

News about previous prisoners:

MOHAMED SHAMTE, Tanzania (January 1966 Newsletter). On the 2nd December the Zanzibari authorities rescinded the decree published on the 28th October after strong representations had been made by Amnesty and other international organisations and by President Nyerere. The Union government covering the two countries observed Human Rights Day this year for the first time and it is hoped that this may mean the release of several prisoners.

DR. M.K. RAJAKUMAR, Malaysia (March 1966 Newsletter). Amnesty recently arranged for a letter to be written to the "Times" signed by Lady Head and two other well known signatories drawing the attention of the readers to the plight of detainees in Malaysia and Signapore. The case of Dr. Rajakumar is specifically mentioned. It is hoped that this may arouse public opinions both here and in Malaysia.

CARL-WOLFGANG HOLZAPFEL, East Germany. (September 1966 Newsletter). Kit Members will no doubt be delighted to learn that Holzapfel has been released and is now living as a free man in West Germany.

Christmas Cards Some Kit Members have written in asking about Christmas Cards. The prisoners to whom cards, if wished, can be sent are those chosen for the November Newsletter, i.e.:

Teresa Asilvera de Patino (Paraguay). Send your Christmas Cards to:

either:	Police Station No. 9,	or:	Dr. Edgar Ynsfran,
	Chacarita,		Minister of the Interior,
	Paraguay.		Ministerio del Interior,
			Asuncion.

Kon Sook Siong (Malaysia) Send your Christmas Cards to:

Prison unknown c/o, The Honourable Tun. (Dr.) Ismail bin Dato Abdul Rahman,  
Minister for Home Affairs,  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Mihijlo Mihajlov (Yugoslavia). Send your Christmas Cards to:

Kazneni Popravni Dom  
Sremska Mitrovica, Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

Kit Scheme Background Sheets. New and revised Background Sheets for many countries are being sent by Sea Mail where applicable. Where necessary, please ensure that you insert the new sheets and destroy the old. We hope this will both lead to increased effectiveness in your writing on behalf of prisoners and also make your work more interesting.

Since the Kit Scheme started we have sent cards on behalf of 54 prisoners. 16 of these have been released, one is on bail pending retrial, and one other has probably been released. Good Work! But, please don't forget the other 36 still in prison. Please go on helping them.

HERE ARE THIS MONTH'S PRISONERS:-

As intimated last month we are now asking Kit Scheme Members to write about new legal status for Conscientious Objectors.

ITALY - Conscientious Objectors

This month Amnesty International has decided to focus attention on the plight of Italian conscientious objectors as a whole, rather than just selecting one prisoner from the Western world, as normally happens. In the past we have had one or two adopted by Groups, but after a large amnesty last summer no Prisoners of Conscience remained in prison. We learned recently however that conscientious objectors were still receiving prison sentences of up to 14 months on account of their pacifist beliefs; some of these cases have served prison sentences before for the same offence. Prison conditions are believed to be bad and in the past some men have suffered mental and physical ill health from long periods in solitary confinement and from cold and malnutrition. Almost all the imprisoned men are Jehovah's Witnesses whose pacifist principles are well-known.

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Bills have been presented to parliament calling for a legal status for conscientious objectors and for the institution of an alternative civilian service for them, but these have been strongly resisted by the Ministry of Defence. We have received a report that a two year period working in an undeveloped country may be offered as an alternative to military service, but this remains unconfirmed. A letter from Amnesty in London to the Ministry of Defence in Rome received a courteous reply, but it is clear that they are not in favour of conscientious objectors being granted any special status. We know however that there is much sympathy in Italy for the imprisoned men, and feel that an expression of concern at their situation coming from abroad might help in getting new legislations passed. Send your cards to:

On. Giuseppe Sargst,  
Presidente della Repubblica,  
Palazzo del Quirinale, Roma, Italy.

Further appeals may be sent to:

On. Aldo Moro, Direttore del Carcere Militare,  
Presidente del Consiglio del Gaeta (Latina),  
Ministri, Italy.  
Roma, Italy. -----

Dr. Ruzena Vackova - Czechoslovakia. Dr. Vackova was a Professor of Classical Archaeology at the time of her arrest in 1951. In June 1952 she was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, apparently for "Catholic activities". What these activities were we do not know, but she is known to have been an active Catholic and to have been persecuted for her religious beliefs at that period of Stalinist terror. Practically all prisoners sentenced at that time have since been amnestied. In 1956 her sentence was reduced to 4½ years but this still makes her liable for imprisonment until 1968. Her name has been mentioned several times over the years and from a list of prisoners smuggled out of Czechoslovakia recently by an ex-prisoner we have learned that she is now detained in Ilava in Slovakia. (The correct address to write to is: Veznice V Ilave, Ilava, Czechoslovakia.) Send your cards also to the following addresses:

The President of the Republic, and Minister of Justice,  
Antony Nvotny, Alois Neumann,  
Praha 1, Hrad, Czechoslovakia. Letna, Prag.  
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Demetrio VALLEJO Martinez. - Mexico. Demetrio Vallejo was the General Secretary of the Union of Railway Workers of Mexico. He was one of many prisoners who were arrested on the 28th March 1959, following a labour conflict. This came as a result of his having organised a strike in protest against the Mexican practice of forcing labour unions to be mere branches of the Revolutionary Institutional Party (P.R.I.). The strike was in fact promoted by the National Union of Railroad Workers and agreed upon by the workers' assemblies. Although the Mexican Constitution states that in this type of case the interval between indictment and trial can be no longer than 12 months, Vallejo was not tried until March 1962, and it seems he was not notified of the sentence till the 10th August 1963. He was condemned to 16 years imprisonment and a fine of 34,000,00 pesos. He is still in prison in the Carcel Preventiva.

You should address your appeals to:

Su Excelencia Gustavo Diaz Ordaz,  
Presidente de Mexico,  
Palacio Presidencial,  
Ciudad de Mexico,  
Mexico.

Letters of sympathy should go to:

Senor Demetrio Vallejo Martinez,  
Carcel Preventiva de la Ciudad de Mexico,  
Mexico.  
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WE WISH YOU ALL A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR