

# monthly newsletter from amnesty international

## postcards for prisoners campaign

July 1967.

Here is some news about previous prisoners:

Mirza Afzel Beg, India (April 1966 Newsletter). Members will be delighted to learn that Mirza Afzel Beg was released on July 6th although he is still restricted within the limits of his home town of Anantang and is not allowed to take part in any political activities or communicate with the press or address any public meeting. Mr. Beg has apparently accepted these conditions and it is believed that they will in any case be withdrawn quite soon. Another Kashmiri detainee was released a couple of days later on a month's parole and there are now strong rumours that Sheikh Abdullah himself will be released even before the emergency is lifted on October 1st.

Kon Sook Siong, Malaysia (November 1966 Newsletter). We have just heard that Kon Sook Siong was released conditionally on 5th April. The exact conditions are unknown, but are presumed to include restrictions of residence, undertaking not to engage in political activity and prohibition of contact with former colleagues and ex-detainees.

Dr. R. Rajakumar, Malaysia (March 1966 Newsletter). Dr. Rajakumar was recently appointed member of a 4-man delegation to investigate the hunger strike at Batu Gajah Detention Centre. Amnesty's Investigation Bureau knows of no precedent for this type of appointment. It would seem to reflect the very high prestige which he formerly enjoyed and it is hoped that this is the first step to his release.

Mrs. Caroline Okello-Odongo, Kenya. (January 1967 Newsletter). The Kenyan Government have informed her that she will be released if she is willing to agree to leave the country. Mrs. Okello-Odongo is happily married and a Kenyan citizen. Members are asked to protest to the Attorney General, Charles Njonjo, Attorney General's Chambers, Nairobi, Kenya.

Geoffrey Boon, St. Kitts. (June 1967 Newsletter). All the detainees are to appear before a tribunal which will sit in-camera inside the prison. An English QC has been engaged to represent them, but it is not known whether he will be allowed to appear for them. The Government is not bound to observe the tribunal's recommendations should they, for example, recommend release. Two cases brought by the opposition and the detainees against the government are pending at this moment. One will be heard this week. The situation on the island appears to be worsening and it is rumoured that both the Governor and the Deputy Chief Minister have already arranged for their family and dependents to leave for neighbouring islands.

Geoffrey Boon's 16 year old son is staying in England and his guardians have been to see us, as have other relatives and friends of the rest of the detainees.

New and revised instruction sheets for the "Postcards for Prisoners Campaign" are now available, together with more up to date versions of some background sheets for countries. Please let us know if you would like to receive copies.

Rhodesian Background Sheet - We regret that some errors appeared on this sheet, a new and corrected version is attached. Please destroy your previous copy.

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Here are this month's prisoners:

Eustaquio Tolosa - Argentina

Since June 28 1966, when President Illia was overthrown by a military coup, Argentina has been ruled by a military Government under the presidency of General Juan Carlos Ongania. The military regime has taken strong action to repress opposition in the universities and the trade unions, and many students and union members have been imprisoned for short periods. Although there have as yet been no major trials of opponents of the Government, the trial of Eustaquio Tolosa may be used to establish a precedent which could lead to long prison sentences for trade union leaders.

Tolosa is Secretary-General of the Dockers' Union (SUPA), which called an indefinite strike on October 19th 1966 to protest against the Government's arbitrary imposition of decrees regulating the pay and conditions of employment of port workers - decrees which contravened existing arrangements between the unions and employers, and which were drafted without consultation. The Government appointed a Captain in the Navy to take over the Dockers' Union and seized its assets. The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) which is based in London and to which the Argentine dockers' union is affiliated, called for a boycott of Argentine ships on October 31. A boycott resolution was passed at a meeting of the ITF Executive in London on November 18 - Tolosa attended this meeting but did not initiate the resolution. As a result of the resolution, an Argentinian vessel was placed under temporary boycott in London.

On his return to Buenos Aires, Tolosa arranged to preside at a meeting of the dockers which was to end the strike. Although the Chief of Police had assured the ITF representative that the police would permit negotiations to take place, Tolosa was arrested as he opened the meeting, and was taken to prison with his hands manacled behind him. He was charged with leaving the country without the permission of a judge, and then with acting in a manner calculated to harm the Argentine economy. He was released on December 22 and the SUPA strike was called off; however, the Government have taken reprisals by organising a lock-out of SUPA members at the docks and employing strike-breakers. Another warrant was issued for Tolosa's arrest, and he decided to fight the case rather than flee the country. He gave himself up on January 4, 1967 and has been in the Villa Devoto prison in Buenos Aires since that date. He is to be tried under a law passed by President Peron in 1951 and which has never been applied. Under this law penalties of between 5 and 25 years may be imposed on those found guilty of acts calculated to endanger the economy of the State. The charges against Tolosa relate to the ITF boycott resolution and it should be noted that the ITF took action in this matter on its own initiative. In fact the Government is clearly using this case as a means of suppressing trade unionism, and if the prosecution is successful, the Government may turn on the leaders of the other transport unions which have opposed its labour policy and attempted to continue the established methods of collective bargaining.

Cards should be sent to: President Juan Carlos Ongania,  
Casa de Gobierno,  
Plaza de Mayo,  
BUENOS AIRES, Argentina.

or: Secretary for Justice,  
Dr. Conrado K. Etchebarne,  
Las Heras 2585,  
BUENOS AIRES, Argentina.

Captain Howard Levy - USA

After completing his medical training as a dermatologist in 1965, Howard Levy was compulsorily drafted into the U.S. Army. He was posted to the Dermatology Clinic in Fort Jackson, South Carolina, where he was expected to train Special Forces Aidmen (Green Berets) bound for Vietnam in the basic treatment of skin diseases. Openly opposed to the Vietnam War from the time he was drafted, his position grew increasingly hostile and culminated in his refusal to continue training Green Berets in the summer of 1966.

He was tried in June 1967 before an army court-martial, found guilty on five counts of "wilful disobedience and culpable negligence" and sentenced to three years hard labour. He has been refused bail pending an appeal in the U.S. military courts of appeal and is currently held in the army stockade, Fort Jackson.

Amnesty International believes that a "Prisoner of Conscience" should include any person who refuses to fight or train for all wars or any particular war on the grounds that it offends his own private conscience. Howard Levy belongs to the latter category.

Cards should be sent to:

The Secretary of Defence,  
Robert Macnamara,  
Pentagon,  
Washington D.C.  
U.S.A.

or:

The U.S. Military Court of Appeals,  
Washington D.C. 20370,  
U.S.A.

Jan Beneš - Czechoslovakia

The 31 year old Czech writer Jan Beneš has just been sentenced to 5 years imprisonment by Prague City Court for "subversion of the republic" and an "attempt at fraud". The prosecution's case was that he had articles published abroad by Czech emigré journals which were slanderous of the regime. The charge of attempted fraud involves a complicated story about a picture by Toulouse-Lautrec but it was not substantiated by the evidence produced in court. A further charge of "speculation" (Beneš was accused of selling his wife's paintings in Paris) was eventually dropped.

The case provides a parallel to the Sinyavsky/Daniel affair in the USSR where two writers were sentenced to terms of imprisonment in labour camps for publishing abroad under pseudonyms. Beneš had in fact made himself unpopular with the government for initiating a discussion on this affair at a meeting of the Union of Czechoslovak writers, the outcome of which was a protest being sent to the Soviet authorities. At the same time he filed a lawsuit against the Czechoslovak Ministry of the Interior for refusing him a passport to travel abroad.

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Jan Benes continued

To understand the Beneš affair one must also take into account the growing alienation of Czech and Slovak writers from the government. At their annual congress famous writers and dramatists made statements critical of the government's foreign policy and called for the abolition of censorship at home. Such resistance from the writers is without precedent in Czechoslovakia and there is evidence that the authorities are seriously concerned about it. It seems only too likely that they are seeking to make an example of Beneš and thereby to intimidate all opposition.

As the trial was officially described as being public one would assume that the authorities had nothing to hide. In fact admission was by ticket only and nearly all those desiring entry, including newspaper correspondents, were told that there was no room. In addition Amnesty International's official observer, Mr. Paul Sieghart, a retired London barrister, was expelled from the country when he attempted to return for the second week of the trial. He was in possession of a valid visa and had stated the reasons for his visit quite openly on application. Fortunately, he was able to spend a short time at the trial during the first week and it is thought that our intervention may have prevented the sentence from being heavier. Certainly the prosecutor has appealed against it, saying that five years is not enough. Please support Jan Beneš in his appeal, by sending your cards to the following.

Mr. Jiri HENDRYCH  
Secretary of the Central Committee of the  
Communist Party in Czechoslovakia,  
PRAHA-Mala Strana, Nabrezi kpt. Jarose 4,  
Czechoslovakia.

Alois NEUMANN  
Minister of Justice,  
PRAHA-Move Mesto, Vyšehradska 16,  
Czechoslovakia.

Cards may in addition be sent to Jan Benes c/o the Ministry of Justice but it is doubtful whether they will reach him.

July, 1967.

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