

# MARXISTS IN SINGAPORE?

## Lee Kuan Yew's Campaign against Catholic Social Justice Activists in the 1980s

Michael D. Barr

**ABSTRACT:** Singapore's ruling elite runs a finely calibrated system of social and political control based on a mixture of monitoring and repression by the state, and self-monitoring and self-restraint by all elements of civil society. This system matured under Goh Chok Tong's premiership in the 1990s but its template was created by Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in the final years of his premiership with his handling of a fresh upsurge of social justice activism and dissent that was becoming increasingly brave. In response to these challenges he created a fanciful narrative about a "Marxist conspiracy" to overthrow the state and centered the main force of his allegations on a group of activists who were associated with the local Catholic Church. He accused them of being Marxists who had been subverted by the teachings of liberation theology and used the Internal Security Act to detain them and destroy their rather modest and innocent operations; their treatment provided both an exemplar to other groups and a model for the next generation of the ruling elite to follow. This article uses archival, oral, and secondary sources to build an account of these events with a particular focus on the motivations and activities of this group of Catholics and the motivations of the government — which essentially means the motivations of Lee Kuan Yew.

Visitors to Singapore's Internal Security Department Heritage Centre view an array of exhibitions that showcase the vital role of the Internal Security Department (ISD) in protecting Singapore from subversion and threats to national security. According to one who has taken the tour, however, the comprehensive display has one glaring omission: there is no mention of Operation Spectrum,

the smashing of the supposed Marxist conspiracy in mid 1987.<sup>1</sup> Those who may ask about this operation are directed to an out-of-the-way display that is not part of the normal tour. The ISD Heritage Centre is not alone in downplaying Operation Spectrum. In a booklet about the Internal Security Act (ISA) produced in 2002, *Why the ISA?*, Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) lists the ISD's achievements in defending the country, with examples going right back to the 1950s; "Operation Spectrum" is not on the list.<sup>2</sup> Even more significantly, the memoirs of former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew mentions the alleged Marxist conspirators only in passing while discussing another matter.<sup>3</sup>

These curious omissions are significant because in 1987 the ISD and Lee Kuan Yew both claimed that the smashing of the ring of "Marxist conspirators" (hereafter without quotation marks) averted an international conspiracy based in London "to overthrow the Government and establish a communist state."<sup>4</sup> The mastermind of the conspiracy was said to be Tan Wah Piow, a self-styled Maoist student leader<sup>5</sup> who was at the time living in exile in London. His supposed point man in Singapore was a lay worker in the Catholic Church, Vincent Cheng. Cheng was accused of manipulating a shadowy network of naïve and idealistic agents that extended beyond his close Catholic circles to include a few solicitors, returned students who had known Tan Wah Piow in London, local student activists, and a few people associated with alternative theater.<sup>6</sup> The alleged conspiracy was so extensive that the ISD even interviewed the man who is now Singapore's minister for finance, Tharman Shanmugaratnam, for about a week.<sup>7</sup> The conspiracy was so shadowy that when one of the detainees protested during interrogation that he did not know anything about a conspiracy and did not even know half of his supposed twenty-one co-conspirators, he was told with a straight face that he was "an unconscious conspirator," and he might as well admit it.<sup>8</sup> This seems absurd in the telling three decades later, but even at the time these stories were greeted with incredulity. According to a former journalist who was working at the *Straits Times* in 1987, not a single person in the newsroom remotely believed the charges, but they had no choice but to report the government's story as fact.

- 
1. The author was denied the opportunity to go on such a tour in 2003 because he is not a Singapore citizen. He is relying on the account of one who did go on the tour in the same year.
  2. Ministry of Home Affairs 2002.
  3. Lee mentions the detention of "16 Marxist conspirators" in the course of an account of a related libel action against the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. See Lee 2000, 152.
  4. *The Straits Times*, 27 May 1987.
  5. Interview with a former detainee, Singapore, 27 March 2003. This former detainee knew Tan and confirmed that in private he regarded himself as a Maoist. Some interviews conducted in the course of this research have been de-identified at the request of the interviewee, and in accordance with procedures approved by the Behavioural and Social Science Ethical Review Committee of the University of Queensland. Such interviews are identified by the date on which the interview was conducted. No two interviews were conducted on the same day. Some interviewees waived the offer to be de-identified. Other detainees have gone public since granting me interviews, but I have not relinquished my original commitments to maintaining their anonymity, even though it might be little more than a legalistic fig leaf at this point.
  6. *The Straits Times*, 27 May, 21 June, and 20 July 1987.
  7. Interview with a former detainee, Singapore, 25 March 2003.
  8. Interview with a former detainee, Singapore, 25 March 2003.

In the ISD operation twenty-two people were detained in two swoops on 21 May and 20 June 1987.<sup>9</sup> Some were released and then rearrested on 19 April 1988.<sup>10</sup> Most were tortured and beaten and all signed confessions their interrogators had dictated. (Some recanted their confessions after being released.<sup>11</sup>) The detainees were the unwilling stars of three television specials — the second in two parts — in which their words were spliced together to create the impression of conspiracy.<sup>12</sup> Cheng himself was detained without trial for three years and another accused, Teo Soh Lung, for two-and-a-half years.<sup>13</sup>

The official amnesia is perhaps a convenient cover for the fact that there never *was* a conspiracy, Marxist or otherwise. Then prime minister Lee almost admitted as much in confidence at the time when he told the Catholic archbishop of Singapore, the late Gregory Yong, that the detainees themselves were of minimal concern to him. He dismissed them as “do-gooders who wanted to help the poor and the dispossessed.”<sup>14</sup> This possibility was certainly also on the mind of then deputy prime minister Goh Chok Tong, who reported to Parliament in July 1987 that he had seriously doubted the existence of a Marxist conspiracy, but in the end decided to approve Operation Spectrum because he had satisfied himself that the initial group of sixteen detainees were “indeed involved in some nefarious activity.”<sup>15</sup> Significantly, Tharman Shanmugaratnam’s association with some of the detainees and his subsequent denial of the existence of a conspiracy<sup>16</sup> did not stop his rise through the highest ranks of the Civil Service, his entry into Parliament, nor his ascension to Cabinet.

These anomalies suggest strongly that the government was operating from agendas other than national security; yet even allowing for this possibility, many aspects of the pattern of detentions appear arbitrary and whimsical. For example, Tang Lay Lee, a full-time worker for the Young Christian Workers’ Movement (YCW) was detained, but her two colleagues in the YCW office were not.<sup>17</sup> (She facetiously notes in a recently published account, “They took [the] cook!”).<sup>18</sup> Chew Kheng Chuan, a Harvard graduate and a known associate of Tan

---

9. *The Straits Times*, 22 May and 21 June 1987.

10. *The Straits Times*, 20 April 1988.

11. See, for example, “Statement of Ex-Detainees of Operation ‘Spectrum,’ Embargoed until 10am 18<sup>th</sup> April 1988,” reproduced in Seow 1994, 258–61. Nine former detainees signed the statement.

12. *The Straits Times*, 10 June, 30 June, and 20 July 1987. Fr. James Minchin reports that he was told by friends working in the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation at the time that the second program was produced because the government was angry that the first one was insufficiently damning. (Interview with Fr. James Minchin, Singapore, 12 March 2003.) Fr. Minchin is an Australian Anglican priest. His connections with Vincent Cheng and other members of the network of Catholic social activists are explained later in this article.

13. *The Business Times*, 20 June 1990; interview with Teo Soh Lung, Singapore, 17 March 2003.

14. Report of Lee Kuan Yew’s words in Internal Security Department notes of “a meeting between PM and Catholic Church leaders at 3pm on 2 June 1987 at Istana.” This document is marked “secret,” but was released to the court during the government’s legal action against the *Far Eastern Economic Review* as exhibit 85(d).

15. *The Business Times*, 30 July 1987.

16. *The Straits Times*, 14 December 2001.

17. Interview with Tang Lay Lee, Singapore, 20 April 2004.

18. Tang 2009, 28.

Wah Piow in London, was detained, but other associates of Tan, such as Tharman Shanmugaratnam, were not.<sup>19</sup> For other detainees, ISD's motivation was more obvious. Teo Soh Lung reported in interview that after the first month the questions asked of her in interrogation no longer concerned her connections with the supposed Marxist conspirators at all. They focused instead on her connections and activities in the Law Society, to which she had just been elected a councilor by a large majority.<sup>20</sup> The events of 1987 only really make sense if we accept that the particular activities of individuals were almost irrelevant and the government was playing a larger game.

This article attempts to understand the motivation of both sides in this story. First it uses a combination of archival, oral, and secondary sources to provide a rounded picture of the motivations and activities of the Catholic activists who comprised the most significant group within the detainees. The purpose of this section is to balance the two-dimensional caricatures painted by the government and to argue the innocence of the activists. This exercise occupies the greater part of the article. The second purpose is to use archival and other historical sources to explain why the government acted as it did, when it did. This section will argue that Lee Kuan Yew personally orchestrated the exercise to try to guarantee what he understood to be the elements essential to the stability of the regime beyond his impending (or so it seemed) retirement.<sup>21</sup>

### The Catholic Activists

Ten of the activists arrested in mid 1987 — the core of the original group of sixteen detainees and the primary focus of the government's rhetorical and legislative response — were associated with the Roman Catholic Church in Singapore. In pursuing this project I have traced a line of continuity of Catholic social activism that stretches back from the time of the crackdown to the late 1960s. This social activism, which the Catholics shared with those of other faiths, never took the shape of an organization, a group, or even a network — let alone a conspiracy. Participants themselves have referred to their work together as “the movement” (hereafter without quotation marks). Aligning themselves with the strands of Catholic thinking that have been labeled “progressive” or “left-wing,” the activists did, however, become increasingly critical of the People's Action Party government.

As the government contended, this movement was inspired to some degree by liberation theology, a politically progressive brand of theology that emerged in Latin America and in several Asian nations in the 1980s. In the government's logic and its public rhetoric, liberation theology was little more than a cover for

---

19. Chew's twelve-month association with Tan Wah Piow pales against that of Tharman Shanmugaratnam, who was a self-confessed member of Tan's “study group” and an “activist” in London “for a few years.” Yet despite being questioned “day and night for one week” in 1987, in the end ISD lost interest in Shanmugaratnam. (Interview with Tharman Shanmugaratnam published in *The Straits Times*, 14 December 2001.)

20. Interview with Teo Soh Lung, Singapore, 17 March 2003.

21. In fact twenty years later Lee has still not retired. He has remained a Cabinet member, first as senior minister and now as minister mentor.



Fr. Joseph Ho, chaplain of the YCW in the early 1970s and chairman of the JPC in the mid 1980s (undated photograph).

Marxism and communism, which formed the basis for the charge of being Marxist conspirators.<sup>22</sup> In fact the term “liberation theology” encompasses a wide range of approaches to politics and theology, only some of which have any connection with Marxism at all. The imprecision of the label is recognized by no less an authority than the Vatican. When, in 1984, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, headed at the time by then cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, is-

sued its statement of concern about what it preferred to call the “theology of liberation” or “theologies of liberation” it described it as a theology that “refers first of all to a special concern for the victims of oppression, which in turn begets a commitment to justice.” From this starting point, the statement says, “we can distinguish several, often contradictory ways of understanding the Christian meaning of poverty and the type of commitment to justice which it requires... [whose] doctrinal frontiers are badly defined.”<sup>23</sup> The various manifestations of liberation theology range from the Marxist-based analysis of José Miranda<sup>24</sup> to the theories of orthodox (in Catholic terms) writers such as Gustavo Gutiérrez, who accepted class struggle as a social reality and engaged in an intellectual struggle to reconcile this conclusion with Catholic and Christian teachings of love, brotherhood, and unity under Christ.<sup>25</sup> The common theme in this myriad of theological analyses was solidarity with the poor and oppressed and an enthusiasm for engaging in practical action to build a just social order. When the Vatican issued its 1984 statement and subsequent documents it made clear that it had no issues with the central drivers of liberation theology, but it was highly concerned about those elements that uncritically accepted Marxist analysis, that denied Church authority, or that failed to recognize the primacy of liberation from sin ahead of liberation from forms of temporal oppression.<sup>26</sup>

In all its manifestations liberation theology was critical of establishments and it therefore sat on the leftist rather than the conservative end of politics, but a

---

22. The simplistic linkage between Liberation Theology and Marxism began with the government’s earliest public accusations against the detainees and never varied, except to make way for the even more simplistic accusation that they were just “Marxists” or “communists,” free of any theological embellishments. See, for instance, *The Straits Times*, 27 May 1987, and Tang Lay Lee’s account of her interrogation in Tang 2009, 24, 25.

23. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1984.

24. Miranda 1974.

25. Gutiérrez 1974, 272–79.

26. See Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith 1984; and Congregation for the Doctrine and the Faith 1985.

close examination of the efforts of the Catholic activists in Singapore shows that their basic inspirations were more conservative than any form of liberation theology — though there can be no doubt that the more orthodox elements of the literature informed their activities. The community organization methodology of Saul Alinsky in Chicago (see below) was one such inspiration,<sup>27</sup> but by far the more important influence was the relatively conservative Catholic approach advocated by Canon Joseph Cardijn, the founder of the Young Christian Workers' Movement.<sup>28</sup> Thus, much of the Catholic activism at that time was not overtly ideological, or even very radical. It was directed predominantly at helping particular groups and individuals (e.g., migrant workers, foreign maids, Housing and Development Board dwellers, and unionists) to achieve particular tangible goals (such as fixing a rat-infestation problem in a housing estate, supporting decent working conditions for immigrant and Singaporean workers, promoting a Catholic vision of family life and education, and opposing abortion and eugenics). Of course it was naïve to think that the government would not consider such activities to be threateningly political activity, but judging from the interviews I have conducted with former activists, this was a failing of naïveté that seems to have been universal among the laity in the movement, with the notable exception of Vincent Cheng, who lived in constant fear of government reprisals.<sup>29</sup> (Interestingly, Cheng's younger colleagues dismissed his fears as paranoia and self-aggrandizement as late as the evening before the arrests.<sup>30</sup>)

The priests among the church activists in the 1980s were clearly more politically aware than the laity, and they took their responsibilities for their charges very seriously. Despite the inspiration they took from liberation theology,<sup>31</sup> the priests consciously and deliberately eschewed the most contentious positions with which it was sometimes associated — class warfare, abolition of private property, revolution, rejection of Church authority<sup>32</sup> — and taught their followers traditional Catholic social teaching as handed down in papal and Vatican documents since the end of the nineteenth century. This is plainly evident in the publications of the movement. The main internal publication of the group of church activists in Singapore was a booklet series called *Church and Society*, published by six Singapore priests under the name of the Church and Society Study Group.<sup>33</sup> The issue in this series that reveals most about the motivations of the group was its first issue, dated December 1984. Devoted to explaining “Jesus and the option for the poor” the booklet argued that Jesus' ministry on earth was directed primarily toward “the oppressed, the economically poor and [the]

---

27. See Fisher and Kling 1990, 71–90; Schaller 1966; Warren 1977, 145.

28. See Cardijn 1949.

29. Interview with Fr. James Minchin, Melbourne, 17 February 2005.

30. Interview with Kevin de Souza, Singapore, 21 March 2003.

31. Interview with Fr. James Minchin, Melbourne, 17 February 2005, and; interview with Edgar D'Souza, Melbourne, 16 February 2005.

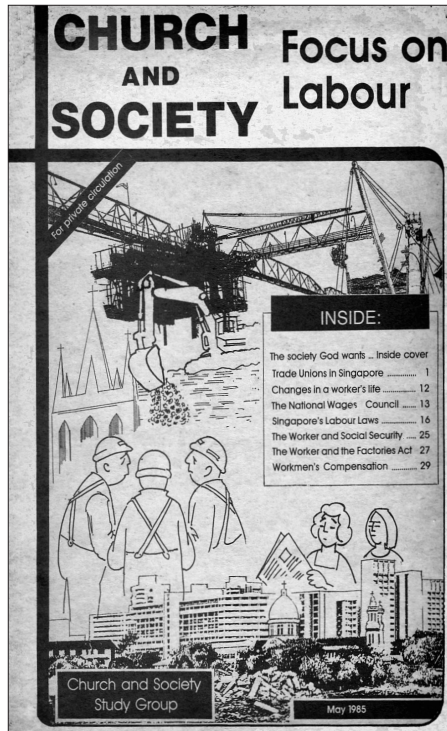
32. See, for instance, *Church and Society*, December 1984.

33. The six priests were Fathers G. Arotcarena, Edgar K. D'Souza, Patrick Goh, Joseph Ho, Joseph Tan, and Eugene Vaz. *Church and Society*, December 1984, before page 1, inside front cover.

*Church and Society* magazine (right). "Anyone looking for a call to violence or rebellion in the pages of *Church and Society* would be sorely disappointed given its insistence on nonviolent action and consensus politics."

social outcasts." In essence, it urged contemporary Christians to emulate Jesus' example.<sup>34</sup> While this issue acknowledges liberation theology as an inspiration and devotes five pages to the arguments of some of its advocates,<sup>35</sup> it dedicates eight pages to a detailed study of the rich vein of traditional Catholic social teachings (mainly in the form of papal writings) that defend the rights of workers, uphold the dignity of the human person, defend the special place of the family in a Christian political economy, and make special claims for the poor.<sup>36</sup> In its conclusion it even

quotes approvingly from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's 1984 "Instruction on certain aspects of the Theology of Liberation."<sup>37</sup> Both this body of social teaching and the *Church and Society* booklets explicitly reject the proposition that capital and labor are in inherent opposition; the legitimacy of class struggle; and the need for confrontation based upon class solidarity.<sup>38</sup> Anyone looking for a call to violence or rebellion in the pages of *Church and Society* would be sorely disappointed given its insistence on nonviolent action and consensus politics.<sup>39</sup> It is significant that when the government later used the *Church and Society* series to build its case for legislative controls of religion for the sake of "harmony," it could claim no more than that the authors "criticis[ed] the Government on various secular issues...[and] accused the Government of emasculating the trade unions and enacting labour laws which curtailed the rights of workers."<sup>40</sup> This hardly amounts to conspiring to overthrow the state.



34. *Church and Society*, December 1984, 7.

35. *Ibid.*, 15–20.

36. The specific papal documents cited are *Rerum Novarum* [On Capital and Labor], issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1891; *Gaudium et Spes: The Pastoral Constitution of the Catholic Church in the Modern World*, issued by the Second Vatican Council in 1965; and *Laborum Exercens* [On Human Work], issued by Pope John II in 1981. See *Church and Society*, December 1984, 9–11, 14, 15, 20. There is also extensive treatment of *Justice in the World*, which the Synod of Bishops in Rome issued in 1971 (*Church and Society*, December 1984, 11–13).

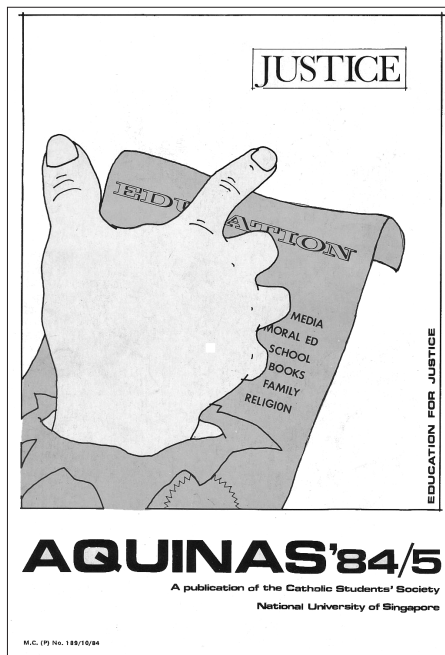
37. *Church and Society*, December 1984, 20.

38. *Ibid.*, 14, 15.

39. *Ibid.*, December 1984, 19.

40. Rajah 2008, 284.

In fact the Catholic activists in Singapore were rather gentle in their approach to social activism and said that they felt embarrassed and disheartened by the modest scale of their activities and achievements. They were thus confident that as long as they were faithful to the teachings of the Church they were safe from government reprisals. Furthermore, they had no reason to doubt that they would remain under the protection of Archbishop Gregory Yong, in whose name all their activities were carried out and who explicitly endorsed their work.<sup>41</sup> The first of these beliefs lasted until the early hours of 21 May 1987, when ISD officers awakened and arrested the activists; the second, until 3 June 1987, when the archbishop told the priests associated with the movement that he would not defend them if they were arrested.<sup>42</sup>



*Aquinas '84/5*, publication of the Catholic Students' Society.

### The Catholic Church

Before considering the history of the movement itself, it will help to describe the state of Christian communities in Singapore in the late 1960s. As with society in general, Christian churches worldwide were being challenged and changed in the 1960s by the new youth and hippie cultures, the civil rights movement, the sexual revolution, and the anti-Vietnam War and peace movements. A spirit of antiauthoritarianism and youthful rebellion clearly marked this decade, and the churches were not immune from these dynamics. Indeed a church that wanted to engage this world had to involve itself with this newly assertive civic culture. This they did in a variety of ways, often with much uncertainty, internal dissent, and contradictory initiatives.

The Catholic Church in particular had been casting around since late in the nineteenth century for new formulae through which to engage society, particularly the poor and the working classes. This search reached a high point in the Second Vatican Council, which took place in the turbulence of the 1960s. In retrospect it seems almost inevitable that a major review of fundamentals, such as Vatican II promised to be, would invite the problems of the world into the Church. And so it did. In the wake of the Council, seminary training, liturgical

41. *Aquinas '84/5*, publication of the Catholic Students' Society, 4–6.

42. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 December 1987.



practices, sexual mores, and social discourse were all shaken dramatically as the Church tried to find new ways to engage the world and its own members.

It was in this milieu that Latin American churches intensified their promotion of liberation theology. This movement found institutional expression in 1968 at the Second General Conference of the Latin American Bishops in Medellín, Colombia,<sup>43</sup> which scholars have described as “the breakthrough” in the history of liberation theology.<sup>44</sup> Significantly for our consideration of the Singapore government’s automatic equation of liberation theology with Marx-

ism, this basic document of liberation theology is cited approvingly in the Vatican’s *Instruction* of 1984. The document also criticizes Marxism, declaring that “although it ideologically supports a kind of humanism, [it] is more concerned with collective humanity, and in practice becomes a totalitarian concentration of state power.”<sup>45</sup>



Fr. Edgar K. D'Souza, assistant editor of *The Catholic News* from 1979 to 1987 and a key figure in the Young Christian Workers organization (undated photograph).

### East Asia Christian Conference

At around the same time, many Protestant churches and the Anglican Church in Singapore began escalating their own social activism, in some cases altering the character of their missionary work from one that was strictly evangelical to one focused to some degree on temporal issues. One of the institutions affected by this shift in focus was the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC), which was eventually deemed guilty by association with the alleged Marxist conspirators and was expelled from Singapore at the end of 1987.<sup>46</sup>

The EACC was formed in the early 1950s as a result of an experiment by the World Council of Churches (WCC) to establish regional, autonomous councils to carry out missionary work in conjunction with local churches and under the general guidance of the WCC.<sup>47</sup> In its early years the EACC took a traditional, evangelical approach to the concept of mission, but by the late 1960s it became engaged in a struggle to find a place for Christian mission in the changing world of nationalism and industrialization in Asia.<sup>48</sup> One of the more practical initiatives toward this end — and one with a direct causal connection to our story —

43. Swatos 2004.

44. Brown 1990, 11.

45. Hennelly 1992, 101. Hennelly has reproduced what he judges to be the main documents of Medellín in chapter 10, 89–119.

46. *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 14 January 1988. In 1973 the East Asia Christian Conference changed its name to the Christian Conference of Asia.

47. World Council of Churches 1968a, 11, 25, 26. The EACC was the first such body established by the WCC. The Anglican Church in Singapore was actively involved in the organization. See World Council of Churches 1968, 7, 107.

48. See, for instance, Anderson 1976.

was a series of EACC conferences during the 1960s on “Urban and Industrial Mission” (UIM) sponsored by the WCC’s Division of World Mission and Evangelism.<sup>49</sup> The most significant of these for the later history of Singapore was the Kyoto conference in 1966, which endorsed a commitment to “industrial evangelism.”<sup>50</sup> This radically new evangelical effort described itself in terms of Christian service to society: “Rendering of un-ending service to the Society in which he lives, the layman in industry may become a true servant of Christ in Witness and service to enhance the Kingdom of God.”<sup>51</sup>

Long discussions were held in the churches and many resolutions passed, but industrial evangelism remained a skeleton before activists on the ground gave it flesh and direction. In this effort, the EACC, through the National Council of Churches of Singapore (NCCS), received aid from one of Saul Alinsky’s disciples.

### Community Organizing Alinsky-style

Saul Alinsky (1909–1972) was a social activist in Chicago who had been working with churches across North America — both Catholic and Protestant — since the late 1930s. Alinsky developed a new, imaginative approach to organizing the poor and seemingly powerless members of society, calling the method community organizing (CO).<sup>52</sup> At the core of the CO methodology was the use of abrasive but nonviolent and legal brinkmanship by those without power to build solidarity and win concessions from those with power.<sup>53</sup> Furthermore, it was vital to the CO methodology that confrontation be generated by local, “natural” leaders acting in accord with local values and tradition and on the priorities identified by the local community.

The centrality of confrontation distinguishes Alinsky from those who advocate more mainstream dialogues and lobbying, among other forms of advocacy. Another noteworthy feature was the seriousness with which Alinsky took the imperative of giving the local community full ownership of CO and the campaign. His first priority upon arriving in a new area of operation was house-to-house and other community visits. These contacts with “ordinary people” helped him identify natural community leaders other than those who had commissioned him and pinpoint vital points of discontent that could be used to spur people into confrontational action. The grievances that surfaced were always tangible and real (and had been identified by the local communities themselves), but the significance of the campaigns and confrontation was not primarily in seeing particular grievances addressed, but in building an organization for the long term. The CO methodology had no ideological grounding apart from Alinsky’s core belief that the “have-nots” should take power away from the

---

49. World Council of Churches 1968b, 234–35.

50. World Council of Churches 1968a, 30.

51. East Asia Christian Conference 1967, 119.

52. Kling and Posner 1990, 42, n. 2; Fisher and Kling 1990, 83, 84.

53. See Alinsky 1969, 144–146; and Alinsky 1971, 146–48.

“haves.”<sup>54</sup> (Alinsky himself, however, did not advocate or believe in a classless society.<sup>55</sup>)

In the late 1960s, when the EACC decided to establish UIMs in Asia, they brought to Singapore Ron Fujiyoshi, a Hawai'i-born American who had trained with Alinsky's organization in Austin, Texas.<sup>56</sup> In 1969 Fujiyoshi used CO methods when he set up two UIMs: the Jurong Industrial Mission (JIM) and a private community center at Toa Payoh. Operating under the auspices of the National Council of Churches of Singapore,<sup>57</sup> both bodies flourished for a short time under Fujiyoshi's guidance. The demise of Singapore's UIMs came suddenly in 1973 when the government expressed its displeasure to some of the churches about the UIMs. Most of the local churches succumbed quickly to this pressure and withdrew their endorsement and financial support from the UIMs, so the UIM organization began winding down. Fujiyoshi himself went first to Malaysia and then to Tokyo, where he continued his work amongst the poor.<sup>58</sup>

### Convergence in Singapore

The Catholic chapter of our story began in late 1968, when a nun, whom I shall call Sister Samantha,<sup>59</sup> was asked by her religious superior to start a private community center in Bukit Ho Swee, to be called the Nazareth Centre. Sr. Samantha had trained and worked as a social worker, but she had no experience running a community center. She had ideas but no appropriate training, no budget, no staff, and no concrete plans. Fortunately help was at hand in the form of a supportive local Dutch Catholic priest named Fr. Roetenberg,<sup>60</sup> and a local Australian Anglican priest, Fr. James Minchin. These two men had already begun developing socially aware communities of young people in their parishes. Ron Fujiyoshi was also active in Singapore at this time and when Sr. Samantha began her work, the JIM and the private community center in Toa Payoh were already well established.<sup>61</sup>

Between them Fr. Roetenberg, Fr. Minchin, and Ron Fujiyoshi gave Sr. Samantha all the help they could, to the point where Fr. Minchin remembers them operating in “loose alliance” through their parishes and the three community organizations. Sr. Samantha hired a Chinese-speaking staff member to assist her

---

54. Alinsky 1971, 3, 126.

55. Alinsky 1969, 231, 232.

56. The EACC also established experimental UIMs in Manila and Seoul as part of this burst of activity. Interview with “Sr. Samantha,” Singapore, 2 May 2003. “Sr. Samantha” (hereafter without quotation marks) is a member of a religious order and under the order's rules she is not free to allow the use of her name or to allow reference to her order in any publication. The interview was conducted on the understanding that these prohibitions would be respected. See also Finks 1984, 162–65, 243, 244.

57. Interview with former detainee, Singapore, 27 March 2003. Email from Fr. James Minchin to the author, 20 January 2005.

58. Email from Fr. James Minchin, 20 January 2005, and from another former detainee on 28 September 2009.

59. See n. 56 above.

60. In the earlier version of this article I attributed Fr. Roetenberg's role to a Fr. Jean Charbonnier, but since then Ron Fujiyoshi has corrected the record. This was reported to me by a former detainee in an email dated 28 September 2009.

61. Interview with former detainee, Singapore, 27 March 2003.

in her home visits, and begged the Catholic and Anglican archbishops for the money to pay this salary every month. On some Sundays after Mass, Fr. Minchin sent over an enthusiastic group of young volunteers to help with home visits.<sup>62</sup> Most significant of all, Sr. Samantha took an intensive in-service training course in CO under Fujiyoshi.<sup>63</sup> When Vincent Cheng came to work for the JIM in 1971, having taken a year's leave of absence from the local Catholic seminary, Fujiyoshi also trained him in community organizing.<sup>64</sup> The impact of CO training and work on the development of the fledgling network of Christian activists in Singapore was profound. Those who were trained directly by Fujiyoshi still speak of him and about CO with some awe. Evidence of the pervasiveness of Fujiyoshi's influence can be seen in the fact that two of the detainees of 1987 who had had no contact with Fujiyoshi nevertheless described in an interview the *modus operandi* of the movement in terms that are indistinguishable from CO.<sup>65</sup>

### Pouring Petrol on Fire

Singapore in the late 1960s was still recovering from the shock of separation from Malaysia, and the entire focus of the new nation's energies was on nation building and survival. Workers' rights, press freedoms, free speech, the freedom to have children, and the rights of immigrants were all expendable in the quest for survival. Sharply contradicting Alinsky's celebration of dissent, Singapore was moving to expel overt politics from the realm of governance. The government's priorities were spelled out time and again, including, ironically, in an address by then prime minister Lee Kuan Yew to the EACC when it met in Singapore in 1967. His speech on this occasion was on the dilemmas of newly decolonized countries trying to catch up with the West economically; on the problems of finding leaders who can motivate the populace to join the race for development; and on the role of religions in the struggle to move society "forward to progress and to a higher level of human life."<sup>66</sup> Armed with a vision of human progress through a collective national struggle led by a natural ruling elite,<sup>67</sup> Lee Kuan Yew envisioned Christians helping the government build the sense of solidarity and purpose that would enable the populace to understand — or at least to accept — the need for ever greater sacrifices in the struggle for progress. He even hoped that the Christian churches might contribute some real leadership in the nation-building effort.

Alas, the vision of the EACC was somewhat different. It aimed to challenge the meek acceptance of sacrifices by the populace; build solidarity amongst the poor as they sought better living and working conditions; and defend workers — particularly migrant workers — from exploitation by employers who, from

---

62. Interview with Sr. Samantha, Singapore, 2 May 2003.

63. Interview with Sr. Samantha, Singapore, 2 May 2003.

64. Interview with former detainee, Singapore, 27 March 2003.

65. Interview with Kevin de Souza, Singapore, 21 March 2003; interview with Tang Lay Lee, Singapore, 20 April 2004.

66. Lee 1967, 1, 3, 7.

67. For the author's more considered views on the impact of the 1960s, see Barr 2009, 49–136.

the perspective of the government, were playing pivotal roles in the national development project. Conflict was almost inevitable.

Sr. Samantha's CO work began to cause concern at the highest levels of government and the security services scrutinized her efforts. In her own words, the government made her "a marked woman." In 1969, when she was making arrangements for a delegation to meet a government minister, an official from the prime minister's office warned her that her "name [was] on the prime minister's desk." This followed an incident in which she had arranged with a local Member of Parliament to meet residents from her community about a municipal problem at his weekly meet-the-people session, only to have the MP (a recent convert to Catholicism, whom she knew personally and liked) phone her in a panic because over

one hundred people had turned up. In an earlier incident an angry local area officer of the Housing and Development Board called her to complain that an article had appeared in the Chinese press about another municipal issue. It was assumed (correctly) that she had suggested going to the press.<sup>68</sup> In retrospect, she says, she realizes that anyone who could organize one hundred people or have a newspaper article published with such ease was someone to be watched. At the time, however, the government's reaction surprised her.

In the end Sr. Samantha's brewing difficulties with the government never reached a head because her health gave out in 1969 and she had to retire. Her religious superiors — almost certainly sensing the dangers ahead — took this opportunity to shift the orientation of her center from community organizing to social services. This might have been the end of the role of CO in this story if not for the restlessness of a seminarian named Vincent Cheng.

### Vincent Cheng

Vincent Cheng played only a peripheral role in the development of the movement in the 1970s, but in the decade that followed he came to be so important a figure that in its case against the alleged Marxist conspirators the government painted him as the key manipulator. Cheng's story merits attention for two



"Vincent Cheng [pictured here] played only a peripheral role in the development of the movement in the 1970s, but in the decade that followed he came to be so important a figure that in its case against the alleged Marxist conspirators the government painted him as the key manipulator."

---

68. Interview with Sr. Samantha, Singapore, 2 May 2003.

reasons: first, because his connections with Fujiyoshi and community organizing placed him in a line of continuity with Sr. Samantha, and second, because his experiences in the 1970s shaped the contributions he would later make in the 1980s.

Cheng was nearing the end of his training to become a Catholic priest in Penang when in 1971 he sought permission to work “in the world” for a year before ordination. His bishop granted him leave whereupon he undertook a six-month training course in community organizing, conducted by Ron Fujiyoshi, and joined the JIM. These experiences affected Cheng profoundly and convinced him that his vocation was to continue with this type of work. He wanted to do this work as a priest, but his bishop insisted that this was not possible and that he had to choose between the two vocations. He was granted an extension of his leave while he continued to consider his options, but he never returned to the seminary. Instead he resumed his work with the JIM until it closed in 1973; he then started working for the Student Christian Movement (SCM) in 1974, engaging in student affairs in Singapore and attending conferences in various parts of Asia. During this time he also became actively involved in the Catholic Church’s Justice and Peace Commission (JPC).

In 1981 he moved to Thailand where for the first time he was appointed to a position in an official Catholic organization: he became coordinator of a regional program (funded by Caritas Germany) that was trying to consolidate the efforts of Catholic social activists in the Asean countries. In June 1982 he was invited back to Singapore by Fr. Guillaume Arotcarena, who asked him to work full-time in his newly founded Geylang Catholic Centre (GCC), which worked to defend Malaysian manual workers and Filipino maids from exploitation and abuse. In 1985 Cheng accepted an invitation to become executive secretary of the JPC. He was occupying this position when he was detained.<sup>69</sup>

### YCW Networks

Independently of Cheng’s involvement in the JIM and SCM in the 1970s, Catholic activism was taking root in Singapore under the guidance of a number of priests whose inspiration came not from Saul Alinsky but from the example and methodology of Canon Joseph Cardijn, the founder of the YCW. Canon Cardijn was a Belgian priest (later a cardinal) of working-class origins who sought to evangelize the working class through the spiritual and intellectual formation of young Catholic workers who would then promote and, if necessary, agitate for workers’ rights. Cardijn was deeply concerned about both the temporal and spiritual welfare of the working class and regarded the problem of inhumane working conditions and the spread of atheism as being two sides of the same coin.<sup>70</sup> He was determined to build a movement of young Catholics to meet this challenge. In 1924 he founded the YCW; a year later he received the endorsement of Pope Pius XI. The key structure of the YCW is the small group, or cell,

---

69. Cheng has recently written a fuller account of these years of these years of his life in Cheng 2009.

70. Cardijn [1949], 9–14.

and its key methodology is captured in the triple imperative “See, Judge, Act,”<sup>71</sup> a motto that is ubiquitous in writings and conversations about the YCW. In its ideal form, the YCW is a way of life for Catholic youth, quite capable of monopolizing their time, energy, and idealism until marriage or other commitments lead them into the responsibilities of adulthood.<sup>72</sup>

The role of the chaplain was crucial in the operation of the YCW, which always operated under the direct and exclusive authority of the local bishop and under the close supervision of a chaplain. In Singapore the mission of the YCW was taken in deadly earnest, which, without detracting from the selflessness and zeal of its lay members, was no small tribute to the priests involved. The key YCW priests were Fr. Joseph Ho, chaplain of the YCW in the early 1970s and chairman of the JPC in the mid 1980s; Fr. Patrick Goh, chaplain at various times of the YCW, the Catholic Students’ Society (at the university and the polytechnic), and the Jurong Workers’ Centre and a member of the JPC at the time of the detentions; and Fr. Edgar D’Souza, assistant editor of *The Catholic News* from 1979 to 1987.<sup>73</sup> There was also another priest who was unconnected with the YCW, but was central to the work of the Catholic activists in Singapore: Fr. Guillaume Arotcarena, chaplain to the GCC (later called the Catholic Centre for Foreign Workers) and to the prisons. Of these men, the main figure was Fr. Patrick Goh. From the accounts of those who knew him in those days, Fr. Goh was an inspirational leader in his own right and a formidable organizer and strategist. These four men were all driven out of Singapore after the detentions of 1987. Other sympathetic parish priests were Fr. Joseph Tan, Fr. Simon Pereira, and Fr. Eugene Vaz. Together with the indefatigable networking of Vincent Cheng in the JPC, this matrix formed the heart of the supposed Marxist conspiracy of 1987.

The movement’s formal organizations were institutionally separate from each other, but there was considerable overlap of personnel and activities. The interconnectivity had great advantages from the work point of view, but it later left the network vulnerable to misrepresentation as a conspiracy. One instance of guilt by association that galls the former detainees even now was the representation of Chung Lai Mei as part of their “conspiracy.” Chung became famous as the detainee who had visited a Tamil Tiger training camp in Sri Lanka and brought home a snapshot of herself brandishing an M-16 rifle.<sup>74</sup> ISD agents found the framed photo on her bedside table when they arrested her. Chung was active in the Students Society of the Singapore Polytechnic (SSSP) and the Asian Students Association, but she was not a Catholic nor was she active in any Catholic groups. The leaders of the Catholic groups certainly knew her and even accepted her presence in some “social analysis training sessions” organized by the JPC, but as her behavior became more flamboyant and unpredict-

---

71. Collins and Hornsby-Smith 2002, 88.

72. Ibid., 87–100. Also see Cardijn 1949, 24–34.

73. Fr. D’Souza was not institutionally involved in the YCW, but was drenched in Canon Cardijn’s teachings and considered himself to be part of the movement. Interview with Edgar D’Souza, Melbourne, 16 February 2005.

74. See the photo reproduced in *The Straits Times*, 29 June 1987.

able they tried to both discourage her revolutionary chic enthusiasms and keep her at arm's length. Relations between her and the leading Catholic activists were so fraught that there were periods in which she was completely estranged from them.<sup>75</sup> Yet after the arrests of May 1987 she was one of the first to "confess" to her participation in a Marxist conspiracy headed by Vincent Cheng, and the government used her as a prime exhibit to demonstrate the revolutionary intent of the alleged conspirators.

### The Work

According to the government, the accused conspirators intended to overthrow the government, but what had they really been doing prior to 1987 and why did their work provoke such a backlash from the government? The movement's campaigns were controversial, provocative, and political in the broadest sense of these words, but they were well within the ordinary bounds of activism for organizations associated with the Catholic Church. The day-to-day work of the movement was overwhelmingly dominated by the organization of practical assistance for vulnerable groups, particularly Filipino maids and migrant workers. Activists also took public stands on controversial issues such as the imposition of twelve-hour shifts in factories and the government's eugenics policies. Some of their work was even conducted in collaboration with the government. Detainee Ng Bee Long, for example, worked daily with the Ministry of Labour, helping Ministry personnel assess the cases of the Filipino maids who had appealed to the Geylang Catholic Centre for help.<sup>76</sup>

### The Government

The focus of this second section of the article is on the dynamics within the government that prompted the detentions. Fortunately we have an accurate, if woefully incomplete, record of official thinking, thanks to the government's own minutes from its post-detention meetings with the archbishop and other Church leaders. Some of these documents were made available to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* as part of court proceedings involving the magazine and the government in 1989. These records include the minutes of a "Meeting between PM [prime minister] and Catholic Church Leaders at 3pm on 2 Jun 87 at Istana;" "Notes of Meeting between PM and Archbishop Gregory Yong and Reverend Giovanni D'Aniello, Charge D'Affaires of the Holy See Mission in Bangkok at Istana Annexe on 2 June 1987 at 5.20pm;" and notes of a "Meeting between Director, ISD and Monsignor Francis Lau on 5 Jun 87."<sup>77</sup> Together with other historical records these reveal a number of salient facts, the main ones of

---

75. Interview with Kevin de Souza, Singapore, 21 March 2003; interview with former detainee, Singapore, 27 March 2003.

76. Report in *The Catholic News*, 14 June 1987. This edition of *The Catholic News* was printed, but on the orders of Archbishop Gregory Yong, it was never distributed. A few copies have survived. A more detailed account of the day-to-day work of the movement is given in Barr 2008, 237–40. This account is based on this issue of *The Catholic News*, on other movement publications, and on minutes of meetings organised by YCW.

77. Spelling and syntax appear as in the original documents.



which are that the detentions were driven personally by and micro-managed by then prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, that he did so in the face of significant reluctance on the part of his Cabinet colleagues, and finally that there is strong evidence that he did not really believe there was a Marxist conspiracy and was certainly not interested in or worried about the detainees themselves.

Taking these three points in order, even the most cursory glance at these documents demonstrates first that Lee Kuan Yew was the driving force . In the private meetings during the afternoon of 2 June, Lee was one of four government representatives in the 3:00 p.m. meeting, and one of five at the 5:20 p.m. meeting, yet there is only one mention of any of the others uttering a word (and this was in answer to a direct question from Lee). Lee personally drove the meetings, and he personally engineered the dramatic introduction of a Vatican representative into the second meeting.<sup>78</sup>

The official record of the 3:00 p.m. meeting is broken into eighteen paragraphs, fourteen of which open with Lee Kuan Yew speaking.<sup>79</sup> In the 5:20 p.m. meeting, the official record is broken into nine paragraphs, seven of which open with Lee Kuan Yew speaking.<sup>80</sup> There is no room to doubt that this was a personal campaign, micromanaged by Lee in every respect.

Second, the wider documentary record makes it clear that Lee was out of step with his Cabinet colleagues in pressing ahead with these detentions. By 1987 Goh Chok Tong was well established as first deputy prime minister and was the nominal leader of the “second generation” of leaders, being groomed to take



Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong is pictured here at a meeting with then secretary of defense Donald H. Rumsfeld in the Pentagon on 4 May 2004. In 1987, “Goh Chok Tong was well established as first deputy prime minister and was the nominal leader of the ‘second generation’ of leaders, being groomed to take over when Lee Kuan Yew retired.” (Credit: DoD / Helene C. Stikkel)

78. The representative was normally based in Bangkok, but was present in Singapore for this meeting.

79. Paragraph 1 opens with “PM explained...,” paragraphs 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 16 open with “He [PM] said...,” paragraph 3 opens with “PM warned...,” paragraphs 6 and 9 open with “PM pointed out...,” paragraphs 13 and 18 open with “PM asked...,” paragraph 15 opens with “When PM returned (4.35pm), he assured...,” and paragraph 17 opens with “PM then asked....” Paragraphs 10, 11, 12, and 14 contain Archbishop Yong’s contributions.

80. Paragraphs 1, 2, and 3 open with “PM said...,” paragraph 5 opens with “PM told Archbishop Yong...,” paragraph 6 opens with “PM believed...,” paragraph 9 opens with “PM then bade farewell...” and finally paragraph 4 opens with “At 5.30pm, the others rejoined PM’s meeting with Reverend D’Aniello. PM began by saying ....”

over when Lee Kuan Yew retired. The first point of significance is that for the first two months after the arrests the new generation of leaders had nothing to say publicly about the detentions except for an almost apologetic response to one journalist's question by Minister for Foreign Affairs S. Dhanabalan on 1 June.<sup>81</sup> The reason for their silence became apparent when Goh Chok Tong, in his first public statement at the end of July made plain just how lukewarm and even skeptical he and all his younger ministerial colleagues had been about ISD's claims. According to *The Business Times*,

His [Goh's] initial reactions were: "Was the ISD not making a mistake? Were they not over-reacting?"

He said he was even more surprised when he read the ISD papers on Vincent Cheng, regarded as a key player in the conspiracy, and the other fifteen who were detained along with him [in the first swoop]. They were mainly English-educated, had good degrees or diplomas, held good jobs and were involved in church or social work, or both.

"I was concerned that ISD should not confuse young idealists for sinister communists out to wreck Singapore," said Mr Goh.... And when the ISD recommended the detention of Vincent Cheng and the others, Mr Goh said he and the other leaders did not just take their word for it.<sup>82</sup>

Despite their extensive misgivings — which Goh's account suggests were never fully allayed — the entire "younger leadership" swung behind the detentions. *The Business Times* reported:

This was the first time, he [Goh] said, that the younger ministers had to make such a difficult decision and it was the first time that they had to use the ISD to deal with the security threat....

All the members of the younger leadership were involved and each gave his view on what should be done with the sixteen people [in the first round of detentions, in May]. "All of us were satisfied that the sixteen were indeed involved in some nefarious activity as reported by the ISD."<sup>83</sup>

From this flimsy premise, Goh went on to take personal responsibility for ordering the re-arrest of some of the detainees the following year.<sup>84</sup>

Goh's account depicts Cabinet members being dragged inch by inch into becoming complicit in taking the decision to act, but never coming up with any better reason for conviction other than that the accused were engaged in "some nefarious activity."<sup>85</sup> Furthermore Goh has since revealed that at least one mem-

---

81. S. Dhanabalan was guest speaker at a Foreign Correspondents Association of South-East Asia lunch. The only specific reference he made to the detainees was to say that they were "not on the verge of overthrowing this government or starting a revolution." *The Straits Times*, 2 June 1987. We know from subsequent developments that in fact he was very unhappy about the detentions. See Yap et al. 2009, 468.

82. *The Business Times*, 30 July 1987.

83. *Ibid.*

84. Yap et al. 2009, 440.

85. For a forensic analysis of Goh Chok Tong's speech and involvement as well as a detailed consideration of legal aspects of the arrests and the government's consequent legislative initiatives, see Rajah 2008.

ber of the Cabinet, S. Dhanabalan, never fully reconciled himself to the detentions, despite acquiescing in the Cabinet's majority decision.<sup>86</sup>

Third, evidence shows that Lee never believed that the detainees were part of a Marxist conspiracy to overthrow the state. Flatly contradicting the charges made earlier in the press, Lee said at the 3:00 p.m. meeting that he "did not believe Tan Wah Piow was in control," that "he was not interested in Vincent Cheng and his group," and separately that "he was not worried about Vincent Cheng and his group." Lee said that he regarded the detainees as nothing more than "do-gooders, who wanted to help the poor and dispossessed" and just another wave of "disaffected, discontented elements and misfits." Rather than explicitly saying that they were communists, he merely expressed his fear that "given sufficient time [they] would eventually become like the communists in the Philippines." Neither did he believe that the Catholic Church had been "captured by communists," but feared that one day "the communists could make use of the Catholic Church and other churches." Yet despite these statements he concluded the meeting by asking "the Church leaders whether they were satisfied that Vincent Cheng was involved in the communist conspiracy" based primarily on Cheng's "admission" of this charge, which had been elicited under torture.

So what were the detentions about? The documents of 2 and 5 June 1987 do not provide complete answers, but they are a good place to begin. Lee's stated reason for the detentions during these meetings was that he was concerned by the activities of the priests associated with the movement, leaving not much doubt that he was restraining himself by not detaining them along with the others. In the 3:00 p.m. meeting on 2 June Lee went on record thus:

PM said that he was not interested in Vincent Cheng and his group.... He was however more concerned about the involvement of several priests [those being] Fr. Edgar D'Souza, Fr. Patrick Goh, Fr. Joseph Ho and Fr. Arotcarena.

PM said that the problem was not going to be over even if the four priests were disgraced or defrocked.... PM said that he wanted the problem to be resolved in a way that would prevent a kind of "crack position" when every action of the Church would be suspect.<sup>87</sup>

At one point Lee threatened to start treating "all the Church priests and laymen as potential fellow-travellers." At another point he accused Fr. Edgar D'Souza of being "a skilful united front operator." He also emphasized that "the government had full rights under the ISA to arrest these four priests." Of the fourteen paragraphs in which Lee was shown to be dominating the discussion, five were focused on the detainees and six on the priests. Even more significantly, the meeting between the director of ISD and Monsignor Francis Lau on 5 June was devoted entirely to the question of the four priests — complete with an instruction from the ISD director that "the Church should stop the four priests from preaching or working as they have done."

---

86. See Goh's account in Yap et al. 2009, 468.

87. Capitals present in the original text. Internal Security Department notes of the meeting between the PM and Catholic Church leaders on 2 June 1987 at 3 p.m. at the Istana.

Bearing in mind that we know there was no conspiracy, communist or otherwise — though Lee's broader fears about the revolutionary power of what he called "Filipino tactics" might have been genuine — it is significant that the priests became such an obsession in Lee's mind. He saw *them* as the problem and was determined to intimidate the Church into stopping not just the activities of the four priests, but all similar activities.

Along with the focus on the priests, the resounding message from these documents is that Lee demanded the complete submission of the Catholic Church to his will. It was not enough for the Church to acquiesce to the detentions. Records of both afternoon meetings on 2 June show Lee personally pressuring and coaching Archbishop Yong for two clearly stated purposes: first, to ensure that the archbishop did not give the impression that he had been pressured by the government into supporting the government's actions, and second, to avoid giving the impression that Lee personally had been heavily involved in the archbishop's decision-making process.<sup>88</sup> The 5 June meeting had much the same purpose, even though neither Lee nor the archbishop was personally present. (On this occasion the government was concerned that the archbishop had been reported in the press giving the impression that ISD had pressured him into suspending the four priests — an impression that was correct.<sup>89</sup>) In the 3:00 p.m. meeting on 2 June the archbishop put up some resistance, but by the end of the 5:20 p.m. meeting he had succumbed almost fully to Lee's repeated

---

88. Consider this excerpt from the report of the 5.20 p.m. meeting of 2 June: "Archbishop Yong again said that he would issue a statement. PM replied that they should not wait and should get over with the matter now. Archbishop Yong said that he would like to make the statement with the knowledge of the PM. He had earlier told the press that he had no comments. Now he would tell the press that he had been given an assurance by the PM himself that he had nothing against the Church and that those arrested were involved in clandestine activities in the Church. PM said that what Archbishop Yong had just said was quite different as it conveyed the impression that the Archbishop was convinced after he met PM. The Archbishop was already convinced before that. Instead, Archbishop Yong was saying that PM further assured him and he came to this conclusion. PM said that he was a direct man and he did not like the statement. PM suggested that they should go over to the table and draft a statement that Archbishop Yong would make to the press. PM told Archbishop Yong that the latter should say that he had come to his conclusion without the PM's assurance." For the record it should be noted that in the earlier 3 p.m. meeting, Archbishop Yong explicitly stated that he was not convinced of the case against Vincent Cheng's fellow accused (paragraphs 11 and 14), and that the Church was merely "giving the Government the benefit of the doubt" while they waited for proofs of the charges (paragraph 12). Furthermore, Lee did give his personal assurance that "he" would show that the detentions were warranted (paragraph 14) and that the detainees were not arrested because of their membership of the church (paragraph 15). This was immediately followed by Lee's threat "to treat all the Church priests and laymen as potential fellow-travellers" (paragraph 16).

89. The opening two paragraphs of the report of the 5 June meeting between the director of ISD and Monsignor Francis Lau convey the core of the government's concern: "1. Edgar D'Souza, in his affidavit (FEER 7 Jan [1988]), quoted the Archbishop's report to the Vatican stating that the Vicar General Monsignor Lau and his ISD 'contactman' met him and told him that "no harm would come to the four priests if they were suspended from preaching and having any contact with the organizations they had resigned from. 2. ISD did not threaten to 'harm' the four priests. Monsignor Lau met with Director ISD between 6pm and 7.10pm on 5 Jun 87. An ISD officer, Eric Tan, who is a relative (not a 'contactman') of Monsignor Lau, arranged the meeting." Paragraph 3 contained a warning that "a confrontation [between the Church and the government] would have serious repercussions" and the Church hierarchy "should act decisively and unequivocally to clear the air." The final two paragraphs of the 5 June meeting complete

threats of a full, unrestrained crackdown on the Church. A generous interpretation of the archbishop's abandonment of the detainees is that his actions were motivated primarily by the need he felt to protect the Church from a broader attack by the government.<sup>90</sup>

If we now ask what made the priests and the Church so important that they needed to be dealt with in this fashion, the evidence is more circumstantial, but seems nevertheless to point clearly to an answer: they were displaying a capacity to operate across many levels of society with great independence and a strong sense of invulnerability. At the heart of this "problem" was the role of the priests in facilitating the activists' access to the Catholic parish system. An incident involving the distribution of leaflets and sale of T-shirts by Catholic university students in 1984 graphically illustrates this major point. Denied permission by National University of Singapore officials to sell or distribute materials produced in opposition to the Graduate Mothers Priority Scheme (part of Lee Kuan Yew's eugenics program), the students made use of the parish system to carry out their campaign.<sup>91</sup> In the light of both previous and subsequent developments, we can now see that this ability and willingness to organize across society was completely contrary to the direction the government wanted Singapore to take. Throughout the 1980s the government had made moves to compartmentalize "politics" so that there was no possibility of coalition building and cross-feeding of political issues. Hence groups concerned with the environment, women's issues and sectional communal issues began springing up from the early 1980s, but each one operated under the strict provision that it would not engage in politics, even on issues relevant to its own field of interest. Personnel who held offices across more than one field — for example in a race-based organization or in a trade union — had no capacity to use that synergy to raise issues that might straddle both interests. Hence Malay trade union leaders studiously avoided raising industrial issues related to racial discrimination, even if they were also leaders of a Malay community organization.<sup>92</sup>

In 1986, only a year before the detentions, the Law Society had used its role as the professional association for solicitors to criticize a government bill (the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act) because it threatened journalistic freedoms.<sup>93</sup> These activities drew public rebukes from Wong Kan Seng (then a junior

---

the picture: "4. Monsignor Lau said he understood the gravity and urgency of the matter and took leave at 7.10pm to convey the [*text unclear – probably 'message'*] to the Archbishop. Monsignor Lau's relative was present when Monsignor Lau briefed the Archbishop at 7.30 pm on 5 Jun 87. 5. The facts set out by Director ISD in paras 2–4 above were confirmed by Monsignor Lau when ISD met with Monsignor Lau on 13 Jan 88 in the presence of ISD officer William Tan." It should also be noted that despite this document being a report of a meeting that took place on 5 June 1987, the opening and final paragraphs make it clear that it was written on or after 13 January 1988.

90. Protecting the Church from government attack was the only concern of the Vatican representative who was present at the 5:20 p.m. meeting. He was instrumental in undermining the last vestiges of the archbishop's support for the detainees.

91. Reported in CSS ExCo. Report on the Catholic Students' Society 1983/1984. *Aquinas* '84/5, 56.

92. Barr 2003, 79–81.

93. Interview with Teo Soh Lung, 17 March 2003. For a broader picture of the politics of the NPPA, see Rodan 2005, 27–29.

minister, but later a deputy prime minister) and First Deputy Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, both of whom disputed the right of the Law Society to engage in any commentary on government legislation, with Goh accusing it of having “gone political.”<sup>94</sup> The government was publicly compartmentalizing political discourse whereby, in the words of Wong, “Public policy is the domain of the government. It is not the playground of those who have no responsibility to the people.”<sup>95</sup> Wong’s words proved to be the template for an emerging theme in Singapore politics, to be picked up in 1994 almost verbatim by then prime minister Goh Chok Tong.<sup>96</sup> This episode has particular significance for our study because one of the detainees of 1987, Teo Soh Lung, was a prominent office holder in the Law Society throughout 1986 and 1987 and she has reported in interview that after the first month in detention, her interrogators completely lost interest in her involvement with the Catholics (specifically her work on behalf of foreign maids) and focused exclusively on her role in the Law Society.<sup>97</sup>

Furthermore, a major strand of the concerns expressed in the meetings of June 2 and 5 was an echo of the charge against the Law Society of having “gone political.” The record of the 3:00 p.m. meeting on 2 June shows that the first set of the Ministry of Home Affairs warnings to the archbishop (in mid-1986 — around the same time as the dispute with the Law Society) made no mention of communist connections. The archbishop was adamant: “They merely told him that these activists were involving themselves in socio-political issues.” At this point in the proceedings he was still defending the right of the detainees to have “criticised government policies on humanitarian grounds or because they were motivated by the Bible,” and was still persevering in asking “whether such people had committed a wrong or a crime.” With the benefit of just another few minutes’ hindsight the archbishop must have realized that in the eyes of the government the answer was “yes,” and that the real offense of these Church workers was not any supposed involvement in a Marxist conspiracy, but the blurring of the line between politics and religion, just as the Law Society was blurring the lines between “politics” and professional responsibility during the same months.

The Catholic activists were no real threat to the state or the nation, but they did challenge the compartmentalization of politics. Apart from the basic initiative of commenting and campaigning on politics when they were not a registered and identified political organization (a trait they shared with the Law Society), they were able to exercise independent action across apparently separate fractions of society. This was the point that was highlighted so graphically by the students’ campaign against the Graduate Mothers Priority Scheme, which successfully circumvented every effort of the government to quash it because it could shift its focus from the university campus to the Catholic parish network. The priests were the crucial element in this maneuvering, acting as coordina-

---

94. “The right to question,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 June 1986.

95. “Singapore minister scolds law group,” *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 June 1986.

96. *The Straits Times*, 4 December 1994.

97. Interview with Teo Soh Lung, 17 March 2003.

tors, facilitators, and advisers, but the maneuvering was also intrinsic to the organizational structure — such as it was — of the movement. These Catholic organizations, as we have seen, had overlapping memberships, with segments of the movement actively participating in the campaigns of others, with little or no regard for institutional boundaries. If a student or a YCW member or someone active in the Geylang Catholic Centre — or someone who was not formally a member of any Catholic organization at all — volunteered to move outside “their” organization to, for instance, assist Filipino maids, conduct a survey of workers, or help convene a meeting, no one asked about membership or raised questions about divisions of labor. The presumption of this freedom to network was perhaps best illustrated in the campaign waged in 1984 against the government’s ultimately successful plan to impose a regime of 12-hour shifts in factories as part of its efficiency drive. The movement’s campaign was initiated and run by the YCW, but other sections of the movement contributed freely. The YCW surveyed over 200 workers about their patterns of work and rest, their socializing and family time, their health, and their opinions about the 12-hour shift.<sup>98</sup> Students actively assisted in the collection of this data even though they were not formally members of the YCW.<sup>99</sup> The surveys were then used in conjunction with other research to present a formal submission to the government, not only from the YCW but also from the Justice and Peace Commission and the Christian Family Social Movement.<sup>100</sup> The 12-hour shift issue and the resulting *YCW Report* were prominently covered in *The Catholic News* thanks to Fr. Edgar D’Souza, who was assistant editor. The coverage prompted Lim Boon Heng, a Catholic government MP, to engage the YCW authors in a debate in the Letters section of the newspaper.<sup>101</sup> The report and the subsequent debate in *The Catholic News* also caught the attention of the secular press, both English and Chinese.<sup>102</sup> The government’s program was never in serious danger of being derailed by this campaign, but it was much closer to losing control of the debate than it wanted to be.<sup>103</sup>

The capacity of activists to cross social and institutional boundaries (for instance, from church to campus to shop floor to the media) challenged the government’s monopolistic control over the public agenda. Furthermore, a common theme of Catholic activism ever since the 1960s has been its propensity to

---

98. The original results from these surveys are held by Sinapan Samydorai, national president of YCW, 1982–86.

99. Interview with Kevin de Souza, Singapore, 21 March 2003.

100. See *The YCW Report on 12-hour Shift*, presented to Prof. S. Jayakumar, then acting minister for labour, by the Young Christian Workers Movement, the Justice and Peace Commission, and the Christian Family Social Movement; and subsequent correspondence.

101. See *The Catholic News*, 25 December 1983, 19 August, 30 September, and 28 October 1984.

102. *Singapore Monitor*, 13 December 1983 and 31 October 1984; *The Straits Times*, 24 December 1983; *Lianhe Zaobao*, 12 November 1983. (Translation of the *Lianhe Zaobao* article kindly provided by Assoc. Prof. Huang Jianli, Department of History, National University of Singapore.)

103. It is significant that Sinapan Samydorai, the YCW president in this period and the coordinator of the 12-hour shift campaign, only escaped detention because the day before the second round of detentions Catholic authorities had warned him to leave the country. Interview with Sinapan Samydorai, 18 March 2003.



Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew, pictured here giving a speech at the thirtieth anniversary launch of the “Speak Mandarin Campaign,” 17 March 2009. “Lee Kuan Yew must have expected public skepticism about the accusations against the detainees to undermine the government’s credibility, but he was clearly prepared to bear this cost in order to establish a firm pattern of effective authoritarian rule that he could be confident would outlast his premiership. This he did by imposing a pattern of tough love both on society and, it must be said, on his successors in government.” (Credit: Singapore government)

transform a collection of individual complaints into a collective demand for action. This was the point that drew Lee Kuan Yew’s attention to Sr. Samantha and the work of the UIMs in the late 1960s and early 1970s. She and the other activists had the power to turn complaints and petitions into campaigns and demands.

Furthermore, Catholic priests and lay activists were now believed to be acting in willful defiance of the government. Whereas a few quiet words with church leaders had been sufficient to deal with the UIMs in the early 1970s, the government now believed that the archbishop was ignoring the explicit warnings it had given him. In fact, the archbishop had failed to grasp the content and the seriousness of the government’s warnings had not been passed on or adequately understood, but the Ministry of Home Affairs concluded that it was being defied. As we have seen, Archbishop Yong was adamant in the 3:00 p.m. meeting on 2 June 1987 that the earlier warnings were only about involvement in “sociopolitical issues,” which he did not see as a problem. Separately one of the priests informed me that the archbishop had warned them in the most oblique and gentle terms. The archbishop, he said, had told us:

[that] we were becoming too negative and the government is angry with us generally. But we did not take it as a very serious warning. It was not indicated that it was so serious that actually we have to stop. We thought that we were already slowing down; we were not expanding our work. He did



not actually take action against us or tell us “either you stop or I will stop supporting you.” He let us continue our work. I think he was unaware of the seriousness of it.

Other warnings were even more circumspect and unofficial, consisting of apparently random questioning by police after meetings and, in the case of Kevin de Souza, an unsolicited expression of concern by a friend who was training for the police force.<sup>104</sup> In retrospect it seems extraordinary that the seriousness of these warnings was not understood at the time — and clearly Lee did not believe that the threats had not been understood — but this does nevertheless seem to be the case.

Lee’s local concerns articulated with his documented fears of what he saw as dangerous developments in the Catholic Church at the international level. In the meetings of 2 June he referred repeatedly to the “problem” of the popularity of liberation theology among the clergy in the Philippines and Latin America. He knew perfectly well that the Catholic Church had been instrumental in bringing down the Marcos regime in the Philippines and that it was taking a leading role in the democracy movement in South Korea. Indeed some of the movement’s publications highlighted these developments with great enthusiasm.<sup>105</sup> Lee probably had only a vague, two-dimensional understanding of the issues involved, but he was not one to view such a pattern of events complacently.

The documents show that the combination of these international and domestic perspectives generated in Lee’s mind a scenario in which, at the very least, the movement posed a short-term threat to the ruling elite’s monopoly on political discourse and power just when he was planning his retirement. Lee responded by using these detentions to set tighter limits on public dissent through two new mechanisms: the imposition of legislative controls to remove the capacity for such blurring of the lines in the future and the encouragement of a culture of self-censorship and self-monitoring to avoid future clashes with the government. It is significant that these government responses found their first expression with the Catholic Church and then became a template for dealing with political dissent. Concerning the management of religion, we find that the legislative response came in the form of the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (1990) and in the associated White Paper and Select Committee Report on Religious Harmony, which made it an offense for religious bodies to engage in politics of any sort.<sup>106</sup> A similar pattern of management emerged regarding the Law Society, with new legislative measures that managed and circumscribed its activities and effectiveness.<sup>107</sup>

---

104. The priest being quoted above spoke of the reports he had received about the general interest of the police in those who attended meetings. Kevin de Souza reported in an interview that in his naïveté he did not realize that the warning he had received was anything more than an expression of concern from a friend. (Interview with Kevin de Souza, Singapore, 21 March 2003.)

105. “Does our church educate for justice?” *Aquinas* ’84/5, 47.

106. A detailed study of this corpus of legislative response regarding religion is beyond the space available in this article, but it has been analyzed in meticulous detail in Rajah 2008; the government’s political use of “harmony” to impose control and conformity is explored in Barr 2010.

107. The details concerning the Law Society are not central to this article, but may be found in outline in Worthington 2003, 50.

Turning to the second point, we consider the immediate outcomes of the church–state confrontation, which was the beginning of a new pattern whereby the Church supervized its own repression. Remarkably, it was the archbishop, not the government, who suppressed publication of the 14 June 1987 issue of *The Catholic News* — an issue that contained a defense of the detainees and a statement of support by the archbishop himself. It was the archbishop, not the government, who expunged the sociopolitical dimension from the Church’s work for the poor. It was the archbishop, not the government, who suspended the four priests from preaching and then dispatched them and the last of the vulnerable lay workers of the movement overseas before the second round of arrests in June.<sup>108</sup>

The pattern this experience with the Catholic Church had set had immediate and long- term effects on broader civic society as well. This was graphically apparent in the stunting of the development of the Association of Women for Action and Research (Aware) in the aftermath of the 1987 detentions. The impact of the government crackdown on this organization was immediate because several of the detainees were members of Aware. The automatic reaction of the Aware leadership was silence for fear of implication: public forums were canceled and the release of a research report on population matters was postponed.<sup>109</sup> Some members opposed these moves, but even those debates were kept strictly private. Years later, during the 1990s, the impact of these events was still being felt. Lenore Lyons gives the most thorough account of these events. In her interviews with members of Aware in the 1990s she discovered that the detentions of 1987 were ever-present in the minds and always at the edge of conversations about politics and “possible threats to the organisation.” Fears were sometimes fed by renewed hints from Cabinet ministers and private warnings from concerned friends in a similar manner to the lead up to the detentions of 1987.<sup>110</sup> Lyons described the final outcome very simply: “AWARE ended up policing its own behaviour without the need for state intervention.”<sup>111</sup>

## Conclusion

Lee Kuan Yew must have expected public skepticism about the accusations against the detainees to undermine the government’s credibility, but he was clearly prepared to bear this cost in order to establish a firm pattern of effective authoritarian rule that he could be confident would outlast his premiership. This he did by imposing a pattern of tough love both on society and, it must be said, on his successors in government. As a direct consequence of this episode,

---

108. *The Straits Times*, 6 June 1987, 8 July 1987. To be more precise, the suspension of the four priests from preaching was executed at the suggestion of the director of ISD. (See the notes of the meeting between the director and Monsignor Francis Lau, on 5 June 1987.) On the eve of the second round of arrests, the Church gave Sinapan Samydorai, the national president of YCW, a plane ticket to Hong Kong and a guarantee of employment there. (Interview with Sinapan Samydorai, 18 March 2003.) In the event, none of the second batch of detainees had any connection with the Catholic Church.

109. Lyons 2008, 255.

110. *Ibid.*, 255, 256.

111. *Ibid.*, 257.

the Catholic Church in Singapore lost both its independence and a vibrant element of its social conscience. The activists of the 1980s were part of a short history of Catholic activism in Singapore, but they were the product of a much longer and more substantial tradition of Catholic attempts to engage with the world. They were accused of believing in Marxism, but the heart of their inspiration was traditional Catholic social teaching, the YCW movement, and, more remotely, Saul Alinsky's community organizing techniques and the orthodox Catholic strands of liberation theology — the elements with which even the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith could not find fault. It was a telling sign for the future that even such an innocent cocktail as this was sufficient to elicit government violence and repression.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: The research for this paper was conducted with financial support from the Australian Research Council and the University of Queensland, and with kind assistance from the National University of Singapore Department of History and the Asia Research Institute. A much abbreviated and significantly different version of this article was published as Michael D. Barr, Singapore's Catholic Social Activists: Alleged Marxist Conspirators. In Michael D. Barr and Carl A. Trocki, eds. 2008. *Paths Not Taken: Political Pluralism in Post-War Singapore*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 228–47.

## References

- Alinsky, Saul D. 1969. *Reveille for radicals*. New York: Random House.
- . 1971. *Rules for radicals: A practical primer for realistic radicals*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Anderson, Gerald H., ed. 1976. *Asian voices in Christian theology*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
- Barr, Michael D. 2003. Perpetual revisionism in Singapore: The limits of change. *Pacific Review* 16 (1): 77–97.
- . 2008. Singapore's Catholic social activists: Alleged Marxist conspirators. In Barr and Trocki 2008, 228–47.
- . 2009. 2d ed. *Lee Kuan Yew: The beliefs behind the man*. Kuala Lumpur: New Asian Library.
- . 2010. Harmony, conformity or timidity? Singapore's over-achievement in the quest for harmony. In Julia Tao et al. 2010, 73–102.
- Barr, Michael D., and Carl A. Trocki, eds. 2008. *Paths not taken: Political pluralism in post-war Singapore*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press.
- Brown, Robert McAfee. 1990. *Gustavo Gutiérrez: An introduction to liberation theology*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.
- Cardijn, Joseph. 1949. *The hour of the working class*. Cardijn Community International. Available at [cp.cardijn.info/the-hour-of-the-working-class](http://cp.cardijn.info/the-hour-of-the-working-class) (accessed 29 June 2010).
- Cheng, Vincent. 2009. Persecuted for justice's sake. In Fong 2009, 9–16.
- Collins, Sylvia, and Michael P. Hornsby-Smith. 2002. The rise and fall of YCW in England. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 17 (1): 87–100.
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. 1984. *Instruction on certain aspects of the "Theology of Liberation."* Available online at [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_19840806\\_theology-liberation\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html) (accessed 5 March 2010).
- . 1985. Notification sent to Fr. Leonardo Boff regarding errors in his book, *Church: Charism and power* (March 11, 1985). In Hennelly 1992, 425–30.
- East Asia Christian Conference. 1967. Ed. Robert M. Fukada. *God's people in Asian industrial society: The report of the [1966] East Asia Christian Conference on Christians in industry and lay training*. Kyoto: East Asian Christian Conference.
- Finks, P. David. 1984. *The radical vision of Saul Alinsky*. Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press.
- Fisher, Robert, and Joseph M. Kling. 1990. Leading the people: Two approaches to the role of ideology in community organizing. In Kling and Posner 1990, 71–90.
- Fong Hoe Fang, ed. 2009. *That we may dream again*. Singapore: Ethos Books.
- Gutiérrez, Gustavo. 1974. Trans. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson. *A theology of liberation*. London: SCM Press.
- Hennelly, Alfred T., ed. 1992. *Liberation theology: A documentary history*. Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books.

- Kling, Joseph M., and Prudence S. Posner. 1990. Class and community in an era of urban transformation. In Joseph M. Kling and Prudence S. Posner, eds. *Dilemmas of activism: Class, community, and the politics of local mobilization*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. 23–45.
- Lee Kuan Yew. 1967. *Leadership in Asian countries*. Singapore: Ministry of Culture.
- . 2000. *From Third World to First: The Singapore story, 1965–2000. Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew*. Singapore: Singapore Press Holdings and Times Editions.
- Lyons, Lenore. 2008. Internalised boundaries: AWARE's place in Singapore's emerging civil society. In Barr and Trocki 2008, 248–63.
- Ministry of Home Affairs. 2002. *Why the ISA?* Singapore: Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Miranda, José Porfirio. 1974. Trans. John Eagleson. *Marx and the Bible: A critique of the philosophy of oppression*. London: SCM Press.
- Nicholson, Penelope (Pip), and Sarah Biddulph, eds. 2008. *Examining practice, interrogating theory: Comparative legal studies in Asia*. Leiden and Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers-Brill.
- Rajah, Jothie. 2008. Policing religion: Discursive excursions into Singapore's Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act. In Nicholson and Biddulph 2008, 267–305.
- Rodan, Garry. 2005. *Transparency and authoritarian rule in Southeast Asia: Singapore and Malaysia*. London and New York, Routledge.
- Schaller, Lyle E. 1966. *Community Organization: Conflict and reconciliation*. Nashville; New York: Abingdon Press.
- Seow, Francis T. 1994. *To catch a tartar: A dissident in Lee Kuan Yew's Prison*. New Haven: Yale Centre for International Area Studies.
- Swatos, William H. Jr. *Encyclopaedia of religion and society*. Hartford Institute for Religion Research, Hartford Seminary. Available online at <http://hrr.hartsem.edu.ency/PreferentialOP.htm> (accessed 1 December 2004).
- Tang Lay Lee. 2009. Citizen of the world. In Fong 2009, 17–32.
- Tao, Julia, et al., eds. 2010. *Governance for harmony in Asia and beyond*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Warren, Ronald L. 1977. *Social change and human purpose: Toward understanding and action*. Chicago: Rand McNally.
- World Council of Churches. 1968a. *New Delhi to Uppsala: 1961–1968*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- . 1968b. Ed. by Norman Goodall. *The Uppsala Report 1968: Official report of the fourth assembly of the World Council of Churches, Uppsala July 4–20, 1968*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Worthington, Ross. 2003. *Governance in Singapore*. London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Yap, Sonny, Richard Lim, and Leong Wong Kam. 2009. *Men in white: The untold story of Singapore's ruling political party*. Singapore: Singapore Press Holdings.

□