



Emergency committee for human rights
in Singapore

UPDATE NO. 10
SINGAPORE HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT

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MORE DETAINEES SENTENCED WITHOUT TRIAL. TV SHOWS DISPLAY FURTHER EVIDENCE OF TORTURE. AMBASSADOR VISITS DETAINEE. REPRESENTATIONS FILED. PASSPORT REVOKED. AUSTRALIAN BALLOONS AND ANOTHER BISHOP SPEAKS OUT. COMMUNISM NOT THE ISSUE. PRIME MINISTER RELIVES HISTORY.

MORE DETENTION ORDERS SERVED

Yesterday, Sunday 19 July, the Singapore Government announced that it was detaining three more persons without trial for a renewable period of one year. The community leaders were detained with 3 others on June 20 and have been subjected to constant interrogation, threats and torture from that time until now. The three served with the order are:

1. Mr CHEW Kheng Chuan, 30, Harvard graduate and owner of a typesetting firm.
2. Ms CHNG Suan Tze, 38, UK graduate and lecturer in English.
3. Ms TANG Fong Har, 32, lawyer, legal adviser to church groups and involved in Criminal Legal Aid Scheme.

The government announced that these leaders were cooperative but required "rehabilitation". Released with severe restrictions on their civil rights were 3 young students: Ms FAN Wang Peng, Mr Ronnie NG Soon Hiang, Mr Nur Effendi SAHID.

MORE FORCED "CONFESSIONS"

The same evening Singapore TV broadcast a half-hour "news special" featuring Mr Chew, Ms Chng & Ms Tang being interviewed together by newsreader Mr Nassim Kamaruddin. A clip was inserted of detained lawyer Ms Teo Soh Lung answering a question and she was cut off in mid-sentence. The whole broadcast was heavily edited.

FROM INTERVIEW TO DOCUMENTARY TO NEWS SPECIAL

In its attempts to present its unsubstantiated allegations as fact and to distort the words of detainees, the Singapore Government has used three TV formats to date. With Vincent Cheng it used a studio interview by 4 Government journalists. With the 15 who were arrested with him, a documentary format was used for two shows entitled "Tracing the Conspiracy". This enabled editing to be done more subtly and the insertion of violent scenes from 20 or 30 years ago to be inserted as if they were related to the actions of the present detainees. It was a standard exercise in low grade political propaganda. Those being interviewed would have no idea how their words were being

distorted by the narration and overall framework of the "documentary".

THE AUTHORISED VERSION

Last night's "news special" employed much the same techniques. The taping was done in the presence of the detainees' case officers from the secret police. Unlike previous tapings, they were not forced to memorise answers. They were told to stick to versions of events approved by their case officers. However, when Ms Chng was asked if she believed that there was a Marxist plot, she replied candidly she did not believe it before she was arrested and she still did not believe it. Then she looked at her case officer and said words to the effect, "Oh, oh. I may get 2 years now." This part was edited out.

THEY ARE NOT THEMSELVES

One aspect of all the forced "confessions" is causing particular distress to families and friends of the detainees. That is, to those who know them, the detainees appear almost as strangers. Their bearing and mannerisms, their facial expressions and verbal turns of phrase are quite untypical. Several were clearly forcing themselves to smile upon instruction while being close to breaking down. All the detainees showed clear signs of great strain and exhaustion which were very obvious to those who know them.

The heavy make-up and untypical hair styles made the appearance of several detainees appear quite bizarre. In several cases, heavy make-up was used to cover the effects of extreme fatigue and torture. Ms Tang Lay Lee was filmed with the bruised side of her face away from the camera. Last night Mr Chew appeared extremely haggard and drawn despite the make-up.

At a meeting of Asian Catholic church workers in Taiwan in June many commented, on seeing the videotape of Vincent Cheng, that it was not Vincent who was talking. They saw it in his eyes; there was no life in him. They saw it in the words he used, words which he never used to describe his work before, words which described many of his alleged activities in terms of "Marxist ideology".

PROPAGANDA OBJECTIVES

The Government's propaganda aims in this latest broadcast appeared to be:

1. To allege that Ms Teo Soh Lung and Ms Tang Fong Har had "infiltrated" the Law Society for political purposes.

To this end Ms Tang was forced to say that she thought the Law Society had "potential" as a political pressure group and that she had discussed the matter with Mr Paul Lim, an ex-seminarian, now a doctoral student in sociology in Belgium. Ms Teo was forced to "remember" this discussion but her "recollection" was cut off in mid-sentence.

Ms Tang commented how, under the leadership of Law Society past-president Francis Seow, they hoped for a more active and less insular Law Society. On one sensitive issue, the control of the distribution of foreign publications, the Legislation (Civil) Special Assignments Committee of the Law Society, to which both Ms Tang & Ms Teo belong, made representations on the Newspaper and Printing Presses Amendment Act. Then Law Society President Francis Seow issued a press statement on the representations. This point came out in the press to the effect that "Teo & Tang got Law Society Council to issue press statement under Francis Seow's name". (When assailed by the Prime Minister in televised parliamentary hearings last year, both Ms Tang & Ms Teo stood up for their point of view against an Act to undermine the independence of the legal profession. This may be their real "crime".)

The show did not comment of course that Ms Teo has been given a strong testimonial by the Law Society saying that she acted with irreproachable professional conduct on the Society's Council and never gave political views in meetings of the Council. Today's STRAITS TIMES used its front page to proclaim that the two lawyers were trying to use the Law Society as a political pressure group.

2. To allege that through their personal contact with former student leader and intellectual Mr Tan Wah Piow during their study in the UK, both Mr Chew and Ms Chng had become part of the "Marxist conspiracy".

Apart from admitting that they had both met Mr Tan, even by Singapore Government standards there was little to substantiate this allegation. Mr Chew said for humanitarian reasons he assisted in the student campaign to save a Malaysian, arrested under emergency powers, from hanging. This was an international student campaign but since Mr Tan is alleged to have been the "mastermind" of it and the accused person an alleged Marxist, this is apparently sufficient to implicate Mr Chew in a "Marxist conspiracy". He was also forced to say that it was possible that Mr Tan had links with the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM). As with other detainees, he was threatened that a member of his family would also be detained (in this case, his wife) if he did not implicate Mr Tan and also confess to leftist leanings himself. Ms Chng was forced to implicate Mr Tan as having introduced her to the drama group, Third Stage, in which she was involved.

"THE UNSEEN HAND"

In an attempt to give some credibility to the Government's allegation that there is an "unseen hand" behind the "conspiracy", Ms Chng was forced to name Mr Patrick Low (a former member of the Student Christian Movement), Mr Biem Lap (a former SCM worker from Holland) and Mr Daniel Breen, an ex Jesuit priest married to a Singaporean who is now a lecturer at an institute of

technology in Thailand. This may be preparation for the next episode.

NOTHING ILLEGAL

Again the latest TV presentation shows only that the detainees disagreed with some government policies and were expressing this through legitimate and open channels. There is nothing illegal about their actions. Even accepting the super-imposed government conspiracy theory at its face value, they have done nothing illegal. Trying to change the government by open political process is not illegal even in Singapore.

AMBASSADOR VISITS DETAINEE

Mr Tommy T B Koh, Singapore's Ambassador to Washington, visited Ms Teo Soh Lung in detention last week. Ms Teo was a student when Mr Koh was Dean of the Law Faculty at the University of Singapore. His first request to visit her was refused but his second approved. She informed him that, despite her requests to her case officer, she had not been permitted copies of the Singapore Constitution or the Internal Security Act. He promised to raise the matter with the Minister of Home Affairs.

DETAINED LAWYER FILES REPRESENTATIONS

Ms Teo Soh Lung, senior lawyer and member of the Law Society Council, has filed representations contesting the grounds given on her detention order. Such representations may be made under Section 11 of the Internal Security Act to an advisory board which shall consider them within 3 months of the date of detention and make recommendations to the President. The subsequent decision of the President is final and may not be challenged in any court.

The advisory board meets in camera and is comprised of a supreme court judge appointed by the President and two other persons appointed by the President after consultation with the Chief Justice. It is thought at this stage that the judge who has been appointed is Mr Justice T S Sinnathuray, the same judge who convicted Mr Tan Wah Piow on political charges in 1974. But this remains to be confirmed. Since the present Chief Justice is employed on a contract which can be renewed at the discretion of the Prime Minister, there is little reason to hope that the other two members of the board will be truly independent.

Very few political detainees have made representations to this board in the past as the practice in Singapore appears to be that the board simply confirms the original order.

However, it is clear that Ms Teo has decided that, as a lawyer, she must take advantage of all legal avenues to clear her name and challenge the grounds of her detention.

SECRET POLICE ARE WORRIED

As a result of her decision to make representations through her lawyer, Ms Teo has been subjected to increased interrogation and

pressure from the Internal Security Department. Ms Teo is the only detainee to make representations.

CATHOLIC LAYMAN VISITS DETAINEES

Dr Ee Peng Liang, the pro-Government Catholic layman used by the Prime Minister to arrange the meeting between the PM and Catholic leaders on June 2, visited the Catholic detainees last week. He was accompanied by two priests. Mr Vincent Cheng refused to see him. Mr Kevin De Souza asked Dr Ee to get him a radio.

PRIME MINISTER'S SON JOINS IN AGAIN

Trade & Industry Minister, Brig-General Lee Hsien Loong, the PM's son, was also on TV last night talking in Mandarin with "grassroots" government-party leaders about national security and cautioned them that Marxists do look just like ordinary people.

CHURCH WARNED AGAIN

Minister of Community Development, Mr Wong Kan Seng, spoke recently at the opening of the Paya Lebar Methodist Centre. He warned the audience not to let the church be "used" and he used the image of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

CONDITIONS CHANGE

It is known that some detainees have just been taken out of solitary confinement and are, for the present, imprisoned with one other detainee. It must be assumed that the initial stage of interrogation and torture is now over for them. However, it can also be assumed that those who seek to take legal action will come under renewed pressure. Or, if there is a third sweep or a need for the government to bolster its case (e.g. getting one detainee to testify against another), the interrogation and torture will resume.

PASSPORT REVOKED

On July 15 Mr Paul Lim, former seminarian, now doctoral student in Belgium and named on 28 May as a wanted person under the ISA, received a letter from the Singapore Controller of Immigration dated 11 July 1987, notifying him that his passport is to be cancelled with immediate effect. The letter required him to surrender the passport to the Embassy in Brussels where he would be issued with a travel document which would enable him only to return to Singapore. If aggrieved he was informed he could apply to the Singapore Government within 30 days.

BALLOONS IN CANBERRA

On July 6 a group of concerned Christians held a vigil outside the Singapore High Commission in Canberra. The group held balloons, each bearing the name of a detainee. Personal details of each detainee were read out, then a prayer and then that detainee's balloon was released. This vigil received wide publicity in the Canberra media.

SYDNEY MASS FOR DETAINEES

Also on July 6, a mass was celebrated for the Singapore detainees in St Patrick's Cathedral, Sydney, by Bishop Bede Heather who spoke out against the detentions and expressed his strong support for those detained.

COMMUNISM NOT THE ISSUE

Communism is not the issue in this latest repression of dissent. The issue raised by the motivation and activities of the detainees is justice: social and political change based on social concern for the poor and exploited. The Government has chosen to misrepresent this motivation ideologically as part of the communism-versus-capitalism or East-versus-West conflict. It has also blurred the distinction between belonging to a communist party and being familiar with Marxist theory.

HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE: PM RELIVES HISTORY

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's concern about a so-called secret study group being set up by Mr Tan Wah Piow among Singaporean students in London, is an anxiety rooted in his own past. He launched his own political career from such a base. He must be concerned that others will emulate him.

In mid-1949 "Harry" Lee and his wife left Cambridge University and went to London for their professional law training. That year a club called the Malayan Forum was formed to discuss political issues particularly the struggle against British colonialism. The "conspirators" included future Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore Goh Keng Swee and future Malaysian PM Abdul Razak as well as some Marxist students. Harry Lee Kuan Yew addressed the Forum in January 1950 on the prospects for Malayan independence and the role of politically conscious students when they return home. Using Marxist terminology he said, "Colonial imperialism in Southeast Asia is dead except in Malaya and our generation will see it out." He advocated that returned students should arouse "a sufficient degree of civic and political consciousness among the various races". He continued: "What actual steps we take when we get back will depend on the political temper at that time. Whether we can openly advocate and propagate our views, or whether we should be more discreet and less vociferous, is something that can be answered only when the time comes... We must break the soporific (sic) Malayan atmosphere and bring home the urgency of the problems facing us... If every returned student makes known his convictions to his own immediate circle, the cumulative effect will be tremendous."

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN SINGAPORE (NZ)
P O Box 28-100, Christchurch, Aotearoa-New Zealand

LIST OF DETAINEES
(as of 21 July 1987)

Updated list of church workers and community leaders arrested by the Singapore Government and detained without trial under its Internal Security Act.

Arrested on May 21 and served with a renewable TWO YEAR DETENTION ORDER:

1. Mr Vincent CHENG Kim Chuan, 40, Executive Secretary, Catholic Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission, former seminarian, worked with Jurong Industrial Mission and Student Christian Movement, related to the Urban Rural Mission Department of the Christian Conference of Asia, holds a master's degree in theology.

Arrested on May 21 and served with a renewable ONE YEAR DETENTION ORDER:

2. Mr CHIA Boon Tai, 36, BSc(Hons) from UK, Malaysian citizen, civil engineer, owns engineering firm, previously involved with drama group, Third Stage.
3. Ms CHUNG Lai Mei, 22, recently returned from Hongkong where she was deputy secretary-general of the Asian Students' Association 1985-87, previously executive committee member of the Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union.
4. Mr Kevin Desmond DE SOUZA, 26, LLB(Hons)(Singapore), full-time worker, Catholic Students' Society of Singapore Polytechnic, former president of Catholic Students' Society of National University of Singapore.
5. Ms Teresa LIM Li Kok, 33, managing director of publishing company and partner in a bookstore, committee member of Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE), formerly executive council member of university of Singapore Students' Union.
6. Ms LOW Yit Leng, 28, Polytechnic graduate, project manager in typesetting firm, volunteer with Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, former deputy secretary-general, Asian Students' Association (Hongkong) 1981-83 and previously general secretary of Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union.
7. Mr TAN Tee Seng, 28, (married to Ms Low), sales executive in typesetting firm, volunteer with Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, assists with Workers' Party official publication, Youth Intern with the Christian Conference of Asia in 1983, Vice-President of Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union 1976-77.

8. Mr TAY Hong Seng, 36, BSc(Hons) from UK, Singapore Broadcasting Corporation translator, previously involved with Third Stage drama group.

9. Ms TEO Soh Lung, 38, LLB (Hons), lawyer, partner in law firm of Teo, Lai & Lee, member of Law Society Council, legal adviser to Catholic Centre for Foreign Workers, assisted in establishing Criminal Legal Aid Scheme, chairperson of Legislation (Civil) Special Assignments Committee of the Law Society.

10. Mr Kenneth TSANG Chi Seng, 34, BA (Hons) from UK, media analyst and advertising executive, volunteer worker for the official publication of the Workers' Party, volunteer with Geylang Catholic Welfare Centre and Archdiocesan Justice and Peace Commission.

11. Ms WONG Souk Yee, 29, Bachelor of Accountancy, senior research executive, former Council member of University of Singapore Students' Union, founder, Third Stage, a drama group which has taken up many of the problems of Singapore in its productions.

12. Mr William YAP Hon Ngian, 39, UK graduate, translator, Singapore Broadcasting Corporation, previously involved in Third Stage drama group.

Arrested on June 20 and served with a renewable ONE YEAR
DETENTION ORDER:

13. Mr CHEW Kheng Chuan, 30, BA (Hons) (Harvard), also studied at London School of Economics, managing director of Wordmaker Design and Typesetting Services which typeset the Catholic News and Christian Conference of Asia publications, secretary of the Harvard Club of Singapore.

14. Ms CHNG Suan Tze, 38, Master's degree in linguistics from UK, lecturer in English at Singapore Polytechnic, playwright of local plays, president of Third Stage drama group.

15. Ms TANG Fong Har, 32, LLB(Hons), lawyer, volunteer adviser to the Catholic Centre for Foreign Workers, involved in Criminal Legal Aid Scheme of Law Society of Singapore, formerly involved in Third Stage drama group, gave evidence in parliamentary select committee hearing on Legal Profession Act amendments last year, member of Legislation (Civil) Special Assignments Committee of the Law Society.

Arrested on May 21, 1987 and released on June 20, 1987 on expiry of 30 day period by which a detention order must be issued or release effected; on following conditions: they cannot leave Singapore without the written approval of the Internal Security Dept director; they cannot join or help in any society without his written consent; they cannot associate with, take part in or assist in the activities of any organisation which, through its publications, statements or other activities, has shown itself to be used in propagating Marxism or communism.

16. Ms MAH Lee Lin, 22, Polytechnic graduate, staff person of Chai Chee Catholic Centre, former general secretary of Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union.

17. Ms NG Bee Leng, 23, staff person of Catholic Centre for Foreign Workers, former president of Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union.

18. Ms TANG Lay Lee, 33, LLB(Hons)(Singapore), fulltime worker, Young Christian Workers, formerly staffperson in Catholic Students' Society of University of Singapore and the International Movement of Catholic Students (IMCS), Hongkong.

Arrested on May 21, 1987 and released unconditionally on June 20, 1987 on expiry of 30 day period by which a detention order must be issued or release effected:

19. Ms Jenny CHIN Lai Ching, 30, BA(Hons) from UK, Malaysian citizen, journalist with the Malaysian NEW STRAITS TIMES, volunteer with the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission. (Note: Ms CHIN's "unconditional" release is circumscribed by the fact that her husband, Mr Kenneth TSANG, has been served with a renewable one year detention order.)

Arrested on June 20, 1987 and released on July 19, 1987 on expiry of 30 day period by which a detention order must be served or release effected; with severe restrictions on civil rights (see 16 to 18 above):

20. Ms FAN Wang Peng, 18, student and Acting President, Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union.

21. Mr Ronnie NG Soon Hiang, 22, student, honorary general secretary, Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union.

22. Mr Nur Effendi SAHID, 21, Polytechnic graduate, National Serviceman, former student leader.

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