



INSIDE-OUT

Same Struggle - Same Fight!

no.12 VVAW-WSO Newsletter for Prisoners

July 75

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Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our greetings and solidarity. Once again, we are a little late with this issue of Winter Soldier and "Inside/Out"; we are in the process of trying to get back on schedule--the next issue should be coming out toward the end of July, and we will be back on our regular system of mailing once again (we hope).

From a number of our members--who are out on the streets selling Winter Soldier at the VA or at the unemployment office--we have gotten the suggestion that we should drop the color from the Winter Soldier paper. So, this month, we are trying a black and white paper so that people can see what they think. Your comments will certainly be appreciated. Getting rid of the color is one way we can help to cut costs on the paper, but if people feel that a great deal is lost without the color, then we are going to try to keep it.

That's only one of the items in this issue of "Inside/Out" where we are asking for your comments--there are at least three other articles which are reprinted here specifically to see what your comments are.

There are also a number of articles dealing with prisons and prisoners in other countries; in most cases, the prisoners are facing many of the same problems and the same conditions that prisoners face in the US prison kamp system. The articles give a sense of how they are dealing with the oppression that they face, and how they are getting together to struggle against it. Even though many of the articles are about foreign prisons, we all realize that the real struggle is right here, against that enemy who reaches his tentacles into the prisons, the factories, the schools, the VA hospitals, the military barracks--everywhere there is another nickel of profit to be made. There is a growing struggle against the enemy, and we are all a part of that struggle.

In Militant Solidarity,

The VVAW/WSO National
Collective



Talks with ex-Prisoners, Liberated from the Prisons of South Vietnam

In the November issue of "Inside/Out," we printed some of the accounts of prison found in a book by Arlene Eisen-Bergman, entitled Women of Vietnam. Because many of the brothers and sisters who are now receiving the newsletter were not getting it then, we are reprinting a short section from that book, followed by some interviews with prisoners recently freed from the infamous Tiger Cages on Con Son Island when their country was liberated.

Huyn Thi Kien refused to talk when she was tortured. With the help of friends, she escaped to Hanoi, where she received an artificial leg to replace the one her torturers cut off. She explained how she was able to defy the torture: "I thought very hard and decided that I would rather die than let my comrades get arrested and be killed because of my information... (They cut off one leg and, after a month, she received word that they were planning to do the same with the other. The night before she knew she would be interrogated again...) I thought very hard about the terrible things that would happen to me the next morning. I thought many things. I thought about how I joined the struggle to liberate the families and myself, my brothers and sisters and the villagers and the country in general. I thought that if I died, many others will live and fight for the cause I have followed. I was determined to keep my loyalty! 'I cannot be bought off by the enemy, I cannot say anything about my comrades, I cannot betray the country. I would rather die.' Thinking these things, I fell asleep, and in my mind I was ready to face anything." The next morning, mistaking her faint for death, her torturers did not completely sever her leg. A sympathetic prison nurse saved her and helped her to escape.

Some people do eventually talk--unable to endure torture indefinitely. But neither Minh (a woman talked about earlier in the book) nor Kien are 'super-women.' They represent hundreds of women who maintain their defiance in the face of torture because they can gain unlimited strength from feeling themselves part of the struggle of an entire people. Every act of resistance becomes a 'mind vitamin'--the prisoners say 'thuoc bo'--for the rest. A prisoner explained how unity among the prisoners makes resistance possible. "We never started a hunger strike alone, separately. By the tens, by hundreds, and sometimes the whole prison went on strike. We even refused to drink... That's why they were afraid of, the obstinate will, not of one, but of the whole collectivity... if need be, ready to die in support of their demands. To let a whole prison die would rouse public opinion, they would get into trouble from their bosses, since their job was not to do away with detainees, but to 'convert' them. Especially as we always took care to present apparently harmless demands at first... But the main thing was to compel them to give up to prove that they were not masters here."





Women like Minh and Kien dedicate their lives to the principles of national liberation, refusing to compromise, because they know this is the only way to survive. They maintain their resolve because they're sure of victory. This certainty makes them know that their death, if it becomes inevitable, will not be wasted. They know they'll be avenged and they cannot conceive of betraying either the memory of other fallen comrades or the struggle of those who fight on.

Women in prison, living in rags without even a shread to clean themselves during menstruation, find ways to comfort each other. Their solidarity, combined with the atrocities of the guards, and the humanity of the NLF cadre in prison, have made many women join the liberation forces while in prison. Their determination to remain free becomes legends to inspire the growing strength of their sisters.

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(The following material is taken from interviews done by Frances Starner as printed in the Liberation News Service; a committee of three prisoners recently freed from Con Son prison met with Starner.)

Le Quang Trinh, 44, of Saigon, was first arrested in 1959 and sent to Con Son in 1962. He had little formal education--only two years--before he joined the resistance against the French. Trinh was arrested by the Diem government and--unlike many of those picked up later--put on trial and sentenced.

When Trinh's term was up, however, he was not released--because, he explained, "I was a leader" among the prisoners. Trinh remained in Con Son from 1962 until freed by the PRG in May.

The prisoners recount tortures used in prison--the Tiger Cages themselves (the cages were approximately 6'x8' with bars for a roof. There were usually four people to a cage and it was impossible for them to stand up; many prisoners eventually lost the use of their legs), the use of quick-lime and water thrown on prisoners, beatings, tear gas and so on--but now they are free, the accounts of their continuous warfare against their jailers take on an air of triumph.

Huynh Ngoc Thanh, who said she had become a member of the Communist movement in 1951 when she was only 19, was first arrested along with her husband and four children in 1960. "In prison," she says, "all of the struggle was led by Communist cadres and Front members."

Thanh shows few ill effects from her 15 years in a wide array of interrogation centers, jails and at Con Son--three times since 1969. She spoke of the communication chain in the prison as being made up of 'puppet government men who worked in Con Son but had sympathy with us. Gradually we educated them.' Many of them were exposed and jailed," she said, "but still there were others who joined us."



Because they were committed to the liberation of their country, the South Vietnamese political prisoners suffered years of imprisonment, often under incredibly brutal circumstances. But, because they had the political understanding that their country would be liberated--that they would win freedom and independence--they withstood whatever the puppet government could do to them. They are now free and joining with their countrymen and women in the task of rebuilding Vietnam.

Iranian Political Prisoners

There is an article about the struggles of the Iranian people in this issue of Winter Soldier. As part of the repressive regime of the US-supported Shah of Iran, some 40,000 political prisoners are held in the dungeons of Iran. Terror tactics have long been part of the standard operating procedure for SAVAK (the Gestapo/secret police which is, in effect, the Shah's private army to violently suppress any dissent). Only pressure from people around the world finally forced the Shah to hold "open" trials for political prisoners before sentencing them to death; and now, the trials are "open" only to those people approved by SAVAK.

Ashraf Dehghani, who had been held and tortured for the past two years in the Shah's political prisons, successfully escaped from Ghasr prison; she escaped after a five-day visiting period at the prison. The women there had held a hunger strike and obtained their demand for visits from their family members during the first 5 days of the Iranian New Year. The fact that Ashraf Dehghani escaped demonstrates the courage and the spirit among political prisoners. For, considering the tight hold which SAVAK keeps over the prisons, it is extremely difficult to escape. This kind of courage was undoubtedly motivated by Ashraf's desire to return to the world outside prison where she could continue her just opposition to the Shah's regime. (This information comes from "Resistance," a publication of the Iranian Students Association in the United States.)

The following statement comes from Mehdi Rezaee, a political prisoner; this was his final statement to a military tribunal at the end of his trial.

"I know that following this trial they will torture me and that they will kill me.

Let them torture... let my flesh and blood be sacrificed for the masses.

As long as there is repression, there is struggle, there is victory and defeat, but

In the end victory belongs to the masses.

This is not my claim, it is what history says,

It is what the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people says,

It is what the masses say...

And the masses say the truth."



NEPA Prisoner Education Project

The North East Prisoner Association (NEPA), publishers of NEPA News, has asked that we reprint this description of their prisoner education project. We have held some discussion with the comrades who are offering this program, pointing out our reservations (particularly around the price). As a result of this discussion, we recognize that the program has a number of positive possibilities and, under the concrete conditions they face, is the best that can be done. We hope that there are people among the brothers and sisters who read "Inside/Out" who can take advantage of this program.

PRISONER EDUCATION PROJECT

Studies in Social Struggles

The Prisoner Education Project is a new program at Franconia College designed for 8-15 prisoners to study "Social Struggles" in a two-year program for the Bachelor of Arts degree.

THE PROGRAM: The course of study will be for 24 months. Each student will be expected to develop a background in the theory of "Social Struggles" (Marxism, Anarchism, etc.) and to study one particular area intensively (for example, China, U.S. Labor Struggles, Afro-American History). Each student will present one or more papers per month on what was studied that month. The last four months will be directed toward a major paper on the specific area of study, as well as an exam composed of several essay questions on the general studies. Each student will work out a series of "learning contracts" with the Project Director, done each four months to define the material to be studied in the coming four months.

ENROLLMENT: Enrollment is open to any person in a U.S. state or federal prison. Two years of previous college, or equivalent experience, is required. Equivalent experience may include work, prison, military, art or literary work, previous independent study or anything else you feel is worth college credit. Evaluation of equivalent experience will be done by Franconia College; some sort of documentation (references, certificates, essays) will be necessary.

COST: \$2500 per year (12 months). This includes tuition, mailing costs, books, and the cost involved in having the Project Director visit you at least twice per year. We have no subsidizing, so we have to charge. **VETERANS:** you may be eligible for G.I. Benefits which will cover the cost of the program.

PROJECT DIRECTOR: Monty Neill, member of the Editorial Board of NEPA NEWS and the Board of Directors of NEPA.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Write to Prison Education Project, NEPA, Franconia College, Franconia, N.H. 03580, (603) 823-8501. More information and/or application forms will be sent to you.

Feedback! Feedback! Feedback!

The following information is the Statement of Purpose, Philosophy, Objectives, etc for the National Prisoners Association; it explains itself. We are interested in hearing your ideas on these statements. The Statement comes from comrades in the Atlanta Federal Prison.

"The NPA is a non-profit association formed by and for prisoners. We oppose Imperialism, Exploitation, Racism, Sexism, and Ageism.

We have for our motto the following three words: 'Educate, Organize, Agitate. These are the three words that strike fear in the hearts of our oppressors.

We have as our final goal the abolishment of prisons throughout the world. We realize to accomplish our goals we must first abolish the social system that makes prisons necessary. We believe socialism will abolish prisons as they are today by removing their cause. Under this new social order, man will be too humane and civilized to cage his fellowman like one would a wild beast.

Socialism and Prison are antagonistic terms. Socialism means freedom. Prison means death. Physical as well as mental. Prisons are a major institution under the Capitalist System. An institution used to punish the victims that it created and dared to call criminals.

Prisoners, by and large, are from the working class. That class which must establish the dictatorship of the proletariat.

A small percentage of prisoners are lumpen proletariat, that class which lives by so-called criminal means. But, under the guidance of a strong prison organization, they too can be salvaged to help make the revolution.

Due to the fact that the revolution is not today, nor tomorrow, we must take steps to make the prisons more humane.

We have formulated a twelve point immediate program that we believe are the most advanced demands made today. The demands can revolutionize the whole prison system.

We realize the prisoncrats will never give anything without a demand. It never has and never will. Therefore, we must be prepared to reach our goals by any means necessary.

We want to be a part of the United Front. We will work with any and all groups who are working for a new social order.

We see ourselves as humans who are victimized by the social conditions created by and for the capitalist. We want all prisoners to have a new sense of social values and perspectives.

Our immediate goals are:

I.

The immediate release of all prisoners fifty-five years or older. Each elderly prisoner is to receive a government allowance, monthly. It is useless to continue confinement at that age. The threat is no longer there and at that age, the job market is non-existent. They must have financial assistance, if they cannot secure employment for themselves, so that they are not forced to return to criminal activity in order to survive.

II.

Mandatory release of all first offenders after serving twelve months. Most prisoners feel as though if they would have received a "shock" type sentence of this nature, they would not have become repeaters.

III.

Mandatory release of all prisoners at the completion of one-third of their sentence, or five years, whichever is less. Long confinement has proven to be not only a failure in terms of rehabilitation but a waste of money considering that it costs the tax payers at least \$4,242.25 per prisoner per year.

IV.

Mandatory furloughs for all prisoners to attend Death Bed, Seriously Ill, and Burial Services for all family members. As it is, only those with MONEY can do this now. This would be for everyone.

V.

Mandatory minimum wage scale compensation for all forms of work and vocational training.

VI.

Abolishment of all segregation units, adjustment centers, or whatever they may be named to get around this. Prison officials have abused these units and made "Horror Houses" of them.

VII.

Mandatory work releases for all prisoners upon completion of one year confinement with three days furlough per month. This would enable a prisoner to support and maintain close family ties.

VIII.

Mandatory uniform sentence laws. This would eliminate the disparity in sentences between those who have and those who have not.

IX.

Conjugal visits on a regular basis with no discrimination. Sex is nature's most biological need. We also realize that people have different desires and respect their freedom of choice.

X.

Abolishment of all forms of Behavior Control Techniques, Drugs, and Brain Surgery, etc. These techniques are known throughout the world as tortures, not treatment. The prisoners chosen for this special treatment are political leaders and those who oppose the exploitation of fellow human beings.

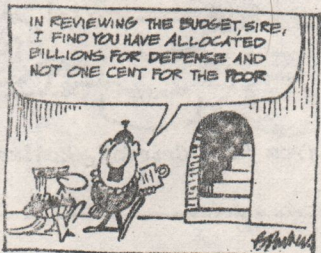
XI.

Abolishment of the Parole Board. This arm of Justice (?) serves no useful purpose.

XII.

All ex-policemen, informers, and government collaborators who are in prison should be, and must be, kept in a separate institution.

WIZARD OF ID



PRISONERS BILL OF RIGHTS

1. The Right to 24 hour sick call.
2. The right to a periodical medical check-up.
3. The right to an adequate suicide prevention program.
4. The right to receive and keep reading material of our choice.
5. The right to seal all out-going mail.
6. The right to true religious freedom.
7. The right to consult religious advisors from the outside.
8. The right to receive visits from anyone.
9. The right to be present during the search of property/quarters.
10. The right to refuse to work without just compensation.
11. The right to consensual sex.
12. The right to free/true political expression.
13. The right to a single living unit.
14. The right to be free from intimidation of any form.
15. The right to a true law library, with able and capable jailhouse lawyers supervised by an outside attorney.

Vets In Prison

The article about vets in prison in the enclosed issue of Winter Soldier needs input from you. While we have a good idea of the kinds of problems faced by vets in prison, we have a minimum of information about any efforts being made to struggle against these conditions. We would appreciate whatever information you can pass along to us; we recognize this area of struggle as one which does not affect each individual directly, but which is a struggle for a better life for millions--and as such is one in which we can all be involved.

