

INTRODUCTION

The Network of Concerned Historians (NCH) forwards to its participants news about the domain where history and human rights intersect, as reported by the American Association for the Advancement of Science [AAAS, Washington]; Amnesty International [AI, London]; Article 19 [A19, London]; Human Rights Watch [HRW, Washington/New York]; Index on Censorship [IOC, London]; International PEN Writers in Prison Committee [PEN, London]; Scholars at Risk [SAR, New York]; World University Service [WUS, Amsterdam]; and other sources. The fact that NCH presents this news does not imply that it shares the views and beliefs of the historians and others mentioned in it.

ALBANIA

In September 1995 Elvira Shaplo, a historian, Vladimir Qiriaqi, an archeologist, and two others were briefly detained on charges of 'distributing anti-constitutional writings', an offence punishable by up to three years' imprisonment. They were the authors of a guide book to Gjirokastër which apparently contained a photograph of former Communist ruler Enver Hoxha, a native of the town. In February 1996 they went on trial in Gjirokastër, but the trial was adjourned. The court was due to reconvene in March 1996. It appeared that the four defendants were not in detention.

[AI Report 1996: 70; AI, Further Information on Urgent Action 50/96, 11 March 1996; IOC 3/96: 98; see also NCH #3.]

In November 1995 police in Vlora and Durrës arrested and briefly detained some fifty people who tried to lay wreaths on the graves of partisans who died in the Second World War.

[AI Report 1996: 70.]

On 30 November 1995 parliament passed a law allowing selective access to the files of the Sigurimi, the secret police under the Communist regime. Under the so-called Verification Law a committee will examine the files of all those seeking public office, as well as those working in the state media and newspapers with a wide circulation. Those found to have collaborated with the Sigurimi will be barred

from office until 2002. The files of all other citizens will be closed for thirty years. In January 1996 appeals against the Law were rejected as 'groundless' by the Constitutional Court.

[Source: IOC 1/96: 169, 2/96: 80.]

On 9 June 1996 historians Jorgo Balo, Pullemb Xhufi and Fatos Baxhaku were among a group of 27 Albanian writers, scientists, artists, journalists and editors who wrote an open letter about free speech and democracy in Albania after the elections of 26 May 1996.

[Source: IOC 4/96: 91.]

ALGERIA

On 13 January 1996 Khaled Aboukacem, archivist at L'Indépendant newspaper, was killed, and a colleague of his was wounded, in a gun attack as they left their offices.

[Source: IOC 2/96: 80.]

BELARUS

On 26 April 1996 a 50,000-strong memorial rally commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster was attacked by the police, who arrested over 200 people.

[Source: IOC 4/96: 93.]

BULGARIA

At least since 1990 organizations of ethnic Macedonians, such as Obedinena Makedonska Organizatsiya 'Ilinden' (OMO Ilinden; United Macedonian Organization 'Ilinden'), named after the Ilinden Uprising of 12 August 1903, were denied registration by the government because they were considered separatist organizations that threaten the security of Bulgaria. In April 1993, 1994 and 1995 police used force to prevent assemblies of OMO Ilinden at Rozhen Monastery. The annual gathering commemorating the death of Yane Sandanski, a prominent figure in the struggle against Ottoman rule, was deemed anti-Bulgarian. In July 1995 the members of OMO Ilinden were forbidden to meet at Samuil Castle to commemorate the foundation of the Republic of Macedonia. It was widely reported that a Bulgarian court upheld the ban stating that 'the territory of Bulgaria cannot be used as a place to celebrate events that have no relation to Bulgarian history'.

[Sources: HRW World Report 1990: 352, 1992: 499, 1993: 211, 1994: 208, 1995: 199, 1996: 208-209; IOC 3/94: 166-167; AI Report 1994: 82-83, 1995: 82, 1996: 102.]

CHINA

On 30 October 1996 Wang Dan (b. [1969]), a former history student from Beijing University and cited as number one on the list of the most wanted student leaders issued by the government on 13 June 1989, was sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment. On 6 July he 1989 was arrested when he made preparations to leave the country. He was charged with 'counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement' and held in solitary confinement for four months. Then he was sent to Beijing Prison No. 2, a 'reform through labour camp' and reportedly held in a cell with five common criminals. He was tried on 23 January 1991. On 26 January 1991 he was sentenced to four years' imprisonment and one year's deprivation of political rights. According to official sources, 'he had shown repentance such as confessing his own crimes and exposing others'. On 17 February 1993 he was released on parole for good behaviour. He stated that he had no regrets. He peacefully resumed his activities to promote human rights, contributed articles on democracy and human rights to domestic and overseas Chinese media, as well as to international media, and raised funds to help people suffering repression. On 16 February 1994 his civil and political rights were officially restored, but he has been harrassed and arrested for short terms by the police ever since his release. He was denied permission to reregister at Beijing University and in January 1994 he began taking a correspondence course from the University of California. In March 1994 he was sent on 'vacation' outside Beijing to prevent 'disruption' during the visit of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher. After he received death threats from the police in December 1994, he filed a lawsuit against the Public Security Bureau to protest police harassment. In May 1995 he was detained again as a leading signatory of pro-democracy petitions. Crew members from the US television network National Broadcasting Company were questioned for several hours after interviewing him. After holding him in incommunicado detention for 17 months, the authorities indicted Wang Dan on 11 October 1996 for 'conspiring to subvert the government'. The three charges against him were 'accepting a scholarship from the University of California', 'publishing anti-government articles abroad', and 'joining other dissidents to set up a mutual aid plan.' Wang Dan's parents were given only one day to choose a lawyer. On 30 October 1996 he was sentenced to eleven years' imprisonment. In 1988-1989 Wang Dan had taken the lead in organizing seventeen unofficial open-air 'democracy salons' at Beijing University, at which participants were urged to discuss controversial political issues. In April 1989 the government attempted to close down the salons, and officials later cited them as evidence that Wang Dan had incited the student unrest. During the student uprising in the spring of 1989, he had been one of the top student leaders and chairman of the

Autonomous Federation of Beijing University Students.

[Sources: IOC 1/91: 17, 2/91: 36, 3/91: 37, 4/93: 35, 5-6/93: 43, 1-2/94: 235, 3/94: 169, 6/95: 172, 4/96: 97; AAAS, Directory of Persecuted Scientists, Engineers, and Health Professionals 1992: 13, 1994: 36-37; AI Report 1991: 65, 1994: 99, 1996: 118; HRW World Report 1995: 143, 144; AAAS Human Rights Network, Case 9621.dan, 28 October 1996; see also NCH #4].

In early December 1995 historian Chen Xiaoya (b. [1955]) was dismissed from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in connection with the publication of her manuscript, 'The History of the 1989 Democracy Movement' (in Chinese). The expulsion of Chen Xiaoya and some of her colleagues came after a secret conference in Xibobo, attended by CASS commissars, held to discuss the growth of rightism. Scholars who attempted to revive traditional Chinese culture, such as Cheng Ming, publisher of the neo-Confucianist journal *The Original Way*, have also been subject to official criticism.

[Source: IOC 2/96: 84.]

CROATIA

On 3 May 1996 Victor Ivancic, chief editor of the satirical weekly *Feral Tribune*, and reporter Marinko Culic were charged with 'rudely and falsely slandering' President (and historian) Franjo Tudjman, because they published an article criticising the plans to rebury the remains of Croatian fascists at the Jasenovac concentration camp where between 100,000 and 150,000 Serbs, Gypsies, Jews and Croat partisans were killed during World War II. Their trial began on 14 June 1996 but was adjourned until 25 September. If convicted they could face up to three years' imprisonment.

[Source: IOC 4/96: 22-24, 97.]

EGYPT

In early June 1996 police raided an Alexandria bookshop and confiscated copies of 'The Truth of the Veil', a book by Said al-Ashmawi, author, retired judge and former head of the State Security and Higher Criminal Courts. In March 1992, he was reported to be severely criticised for distorting Islamic history by the Committee of the Koran and its Sciences, an organ of the Islamic Research Academy of Al-Azhar, Egypt's Islamic university. There was considerable concern for his safety. He wrote widely and critically on the rise of militant political Islam. On 7 January 1992 the Committee confiscated five of his books at the Cairo Book Fair.

[Sources: IOC 1-2/94: 119-121, 124, 129, 237, 255, 5/96: 88; WUS & Human Rights, June 1992: 5.]

FRANCE

Among the books that the far-right mayor of Orange, Jacques Bompard, had refused to purchase for the new municipal library in July 1996 because they ‘offended good morals’, was a history of World War II.

[Source: IOC 5/96: 89.]

GUATEMALA

On 12 and 19 June and on 2 August 1996 Carlos Federico Reyes Lopez (b. [1970]), the coordinator of the Equipo de Antropología Forense de Guatemala (Guatemalan Forensic Anthropology Team, established 1992), and his family received death threats. In March 1996 Carlos Federico Reyes Lopez participated in the exhumation of one of the clandestine cemeteries in the country. Thousands of noncombatant civilians are believed to be buried in these cemeteries after they were massacred during counterinsurgency operations conducted by the armed forces in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The team of anthropologists, established in 1992, collected important and substantial evidence for use in future investigations into the massacres.

[Sources: AI, Urgent Action 173/96, 8 July 1996; AAAS Human Rights Network, Case GU9615.LOP, 10 July 1996 and 11 October 1996.]

HONG KONG

In mid-November 1995 a delegation of educationalists visited Beijing and learned of forthcoming revisions of history and geography textbooks. On 11 June 1996 the Hong Kong Educational Publication Association announced that school textbooks would be revised after 1997 to reflect the official Chinese view of history. More emphasis would be placed on Hong Kong’s past within China. References to the Opium War (1840-1842) were to be purged of ‘western bias’, Taiwan would no longer be a ‘country’ and there would be a ban on the expression ‘mainland China’, with its implication that there is more than one China. Details of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre would be left to the discretion of individual editors, but fears were expressed by the Teachers’ Union Resource Centre that schools were already dropping the use of teaching materials on the massacre in anticipation of a possible ban.

[Source: IOC 1/96: 178, 4/96: 103.]

INDIA

In 1996 it was reported that the following books were banned: ‘Nine Hours to Rama,’ by Stanley Wolpert, a reconstruction of the plot to kill Gandhi in which the killer is reportedly sympathetically portrayed; ‘The History of Sexuality’, by historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984); ‘Reclaiming the Past? The Search for Political and Cultural Unity in Contemporary Jammu and Kashmir’, by Vernon Hewitt, a book on Kashmir critical of Pakistan and India. The second and the third book were held up at customs; Michel Foucault’s book had previously been freely available.

[Source: IOC 2/96: 90, 166, 168.]

INDONESIA

In May 1996 it was reported that the government had banned the book ‘Bayang Bayang PKI’ (In the Shadows of the PKI), published by the Institute for Studies on the Free Flow of Information (ISAI). The book focuses on the 1965-1966 events leading to the assumption of power by President Soeharto.

[Source: IOC 4/96: 103.]

IRAN

In 1995 at least ten followers of the sociologist and historian ‘Alî Shari’atî (1933-1977), once called ‘the Ideologue of the Iranian Revolution’, were still serving long prison terms after unfair trials.

[Sources: AI Report 1996: 179, IOC 4/96: 152.]

The threat of extrajudicial execution extended to many Iranian nationals abroad, as well as to non-Iranians such as Salman Ahmed Rushdie (b. 1947), a British writer who studied history at Cambridge University (1965-1968) and showed special interest in the history of early Islam and the history of independent India, and whose killing has been called for in a fatwa (religious edict) in 1989 for writing and publishing an allegedly blasphemous novel, ‘The Satanic Verses’ (1988).

[Sources: AI Report 1996: 180; IOC 4/96: 8.]

ISRAEL

In 1995 Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin rejected calls for an investigation into allegations that Israeli soldiers killed Egyptian prisoners during the 1956 and 1967 wars with its neighbours. Egypt demanded a full enquiry.

[Source: IOC 6/95: 177.]

JAPAN

In June 1995 the Diet (parliament) adopted a resolution in which 'deep remorse' was expressed to the victims of Japanese aggression during the Second World War. In August 1995 the Prime Minister made a public apology. The victims included up to 200,000 women, known as 'comfort women', mostly from Korea and several other countries in East and Southeast Asia, who had been forced into prostitution by the Japanese armed forces. The government was criticised for its decision to set up a private fund for the 'comfort women' instead of paying individual compensation to the victims.

[Source: AI Report 1996: 191.]

In mid-February 1996 New Zealand author James Mackay received a death threat from an anonymous man, in an apparent attempt to prevent publication of his forthcoming book on Japanese war crimes. In late 1995 the author reportedly refused bribes to scrap the book.

[Source: IOC 3/96: 111.]

In March 1996 curators of an exhibition at the Atomic Bomb Museum, Nagasaki, removed controversial photographs and texts from display. Items depicting the 1937 Rape of Nanking and the Bataan Death March were replaced by pictures of victorious Japanese soldiers and the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor. The items, introduced at a late stage to give a balanced overview of the war, were removed after a formal protest from conservative members of the city council. In late June 1996 the Museum replaced a picture of the Nanking massacre by order of the mayor. The Prime Minister instructed the Foreign and Education Ministries to investigate whether photos of Japanese military aggression in museums around Japan were real or fabricated.

[Source: IOC 3/96: 111, 5/96: 94.]

MALAYSIA

On 19 October 1995 the Prime Minister ordered a review of the 20-year-old ban on television programmes featuring people in Chinese historical costumes after two such programmes had to be

withdrawn that month.

[Source: IOC 6/95: 179.]

In early August 1996 the Terenggau Umno Youth Movement called upon the religious authorities to ban a book on Islamic history which, it claimed, promoted Shi'ism. The first edition of the book, 'Fitnah Terbesar Dalam Sejarah Islam', by the Egyptian poet and historian Taha Hussain (1889-1973), was published by a state-owned press in 1992 but sold out. Malay authorities are campaigning to curb the influence of Shi'ism.

[Source: IOC 5/96: 96-97.]

PALESTINE (AREAS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY)

On 24 or 25 December 1995 Maher al-Alami, a senior editor at the Arabic-language daily al-Quds was summoned for questioning in Jericho and detained for six days, apparently because he put a story on page eight and not on the front page. The story was about the Greek Orthodox Patriarch granting President Yasser Arafat, Chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization and head of the Palestinian Authority, symbolic custody of Christian holy sites in Jerusalem by likening him to the seventh-century Arab caliph Umar, who delivered Jerusalem to Islam. After a personal reprimand from President Arafat, he was released.

[Sources: IOC 2/96: 73, 98; AI Report 1996: 187.]

POLAND

On 15 October 1995 President Lech Walesa accused historian Adam Michnik, editor-in-chief of the daily 'Gazeta Wyborcza', of 'highly unethical manipulation' in publishing the 'unauthorised text' of an interview with him, which, President Walesa said, was 'too frank'.

[Source: IOC 1/96: 183.]

On 6 February 1996 Jerzy Urban (b. 1933), editor-in-chief of the satirical weekly 'Nie' ('No'), former government spokesman (1981-1989), former Minister of Information (1989), was fined and barred from managing a publication or working as a journalist for one year, after he was found guilty of publishing classified documents. He was also given a one-year suspended sentence. The charge arose from a 1992 article which contained extracts from the former Communist political police archives, revealing, among other things, an undertaking to co-operate with the secret police, signed in 1958 by Zdzislaw Najder,

who later became director of the Polish section of Radio Free Europe and an adviser to premier Jan Olszewski (1991-1992).

[Source: IOC 2/96: 99-100, 152.]

ROMANIA

During 1995 local authorities in Transylvania attempted to remove all traces of Hungarian history and culture from several towns. The mayor of Cluj had sought to remove the statue of King Mathias in 1994, and in mid-April 1995, announced that he would place a Romanian and English-language inscription at King Mathias' birthplace, explaining that the greatest Hungarian king was a Romanian.

[Source: HRW World Report 1996: 226.]

RUSSIA

On 15 December 1995 Sergei Grigoryants, a historian and literary specialist, chairman of the organizing committee of the International Public Tribunal on Chechnya, was detained with two colleagues at Moscow airport as they were about to leave for the tribunal's hearings in Stockholm. Books, computer disks, videotapes and documents were confiscated. From 1975 to 1980 Sergei Grigoryants had been imprisoned. On 25 February 1983 he and Viktor Beskrovnykh were arrested in the Kaluga region, apparently in connection with the publication of a samizdat human rights bulletin, probably 'Bulletin V'. In early February 1987 he was released. Shortly afterwards, a group of former prisoners, led by Sergei Grigoryants, asked permission to publish an unofficial current affairs journal, 'Glasnost'. On 9 May 1988 he was detained at the headquarters of 'Glasnost', where the third session of the founding conference of a new political party, the Democratic Union, was due to take place. He was put under administrative arrest for seven days for allegedly 'resisting the police'. As the chief informant for the western press on the situation in Armenia and Karabakh, he came under attack in the official press because of his regular contact with Western correspondents. While he was in prison, the magazine's equipment was confiscated and its archives destroyed. On 28 November 1988 he and Andrei Shilkov, another editor of 'Glasnost', were detained in Yerevan, Armenia's capital, charged with taking photographs in contravention of emergency regulations, and sentenced to thirty days' imprisonment. On 26 February 1990 Sergei Grigoryants was refused permission to travel to Paris for a UNESCO conference on the press in Eastern Europe.

[Source: IOC 4/83: 43, 3/87: 40, 5/87: 41, 7/87: 40, 1/88: 6, 6/88: 41, 7/88: 40, 2/89: 41, 6/90: 43, 2/96: 99.]

SAUDI ARABIA

In 1995 it was reported that the authorities prohibited, among other subjects, the study of evolution.

[Source: IOC 4/96: 79.]

SOUTH AFRICA

In 1995 it was reported that possibly ‘tens of thousands’ of classified documents had been destroyed since the unbanning of the African National Congress in 1990.

[Source: IOC 6/95: 184.]

On 3 May 1996 Maggie Friedman testified to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Johannesburg on the murder of her companion, David Webster. She denounced the many investigations and inquiries into his death that had remained without results, and the destruction of some of the documentation. On 1 May 1989 David Joseph Webster (1945-1989), lecturer of social anthropology at the University of the Witwatersrand, editor of ‘Essays in South African Labour History’ (1978) and a member of the History Workshop, was shot dead in Johannesburg by three unidentified gunmen believed to belong to a hit squad of the Civil Co-operation Bureau, a secret wing of the South African Defence Force. As an anthropologist, he conducted research into the culture of the Thembe-Tonga people of the Kosi Bay region. As a human rights activist, he was possibly involved in the opposition against removals due to take place as a result of conservation policies in the region; he was also interested in the secret South African aid to Renamo rebels in Mozambique passing through the region. As a member of the Detainees’ Parents Support Committee (an organization publicising the situation of thousands of detainees held without charge or trial, itself banned in 1988), he was engaged in research into the death squads.

[Sources: AI Report 1990: 215; Africa Watch, Academic Freedom and Human Rights Abuses in Africa 1991: 81-82; IOC 6/92: 31, 5-6/93: 22, 5/96: 58-60.]

TURKEY

In January 1995 the Turkish author and journalist Günay Aslan (see NCH #2) was released.

[Source: AI Report 1996: 20.]

In the spring of 1995 the book 'Genocide as a Question of National and International Law: The 1915 Armenian Event and its Consequences', written by US historian Vahakn Dadrian, was banned. The publisher of the Turkish translation of this book, Ayse Zarakolu, already serving a two-year prison sentence for publishing 'The Armenian Taboo', another book on the Armenian genocide by French historian Yves Ternon, faced prosecution for separatist propaganda. On 29 December 1995 she was acquitted for this book (but charges for other books were upheld).

[Source: IOC 4/95: 188; 6/95: 186, 2/96: 104.]

In early June 1996 the Islamist-run town council of Kayseri in central Turkey banned 'Istanbul Beneath My Wings', a popular Turkish film which portrays seventeenth-century Sultan Murat IV (1623-1640) as bisexual. The mayor declared that the film 'approaches our history from a distorted viewpoint'.

[Source: IOC 4/96: 113.]

UKRAINE

In August 1996 the Hungarian community was refused permission to erect a monument and hold a religious service in the Verecke pass. The monument and service were intended to mark the 1,100th anniversary of the crossing of Hungarian tribes through the Verecke pass into the Carpathian basin in the year 896.

[Source: IOC 5/96: 105.]

UNITED KINGDOM

In 1995, among the subjects surrounded by secrecy, according to historian and Conservative Member of Parliament Alan Clark, were the following: the cabinet discussion of peace terms with Adolf Hitler; the contents of Rudolf Hess' brief which he brought on his mission in 1941; the wartime antics and financial speculations of the Duke of Windsor; the full degree of pressure applied by the Americans over Suez; the text of the consultations during the Cuban missile crisis.

[Source: IOC 2/95: 32.]

In February 1995 the Imperial War Museum withdrew permission to use its film archive of war crimes, given previously to the company Still Movements. The company wanted to produce a commercial video, 'Executions', a history of capital punishment in the twentieth century, but the Museum expressed

concern over the possibility of the subject being sensationalised. Earlier Amnesty International, who campaigns for the complete abolition of capital punishment, had withdrawn from the project. The disputed footage was eventually acquired from US archives and from private collections in the UK, and the video was released in June 1995.

[Source: IOC 4/95: 21-23.]

UNITED STATES

In a 1995 interview the Ethiopian film-maker and professor of cinematography at Howard University, Washington, Haile Gerima claimed that he could not get funding for his film 'Sankofa', about slavery, and that, after its release in 1993, it was ignored by the big distributors, because the topic was still too sensitive.

[Source: IOC 6/95: 137, 191.]

On 6 December 1995 an exhibition of the Library of Congress, 'Sigmund Freud: Conflict and Culture', was postponed after protests from academics who said that Sigmund Freud's theories were now widely discredited. On 19 December 1995 the Library of Congress scrapped 'Back of the Big House: the Cultural Landscape of the Plantation', after complaints from black staff members and officials that the display lacked a proper historical context.

[Source: IOC 2/96: 105.]

In 1996 the US publisher of revisionist historian David Irving suddenly canceled publication plans for his biography of Goebbels.

[Source: IOC 3/96: 7.]

VATICAN/GERMANY

Pope John Paul II was censored by his own bishops on a visit to Germany in June 1996. They excised from his homily, which was delivered at the stadium built by Adolf Hitler for the 1936 Olympics, a passage praising the Catholic hierarchy's 'glorious' record of resisting Nazism.

[Source: IOC 4/96: 6.]

VIETNAM

On 8 November 1995 it was reported that two veterans of the Vietnamese revolution, Hoang Minh Chinh and Do Trung Hieu, were sentenced to twelve and fifteen months respectively, for 'anti-socialist propaganda'. They had written articles calling for the rehabilitation of about thirty senior party officials purged during the 1960s for revisionism and opposing the party line.

[Source: IOC 1/96: 192.]