Poems by Sugiarti Suswadi, An Indonesian Political Prisoner

WOMEN

No longer
are we guilded posies
engaging when compliant
exquisite when yielding
enchanting when submissive.
to hell it is our duty to go
to heaven permitted to follow.

and no longer
are we blossoms cast aside
downtrodden
selling our sweat for next to nothing
workers at half price
no security
no egality
only duty

we have cried out
from behind the walls of segregation
from the clutches of the spiteful bed
from the nightly business in the gutters
from the revenge of unwilling wedlock
"we are human beings!"

FREEDOM

Freedom has changed the face of the world
it rules the mind, the heart and the person
it dispels the mist hanging over the
mountains, the valleys
the shores, the fields, the factories and
the cities
and the hearts of us, women.

now we are no longer
just giving birth to worker soldiers.
we too are worker soldiers.
no longer just wives of people's heroes,
we too are people's heroes

and when the fortresses of obsolete time are
smashed
and workers' power stands proudly on our land
we shall no longer only tend the graves
read the prayers and weep for the dead
we shall be part of the formost ranks.

These two poens were written by Sugiarti Siswadi, an Indonesian woman who has been in prison since 1966. Sugiarti comes from Central Java. Her husband is also in prison and her two sons and daughter have been looked after by relatives during the ten years of the parent's detention. Sugiarti is about 48 years old.

Sugiarti established herself as a well known writer and poet in Indonesia in the early 1950s. She was particularly well known for her short story "Paradise on Earth" and for her contributions to the Communist Party newspaper Harian Rakyat until the paper was banned in 1965.

Sugiarti was also a leader of the Jakarta branch of the leftwing cultural organisation, LEKRA and a member of the leftwing women's organisation, Gerwani. Both these organisations were banned after the abortive coup in 1965 and many of the people associated with these organisations were arrested in the aftermath of the coup. Sugiarti was co-editor of the Gerwani magazine Api Kartini. This paper educationalist, Kartini, who died in 1901 when she was in her early twenties.

At the time of the abortive coup and the counter coup that brought General Suharto to power in 1965, Gerwani was one of many mass organisations which were banned together with the Indonesian Communist Party. The membership of Gerwani numbered over one million. After ten years four leading Indonesian women have been tried. They have received stiff sentences ranging from 15 to 20 years for their allegedsubversive activities at the time of the coup. They were not accused of involvement in the coup attempt itself. Two of these women were Gerwani leaders. These four women are likely to be the last women tried for a long time to come. Of the hundreds of others, including Sugiarti Siswadi, still in prison in Indonesia most of them will never receive a trial, will not know what they are accused of or when they will be set free.

September 30th is the anniversary of the abortive coup in Indonesia. For tens of thousands of people it is also the anniversary of ten years of political imprisonment.

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Amnesty International
P.O. Box 6145
2101 Algonquin Ave.
Ottawa, Ont. K2A 1T2

Contact:
Susan Swan
45 Elgin Ave.
Toronto, Ont. M5R 1G5
(telephone: 416-925-1591)