological research. In 1961 she married Svyatoslav Karavansky, a political prisoner who had served 16 years for nationalist activity before he was amnestied in 1960. He became a very productive writer and translator, but was arrested again in 1965 because he had written essays critical of the Communist Party and letters to communist officials in Poland and Czechoslovakia, protesting against the violations of human rights in the USSR. Nina Strokata-Karavanska actively went to the defense of her husband and, in spite of intense pressure to renounce him, continued to stand by him. A vicious campaign against her—harassment at work, interrogations by the KGB, attacks in the press—was temporarily suspended in 1969 while she used her scientific talents in combating a cholera epidemic in

the South of Ukraine. In early 1971, the campaign began again—in May 1971, Strokata lost her job at the Medical Institute. On December 9, 1971, she was arrested by the KGB and in May 1972 went on trial in Odessa for “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda.” Though her health has badly deteriorated—she is reportedly suffering from a breast malignancy—Nina Strokata-Karavanska has been a leader of the hunger strikes by women in the labor camp where she is serving her 4-year term. Her colleagues, microbiologists from around the world, have rallied in her defense. In May 1974 she was made a full member of the American Society for Microbiology.

### ODARKA HUSYAK

Sentenced to 25 years' imprisonment

Odarka Husyak was an active participant in the Ukrainian struggle for independence as a courier for the central underground *Released in February, 1975* until her arrest on March 5, 1950. She was sentenced to a 25-year term and has served it in the prisons of Verkhne-Uralsk and Vladimir and since 1968 in the concentration camp of the Mordovian ASSR of Soviet Russia. She was 26 years old at the time of her arrest; when her term is completed sometime *in April, 1975* year, she will have spent half of her life in labor camps and prisons.

### MARIA PALCHAK

Sentenced to death, commuted to 15 years' imprisonment

Maria Palchak was among those participants of the Ukrainian national liberation movement who refused to lay their arms down. She was hiding out with an armed partisan group in Ternopil Region when it was discovered by the KGB in 1961. *Released in April, 1975* Surrounded members of the group made a desperate attempt to fight their way out, then, with this situation hopeless, shot themselves in order to avoid capture. Maria Palchak, 34 years old at the time, was found critically wounded but alive. *Released in April, 1975* A complex operation saved her life and she was made to stand trial. The court's sentence—death by firing squad. An appeals court commuted Maria Palchak's death sentence to fifteen years' imprisonment. At present, she is in a concentration camp in Mordovia.

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If you wish to help those Ukrainian women who are imprisoned in Soviet concentration camps for their political beliefs, please voice your concern to Helvi L. Sipilä, the Secretary-General of International Women's Year, 1975.

Address:

Ms. Helvi L. Sipilä  
Secretary-General of International  
Women's Year, 1975  
United Nations Plaza  
New York, N.Y. 10017



Detail from a tapestry by Stefania Shabatura, inspired by Lesya Ukrainka's poem, "Cassandra." Caption: "Awake O Troy! Death approaches!"

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*For further information write to:*

*or to*

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