

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER FROM AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

POSTCARDS FOR
PRISONERS CAMPAIGN

July 1969

First some news about prisoners who have been on this Campaign:

Mrs Sabine Bonnet, East Germany (October 1968) was released from prison early in June this year and is now back at her former post as a gynaecologist in an East Berlin hospital. Her husband, Horst Bonnet, is still in Kottbus Prison.

Anthony Grey, China (December 1968). The Chinese Embassy in London has replied to a Card Campaign member, sending a press statement from the Hsinhua Press Agency in Hong Kong dated December 1968. The statement describes as "sheer nonsense" the statement by the British Prime Minister that "Mr Grey's detention was totally unjustified". The statement makes it clear that Anthony Grey was arrested in retaliation for the arrest of Chinese journalists in Hong Kong.

Ghaus Baksh Bizengo, Pakistan (November 1968) is free. Unlike most Pakistani prisoners who were held without trial under the Defence of Pakistan Rules, Baksh Bizengo was charged with an offence; but the case against him was quashed shortly after the resignation of President Ayub earlier this year.

Achkar Marof, Guinea (April 1969) is definitely being held under house arrest. Reports that he was dead or in prison are incorrect.

Professor Tran Huu Khue, South Vietnam (July 1966). In October 1968 he was offered his freedom on condition that he sign a plea for pardon. "However" he writes "I politely refused to sign, considering that 'to demand peace for our country in no way constitutes a crime' and I cannot renounce my opinions." Consequently he remains in prison.

Narciso Julian Sanz, Spain (May 1969). Many members have sent in replies about this prisoner from the Spanish authorities. In these replies it is said that Julian Sanz has been transferred to a geriatric institute (as if this were in a general free hospital). However, according to our information (given in a letter from the Ministry of Justice, Dirrecion General de Prisiones, dated July 12th 1968) the geriatric unit where Julian Sanz is a patient is part of the provincial prison of Almeria. We have written to obtain clarification on this point and will report on developments in the next issue of this newsletter.

Karam Singh, Malaysia (June 1967). Unsuccessfully sought a Habeas Corpus order and made an appeal to the High Court. After a two month delay his appeal was finally rejected in May 1969.

Illias Iliou, Greece (May 1967) is still a prisoner. He has been ill and in hospital for the past eighteen months.

Florence Matomela, South Africa (May 1966). We have learnt that Mrs Matomela, who was released in January 1968 because of her diabetic condition, died at the beginning of June this year, sixteen months after her release.

Here are this month's prisoners:

Noureddine Ben Khader, Tunisia.

M. Ben Khader, who is 30 years old, was an assistant (lecturer) in Economics at the Institute of Applied Economics in Tunis until his arrest in March 1968. He was arrested with a large number of students and intellectuals after disturbances in the University of Tunis provoked by a sentence of 20 years imprisonment imposed on student leader, Mohammed Ben Jennet (see October 1968 Newsletter).

M. Ben Khader was one of over 100 prisoners who were tried in September 1968 by a special Court of State Security on charges including plotting against internal state security and membership of an illegal organisation. Amnesty sent an official observer, a Swiss lawyer, to the trial. The prosecution failed to produce any evidence that such a plot had ever existed. In fact it was clear that the prisoners were actually being tried for their opinions which had been published in a left-wing magazine, readings from which formed the entire case for the prosecution. The prisoners were denied lawyers of their own choice and are thought to have been tortured during interrogation.

M. Ben Khader received one of the heaviest sentences - 14 years imprisonment. He is being held in the Prison Borj Er Roumi, Nador, Bizerte, Tunisia, where he and his associates are being kept in inhuman conditions and are deprived of any contact with the outside world. Noureddine Ben Khader has never fully recovered from tuberculosis contracted in adolescence. He is probably suffering particularly from an inadequate diet and lack of exercise in cramped cells which are either overcrowded or damp and dark.

Send your card protesting against these conditions and appealing for M. Ben Khader's release to:

EITHER

Secetaire d'Etat a la Justice,
Secretariat d'Etat a la Justice,
Place du Gouvernement,
Tunis,
Tunisia.

OR

Ahmed Ben Saleh,
Secetaire d'Etat,
Secretariat d'Etat au Plan et a l'Economie Nationale,
Place du Gouvernement,
Tunis, Tunisia.

OR to your Local Tunisian Embassy.

Lothar Dietzsch, East Germany.

Lothar Dietzsch is a Jehovah's Witness, formerly resident in the East German town of Zwickau. He was arrested in November 1965 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment the following September. The charges against him were having contact with the Jehovah's Witnesses headquarters in West Germany, distributing unlicensed Bible literature and having helped to compile reports on the work of Jehovah's Witnesses. Since his trial he has been held in Brandenburg Prison.

The Jehovah's Witness sect was banned in Nazi Germany and again in the new German Democratic Republic (East Germany) in 1950. It was then alleged by the Ministry of the Interior that they had distributed 'illegal writings', organised 'systematic incitement against the existing democratic order and its laws under cover of a religious institution' and 'had served the espionage system of an imperialistic power'. On the latter charge they were certainly suspect since the world headquarters of the Jehovah's Witnesses is in the U.S.A.

As Jehovah's Witnesses refused to serve in the country's People's Army (considered to be working for peace), they were technically guilty under a law dealing with 'incitement to war'. Another principle of the sect - the refusal to vote in elections - was deemed to be punishable as 'incitement to boycott democratic institutions'.

In spite of heavy sentences passed on offenders (the first ones sometimes involved life imprisonment) the Jehovah's Witnesses have continued their active evangelistic work to this day, visiting people in their homes secretly and trying to convert them to their beliefs. A large number are believed to be serving prison sentences, although exact information is hard to obtain. Some are believed to be survivors from imprisonment in the Nazi era.

Send your cards to:

EITHER

Walter Ulbricht,
Vorsitzender des Staatsrates der DDR,
Berlin-Niederschönhausen,
Ossietskistrasse,
German Democratic Republic.

OR

Kurt Wünsche,
Minister der Justiz,
108 Berlin W.8.,
Clara-Zetkin-Str. 93,
German Democratic Republic,

Krishna Prasad Bhattraï, Nepal.

Mr Bhattraï was formerly General Secretary of the Nepal Congress Party, which formed the government after the first democratic elections ever to be held in Nepal in the late 1950's. He later resigned to become Speaker of the Nepalese Parliament. The King did not like the policies of the Congress Ministry and in 1960, using the power which he retained under the Constitution, he dismissed the Ministry and imprisoned all its members. Mr Bhattraï was also imprisoned at this time.

After a period during which the King ruled by decree, he introduced a new Constitution in 1962. This Constitution replaced direct parliamentary elections by a system of indirect elections to village, district and national councils, called 'Panchayats'.

The Nepal Congress disliked this new system which, they felt reduced their chances of forming a government. They also said it was less democratic than the old system of direct elections. They therefore refused to take part in politics under the new Constitution.

Over the last few years all the other politicians have accepted the change and have been released. Only Mr Bhattraï, who no longer regards himself as a member of the Congress and therefore does not feel himself bound by

party decisions, remains unwilling to acknowledge the wisdom of the King's decision and so remains in detention.

He is held without trial under the Security Act in Nakkhu Prison, Katmandu.

Cards appealing for his release should be sent to:

EITHER

His Majesty King Mahendra,
Royal Palace,
Katmandu,
Nepal.

OR

The Nepalese Ambassador in your own
country.

oooooooooooooooooooo

Amnesty International,
Turnagain Lane,
Farringdon Street,
London, E.C.4.