

CARD SCHEME NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1965.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
12 Crane Court, Fleet Street, LONDON EC4.

Card Scheme members should not be disappointed by the somewhat negative replies they may have received from the British Foreign Office. We understand that in fact British authorities in Oman and Muscat have been specially asked to look into the whole question of political prisoners and the conditions under which they are held. In our experience this usually leads at least to a temporary improvement in conditions. The Card Scheme campaign on behalf of Shaikh Muhammad Salim Al Rugaishi coincided with a special effort by Amnesty Groups who had adopted Omani prisoners. The Belfast Group (Northern Ireland) were able to secure newspaper and wireless coverage and to arrange for the tabling of a parliamentary question.

The following extract is taken from the letter written by Professor Peng Ming-min to Peter Benenson shortly after his release.

" I have just been amnestied by President's special decree and released last night from the military prison in Taipei. First of all I wish to express to you my deepest appreciation for the sympathy and assistance the Amnesty International and its Swedish 7 Group have extended to me in the past months. I cannot find words to tell you how much my heart was warmed and my spirit lifted when I learnt in prison that the Amnesty International had been taking the trouble to do so much on my behalf. I regretted that I was not able to thank you earlier as I was not permitted to write to you

Sincerely yours,

(sgnd) Ming-min PENG "

Members who wish to continue their appeals on behalf of Spyros Kotsakis should address their cards to Mr. K. Stephanakis, Minister of Justice, Ministry of Justice, Pirawous Zinonos Sokratous, Athens. He is the newly appointed Minister of Justice, replacing Mr. Papaspyrou. In September and October 1964, the then Minister of Justice, Mr. Polychronidis, signed ten recommendations for reduction of sentence for prisoners sentenced under Law 375. These appeals were sent to the Palace for King Constantine's signature but remained there, unsigned by the new Minister of Justice because the Bill for the abolition of the Emergency Laws (including Law 375) was under active discussion. After the political crisis in the summer of 1965 the new Minister of Justice, Mr. Papaspyrou, again signed the appeals and added four more, including a recommendation that Spyros Kotsakis's sentence be reduced from life imprisonment to 10 years (if this was granted, it would mean that he would be released). When Mr. Papaspyrou was elected Speaker of Parliament in October 1965, the King once more sent the appeals back to the Ministry of Justice on the pretext that the Minister had changed. There is no law that requires the King to send the appeals back. He can sign them when he likes but so far, they have remained unsigned.

ATILA BARTINLI (TURKEY)

Article 142 of the Turkish Penal Code forbids the publication of anything "advocating the dominance of one social class over another". Earlier this year Mr. Vedat Günlol and Mr. Sabahattin Eyuboglu, two Turkish intellectuals, published a translation of a book by Babeuf, the nineteenth century French Socialist writer, and were promptly put on trial. The trial was reported in "Gündem", the journal of the Turkish Union of Journalists. "Gündem" also published extracts from the Babeuf translation.

The Turkish Government then charged the editor of "Gündem", Mr. Atila Bartinli, under Section 142 and Mr. Bartinli has been sentenced to 7 years and 2 months imprisonment. If Mr. Bartinli's sentence is confirmed on appeal, as some of his friends fear, Mr. Günlol and Mr. Eyuboglu will presumably receive sentences at least equally severe under an article of the Penal Code which has long been bitterly criticised in liberal circles.

The background to this case is that the elections of October 10 1965 resulted in a victory for the Justice Party, which is politically unpopular with the Army. For the first time elections were contested by a left-wing opposition. Although this opposition did not poll well, the Military appear to have put pressure on the new Justice Party Government to keep press and public criticism under stricter control. Mr. Bartinli's Appeal is likely to be heard in the next two or three weeks and this is therefore a most opportune moment to make representations.

Your cards should go to:

Minister of Justice,
Hasan Dincer,
Ministry of Justice,
Istanbul

N.B. - Card Scheme members are asked to amend Turkish addresses as below:

Prime Minister,
Soleiman Demirel,
Istanbul

Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Ihsan Sabri Caglayangil,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Istanbul

Minister of the Interior,
Faruk Sukan,
Ministry of the Interior,
Istanbul

Minister of Justice,
Hasan Dincer,
Ministry of Justice,
Istanbul

Additional cards may be sent to the above if members so wish.

PARVIZ NIKKAH (IRAN)

Parviz Nikkah, a 26 year old Iranian student, comes from a comparatively poor family but his brilliant record as a student enabled him to continue his studies in England. While abroad he not only graduated in engineering at Manchester University but was an active member of the Iranian Student Organisation and was a member of its Executive Committee. He returned to Iran in 1963 and became a lecturer at the Teheran Polytechnic.

On 9th April 1965 an attempt was apparently made to assassinate the Shah of Iran at the Marble Palace in Teheran. The circumstances of the attempt are still somewhat obscure but the shots appear to have been fired by a conscript named Shamsabadi. Shortly afterwards an acquaintance of Shamsabadi, Ahmad Kamrani, was arrested and admitted that he knew of Shamsabadi's intentions. A friend of Kamrani's, named Ahmad Mansouri, a fellow graduate of Manchester with Parviz Nikkah also admitted hearing of Shamsabadi's plan though he never met Shamsabadi and did not take the story seriously.

The arrest of Kamrani and Mansouri on charges of complicity in the attempt on the Shah's life provided an opportunity for arresting Nikkah who is known to be one of the most forceful younger critics of the Shah's regime. At the first trial before a Military Court in October Shamsabadi was sentenced to life imprisonment. The Military Court of Appeal has subsequently acquitted Nikkah on this charge but found him guilty of membership of a group with Communist ideology and policy and given him the maximum sentence of 10 years solitary confinement. The evidence against Nikkah on this charge is largely the possession of books and pamphlets, some of which are Marxist and the fact that while in England he wrote a thesis saying that guerilla warfare in Iran would theoretically be possible. Both Nikkah and others who have given evidence have always said that he was opposed to the idea of assassination as a political weapon.

Evidence given at the trial makes it unfortunately probable that Nikkah and other accused have been tortured to obtain "confessions". Although by stretching the meaning of the word "communist" Nikkah may technically be guilty of an offence against Iranian law, his real "crime" is simply that he was known to be an outspoken opponent of the regime.

Your cards should go to:

His Imperial Majesty,
Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi,
Teheran,
IRAN

ANDREI SINIAVSKY (SOVIET UNION)

Andrei Siniavsky, literary critic and author, was arrested in Moscow in September of this year, and is at present awaiting trial on charges of publishing anti-Soviet propaganda abroad under the pseudonym of Abram Tertz. The works of Abram Tertz are known to critics in the West, and have been published in Russian emigre journals and in the magazine Encounter in London and in the New Leader in New York. A critical essay in "Soviet Realism" dealing with the officially imposed Soviet school of writing and painting, was published in 1959; other works are "The Trial Begins", "The Makepeace Experiment", and a collection of tales called "Fantastic Stories". Some are interesting for their accounts of persecution of Jews in the last years of the Stalin regime, particularly in the book called "The Trial Begins". It has been argued that the Jewishness of Tertz's works suggests that he himself must have been a Jew, and therefore that he is not Siniavsky, but Soviet government spokesmen have said that he has confessed to being Tertz.

Siniavsky is almost 40, and is married with children. He has actively contributed literary criticism to Soviet journals including analyses of the works of Maxim Gorky and reviews of poetry. His contributions to the liberal paper Novi Mir have made him well known in the Soviet Union and he has been credited with helping to free Soviet literary criticism from the remnants of Stalinist dogmatism. Yevtushenko received Siniavsky's support when he came under fire from literary dogmatists, and Pasternak, some of whose work he helped to have published was one of his life long friends. Together with Ilya Ehrenburg he wrote a book about Picasso, and he was one of the main authors of a 3 volume edition of "History of Soviet Literature".

He was associated with the research institution, the Gorki Institute of World Literature, and it is reported that some of its students tried to demonstrate in his favour in Moscow recently. While Makhail Sholokhov was on a visit to Stockholm this month, to receive the Nobel prize for literature, appeals were made to him to intervene in Siniavsky's case, but he replied that even writers were subject to the law. One cannot however accept that publishing manuscripts abroad under a pseudonym can be considered a crime.

Send your appeals:

Minister of Justice of the R.S.F.S.R., V. Boldyrev.
Ministry of Justice.
MOSCOW.

Additional letters can be sent to:

The Editor,
Novi Mir Journal,
MOSCOW.

The Union of Writers of the U.S.S.R.,
57 Vorovskiy Street,
MOSCOW.