



Emergency committee for human rights  
in Singapore \_\_\_\_\_

UPDATE NO.14  
SINGAPORE HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT

2 OCTOBER 1987

SINGAPORE COPIES SOUTH AFRICA. SEVEN MORE DETAINEES "RELEASED" INTO BIGGER PRISON. A PRICE ON THEIR HEADS. ABSOLUTE POWER OF ISA SECTION 10. "RELEASED" DETAINEES THREATENED ALREADY. SIX STILL HELD WITHOUT TRIAL. NEGATIVE FEEDBACK FROM PROFESSIONALS CONFIRMED. MORE LEGAL ACADEMICS SPEAK. CITIZENSHIP INQUIRY HELD. PUBLICATIONS AND MEDIA COVERAGE IN MALAYSIA, AUSTRALIA, UK, CALIFORNIA. THE 1974 FRAME-UP EXPOSED.

**PRISON MADE BIGGER SOUTH AFRICAN STYLE**

Seven detainees had their detention orders suspended and were "released" with restrictions on the afternoon of 26 September. The restrictions depriving them of their civil rights are so severe that, although they are no longer confined to the secret police prison, the island of Singapore now becomes their prison. Their restrictions are nearly equivalent to being banned in South Africa.

**RESTRICTED PERSONS**

The restricted persons released from secret police custody on 26 September are: Ms CHNG Suan Tze, Ms CHUNG Lai Mei, Mr Kevin Desmond DE SOUZA, Ms LOW Yit Leng, Mr TAN Tee Seng, Ms TEO Soh Lung, Ms WONG Souk Yee.

**A PRICE ON THEIR HEADS**

Under Section 10 of the Internal Security Act, the restricted persons are subject to forfeiture of a bond of S\$3,000 and immediate re-imprisonment under the same detention order should they breach any of the conditions of their "release". That is, the suspension of the detention order can be revoked at any time on any pretext by the government and the restricted person again detained without trial. Interrogation and torture would again be resumed.

**ABSOLUTE POWER**

Section 10 of the ISA gives absolute power of control over the restricted persons. The government may restrict activities, place of residence and employment, prohibit the restricted person from being out of doors at specified hours except with written permission, require restricted persons to notify authorities of

intended movements, prohibit travel beyond the limits of Singapore or any part thereof, prohibit the addressing of public meetings, prohibit from taking part in the activities of or acting as an adviser to any organisation or association or from taking part in any political activities. These restrictions have been applied to the seven detainees "released" on 26 September and also to Mr CHEW Kheng Chuan and Ms TANG Fong Har who had their detention orders suspended and were "released" on 12 September.

It is understood that one or more of the restricted persons have applied for permission to leave Singapore for short holidays.

#### EFFECTS OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

The effects of solitary confinement have left scars on the detainees. Since their "release" they have also realised the many ways they were manipulated and lied to by the secret police.

#### ALREADY THREATENED

Some of the restricted persons were threatened prior to their "release" with immediate re-imprisonment if they revealed details of their interrogation and ill-treatment at the hands of the Internal Security Department officers. By such crude tactics, the Singapore Government has silenced these young community leaders who remain dedicated to the people of Singapore. The young leaders who are now restricted persons are being pressured to join the government-sponsored ex-detainees association, another weapon of police state control.

#### WHY THIS MOVE?

It appears that the Singapore Government decided on the "releases" as a political tactic to head off the tide of international pressure by giving the appearance of softening its repressive measures against the detainees. The Govt was also afraid of the writs of habeas corpus being prepared by some defence lawyers. Had these been filed, the cases would have had to be heard in open court even though the detainees would have little prospect of winning release. This kind of legal recourse and public proceedings would have widened the already gaping credibility gap faced by the Govt. Thus "release" under Section 10 enables the Govt to lessen the political pressure while maintaining complete control over the detainees. Statements by the Govt that the "releases" have been made because the detainees have been rehabilitated and are unlikely to re-offend should be discounted as propaganda. The detainees, of course, never committed any offence at any stage.

#### SIX ARE STILL DETAINED

Still detained without trial in the secret police prison are Mr Vincent CHENG, Mr CHIA Boon Tai, Ms Teresa LIM Li Kok, Mr TAY Hong Seng, Mr Kenneth TSANG Chi Seng, Mr William YAP Hon Ngian. Four of them (i.e. except Mr Cheng and Ms Lim) are the detainees most closely associated with the UK overseas student organisation FUEMSSO during their student days in the UK. It may be that

their previous association with Mr TAN Wah Piow accounts for their continued detention. Of course the Govt cannot release Mr Cheng who has been labelled as the Singapore agent for Mr Tan. To do so soon would be tantamount to admitting the falsity of its case. Ms Lim may still be held because she was alleged to be the main person for assisting the re-entry of UK returnees to Singapore.

#### NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

On September 19 The Straits Times reported on a survey of the opinions of more than 300 professionals representing 84 professional bodies, business associations, social clubs and alumni associations. Contradicting its headline "Professionals and Govt agree on fundamentals", the article by Ahmad Osman reported that professionals "felt that more should be done to remove the belief that the Government was not willing to tolerate dissenting views". Dr Tan Cheng Bock, who supervised the government survey, said, "They felt that the Government must dispel the atmosphere of apprehension and the perception that Government penalises those who openly express dissent."

In an obvious reference to the Team Constituency proposal, Dr Tan said the professionals did not want any unnecessary tampering with the democratic system which had served Singapore well. The professionals also criticised the Govt tactic of making decisions first and then trying to get the people's support. Rather, they called for open debate based on full information on public issues so that the people can suggest alternatives or choose options. They criticised the "paternalistic know-all attitude" of the Govt. The survey was said to have taken place between Feb 26 and April 16 but released only now.

#### COMING UNDONE

In a London Observer Service article reprinted on September 10 in NZ's major daily, The NZ Herald, journalist Steve Vines writes that "Singapore's extraordinary experiment in social engineering is showing signs of coming undone at the seams". Entitled "Lee Wants Total Power in Singapore" the article refers to the ISA detentions by saying: "It is hard to find people outside official circles who really believe there was a marxist plot. It is equally hard to convince people that the amiable Mr Jeyaretnam is such a threat to society as he is painted. Therefore, the explanation for the Government's intense pursuit of its political opponents is only explicable in terms of its desire for total control."

#### LEGAL ACADEMICS CONDEMN ARRESTS

On 31 August 39 legal academics and lawyers from the UK, Australia and New Zealand signed a letter to Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew condemning in the strongest terms the arrest and continued detention of the Singapore detainees. They rejected the "confessions", expressed concern at the maltreatment of the detainees and refused to condone the denial of proper access to legal counsel.

### TAN WAH PIOW'S CITIZENSHIP

Mr Tan Wah Piow issued a press release on 9 September stating he has submitted a 134-page affidavit to the Citizenship Committee of Inquiry, Singapore "in pursuance of my right to make written representation on the issue of deprivation of my citizenship". Mr J B Jeyaretnam acted as his legal representative at the Inquiry on 18 September. The Singapore Govt recently changed the constitution to enable it to deprive citizens of their citizenship at its own discretion. The Govt has accused Mr Tan of being the "mastermind" behind the "Marxist conspiracy" and has therefore decided to revoke his citizenship while he is studying at Oxford University.

### COVER STORY

The respected British journal, INDEX ON CENSORSHIP, has given major coverage to the Singapore "conspirators" and an interview with Mr Tan Wah Piow in its September issue. Among other recent publications are two dossiers which include a comprehensive record of the arrests and their background. Published by the National Office for Human Development of the Catholic Church in Malaysia (528 Jalan Bukit Nanas, 50250 Kuala Lumpur) for private circulation is a dossier entitled "ISA Arrests in Singapore". It includes articles by Singaporeans, a chronology and church documents and statements. The same office has also produced a document on liberation theology which shows it is an integral part of Christian theology and spirituality. Another dossier with striking graphics has been produced by the Overseas Students' Services Dept of the Students' Union of the University of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia. P.O.Box 1, Kensington 2033, NSW, Australia. Entitled "Violation of Human Rights in Singapore" it includes a chronology, biodata of detainees, Lee Kuan Yew's quotes, "what others say...", international support, myths and realities—ordeals of ISA detentions, analysis, poems, LKY's 1984 Singapore. The material in the dossier originally formed an exhibition on Sydney university campuses during August.

### CALIFORNIA JOINS IN

The San Francisco Chronicle carried an article on August 12 by associate editor Andrew Sullivan which stated: "Singapore's 'democracy' is no place for the United States to keep silent. We should press for repeal of the Internal Security Act which allows for detention without trial. Given Singapore's reliance on Western investment, the leverage is there.

### FRAME-UP

In the UK another book has been published related to the detentions. "Frame-Up: A Singapore Court on Trial" by Tan Wah Piow details the way student leaders in 1974 were framed by the Singapore Govt and brought to trial on trumped political charges of rioting. Tan Wah Piow defended himself during the 47 day trial which made him a folk hero. Australian Queen's Counsel, Mr Frank Galbally, observed the proceedings and said: "In Australia, the case would be laughed out of court...the evidence and

procedure used would, in my opinion, have aborted any trial in Australia... (The three accused) did not get a fair trial. There are no juries in Singapore and this speaks for itself. In my opinion, it is just a political trial."

After his conviction, Tan Wah Piow said to Judge T S Sinnathuray, "May I congratulate you on your future promotion to the High Court." The judge exploded, "That is contempt of court." However, he is now a high court judge who has presided over the political trial of opposition leader Mr J B Jeyaretnam, a commission of inquiry into the independence of the judiciary and the recent advisory board hearings for the present detainees.

EMERGENCY COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN SINGAPORE (NZ)  
P O BOX 28-100, Christchurch, Aotearoa-New Zealand.