

STATUTORY DECLARATION OF MR SEONG KWOK KEI

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SINGAPORE

THE STATUTORY DECLARATIONS ACT
(Chapter 320, 1985 Rev Ed)

STATUTORY DECLARATION

SEONG KWOK KEI

I

NRIC/Passport No. [REDACTED] Occupation Lawyer

Address [REDACTED]

do solemnly and sincerely declare that :-

After the arrests of 16 people on 21 MAY 87, I got involved in the events thereafter when the husband of NG BEE LENG (one of the 16 arrested) instructed me to act for her as legal counsel. I knew NG BEE LENG well before 21 MAY 87 as she was a full-time staff of the Geylang Catholic Centre of which I was one of the volunteer lawyers since 1984.

2 When the Ministry of Home Affairs released various press statements in late MAY 1987, I could not see how BEE LENG could have involved the Geylang Catholic Centre in the conspiracy as I was involved in the activities of the Centre.

3 After I was instructed to act for BEE LENG I began to read in depth the laws relating to habeas corpus, certiorari, advisory board hearing and administrative law in general. I recognised the legal difficulties in securing the release of NG BEE LENG through such legal process.

4 I also began to observe and read foreign publications which reported increasing international protests over these arrests and detentions. This was when I began to have the idea that perhaps increasing and continuing publicity over the arrests and detentions would put pressure on the Singapore government and, therefore, hopefully, securing their early release.

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5 I then began to give information to foreign journalists based in Singapore, namely Asiaweek and Far Eastern Economic Review (FEER), with the aim of getting it published in their magazines. These foreign journalists were of course willing to accept such information from me. In subsequent reports in such magazines I noted that they have used some of the information supplied by me. As the events went on there was a momentum to it as these journalists came back again for more information and I continued to supply it.

6 As these publications continued to report on these detentions, I was glad to note that the government was put on the defensive. I held the slim hope that such publicity would be effective in securing the early release of the detainees. However, as time went on, I also observed that the government was not going to release these detainees because of such continuing publicity. I began to feel helpless and frustrated over the continuing detention of my friends.

7 I was also the legal counsel for CHNG SUAN TZE. I interviewed her on 10 occasions between JUL and SEP 87. She accepted my advice to make representations to the Advisory Board. I prepared the representations and gave her and her two brothers a copy each. I was told by her two brothers not to publish her representations because they were apprehensive of her well-being as she was under detention. The Advisory Board hearing was held on 29 AUG 87. After the hearing, LISA BEYER called at my office on either 31 AUG 87 or 1 SEP 87 to find out about the outcome of the hearing. I told her that the outcome would only be known later. Although she did not ask for a copy of the representations, I showed it to her. She read through it and asked for a copy. I told her I could not give her a copy. She then informed me that she was writing an article on the conspiracy and after reading the representations she intended to include a section on Third Stage. I then agreed to let her take notes from the representations, as I wanted her to write an article depicting the activities of Third Stage as innocuous and that its plays were approved by the Ministry of Community Development (MCD). She showed interest in 3 topics from the representations, viz., a letter from the MCD inviting the Third Stage for a discussion on how to stimulate cultural promotion and Straits Times (ST) cuttings featuring interviews with CHNG SUAN TZE and WONG SOUK YEE. Subsequently, Asiaweek carried an article entitled "The Curtain Falls" in its 13 Sep 87 issue.

Wong Souk Yee
23/9/88

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8 Realising the futility of such international publicity, I thought that by discrediting the government, doubts would then be cast on the existence of the conspiracy. I then thought of other areas or things which the government had done which could be criticised thereby giving a general picture of a government that is dictatorial and not tolerant of dissenting opinions.

9 Towards this direction I then gave my views on the Group Representative Constituencies (GRC) to the foreign journalists. I gave the view that it would make it extremely difficult for opposition parties to win any seats in future elections. I said that the government was not genuine in ensuring minority representations in Parliament and that the whole concept of GRC was to perpetuate its rule.

10 I also commented on the restriction of Asiaweek to LISA BEYER. The restriction was imposed based on the omission of some sentences of CHIN FOOK LEONG's letter. I said that it was an abuse of the powers under the Newspapers and Printing Presses Act (NPPA) as such omission could hardly be construed as interference in domestic politics. I said that the main reason behind the restriction was because of an article published in the Asiaweek. It contained some paragraphs relating to the Marxist conspiracy which were embarrassing to the government. This article contained a section on the Third Stage based on information supplied by me.

11 Sometime in OCT 1987, about a week after the release of TEO SOH LUNG, I visited her to enquire about her well-being. In the course of our conversation she told me that the ISD was unhappy with my activities over the May 21 and June 20 arrests, viz., publishing and internationalizing the detentions to discredit the government. She warned me that I could be arrested. In subsequent talks with released detainees NG BEE LENG, TANG FONG HAR and CHNG SUAN TZE, I was also given similar warnings. Although I was apprehensive after these warnings, I felt that the government would not mount another round of detention with consequential international protests. I therefore felt that it was in my self-interest and for my protection that I continue supplying information to the foreign journalists to discredit the government. There was also the momentum to the giving of such information as the foreign journalists kept requesting me for interviews.

23/4/88

Signature

12 I also provided documents to EDGAR D'SOUZA who was then in Australia as I knew that he was already speaking to the Australian papers about the detentions. These documents were mainly ST cuttings which reported his association with a woman lawyer and the arrests and detentions. In return, he sent me Australian newspapers cuttings which carried interviews given by him on the conspiracy.

13 I knew that there was a group in New Zealand called Singapore Emergency Committee of Human Rights which was putting up newsletters on the detentions. LAI MAYLENE and CHRIS TREMAWAN are members of this group. I faxed to them ST cuttings on the detentions and the closure of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) knowing that they would use the information in their newsletter. My aim was to further discredit the government by showing that it was moving against Christian organisations in general.

14 On the restriction on FEER, I also gave the view to MARGARET SCOTT that it was an abuse of power by the government under the NPPA and that the government was afraid to face further revelations on the detention. Sometime in FEB/MAR 1988 when MARGARET SCOTT was in Singapore I gave her a copy of WONG SOUK YEE's account of her detention. About a week later MARGARET SCOTT called me and said that FEER intended to publish the account. However, as the article needed editing she said that arrangements will be made to send a draft to me so that I could get WONG SOUK YEE to approve the draft before its publication. I advised MARGARET SCOTT not to directly ask WONG SOUK YEE's permission but to proceed with the publication as it would put SOUK YEE in a very difficult position.

15 Then sometime in FEB or MAR 1988, TANG LAY LEE informed me of the proposal by some ex-detainees to issue a press statement denying the conspiracy and alleging ill-treatment. I was also told of the proposal by TEO SOH LUNG in early MAR 1988 and NG BEE LENG in early APR 1988. I actively encouraged all of them to proceed with the press statement. I said that it was a good idea because once such a statement was released it would discredit the story of the Marxist conspiracy thereby embarrassing the government in general and the Prime Minister in particular. I also said that 1988 would be an election year and this would be an issue which opposition candidates could use to their advantage in their election campaigns.

Muf 23/6/88

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16 In early APR 88, before I spoke to BEE LENG, I had lunch with FRANCIS SEOW in which he indicated his intention to stand as an independent candidate in the forthcoming general election. When I informed him of the intention of some ex-detainees to release the statement, he said it would be useful as it would keep the issue alive in view of the general election as it could be used to discredit the PM and the second generation leaders. He suggested timing the release when the PM was in US.

17 On 16 APR 88, I had tea with LISA BEYER and informed her of the intention of some ex-detainees to come out with the press statement on 18 APR 88. I could not tell her the contents of the statement as I was not aware of it although I did tell her whom I have encouraged to sign. I told her of my disappointment that the statement could not come out on 11 APR 88 when PM was in the USA when it would have a greater impact because then American journalists would ask PM embarrassing questions. I said it was a missed opportunity and she agreed.

18 On 13 APR 88 morning, I received the press statement from an unknown sender. After I have read it I felt very happy with the contents as I felt that the government would find it difficult to answer the detainees' allegations. I then faxed a copy of the statement to EDGAR and shortly thereafter he called me to clarify a part of the statement which was not clearly received by him. He also expressed his concern for his friends in Singapore. By that I assume he meant the signatories of the statement.

19 On the evening of the same day I met LISA BEYER and she sought my views on the possible government's reaction. I said that the signatories could either be rearrested or be called in for interviews with a view to retracting the press statement. I then told her of the possibility of my arrest and gave her my house address so that she could write a story of my arrest. My aim was to discredit the government as it would be seen that I was arrested because I had acted for 8 of the 22 detainees.

20 The signatories of the press statement felt that the government was taunting them in letters to the press touching on the conspiracy. The letters were in reply to various articles in the foreign publications which were published with my assistance. By this means

Newspaper/4/88

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