



Emergency committee for human rights
in Singapore _____

UPDATE NO.15
SINGAPORE HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT

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OPERATION SPECTRUM. ALLEGED BEATER NAMED. JURISTS REPORT
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UPDATE SPECIAL APPEAL: MALAYSIA ARRESTS OVER 90 UNDER ISA
(See last page.)

THE SCORE SO FAR

With events moving more slowly, UPDATE is coming out less often. So we remind you that of the total of 22 persons arrested under the Internal Security Act on 21 May and 20 June, six persons remain in detention without trial under renewable detention orders.

In September, nine were released under severe restrictions on their civil liberties and with their detention orders suspended so that the constant threat of their reimposition remains. Another seven persons were released earlier after intensive interrogation without detention orders being served on them but with severe restrictions on their civil liberties (except in the case of one Malaysian woman whose Singaporean husband remains in detention). None of the detainees have been able to defend themselves in a court of law.

OPERATION SPECTRUM

The suppression of the community and church organisations by the Singapore Govt in May and June through the detention of the new generation of leaders was called "Operation Spectrum". The operation pulled in a wide range of groups and thus necessitated a conspiracy theory in order to link them and give some credibility to such cynical crushing of socially conscious people.

ALLEGED BEATER NAMED

One of the government officials alleged to have physically mistreated the detainees is Mr S K Tan who became known to the detainees as the "official slapper" especially of the women. He has been awarded a public service medal.

JURISTS FIND SINGAPORE GUILTY

The International Mission of Jurists released its report on the Singapore detentions on October 13. The report resulted from the visit to Singapore during July of the International Commission of Jurists (Geneva), the Asian Human Rights Commission (Hongkong) and the International Federation of Human Rights (Paris).

The IMJ Report concludes that the detainees' activities were "a legitimate exercise of civil rights". It discounts the government's conspiracy theory noting how the absence of provable evidence has, for the government, become proof in itself. It says "the fundamental principles of the rule of law and natural justice are abandoned to the whim of the rulers and the legal institutions and judiciary of the nation denigrated. The Mission condemns the Singapore government, as it would any other government, for this abrogation of the fundamental protection of the rule of law for its citizens."

The Report's conclusions also included the Mission's findings on the government's motives for the detentions, the communist threat and guilt by association, the church and state in Singapore and the maltreatment of the detainees.

It calls on the international community to "make it clear to the Singapore Government that it will not tolerate future attempts to suppress the legitimate democratic rights of its citizens through the use of the Internal Security Act".

The IMJ Report will be presented to the European Parliament later this month. (Addresses from which copies of the Report can be obtained are given below.)

UNPLEASANT SURPRISE IN VANCOUVER

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew had an unwelcome and embarrassing surprise at the start of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Vancouver last month. Canada's prestigious national daily, The Globe and Mail, took up the IMJ Report in its editorial on October 14 under the heading "Singapore's Rules". While referring to the fact that human rights is a problem in many Commonwealth countries and should have been on the conference agenda, it said that the IMJ report was "sobering" and went on "What is troubling in the report on Singapore, a country with a stable and healthy economy and a reasonable standard of living, is the utter disregard of due process occasioned by an imagined threat to political stability... The human rights investigators reject the conspiracy theory and claim that the detainees were exercising legitimate civil rights. The Singapore

government did not take the detainees to court to prove otherwise..."

CASE PUT BEFORE UNITED NATIONS

In August, soon after the International Mission of Jurists made its preliminary statement of concern, the International Commission of Jurists (Geneva) brought a formal intervention before the UN Commission on Human Rights' Working Group on Detention. It outlined its concern over the use of the ISA and the lack of due process of law while urging the Working Group to appeal to the government of Singapore to bring the detainees to trial or to release them.

US STATE DEPT VOICES OPPOSITION

In a statement on October 19 Asia Watch, the Washington-based human rights organisation, said that it had received a firm statement from the US State Dept that it "stands opposed to any system that detains people without trial". With respect to the Singapore government's decision to issue detention orders in lieu of trials in this case, the Department said: "Our opposition to that is clear."

DEFEAT FOR SINGAPORE DISINFORMATION

The above clarification represents a serious failure for the lobbying efforts of Singapore's diplomats in Washington. Coming on top of the letters signed by 39 members of Congress condemning the detentions, it represents a defeat for the active disinformation policy of the government. A young diplomat in Singapore's Washington Embassy has been taking a lead in this misrepresentation of the facts since the arrests in May. Mr Bilahari Kausikan is said to have advanced his career prospects considerably and even to have had his term in Washington considered for extension because of his work on the detentions. On June 9, he wrote to the American Friends Service Committee in Hawaii saying the detainees "were arrested not because they were engaging in community work, but because of their links with the communist movement, which has advocated "armed struggle", and continues in its efforts to overthrow by unconstitutional means the established political and social order in Singapore".

The Washington embassy has also lobbied Congress members by telling them of the releases but not the restrictions under which people are released or the fact of the number still detained. Mr Bilahari Kausikan has also been sending back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Singapore some of the right-wing propaganda published in the US. For example, on July 7, the Washington Times (NOT the Washington Post) printed a shrill and irresponsibly inaccurate article entitled "Pacific's Christmas Bowl pours into Marxist Pockets". This article drew imaginary connections between church development aid fund-raising and anti-government movements in the Philippines, East Timor, Singapore, Sri Lanka and elsewhere. It characterises every opposition movement as anti-US and pro-communist. It targeted the Singapore-based Christian Conference of Asia as "solely

interested in programs that were leftist, revolutionary, radical and militant."

This article was subsequently sent out by the Minister of Home Affairs in Singapore with his replies to critics of the detentions.

NO LUCK FOR DHANA

When in Washington in September, Singapore Foreign Minister Dhanabalan, met with several Congress members on the detentions. Just before the meeting Mr CHEW Kheng Chuan (Harvard Graduate) and Ms TANG Fong Har were released. As predicted by this UPDATE, Mr Dhanabalan tried to emphasise the role of the ISA Advisory Board in giving a fair hearing which could lead to release. However, the Congress members had already been informed of the exact nature of the Advisory Board, its biased composition and its powerlessness. Thus the highlighting of the Board was clearly seen as a face-saving propaganda exercise to allow the government to release a few detainees in order to lessen international pressure.

MAGAZINE GIVES INDEPTH COVERAGE

In a bold move, the Hongkong-based Far Eastern Economic Review gave extensive coverage to the Singapore detentions in its October 22 issue. Perhaps the best summary of the situation to date, UPDATE appends the articles for readers' benefit. The move is a bold one because ASIaweek was effectively banned on October 11 (its circulation reduced from 10,000 to 500) by the Singapore Govt. TIME magazine and the Asian Wall Street Journal have also suffered a similar fate because they have refused to print every official rejoinder from the Singapore Govt whenever a slightly critical article on Singapore appears. They are thereby accused of interfering in domestic politics.

JEYARETNAM DISBARRED

As predicted, the Singapore government has pursued to the end its vendetta against Workers' Party Secretary-General and Anglican layman, Mr J B Jeyaretnam. He has now been disbarred and cannot practise law. His livelihood has now been removed.

MALAYSIA USES INTERNAL SECURITY ACT

Over the past week the Malaysian Government has arrested at least 91 people under the ISA, the same legislation from which the Singapore legislation is derived. In Malaysia's case a person may be held for up to 60 days (compared with Singapore's 30 days) before they must be served with a detention order or released.

Among those arrested are Dr Chandra Muzaffar, Ms Chee Heng Leng, Ms Lim Chin Chin and Brother Anthony Rogers who were among those most outspoken in their condemnation of the Singapore detentions and who have been working persistently for the detainees' release. Now they have fallen victim to their own government's cynical repression. An appeal for action accompanies this Update. This is a moment of tragedy for Malaysia and of great

concern for the safety and health of those many community leaders arrested.

Yesterday November 1st, the 3 Catholic bishops of peninsular Malaysia ordered a joint pastoral letter to be read in all churches condemning the arrests. Former Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman has also condemned the arrests saying that Malaysia could be moving towards dictatorship. Several newspapers have been closed down and the managing director of the only independent television channel, TV3, has been arrested.

Once again, racial tension has been manipulated by the Malaysian Govt for its own purposes. Facing a split in his own party, increasing criticism for corruption, challenges from environmental and social reform groups and defeats at the hands of the judiciary who have delivered several recent judgements against the government, Prime Minister Mahathir has decided to consolidate his power. His govt has intentionally stirred up racial feelings by insensitive actions on Chinese education. This produced a predictably strong reaction. Those who reacted have been accused of stirring up racial tension. Subsequently anyone Dr Mahathir needs to silence on any issue is being arrested whether they are related to the current crisis or not.

While politicians of all parties tend to play on racial chauvinism for their own advancement, it is the height of cynicism to place in preventive detention with such politicians exactly those social reformers and community leaders who have publicly and persistently rejected racially based politics and have dedicated their lives to racial harmony and understanding. The commitment of such leaders is now characterised as contributing to racial tension when their role has been to point out how the major political parties have been manipulating racial feelings for self-interested political goals.

UPDATE APPEALS FOR IMMEDIATE ACTION IN SUPPORT OF THOSE DETAINED IN MALAYSIA. AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAS ALREADY CLASSIFIED THEM AS PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE. PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING LETTER

November 2, 1987

Dear friends,

As you are no doubt aware, since Tuesday, October 27, scores of individuals have been and are continuing to be arrested and detained under the Internal Security Act of Malaysia. This Act is almost identical to the Act in Singapore under which 22 people were arrested and detained this year and under which 6 (not including Mr Chia Thye Poh who has been in prison since 1966) are still imprisoned. As in Singapore, persons can be arrested and detained for indefinite periods of time without charge or trial.

The latest news is that 91 people have been detained. More arrests are expected.

There has been increasing political turmoil in Malaysia in recent weeks as a result of dissension within the ruling party. In addition there have been disturbing reports of escalating racial tension which appears to have been exacerbated, if not caused, by those within the ruling party itself. Nevertheless, the sudden arrest of so many individuals has come as a shock to all those concerned with events in Malaysia. Detention powers under the ISA have not been extensively used in Malaysia since before the present Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir, came to power in 1981.

The individuals themselves come from a broad spectrum of political, religious and social backgrounds. Individuals detained so far include Mr Lim Kit Siang, Secretary General of the Democratic Action Party and Leader of the Opposition, his son Mr Lim Guan Eng, also a DAP member of parliament and at least 10 other opposition MP's and State Assembly members; members of the the Islamic opposition party, PAS; leading members of the MCA, the main Chinese party in the ruling coalition; members of the opposing faction in the Prime minister's own party; human rights lawyers and community leaders including Mr Karpal Singh of the DAP and Dr Chandra Muzaffar, President of the social reform movement ALIRAN and an Asian Human Rights Commissioner; members of environmental and consumer protection groups; Muslim religious teachers and staffpersons of Christian organisations; activists in the recent Chinese education controversy; and a wide variety of other people either connected with community and political groups or with no apparent affiliation.

It is believed that the vast majority of these people were involved in nothing more than political, social or legal activities of a peaceful and legitimate nature. Amnesty International has already declared most of the detainees to be prisoners of conscience and has called for their immediate and unconditional release.

It is not yet completely clear what is the extent or cause of these arrests. We would ask all those who are concerned with the protection of human rights in Malaysia to write or telex the government of Malaysia, either directly to the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Kuala Lumpur, or through the Malaysian Embassy or High Commission in your country to express your concern over these arrests and to ask why detentions under the Internal Security Act have been ordered.

Thank you for your support.

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SINGAPORE

The conspiracy theory

Former 'mastermind' becomes tool of the 'unseen hand'

By Michael Malik in Singapore

The release in September of nine middle-class Singaporeans detained without trial under the Internal Security Act (ISA) for allegedly taking part in a Marxist conspiracy, plus an abrupt change of emphasis by the government, has raised new questions about the seriousness of the whole episode.

A total of 22 people were detained in two batches in May and June, accused of being part of a Marxist conspiracy, masterminded from exile in Britain by former student activist Tan Wah Piow, aimed at subverting "the existing social and political system" using communist united front tactics, with a view to establishing a Marxist state.

Despite the seriousness of such accusations, within four months of the first arrests, 16 of those held had been released as constituting no further threat.

Perhaps even more surprising was a speech by Home Minister S. Jayakumar in July in which he claimed that Tan could not have been anything but the agent of an "unseen hand" whom he had not identified, but could be, he hinted, the outlawed Communist Party of Malaya.

To add to the confusion of signals coming from government, First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong on 19 September — only a week before the release of the nine — without mentioning the detentions,

made what to many sounded like a very conciliatory speech. Addressing himself to young, educated, middle-class Singaporeans, he said that perhaps the government had been too intolerant of differences of opinion.

Little about the group of detainees conforms to the type of person expected to be accused of such a plot. The majority of them are well-educated young professionals, or graduates, many of whom were concerned with social work and half of them connected with Roman Catholic Church-affiliated grassroot organisations.

Basically, the allegations were un-specific, but principally centred on a commitment to Marxism, a dissatisfaction with Singapore society and a desire to change it. All were accused of knowing fellow-detainee and Catholic Church social worker Vincent Cheng —

who in turn was accused of being under the orders of Tan to organise a network of like-minded young people inclined towards Marxism.

In detail the allegations mainly related to "infiltrating" the opposition Workers' Party (WP) — of which none of the detainees was a member — by running the party organ *Hammer*; politicising the Law Society, and working with a theatre group known as Third Stage (REVIEW, 24 Sept.).

Under the terms of the ISA, which allows a month of interrogation, followed by renewable terms of detention of two years, the government does not

educated circles, it has not been very successful. Among professional Singaporeans, apart from government employees, there is a general lack of acceptance of the idea that various anti-government actions by disparate people constituted a grand Marxist conspiracy.

The REVIEW also has gathered sufficient allegations of coercion and distortion of the truth to cast considerable doubt as to whether this part of the prime minister's criteria was fully met. The definition of "torture" can be subjective. The Oxford English Dictionary gives several definitions. Apart from "inflicting severe bodily pain" the word can also mean "severe physical or mental pain." Some of the allegations, coming from detainees themselves and those close to them, if true, would fit this definition.

As part of its public relations exercise, the government, through the co-operation of its own state-run TV service and the press, bombarded the public

with the full weight of modern media technology, from massive displays in the daily newspapers, accompanied by charts illustrating the alleged network of Marxists, down to edited confessional "interviews" with the detainees, during which most appeared to admit to all or part of the accusations against them.

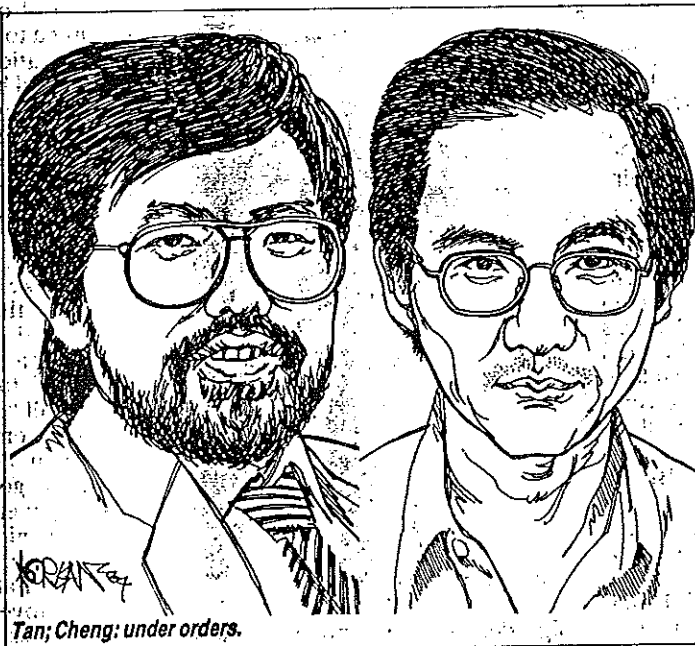
At all times in the media's handling of the topic, allegations made by the Ministry of Home Affairs were presented as unquestioned fact rather than allegations — an editorial decision taken at the dominant English-language newspaper *The Straits Times* at the highest level after editorial discussions.

Simply stated, the government said it acted to "nip in the bud" a long-term

plan — the only figures ever mentioned are "in 10 or 15 years time" — for Tan to return to Singapore "to capture political power." Tan is wanted in Singapore for avoiding military conscription, and the government is taking legal steps to deprive him of his citizenship under a rule which allows this if a Singaporean stays abroad for 10 consecutive years.

Only one vaguely worded statement during a TV interview by principal detainee Cheng — now to be held for a maximum of two years — suggests anything which might be considered outside the law, apart from vague claims to supporting Marxism. The communist party is proscribed in Singapore.

Cheng agreed with his questioners that through his social work for the Catholic Church's Justice and Peace Commission he had established several



Tan; Cheng: under orders.

have to bring any evidence to justify its action.

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, on 3 June, re-stating the policy on using the ISA in preference to bringing the accused conspirators to trial, said it was not his government's practice to take such people to court. As long as it was satisfied that it had the evidence, he said, that was all that mattered.

"So long as we know it is true, so long as there has been no torture, no coercion, no distortion of the truth... we are prepared to act. But we will not act on concocted evidence," he told a press conference.

Nevertheless, the government went through an extensive public-relations operation to convince the Singaporean people that the accusations were justified. Judging from the widespread scepticism it has met, especially in more

discussion groups which could possibly be turned into pressure groups and a "power base," "which would, perhaps, lead to some kind of political turmoil." Cheng said that he personally could not handle the idea of turning to violence, but that he thought that perhaps Tan would return or other leaders emerge "to take care of the problem."

He then agreed, again in answer to a question, that he could have been creating the conditions for violence, but "not knowing of the consequences." Asked to explain what he meant by that, he replied:

"I would foresee that the building up of pressure groups would develop to a stage where they would come into open confrontation with the government. This confrontation . . . would start off with peaceful protests, public mass petitions, which could lead further to more mass events like mass rallies, mass demonstrations, strikes, where more people are mobilised. And leading to public disorder and maybe even rioting, bloodshed."

Much has been made of this, and soon Jayakumar was listing as one of Cheng's "admissions" that the group's plan was to escalate events, "leading to public disorder and maybe even rioting, bloodshed and violence." Later a government spokesman used the same phrasing, attributing it to Cheng, though "and violence" were not Cheng's actual words.

But study of the official transcript makes it clear that Cheng was merely speculating as to a possible consequence. He did not, in fact, say that he or even Tan were consciously working towards bloodshed or violence.

His further statement almost immediately in the interview that both he and Tan agreed that any bid for power would have to wait until "the prime minister is out of the scene," also undermined the credibility of a serious plot. Singaporeans are all too familiar with the fact that many people dream about what may happen when the all-powerful figure of Lee is "out of the scene," but they do not amount to plots.

The Cheng interview and a two-part Singapore Broadcasting Corp. "documentary" about the alleged Marxist conspiracy, in which 18 other detainees made brief appearances, formed the centre-piece of the government's campaign to justify its use of the ISA.

On 5 July, addressing a seminar of the youth wing of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP), Jayakumar made his sudden about-turn. After suggesting several explanations as to who might be

behind the plot, he said such considerations "lead us to conclude that Tan Wah Piow cannot be the mastermind behind the communist network. Nor can Vincent Cheng and his group constitute the entire story. If it is just Tan Wah Piow, Vincent Cheng and the 15 and the six only — there is no serious problem. The government has dealt with tougher men with far more cunning minds."

Theories abound as to why the previous allegation of a serious threat coming from Tan was scaled down. One school of thought has it that the government now feels that it overreacted in the first place; another is that building Tan up into a serious threat to the state could only benefit a man who previously had only been taken seriously by himself.

Goh's 19 September speech tended to suggest that at least he, if not other leaders, sees the need for the government to be more liberal in its approach

not create. Maybe we are over-regulating people's lives.

If not unprecedented, Goh's words were unusual for a government which — particularly on the part of the prime minister — more often emphasises the need for discipline than non-comformity.

Another theory for the virtual about-face is that Singapore was taken aback by the reaction outside the country to the detentions. London-based Amnesty International called for the release of the detainees and said it had reports of ill-treatment during interrogation.

A total of 39 members of the US Congress signed a letter condemning detentions without trial and 17 signed an appeal on behalf of woman lawyer Teo Soh Lung. Several prominent Americans also appealed on behalf of Harvard graduate Chew Kheng Chuan.

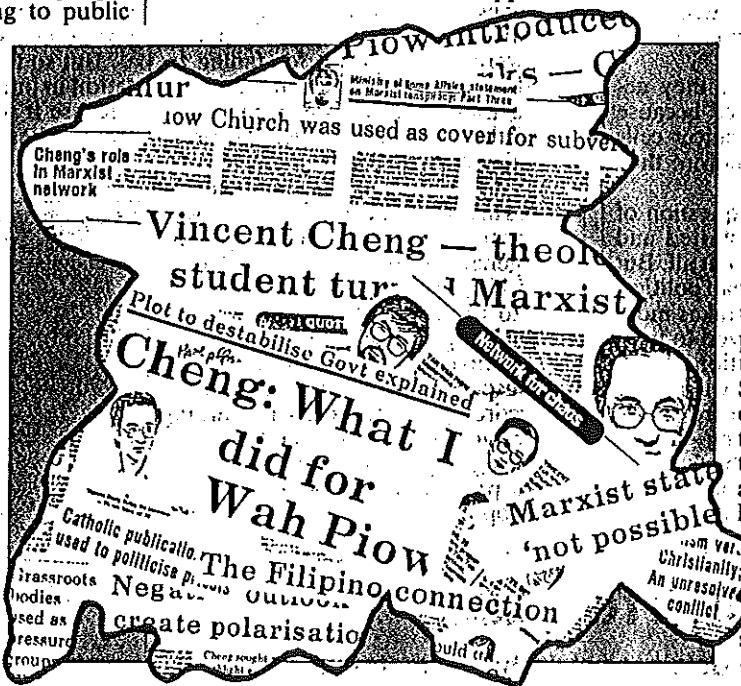
Questions about the detentions without trial were expected to be raised in the European Parliament, which two Singaporean MPs were to attend as observers. None of this reaction can help the image of Singapore in its bid to become a regional financial, communications and printing centre.

What has emerged from the whole exercise is that the 22 are mostly young professionals believing that there were things about Singapore society which could be improved. Most of them are inarticulate about their beliefs and objectives and their knowledge of Marxism or Maoism appears, from what they admit in the TV interviews, to be limited to cursory reading with no suggestion of serious study or commitments.

None of them has sought to deny their political activities as students, and their subsequent involvement in broadly political causes. But none, except Cheng in his confession, has conceded any subversive objective, while admitting they may have unwittingly been used by others less well intentioned.

Why would the whole force of the state be directed against such people? Since it is based on supposition, nobody can contradict the theory that a situation which at the moment is non-threatening, if allowed to continue, could become so. Indeed, one ex-detainee, while denying seditious intent, conceded this hypothesis to the REVIEW. But many feel that the case against the 22 hardly supports a reasonable suspicion that they represented a real threat.

There is no doubt that part of the



to dissent. He said that having provided materially for Singaporeans, it had to consider a new phenomenon: the middle classes with other than material aspirations which were not being met.

Addressing the first annual convention of the PAP's youth wing he conceded that he could understand — though not agree with — the opinion of some young Singaporeans that the country was boring, he added:

"Maybe we emphasised too much growth and things material. Maybe we are too intolerant of differences of opinion, thus causing people to conform and

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exercise was further to test the will of the "second-generation" leaders including Goh who are being groomed to take over the government. Goh, in a statement to parliament, said he and others had serious reservations about using the ISA and about the evidence presented. It was, he said, the toughest decision they had ever had to make and the first time they had been required to consider using the ISA. He also revealed that the ministers came to the conclusion that the group did not represent an immediate threat to state security but were eventually convinced that there was a long-term threat.

He then frankly laid out the negative effects the group foresaw in using the ISA: the accusation of intimidating or silencing opposition; the danger of a collision with the Catholic Church, and, most importantly, a loss of credibility with the people if the government failed to convince them it had acted correctly. The political price, he said, would be very high and could mean "the end of the younger generation."

Despite these objections, they accepted that they should act because communist cells were like cancer cells and had to be destroyed "before they multiply and destroy us."

All this still begged the question of why the investigation was started and why it was put before cabinet at all. But taken in the wider Singaporean political landscape, the crackdown makes more sense. The arrests are believed to have been codenamed "Operation Spectrum" since they cut across a wide range of socially conscious people from Law Society member Teo Soh Lung — Tan's lawyer, who had already publicly crossed swords with Lee — through businessman Chew to 18-year-old Fan Wang

Peng, acting president of the Singapore Polytechnic Students' Union. All three are among those now released.

Seen in an even wider context, some observers believe that they were the "bottom end" of a consistent government sweep against elements considered immediately or potentially hostile or politically embarrassing. These range from WP leader J. B. Jeyaretnam — who lost his parliamentary seat less than a year ago because of a conviction for making a false statement amounting to perjury — through the foreign press and the Law Society.

The foreign press was made subject to additionally harsh restrictions last year under an amendment to the already-stringent press laws, making it possible for publications to have their circulation limited — a provision already used against *Time* magazine, *The Asian Wall Street Journal* and *Asiaweek* — if considered to have "engaged in domestic politics." All three publications were acted against for failing to publish government letters in full.

The Law Society, which had challenged the government over the press restrictions and made clear its intention to express its opinion on government policies involving the use of the law, was itself attacked. Its president, former solicitor-general Francis Seow, was stripped of his presidency under an amendment to the Legal Profession Act declaring ineligible for office in the Law Society anyone who, in the past, had been suspended from legal practice.

According to this scenario, turning its attention on the social and religious pressure groups completes the government's programme to pre-empt virtually all opposition to the PAP in the run-

up to the next general election, not due until 1989 but widely expected to come during the next year.

In the last election in 1984, the PAP won 62.9% of the votes cast — down from their 1980 figure of 75.5% — though only losing two of the 79 seats in parliament. Analysts have suggested that if the same trend continued, the opposition could reach a break-through point in the first-past-the-post system where it could start to win significant numbers of seats.

In its search for ways to stop the opposition gaining further ground — a process which could lead to the introduction of confrontational party politics, feared as dangerously divisive — the PAP has given close study to a plan to introduce certain "super constituencies" which would group three of the present parliamentary seats together. In order to win all three, a party would have to run a team of candidates and win an overall majority, making an opposition victory more difficult.

But so far, there appears to be hesitation in introducing the scheme, partly because it would be a major departure from Westminster-style democracy, and partly, some believe, because of the



Goh: reservations about using ISA.

Detention and release

Arrested at night, some detainees claim harsh treatment

Being detained without trial under Singapore's wide-ranging Internal Security Act — inherited almost intact from its British colonial predecessor — can be a daunting experience.

The REVIEW found the few of those released from a group of 22 detained earlier this year who it was able to contact visibly nervous, cautious to a degree and almost cowed. They prefer not to answer questions directly, with constant recourse to the "no comment" formula — even when, in context, such an answer can only serve to confirm that the question deserves an affirmative answer.

It appears that those released were not required to give a formal undertaking not to speak to the press, but one said such an undertaking had been given voluntarily. They were required to discontinue any social work with organisa-

tions named in the alleged conspiracy, which has caused at least one full-time employee of a Catholic Church social organisation to change employment.

Under the terms of their release, they are also forbidden to leave Singapore or join any registered society without permission, and would be liable to return to detention if they involve themselves with any activity considered subversive or associate in any way with any organisation propagating Marxism or communism.

Despite the release of 16 of the 22 within four months, the confessional TV appearances and government statements that they responded well to rehabilitation and were unlikely to resume subversive activities and no longer posed a security threat, some questions remain unanswered.

Since the government denies any tor-

ture or coercion was used to obtain statements, why do those ex-detainees contacted decline to either confirm or deny this?

Why were statements made in the TV broadcasts directly contradictory in many cases to signed statements made for submission to an Advisory Board in petitions for release?

One of the former detainees explained that those free had to consider the effects any statements might have on the length of detention to be served by the others. One said this point

danger that the scheme could backfire and present the opposition with a three-seat bonus.

Political analysts believe there is a more than even chance that the PAP will, in fact, go to the polls without introducing the change, taking the opportunity to seek a popular mandate for constitutional changes if it considers them necessary later. Hence the operation to suppress any dissent ahead of the election.

The detainees who have been released have had to undertake not to resume any political activity, travel abroad or even join a registered society without permission.

Most of the social and student organisations they were connected with are badly frightened and dispirited. The Catholic Church, which officially accepted the accusations against its social workers, suspended four priests and has scaled down its social work, with an undertaking that it will keep well away from politics (REVIEW, 11 June).

And a warning in his National Day speech in August by Lee about all religions avoiding politics has certainly been listened to. Two Muslim organisations — Perdaus, the Adult Muslim Religious Students' Association and Pergas, the Singapore Muslim Religious Teachers' Association — have announced their intention to withdraw from the Central Council of Malay Cultural Organisations (Majlis Pusat) for fear of involvement in politics, despite the council's denial of any such involvement.

Such action is symptomatic of the ultra-caution being exhibited by many organisations and individuals on the fringes of social work, in the wake of the detentions. ■

had been made by Internal Security Department officers.

Perhaps the most revealing answer to the question of why a detainee had cooperated by taking part in the TV interview while not believing that there had been sufficient reason for being detained, was: "You have to understand how this country is run."

What does that mean? Threats of further detention? "It is not just oneself one has to think about," this former detainee replied.

From various sources, including written statements by detainees, the REVIEW has compiled allegations about how at least some of the detainees were treated which suggest that, if true, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's ruling that there should be "no torture, no coercion, no distortion of the truth" may not have been observed. All those involved are understandably nervous of the consequences of revealing details and none wishes to be identified.

(These allegations were put to the Singapore Government, which re-

sponded: "The government does not reply to allegations in private correspondence with publishers of journals. If you publish these allegations, the government will deal with them.")

The allegations include:

► At least three of the female detainees were slapped in the face during interrogation if they gave "bad" answers. At least one of them was hit hard enough to cause visible bruises.

► Detainees, who had been arrested in their homes during the night, were taken, some blindfolded, to the Whitley Road Detention Centre where they were kept in solitary confinement and under constant interrogation by teams of officers for up to three days with little or no sleep.

► They were questioned in rooms with intensive air-conditioning, so that they all suffered from the cold. The detainees, having dressed hurriedly, wore short-sleeved shirts or thin dresses. The questioners were in heavy clothing. One woman later sent out a request to relatives that she be sent the thickest sweater that could be bought.

► One woman detainee alleged she was forced to stand in a cold room without her shoes on, was subjected to insults about her private life and, on hearing shouting from an adjoining room, was told her friends were "having a bad time." She also claimed she was threatened with harsher treatment, in-

cluding cold showers and being made to sit on a block of ice—a technique other detainees in the past have claimed was used.

► Detainees were made to sit during questioning with spotlights shining in their eyes so that they could not see their questioners clearly.

During this intensive period of questioning, one detainee claimed later to have agreed to having attended a social gathering at which she had allegedly met and talked to certain people, despite the fact that in retrospect she could not remember this. Having said this in a signed statement, in her TV appearance she indicated she could remember the occasion without hesitation.

After this first period, a softer approach was adopted, though occasionally harsher questioning and conditions were resumed. The detainees were still kept in solitary confinement.

They were required to write a list of the names of 200 people they knew and then to answer a list of detailed questions. Those close to them say the detainees claim that often their answers were discussed and alternative wording was suggested—and often agreed to—which subtly changed the original meaning.

Once the list of questions and answers was completed to the interrogators' satisfaction, the detainees

A statement of beliefs

One of six people detained in a second swoop on 21 June was Chew Kheng Chuan, a Harvard graduate who, with his wife, runs a typesetting business.

He was detained particularly for his involvement with the theatrical group Third Stage. After 12 weeks of detention and an appearance before the ISA Advisory Board, he was released.

Chew refuses to comment publicly about his detention or his reactions to it. However copies of two statements have been circulating in Singapore. The REVIEW has verified they were made by him, though he has not consented to their publication.

According to legal advice obtained from Singapore and Hongkong, there are no grounds against publishing such statements, nor can there be any suggestion that their publication involves Singapore's national security. The REVIEW has therefore decided to run extracts from Chew's statements.

In his first representation, Chew stated that he had never acted in a manner prejudicial to the security of Singapore and was never involved in a Marxist conspiracy to subvert the social and political system in Singapore, while freely agreeing to his involvement in a discussion group in Britain in

which Tan Wah Piow was also a member.

In the second representation, he stated that though, as a student, he became familiar with the theories of Marx—as well as "with the writings and theories of Hobbes, Adam Smith, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Alexis de Tocqueville and Max Weber"—he is not a Marxist. He claimed that his actions should convincingly show that he is inclined to capitalism rather than Marxism. After graduation he first worked for the Development Bank of Singapore and then, two years ago, founded his own company.

Chew then said:

"... If I am no Marxist, much less involved in a conspiracy, what am I ideologically or politically? I am a democrat, a believer in an open and democratic polity and in the virtues of an open and accountable government.

"I strongly believe that for society to be meaningfully called democratic, interest and action in politics cannot be the sole prerogative of the professional politician. A citizen of a democracy, to be worthy of that society, has not just the right, but indeed the duty to participate in the political life of his or her society. It is a grave danger to democracy to suggest that for one to comment on political and social issues or to hold dif-

were taken over them again and again in preparation for the TV appearance, it is alleged.

Even then, many times a question and its answer had to be shot more than once. The "confession" of Vincent Cheng, alleged to be the central figure in the conspiracy, is claimed to have been filmed over at least two days, with the four journalists who put the questions being told to wear exactly the same colour shirts each day to suggest it was all shot at once.

Even so, the finished product is far from convincing. There are repeated sudden cuts. Often it is far from clear whether Cheng is actually answering the question which has been heard in the "voice over." At very few points are the four journalists actually seen on screen with Cheng. When the film cuts to them, the colour quality is obviously different, suggesting that some shots were taken at a different time, possibly completely separately.

There is heavy use of "cut-away" shots — cutting to another person while the voice continues — which is a well known device in TV to disguise editing or cuts.

During most of the interview, words are suggested to Cheng, rather than him volunteering them. One example of this, taken from the official transcript, is glaring:

Having said that Tan Wah Piew in-

roduced him to the works of Mao Zedong, the following exchange takes place:

Q: Were you attracted by what you read?

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: So you were fascinated by the ideology?

A: I was, yes.

During the first part of the detention, several lawyers representing the detainees had meetings in an effort to

A detainee claimed she was threatened with harsher treatment, including cold showers and being made to sit on a block of ice.

coordinate their strategy. There was talk of filing writs for habeas corpus to obtain their clients' freedom. But gradually, as the interrogations continued, instructions from the detainees started to change. Instructions became so confusing and contradictory that the lawyers saw no point in any further effort at coordination and stopped attempting to act as a group.

Eventually, all the detainees decided

against taking legal action to seek their release, though five of them did petition for hearings before the Advisory Board to ask for release. Four hearings were held and all four detainees — businessman Chew Kheng Chuan; lawyers Teo Soh Lung and Tang Fong; Har and former student association employee Chung Lai Mei — are among those released. The fifth person, Kevin de Souza, a full-time volunteer worker with the Catholic Students' Society at the Singapore Polytechnic, was denied a hearing on the technical ground that the application was made too late. This is under appeal.

Most of the detainees, even those who are lawyers themselves, instructed their representatives that they had decided they would rather conform to what was required than prolong their interrogation and questioning. It was made clear to them that the length of their detention would depend on how cooperative they were.

Although officially it was announced after the initial interrogation period that Cheng would be detained for two years, and another 11 would serve one year, the detainees were given to understand that these were merely maximum sentences which would be reviewed every three months; so their behaviour would still determine the length of time they would be in custody. Six of the 11 have already been released. — Michael Malik

fering political opinions, one should go and form a political party to take on the government!

"Has the citizen no political voice, other than a vote once in every four years; that cannot be articulated freely and responsibly, but only through the medium of a professional politician? Such is a situation even more than that of the common man's crippling dependency on 'experts' — whether plumber or temple medium. It will lead to a society where only the authorised, registered, professionally affiliated expert can comment on the subject under his or her purview.

"In such a society, a cabinet minister would have no business commenting on, say, genetics and procreation, no matter how rational or well-meaning. For he is a politician, and not a geneticist, or a marriage counsellor. In such a society, we have to say, however reluctantly, to the minister, 'Take off your political cloak. Take it off! Comment on procreation issues by all means, but go and found an Institute of Genetics, or, at the very least get yourself qualified as a marriage counsellor, then let us hear what you have to say.'

"Put this way, the absurdity of wanting to restrict participation of citizens in political life by asking them to join or found political parties becomes clearer."

Later in his representation, Chew said:

"And what were my actions, especially those which have led the government to believe that I was acting in a manner prejudicial to the security of Singapore? Here, a general puzzlement invades:

"In the last five years, I have been exerting myself strenuously in the hope of capitalistic promise yet I am accused of involvement in a Marxist conspiracy.

"I do not question the right, indeed

To be a rebel without a cause is foolish enough to be a martyr without a cause is murderously stupid. I am neither the former nor wish to be the latter.

the duty, of the Internal Security Department to question me exhaustively on all my past activities deemed to be of 'security' interest, traumatic as this experience has proved for myself, my family, and my business. However, I question the justice of my detention after I cleared all doubts and questions regarding my activities of seven years ago, and especially, my lack of activities

these last five years. Is this not an abuse of preventive detention?

"I have always acted to build up, not break down, the body politic. I have never knowingly acted in a manner prejudicial to the security of Singapore or against the interests of our nation. And if I had acted unknowingly, how could I have been involved in a conspiracy? This is a simple yet profound and grievously unfortunate contradiction in terms.

Addressing the question of what he would do if released, Chew concluded to the board:

"My most immediate task would be to attend to the demands of my business which has been disrupted but is now being managed, with tremendous pressure placed on her shoulders, by my wife, who is the other managing partner.

"I have been sufficiently discouraged by my arrest and detention from wishing to continue living but my political beliefs of free association and responsible participation in the political process in Singapore, outside of being a professional politician.

"My crime it appears, is one of association: I consider it an insult that I might have been acting on the instructions of anyone. I am not the cancer that can easily reproduce itself but the faithful healthy organism that got blasted in the political chemotherapy that was

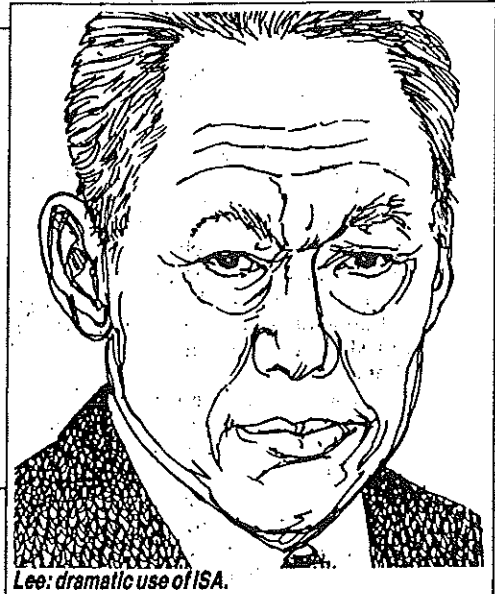
applied in this security operation. It was bitter and lethal medicine.

"Who, as they say, needs it? I had only sought to do my little bit as an educated citizen in a democratic society. It was so little that I had not even begun to seek public recognition for my efforts, let alone the attentions of the Internal Security Department (ISD). If I had felt quite safe, it was because I was no communist, pro-communist nor communist sympathiser.

"In their conduct of my interrogation, the ISD has said that I was forthcoming. It is not difficult to understand why I was so forthcoming. I had nothing

to hide. I had no organisation to protect, no shibboleth to uphold, no cause to die for. My only fear was to irresponsibly implicate friends where I had no control over how the information I gave might be used against them.

"But even this last reservation evaporated when I was threatened with the arrest of my wife and indefinite detention for myself. To be a rebel without a cause is foolish enough; to be a martyr without one is murderously stupid. I am neither the former nor wish to be the latter. I shall become like other Singaporeans — eschew politics — and pursue wealth." □



Lee: dramatic use of ISA.

Security of the state

Asean lawyers discuss different types of detention laws

By Suhaini Aznam in Kuala Lumpur

The communist threat, real or imagined, is the common justification given by all the five older Asean governments for enacting internal security laws which provide for preventive detention without trial. History has given them different forms of government but whether under military rule or civil bureaucracy, each has its own methods of dealing with "the enemies of the people."

At a low-key Asian Human Rights Commission workshop here from 5-8 October, a gathering of about 10 Asean human-rights lawyers and workers — Brunei was the only member not represented — concluded that it was important to differentiate between the security of the people and the security of the state, not necessarily the same thing. The concept of security of the people, however, automatically raised the question "security from whom?" one delegate commented. In many of the instances the participants described, the citizen's right to a trial was denied them by the state itself.

Indonesia's enemies of the state, for instance, fall into five categories — communists, Islamic radicals, other radicals, liberals and former dissatisfied officials such as retired generals, civil servants and university professors, said Indonesian lawyer John Yap, himself a former detainee. "In such an atmosphere, there is no choice but to remain silent," he added.

This "culture of silence" was repeatedly cited by the speakers as a major reason governments could maintain such laws. Some 30-40% of Indonesia's grassroots are illiterate, said Yap. "When the government decides to take their land, they transmigrate, evicted without much compensation and little fuss." Meanwhile, with a military corps on campus, students are very regimented, all social and political organisations must be registered, and one

must have a permit to visit villages or to hold assemblies of more than five people.

More importantly, the concept of opposition is foreign to Indonesian, especially Javanese, culture where one must strive for harmony in life through *musyawarat* (discussion and consensus), added Abdul Hakim Nusantara, head of Indonesia's Legal Aid Foundation. An army of 250,000 is able to control a population of 170 million.

In contrast, the Philippine army was helpless when the people took to the streets to overthrow former president Ferdinand Marcos after nine years of what he himself had termed "constitutional authoritarianism," reminded Sonja Paras Morch, a lay worker for the Philippines' Protestant Lawyers League. During that time there were 161 documented cases of prisoners being "salvaged" — the euphemism coined for executions without trial. There were also 12 cases of "involuntary disappearance" in the first six months after the 1981 lifting of martial law, she added.

Although President Corazon Aquino released many political prisoners, some remained, and some others were arrested after she came into power, said Morch.

Under the civilian governments of Malaysia and Singapore, the Internal Security Act (ISA) remains the most obvious method of preventive detention. Since independence, the Malaysian Government has used it against nine categories of perceived public enemies: political opponents within and outside the ruling parties, trade unionists, student activists, university lecturers, religious extremists, journalists, lawyers and economic saboteurs, said Malaysian lawyer Tommy Thomas. In June 1986, Malaysia's ISA detainees numbered 27, down from 600-700 in 1981.

The most dramatic use of the ISA in recent years was probably the Singapore Government's arrest of 22 lawyers and Christian workers in May and June. Despite Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's argument that he would not "allow subversives to get away by insisting that I [have] got to prove everything against them in a court," the ISA is also used where the state clearly had the needed evidence, said lawyer Francis Seow. An example was that of four Malay men, arrested under the ISA for allegedly preparing to stir up communal hatred and clashes. A cache of arms was also found. Since they also publicly admitted their guilt there would be evidence enough, yet still they remained in detention without trial.

While the ISA may be the more renowned, it was not Singapore's only avenue for "arbitrary arrest and detention without trial during peacetime," said another Singapore-based lawyer, Subhas Anandan. It also could use the Criminal Law (Temporary Provision) Act, usually used in drug or triad-related cases, to protect witnesses. Introduced in 1955, the ordinance was supposed to have lasted for three years. Instead, 32 years and 25 amendments later, the revised Act contains an entire new section entitled "Detention [Without Trial]."

Under the act, the home minister need only be satisfied that a person has been "associated with activities of a criminal nature," to have him detained for up to one year or have him placed under police supervision for up to three years. The definition of criminal activities are wide, as are the minister's discretionary powers in determining what constitutes association and how far back into a person's past such associations may be deemed to have relevance, said Subhas.

In addition, the president may extend such detention indefinitely, for a year at a time, so that more than half serve at least five years and some detainees have been held for more than 12 years. □