

# monthly newsletter from amnesty international

## postcards for prisoners campaign

---

February 1969

Here is some news of former prisoners:

Jusu Sheriff, Sierra Leone (December 1968) was released together with over a hundred other detainees on February 6th. During the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference Amnesty made formal representations about these prisoners to the Prime Minister, Mr Siaka Stevens. We received the information <sup>about</sup> the releases direct from the Sierra Leone authorities which, in itself, an indication of the effectiveness of approaches made by Amnesty. Members might like to Mr Stevens and express their appreciation of this action.

Ganeshman Singh, Nepal (May 1968) was released in December last year at the same time as the former Prime Minister, Mr Koirala, and other imprisoned ministers.

Jean Coulardeau, France (June 1968), who had been hoping to emigrate to Canada, has written to say that his application for permission to enter Canada as a settler was turned down. He is now considering applying to Australia.

Ben Jennet, Tunisia (October 1968). The remaining 30 prisoners (allegedly Ba'athists) arrested after protesting against the severity of the sentence imposed on Ben Jennet together with roughly 70 others who were tried in September 1968, are now appearing before a special state security tribunal in Tunis. The trial opened on February 12th and is being attended by an Amnesty observer.

Ndabaningi Sithole, Rhodesia (December 1968). On February 12th a Salisbury High Court judge and two assessors found Mr Sithole guilty of incitement to murder and sentenced him to 6 years' imprisonment with hard labour. The trial was attended by Mr Muir Hunter, Q.C., who officially represented the International Commission of Jurists. Mr Sithole, who pleaded 'Not guilty', has lodged an appeal and pending judgement in the appeal case the issue is sub judice.

Abu Mayanja, Uganda (November 1968). Judgement was given on February 1st and both Mayanja and Neogy were acquitted on all counts. In announcing his verdict the magistrate said that he considered Mayanja's letter was fair comment on a matter of public importance. Despite this the two men were immediately returned to detention under the emergency regulations. This situation makes a mockery of the independent judiciary which acquitted the men of all charges against them. We would urge members to renew appeals on behalf of both Neogy and Mayanja expressing surprise and concern at these developments, but avoiding any condemnation which might antagonise the authorities and not be in the prisoners' interest.

Horst and Sabine Bonnet, East Germany (October 1968). There appears to be no prospect of release or remission of sentence in this case. Their 13

### Background

The position of conscientious objectors in East Germany is as follows:- refusal to do military service, on any grounds whatsoever, has been a punishable offence since the introduction of compulsory military service in January 1962. However, in September 1964, a law was passed providing for the establishment of construction units under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence. This, it was suggested, would provide a convenient alternative form of service for those who objected to military service on religious or similar grounds. Men serving in these units are called 'construction soldiers' and are expected to wear uniform, serve under the command of experienced soldiers, N.C.O.s and officers of the National People's Army and work on military installations. Werner Ross would have been willing to do civilian service as a genuine alternative to military service, but found the above alternative - the only one provided - unacceptable.

Send your cards, appealing on behalf of Werner Ross and expressing concern at the lack of any provisions for genuine alternative service to:

EITHER

An den Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates der DDR,  
Walter Ulbricht,  
Berlin-Niederschönhausen,  
Ossietzki-Strasse,  
German Democratic Republic.

OR

An die Generalstaatsanwaltschaft  
der DDR,  
X 104 Berlin N.4.,  
Scharnhorststr. 37,  
German Democratic Republic.

### Don Baty, U.S.A.

Don Baty is an American conscientious objector who is serving a 4-year prison sentence for refusing induction. Baty, who comes from Huntington, Long Island, worked with the New England Committee for Non-Violent Action (CNVA). His total opposition to military service led him to adopt a course of non-co-operation with the American authorities.

On June 13th 1968, when he was due to appear for arraignment, he sought sanctuary in the Washington Square Methodist Church and it was here that he was arrested. Refusing to co-operate with the Federal authorities, he was taken forcibly before Judge Zavatt of the U.S. District Court in Brooklyn, New York. He refused bail and later wrote of this action "I do not feel that the government had the right to imprison me .... that it has done so unjustly, and I will not pay ransom to it to buy my release.". Baty then refused an order to 'stand for the court' on the grounds that he did not recognise the court's authority. Consequently he was held in contempt of court and sent directly to the Federal Detention Headquarters in New York city. Judge Zavatt postponed Baty's arraignment until such time as he would walk into court himself. This Baty refused to do until his handcuffs were removed.

While in detention awaiting trial Baty refused to co-operate with the prison officials and underwent a fast lasting 30 days during which period he only drank milk, coffee and water. Eventually Baty was arraigned and the date of his trial was set. In court he declined the services of a lawyer preferring to conduct his own defence on the ground that his was

"not a legal case, but a moral case". He said: "I am being held for following my conscience .... I have no interest in trying to 'beat the rap' on some legal technicality."

At his trial Baty admitted having refused induction, defending this action as consistent with his beliefs and background, and on the basis of his duty to God, conscience, humanity and international law. After deliberating for 30 minutes the jury found him guilty. He was later sentenced to 4 years imprisonment and is now understood to be serving this sentence in the Federal Penitentiary in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

Cards protesting at the severity of the sentence imposed on Don Baty should be sent to:

EITHER

The Pardon Section,  
U.S. Justice Department,  
Washington, D.C.,  
U.S.A.

OR

The Prison Governor,  
Federal Penitentiary,  
Allentown,  
Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

oooooooooooooooooooo

Background sheets on Indonesia and the U.S.A.  
are enclosed.

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

POSTCARDS FOR PRISONERS CAMPAIGN

INDONESIA

STOP PRESS

BACKGROUND PAPER

JUSU SHERIFF - SIERRA LEONE.

We have just received the news that Jusu Sheriff and three of the other leading Sierra Leone Peoples Party members who were released on February 6th, were re-arrested over the following week-end. The names of the other three arrested man are Doyle Sumner, former Minister of Works in the last civilian government headed by Sir Albert Margai, Samuel Goba, SLPP M.P. for Bonthe North, now facing an election petition, and Edward Palmer. Both Jusu Sheriff and Samuel Goba are being charged with incitement. The four men were due to appear in court on February 10th and it is understood that they have been allowed bail.

Amnesty International  
SJ/lp

February 1969

AM/31

Research Department

February 1969

POSTCARDS FOR PRISONERS CAMPAIGN 1969

INDONESIA

BACKGROUND PAPER

After the end of the Japanese Occupation in 1945, Indonesian nationalists declared an independent republic, but this was not recognised by Holland, the colonial power, until 1950 - after nearly 5 years of bitter fighting.

For 15 years Dr Sukarno ruled independent Indonesia, during which time the rights of the federal states were abolished, parliament was suspended and Dr Sukarno declared President for life. He retained power largely by playing off the army and the Communist Party against each other. In September 1965 an unsuccessful communist coup sparked off a violent reaction from the army. More than 200,000 communist sympathisers were arrested, about 80,000 of whom are still detained. Approximately half a million alleged communists were killed in the mob violence which erupted all over Indonesia during the months immediately following the attempted coup.

President Sukarno was gradually deprived of all his powers and the new government under President Suharto is pro-Western and has re-established friendly relations with neighbouring states.

Conditions in prison camps are often extremely bad. The food is frequently inadequate and medical supplies and personnel almost totally lacking. There is very little central control and prisoners are at the mercy of the local army officers in charge of the prisons. There have been many instances of brutality and in some places large numbers of prisoners have been shot.

AH/SJ

Research Department

February 1969

POSTCARDS FOR PRISONERS-CAMPAIGN

BACKGROUND PAPER

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (U.S.A.)

February, 1969

Amnesty at the moment is almost exclusively concerned with those who are refusing to serve in the Vietnam War on grounds of conscience. Two main, and one ancillary category of prisoners are involved:

- 1) draft resisters - those who on grounds of conscience have refused induction into the armed forces (this may or may not have been preceded by a failed Conscientious Objector application)
- 2) soldiers who have either refused to obey particular orders, or who have deserted from the army and subsequently been imprisoned.
- 3) those who are not themselves eligible for military service, but who have advocated or supported those (in categories 1 and 2) who are violating the law to resist the war effort.

America does not recognize the right of selective objection to a particular war (a right which is recognized, for example, in Britain), and often makes it exceedingly difficult to obtain status as a conscientious objector (i.e. as a pacifist objector to all wars), even though this is a right they do recognize. Any violation of the Selective Service Act carries a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment and/or a fine of 10,000 dollars on each count, and these sentences could be imposed to run consecutively and not concurrently. This could result in a maximum sentence of 25 years, although we have not come across sentences of more than 10 years. There is considerable regional variation, in different parts of the country, in amount and severity of draft violation sentencing. A Bureau of Prisons survey last year showed that at one point there were nearly 800 convicted draft law violators in the federal prison system at that time.

Although we have no such adoptions at the moment, Amnesty is keeping a watching brief on the civil rights situation, and the domestic political situation in America, in case prisoners of conscience should appear.

HP/SJ

Research Department