

SINGAPORE HUMAN RIGHTS ALERT

Church Responds. Inhumane Treatment of Detainees.

BIG ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH SERVICE

A special Mass was held to pray for the detainees at the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, Siglap Hill, Singapore at 8.30 p.m. on Wednesday 27 May. The service was led by Archbishop Yong and more than 2,000 people attended. Four friends and relatives of detainees spoke and attested to their integrity and character.

THE CHURCH SPEAKS

After meeting with his clergy the next day, Archbishop Gregory Yong issued a statement on 28 May. It said that the Church was perturbed by the arrests and that it was concerned for the detainees and their families. While the church is against Marxism, it is the mission of the church to include teaching on matters pertaining to justice as it applies to social, political and economic issues. The teachings of the Church are part of its tradition and mission, they have worldwide application and do not derive from any one theology. The Church confirms its confidence and support for all the Catholic organisations named by the Ministry of Home Affairs. To the best of the Church's knowledge the detained full-time workers of the Church are fully committed to the work in their organisations. The six detained voluntary workers have generously contributed their time and energy to the Church. The Church hopes and prays that justice will be done and be seen to be done. It hopes that the detainees will be treated humanely. (A full text will issued as soon as obtained.)

The Archbishop will issue a Pastoral Letter on Sunday.

It seems that Fr Patrick Goh and Fr Edgar D'Souza are heading a support committee for the families.

ACCESS DENIED FOR ONE WEEK

Although the arrests were made on 21 May, no families or lawyers were able to see the detainees until 27 May. However it is still not clear whether all the detainees have been seen. In particular there is concern over Vincent Cheng. There are no reports of him being seen at all.

A Bible and rosary were given to Internal Security Dept officers for Ms Tang Lay Lee on 27 May. The officers gave an assurance she would be given them immediately. When seen on May 28 she had still not received them.

DETAINEES SLAPPED AND BRUISED

It is reliably reported that Ms Teo Soh Lung was slapped during interrogation. Ms Tang Lay Lee has a thick, long blue-black bruise on the right side of her jaw. There is considerable

concern over what treatment has been given to the detainees especially those who have not been seen yet.

GOVERNMENT PAPER PRINTS ALLEGATIONS

After a week's silence and black-out of the international outrage at the detentions, Singapore's STRAITS TIMES on 27 May began to print the text of a lengthy Ministry of Home Affairs statement under the banner headline "MARXIST PLOT UNCOVERED". Over several pages it spread a narrative alleging a conspiracy by the Christian community leaders to overthrow the Singapore Government and install a communist regime. The local ringleader is supposedly Vincent Cheng of the Justice and Peace Commission and the statement maliciously fabricates a story of subversion and distorts his activities. The international mastermind is supposedly Mr Tan Wah Piow (now a law student at Balliol College, Oxford) who fled for his life in 1975 after he was imprisoned on political charges in 1974 when he was leader of the Students' Union of Singapore University. He sought asylum in the UK when he was forcibly inducted into the army upon his release from prison. The government has been trying to discredit him ever since.

The government "revelations" are coming out daily in the media. However the complete document from the Ministry is available at overseas diplomatic posts. Foreigners can see the allegations in full before the Singaporeans themselves.

TAN WAH PIOW REPLIES

On May 28 Tan Wah Piow issued a statement from Oxford replying to the allegations of the Singapore Government and refuting them categorically. This is available on request and will be summarised in the next Update. Mr Tan and the detainees will be the cover story of the next issue of ASIAWEEK. The FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW and other international media are covering the issue in depth.

INTERNATIONAL CONCERN

There have been many expressions of international concern from around Asia, Europe, Australasia and North America. Update No. 3 will report more on these.