

M. R. MASANI,

2, Tughlak Road,  
New Delhi,

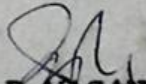
14th November, 1968.

2635

My dear Maharaja Sahib,

I trust you recall my mentioning to you the sad case of Sister Ursula Eichstaedt. I also sent through Raju a copy of my letter to you on the subject. I trust you have by now gone into the matter and informed Sister Ursula Eichstaedt C/o the German Embassy, New Delhi that she is welcome to return to Orissa. I may mention that when I met the German Ambassador the other day, he mentioned to me the letter he had written to you on the 5th November on the subject and he was awaiting your reply. They are very keen that this unfortunate matter should be put right and that the lady may be permitted to return to complete her work by the end of the year. I shall be glad to know of the action you have taken.

Yours sincerely,

  
(M. R. MASANI)

Shri R.N. Singh Deo,  
Chief Minister, Orissa,  
Chief Minister's Residence,  
Bhubneshwar(Orissa)

M.R. MASANI,

2, Tughlak Road,  
New Delhi,

14th November, 1968.

My dear Maharaja Sahib,

I trust you recall my mentioning to you the sad case of Sister Ursula Eichstaedt. I also sent through Raju a copy of my letter to you on the subject. I trust you have by now gone into the matter and informed Sister Ursula Eichstaedt C/o the German Embassy, New Delhi that she is welcome to return to Orissa. I may mention that when I met the German Ambassador the other day, he mentioned to me the letter he had written to you on the 5th November on the subject and he was awaiting your reply. They are very keen that this unfortunate matter should be put right and that the lady may be permitted to return to complete her work by the end of the year. I shall be glad to know of the action you have taken.

Yours sincerely,

(M.R.MASANI)

Shri R.N.Singh Deo,  
Chief Minister, Orissa,  
Chief Minister's Residence,  
Bhubneshwar(Orissa)

Botschaft  
der  
Bundesrepublik Deutschland  
Embassy  
of the Federal Republic of Germany  
Minister  
Dr. G.F. Werner

New Delhi, 8th November, 1968  
POB. 613  
Tel.: 74361-68

The Honourable  
Mr. Minoo Masani, MP  
2, Tughlaq Road  
New Delhi - 11

*Dr. G.F. Werner*

Dear Mr. Masani,

On occasion of the visit of Mr. Wuest from the Friedrich Naumann-Stiftung, I learnt a lot about your very successful seminar at Coonoor. I hope that the seminar will be fruitful for the future and will have good results.

Today, I would like to come back to the story of our Sister Ursula Eichstaedt, a German national, who lived up to now in Orissa State and who is charged by the local authorities there to have misled the people. I am convinced that this is not true because Sister Ursula is devoted to her task only by humanitarian feelings. She helped a lot all around the Adivasis in the last ten years, and her efforts have been crowned by a special award which similarly has been given to the Indian Prime Minister.

Therefore, Ambassador von Mirbach has written to the Honourable Chief Minister of Orissa, and I would like to send you a copy of this letter. If you have the possibility to intervene in favour of Sister Ursula who will leave India for good at least at the end of

the year because her assignment in the DED Corps will then be terminated, I would appreciate it very much. But, at least, it is necessary that Sister Ursula goes back to her place to finish her report and to finalize all what has to be done before leaving.

I expect to see you at the conference which will be held at the Ambassador's Residence on the 11th of November at 6,30 p.m. where the famous political author and lecturer Wolfgang Leonhard will make a lecture.

With best regards,

Sincerely Yours

A. S. Z. Vinner

Embassy  
of the  
Federal Republic of Germany,  
NEW DELHI

cc for Mr. MASANI

New Delhi, 5th November 1968  
P.O.Box 613

Baron D. von Mirbach

The Honourable  
Shri Singh Deo  
Chief Minister of Orissa  
Bhubaneswar (Orissa State)

I feel very unhappy, indeed, that a person like  
Sister Ursula EICHSTAEDT has been so selflessly devoted to  
social work amongst the population of Koraput, who has

A matter causing me grave concern compels me to turn  
to you for advice and assistance. amongst them, who helped the

Sister Ursula EICHSTAEDT, a German national, has  
arrived here a few days ago in great distress and told  
me that a warrant of arrest is being issued against her  
by the Police of the Koraput District under the Freedom  
of Religion's Act. As this is the very opposite of what  
she is entitled to expect from the authorities there,  
I would be very grateful if you could look into the  
matter personally. They will never be able to understand

Right from 1956, the year of Sister Ursula's arrival  
in India, she had the support of the Embassy and that of  
the German Consulate General at Calcutta. We not only helped  
her work in many ways but kept in close touch with her and  
were at all times in fullest knowledge of her activities.  
I can therefore vouch with all my responsibility as the  
representative of my country in India that Sister Ursula  
Eichstaedt never had anything to do with missionary activi-  
ties. Since she had no medical officer working with her  
throughout the 12 years of her stay in Koraput District,  
she had no option but to take serious cases to the next  
hospital which happens to be a Mission Hospital. But that  
cannot be held against her, for everybody would act like-  
wise if a suffering human being requires help desperately.

The very fact that 9 years out of 12 she was attached to and working under the direction of the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi and the Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation seems to me to be more than sufficient proof that the charge made against her must be due to a grave misunderstanding. And now that she is attached to the German Volunteer Service also places her entirely outside the orbit of missionary work.

I feel very unhappy, indeed, that a person like Sister Ursula who has been so selflessly devoted to social work amongst the population of Koraput, who has rid them of the fell disease of Yaws and is now devoting her energy to control leprosy amongst them, who helped the population of her district in times of drought and famine and stood by them all these many years, should be threatened with a warrant of arrest.

Sister Ursula has meanwhile become quite famous in Germany through articles written about her and through television. Millions of her fellow-countrymen have watched her on the screen living amongst her beloved tribal people. They will never be able to understand when they hear that Sister Ursula has been ousted for the very work she has been doing. The City of Rome awarded her, along with Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, a coveted prize for her humanitarian work. May I emphasise and assure you that the Vatican had nothing to do whatever with this honour bestowed on Sister Ursula and the Indian Prime Minister. She has adopted de facto two orphan children of the Kuttia Kond tribe, but has not allowed them to be baptised.

On the basis of the above I should be very grateful to you, Mr. Chief Minister, for putting the matter in its right perspective. Sister Ursula has to return to

Koraput very urgently since she has to complete the 5 years' statistical report of the Red Cross Leprosy Control Project as well as the audit to be produced to the Government of Orissa, to be able to hand over the Project to the Tribal and Rural Welfare Department.

I am confident that it is in our common interest to avoid difficulties between our two countries. Therefore, I should greatly appreciate it if I soon received a favourable reply from you.

With kind regards I am, dear Mr. Chief Minister,

Yours sincerely,

s/ v.Mirbach

In the year 1956 I came to India under an UNESCO - Exchange Programme for a term of two years to work as a Nurse in different Projects of the Service Civil International in the States of Assam, Kerala and Madhya Pradesh (Sevagram). At the end of my service I visited the State of Orissa and was requested by the Gandhi Smarak Nidhi to undertake an Anti-Yaws Campaign with the help of UNICEF in the Chandrapur area, Koraput District, Gunupur Sub-Division, Orissa. As it was absolutely essential to establish some kind of permanent Health Service in this tribal area I requested the Government of Orissa to make plans for a small Hospital. This Hospital was then granted and funds were sanctioned for its construction from the Tribal and Rural Welfare Department of the Government of Orissa. The Hospital was then completed and in May 1962 the then Governor of Orissa Sri Suhtankar came to Chandrapur and inaugurated the Hospital.

Inspite of all efforts no Medical Officer was posted up till now, so the services of this Hospital could not be utilised fully. I continued to take my patients to the Danish and English Mission Hospitals in Bissam- Cuttack and G. Udayagiri, as there was no other alternative.

In view of the fact that I came across so many Leprosy patients in the area, I decided after the eradication of Yaws to take up the Anti - Leprosy Work. For this purpose I approached the Chief Minister Sri Biju Patnaik to sanction funds. In 1962 the Tribal and Rural Welfare Department decided to take up a Project in the Chandrapur area comprising 6 Gram Panchayats over an area of 250 sqm with a population of almost 15 000. In Consultation with Dr. R.V. Wardekar Director of the Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation a scheme was prepared and approved. The Government of Orissa entrusted me with the execution of the work as Honorary Secretary in co-operation with the Red Cross Society. The Project was named the " Red Cross Leprosy Control Project Chandrapur ". Local boys belonging to the Tribal and Hindu Communities came forward and underwent training with the Gandhi Memorial Leprosy Foundation and finally after Census and Survey had been done the treatment of almost 500 patients ( 489 cases detected and put under treatment) ~~work~~ was started in March 1963.

Ever since the beginning of the Project the need for a Medical Officer was felt very much. It was under these circumstances that I have contacted the German Volunteer Service to send a Medical Officer to the Project. I went on Homeleave in 1964/65 and contacted them personally at that time. The German Volunteer Service was eager

to send Volunteers to the Project but unfortunately never succeeded in procuring the Services of a Medical Officer. So the full Health Service including the Hospital could never be taken over in the area. But I did receive the help of a German Midwife for the period of two years. In the year 1966 I also joined the German Volunteer Service as a Volunteer.

In November 1965 I was given the Isabella d'Este prize of the City of Rome. which was given to me in appreciation of my social welfare work in India. This prize I received personally in Rome. At the same time Mrs. Indira Gandhi was given the same prize for her achievements in the field of Diplomacy. This prize was not given to me by the Pope<sup>or</sup> of the State of Vatican. It seems to be taken for granted by the Orissa Government, which is in power now, that this prize was actually handed over through the Pope.

All the years that I have been in the area there have been conversions of the Konds to Christianity, but I had nothing whatever to do with it. I want to emphasise here that I am not connected in any way with any of the Christian Missionary work in India or Europe. Proof of this is the fact that the two orphan children which I have adopted de facto though not de jure have not been allowed to be converted to Christianity they still belong to the faith of their ancestors.

My work is solely concerned with the social and physical welfare of the people amongst whom I live, which sometimes of course compells me to take serious cases to the next best hospital which happens to be the Danish Mission - Hospital in Bissam- Cuttack and G. Udayagiri the English Mission Hospital.

In such Emergency cases the interest of my patients lets me forget to whom this Hospital belongs.

As soon as our Hospital is taken over by an Indian Medical Officer the patients of my area can be attended to by him in Chandrapur.

All these years I was working in good co-operation with local and State Officials and it always seemed to me that the Government of Orissa was appreciating my service in the area.

In the year 1958 I took into my care two orphan boys belonging to the Kuttia-Kond Tribe.: Burcha and Jiringa Bredeka.

When I later joined them in the Asram School the names were changed to Ganesh Chandra and Suraj Chandra.

Ganesh Chandra, now 11 years old reading as student in the Stewart-School in Bhubaneswar in Standard 5 and Suraj Chandra now 18 years old completed the 7th Standard and got married to a Kuttia-Kond girl and

has settled as a Cultivator, after I bought land and bullocks for him.

In October 1967, Miss Christiane Biessel, the German Midwife finished her term of Service with the German Volunteer Service and decided to return to Germany. We both made a trip to South-India and I utilised my leave for two years for this purpose. According to the Rules of the Foreigner's Act I reported my departure for South India and other places to the Assistant Sub-Inspector of Police in our local Chandrapur Police - Outpost. I expected the ASI to forward my report to the District Registration Officer in Koraput. Subsequently this was never done and the Superintendent of Police started to persecute me under Section 5 of the Foreigners Registration Act in July 1968. The case is still pending in the court of the Subdivisional Magistrate Gunupur, Koraput District, Orissa.

Rumors started circulating in the area that Police people have told the Konds to state that I was trying to convert them to Christianity with the help of free medical aid and food.

At this time one of my Para Medical Workers had become the Chairman of the Panchayat Samiti Chandrapur.

When elections in the State of Orissa finally led to the defeat of the Congress Party the whole administration in the State was changed and Swatantra and Jana Congress supporters were put into the leading positions in the State.

The fact that I had been closely working with the Congress Government and personal friendships with some of the leading persons in the Congress Party led to the suspicion that I am a supporter of the Congress Party.

After the departure of Miss Christiane Biessel I was requested by the District Magistrate of Koraput in January 1968 to vacate the Medical Officer's quarters on the pretext that a Medical Officer is going to be posted to the Chandrapur Hospital at once. I was very happy about this and gladly vacated and moved into my sub-centre at Dangsura, 24 Miles south of Chandrapur on the other side of the River. Here I also took over the medical care of 100 boys in the Asram School. But no Medical Officer arrived in Chandrapur still up to now.

A Research Party consisting of 18 members was sent by the Tribal and Rural Welfare Bureau to undertake a study of the : Impact of Christianity on the tribes and the issue arising out of this in the Malkanagiri, G.Udayagiri and Chandrapur area." This party was accommodated in the Medical Officer's Quarters.

After the departure of the Research Party the quarters were utilised

for the storage of 400 bags of Government Rice. And even up til now no Medical Officer has arrived in Chandrapur.

In the meantime the Orissa Legislative Assembly suddenly introduced the Orissa Freedoms of Religion Act, banning conversion from one faith into another, which came into force almost immediately.

Suddenly on September 25th three Catholic Catechists and two Baptist Pastors (all Indian Nationals), among them being one Headman of a tribal village were called to the Chandrapur Thana of the Police Outpost and arrested and handcuffed. They were then sent to Gunupur Headquarters of the Subdivisional Officer. All the catechists and pasors were imprisoned up til 11/12. Oktober without being produced before the Magistrate.

Over a hundred Christians were called to the Thana and told to state (by Police officials) that they had become Christians because the Missionaries, catechists and Appa (my name among the people meaning elder Sister) had promised them money, clothes, food, bullocks and free medical aid and school.

If they refused to state that and did not sign this statement, they would be detained and imprisoned. Out of fear of arrest, a number of people signed the statements, which had been prepared before, but I do not know how many and who.

The only villager who was allowed to enter the premises of the Police Outpost was the Chairman of the Panchayat Samiti, which was no longer my Para Medical Worker but the former Landlord and Moneylender of the area, who did not attempt to release any of the arrested persons, although one of the people was a Majhi (Headman) and member of his own Panchayat Samiti.

On October 11th a Police Constable was despatched from the Bissam-Cuttack Police Station to Dangasuruda where I had just arrived from Chandrapur and requested me to attend an examination of the Deputy Superintendant Koraput. The Constable was instructed to accompany me. Accordingly I started on the 60 Miles trip only to meet halfway another Constable who instructed me to attend the Examination of the Deputy Superintendant Koraput on the 12th October. So again I returned to Dangasuruda and proceeded to Rayagada on the 12th October. Here I waited for the arrival of the DSP Koraput from 12 a.m. til 5 p.m.. Finally being told that he would not be able to come and that he would meet me on another date, I informed him that I would be leaving Rayagada and returned to my area. It was at this time that my Danish Friends in Bissam-Cuttack had received reliable information that the Police was holding an arrest

warrant for me as well as for Father Fernando, a Spanish Priest working in the area.

In the "Prajantra" Newspaper of Orissa appeared the following article on the 7th October:

" Five preachers have been arrested in the Chandrapur area. They are alleged to have converted the Adivasis to Christianity by the use of threat and fraudulent means in the area of Chandrapur. Gunupur 5.10.68. : Cases under clause 4 of the Orissa Freedom of Religion Act have been started against the Christian Missionaries who are alleged to have converted the Adivasis in the area of Chandrapur by use of threat , misrepresentation and fraudulent means. In this connection Bisana Pradhan, Gombidanga Gotula Majhi, Ruben Behera Joseph Mallick and Richard Ranjit have been arrested up til now. Fr. Fernando and Sister Ursula also have been charged with the accusation that many Adivasis have been converted to Christianity through their efforts."

No other paper in Orissa published this report.

As my ward , Ganesh Chandra Bredeka had been on Dassera Puja Holidays in Chandrapur and now had to return to school ,I decided in view of the circumstances to drive to Bhubaneswar to inform the Regional Director of the German Volunteer Service. As there was nobody in Bhubaneswar at the time of my arrival I proceeded at once to Calcutta and informed the Consulate General of the Federal Republik of Germany about the facts. After mr return to Bhubaneswar I met the Regional Director of the German Volunteer Service. After consultation with the State Co-ordinator and the Chief Secretary of the State of Orissa it was decided by the German Volunteer Service and the State Officers concerned that I should not return to Chandrapur for the present but leave the State of Orissa immediately and proceed to Delhi. In the meantime they would investigate the charges against me. I was unfortunately unable to meet the Chief Minister of Orissa .

My term of Service with the German Volunteer Service is ending 31.12. 68 and I was preparing the final reports of the Leprosy Control Project to be able to hand it over to the Gove nmet of Orissa.

It is vitally important for me to finish this report and to give an account of what measures I have taken to controll this fell disease apart from the other Health and Social work I have undertaken for the benefit of the tribal population in this area.

I shall therefore be very grateful to the Orissa Government to allow me to continue my work amongst the Kuttia-Kond tribe for whom I have developed a deep affection during the course of my 12 years stay with them.