

"POSTCARDS FOR PRISONERS" CAMPAIGN

NEWSLETTER - FEBRUARY 1967

You will see from the above heading, that we are changing the name of the Card Kit Scheme. This is because the words "Card Kit" do not explain sufficiently clearly the purpose behind it or the way it works. We are hoping to give increasing publicity to the campaign and recruit many more helpers; the more simply we are able to communicate its purpose, the greater the support we will get.

Here is some news about previous prisoners:

Mohamed Shante, Tanzania (January 1966 Newsletter). On the third anniversary of the Revolution in Zanzibar, Vice-President Karume announced an amnesty. 74 prisoners were released, 24 of whom were political including a number of prisoners adopted by Amnesty Groups. It is not yet known whether the amnesty will include the 10 Members of the Cabinet detained on the mainland, but we have been encouraged that the outlook for their release is now optimistic.

to believe

Sadi Alkilic, Turkey (January 1967 Newsletter) The Supreme Court in Ankara met on the 3rd February to discuss the Alkilic case. They apparently came to no decision and adjourned to a later, but unspecified, date. You are therefore encouraged to continue sending cards to the Head of the Court.

Arthur Vacareanu, Rumania (May 1966 Newsletter). This prisoner has been released, but we have no further details.

Tofazzal Hossain, East Pakistan (September 1966 Newsletter). We have been informed that letters of sympathy to the prisoner himself, though strictly censored, will reach him if sent with a covering letter to the Superintendent of Dacca Central Jail, as the Superintendent is liberal, and kind to him.

Here are this month's prisoners:

James Bass - Liberia

Mr. James Bass is the leader of the trade union movement in Liberia and is the Secretary-General of the Congress of Industrial Organisations. He was arrested on the 25th November 1966 under the Emergency Legislation which was passed in February 1966 and has not so far been brought to trial.

In Liberia trade unions and strikes are legal but will not be considered so unless they are described as such by the Labour Practices Review Board or by the President himself. So far as is known no strike has ever been considered legal by the Labour Practices Review Board or by the President since his accession to power in 1943. The history of trade union activity in Liberia has been one of constant friction with the government and strikes have been put down on many occasions with arbitrary brutality. James Bass's arrest should be viewed in this perspective.

As a result of the exposure on Swedish TV of the Liberian government's drastic intervention (accompanied by the use of troops) at the Kimba Iron-ore mines in July 1966 international protests over the treatment of labour in Liberia were for the first time widely viewed. The Director of I.C.F.T.U.'s African Regional Office went to investigate and also to distribute relief to the individuals who had suffered. He was viewed with hostility by the authorities and shortly after his visit a letter was received from James Bass, written it is believed under duress, complaining that the I.C.F.T.U. representative's allegedly "illegal activities". Meanwhile the Secretary of M.I.F. had received permission from the Junior Minister of Labour Affairs to investigate and assist the Union of Mine Workers. After his arrival, however, the Secretary of State for Commerce and Industry immediately accused him of violating the law and he was immediately deported. James Bass objected officially against the deportation and this was perhaps the immediate cause for his arrest. After his arrest he refused to sign a bond of "good conduct" which would have denied him free expression of opinion on trade union affairs and this led to a charge of "sedition" being levelled against him several weeks after his arrest. Your cards should be sent to:

H.E. President Tabmam,  
Executive Mansion,  
Monrovia, Liberia.

and to:

The Department of Justice,  
Monrovia, Liberia.

\*I.C.F.T.U. = International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Cont.....

Eleni Voulgari - Greece.

Eleni Voulgari was arrested in August 1966 and given a 10-year prison sentence under Law 375. This is an emergency law introduced in 1936 but used mainly to deal with communist supporters after the civil war (1946-9). It is not part of the penal code and can only be administered by Court Martial. It has been severely criticised by a number of bodies including the Greek Lawyers' Association and the International Commission of Jurists.

The only evidence produced against Eleni Voulgari appears to be that she is a member of a family which 13 years ago in 1954 gave shelter to a communist who had re-entered Greece illegally. The communist was her brother-in-law, Nico Ghenas. He and other members of the family were arrested and given heavy prison sentences. Eleni Voulgari was out of the house at the time of the arrest and, although a warrant was issued for her arrest, she managed to take a room in Athens and earn her living as a seamstress.

Last year Ghenas and all but 6 of the prisoners still held under Law 375 were amnestied by the Stefanopolous government. Eleni Voulgari became engaged to another former 375 prisoner, Charalambos Golemas, but was then arrested and accused of being an accomplice to Ghenas.(in 1954). She is now expecting Golemas' baby which is due to be born in February. Our latest news is that she is ill with fainting fits and in St. Paul's Prison Hospital in Athens.

Your cards should be sent to:  
King Constantine,  
The Royal Palace,  
Athens, Greece.

(Minister of Justice)  
and to: Mr Ioannis Maniatis, Vouli  
The Greek Parliament -/  
Panagia Anaktora, Athens.

Alexander Ginsburg - U.S.S.R.

Alexander Ginsburg is aged about 30 and is described as being one of the best-known contemporary poets in the USSR. It appears however that he found it necessary to express himself through the medium of clandestine literary journals which are mimeographed by students in Moscow and passed from hand to hand. In 1961 he was editor of the illegal journal "Sintaksis". When the KGB or Secret Police found out he was arrested and condemned to hard labour in the uranium mines in the Ural Mountains. After being released in 1963 he was rearrested the following year and not released until 1965 when he was forced to sign an article of self-criticism, written for him by the KGB. In the autumn of 1966 Ginsburg helped to produce the "White Book" on the Siniavsky/Daniel trial, which included excerpts from evidence given at the trial, letters from the prisoners' wives to the Soviet leaders and a letter from Ginsburg to Kosygin where he expressed his fears about the fate of the two writers at the hands of the KGB in view of his own experiences.

In November 1966 the "White Book" appeared in the Russian emigre journal "Grani", a publication considered by the Soviet authorities to be highly subversive. In early January Ginsburg was arrested, as he had no doubt expected. His name appeared at the end of the letter to Kosygin and he openly admitted his active support of the two writers. The letter ends "I love Russian literature and I do not want to see two more of its representatives felling trees under armed guard. I respect Andrei Siniavsky, a wonderful literary critic and writer."

Send your cards to:  
Alexander Ginsburg c/o Mr V.Y. Semichastny,  
Chairman of the Committee for State,  
Security (KGB) at the Council of Ministers,  
of the USSR,  
Moscow U.S.S.R.

or in Russian:  
Predsedatelyu KGB pri Sovete  
Ministrov SSSR V.Y. Semicha-  
stnomy,  
Moskva, U.S.S.R.

and to: Mr. A. Kosygin,  
Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR  
Moscow, U.S.S.R.

Professor Tran Huu Khue - S. Vietnam (July 1966 Newsletter). Some members have sent in letters received from the US Embassy in Saigon which disassociated the US from responsibility for prisoners held by the S. Vietnamese government. Members who wish to pursue this case further are recommended to write to the Embassy of the Republic of Vietnam in their country or in the nearest country to their own which has an Embassy.