

World Council of Churches under fire

by Our Special Correspondent

On Dec. 30, 1987, the Singapore government shut down the regional headquarters of the World Council of Churches, which operates in Asia under the name Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). In a press release motivating its decision, Singapore's Home Ministry reported that, although the Christian Conference had promised in 1974, when it moved its headquarters from Bangkok to Singapore, not to engage in political activity, the "CCA has been using Singapore as a base to support 'liberation movements' in other Asian countries, helping to fund pro-communist movements, solidarity conferences, and exchanges for political activists and dissidents." The CCA was also caught red-handed attempting a "Christian-Marxist" overthrow of the Singapore government.

Word is that the CCA is now petitioning Thailand to serve as home base for its Asian operations. If the CCA is "denied a visa" in the region, it will be a major step in drying up the foreign-owned-and-operated networks that are targeting Asian governments, from Seoul to New Delhi.

As the Asia arm of the WCC, the Christian Conference has over 100 Protestant and Orthodox churches participating. With key input from the Soviet bloc's Orthodox churches, the World Council of Churches uses its "ecumenical" banner to operate as a Soviet front group, a fact noted even by the U.S. State Department. In its 1987 report, "Soviet Influenced Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda," the State Department said:

"During the 1960s and 1970s, the WCC's focus shifted away from traditional ecumenical dialogue toward policy stands on contemporary social and political issues, some of which paralleled Soviet stands. Soviet church officials have been increasingly active in encouraging WCC support for policy lines that the U.S.S.R. also supports, and for using its fora for presenting official Soviet views. . . ."

"The WCC sometimes sponsors organizations or activities that have some form of affiliation with Soviet front organizations. On occasion, the WCC works with the CPC [the Moscow-based Christian Peace Conference] and/or its affiliates to encourage foreign governments to remove U.S. military bases. . . . WCC headquarters' support for radical leftist and/or violent movements in the Third World has already caused considerable controversy within member churches."

The tone of the CCA was set in its Fourth Assembly meeting in Bangkok in 1968, in which the conference called for "mass struggles of peoples," and denounced nation-build-

ing as an "ideology for rulers in Asia." Later, the CCA declared that "nationalism, with its emphasis on national security, unity, and stability tends to become an obstacle for those seeking preservation of democratic rights and mass action for change."

Singapore draws the line

The Singapore government's attention was drawn to the CCA in May 1987, when 16 people were arrested on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the government. According to Singapore and Philippines sources, the nexus exposed by the arrests was an extension of the "theology of liberation" networks under Jaime Cardinal Sin of the Philippines, which spawned the insurgent New People's Army. Further investigation in Singapore led to the Christian Conference. While all but the top two leaders of the conspiracy have since been released, Singapore has taken civil action to clear out the CCA nest.

In its release, the Singapore Home Ministry reports that the CCA began its operations against the government in 1969 with the creation of the Jurong Industrial Mission (JIM), which attempted to organize labor unrest in the Jurong factories, until it was shut down in 1972. The JIM involved the same cast of characters named as conspirators 12 years later, including Vincent Cheng.

"The CCA also provided Vincent Cheng with financial support, both when he was studying at the Trinity Theological College in the mid-1970s and later when he was working as a 'workers' organizer' in 1983-84," stated the Singapore release. "In this capacity, he ran 'organizers' training' sessions and 'social analysis' workshops attended by several of the Marxist conspirators arrested recently.

"The CCA took care to conceal its direct association with Cheng. In 1976, the CCA arranged with the Japanese branch of the CCA-Urban Rural Mission to channel funds directly to Cheng, so that the CCA secretariat in Singapore did not have to get involved. Similarly, the funds which Cheng received while working as a 'Workers Organizer' came from the CCA-URM in Hong Kong.

"CCA members have mounted a campaign against the recent arrests of the Marxist conspirators. CCA's subsidiary bodies in Hong Kong—the Committee of Asian Women, the Documentation of Action Groups in Asia, the Asia Committee for People's Organization and the Asian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)—as well as some of its member Councils of Churches, have sent protest letters to the government. . . ."

However, the Singapore release emphatically stated: "The government will not allow any foreign or regional organization based in Singapore to meddle in the internal affairs of Singapore or to use Singapore as a base for political activities involving other countries. . . . The CCA is being used for purposes prejudicial to Singapore's interests, and has therefore been expelled."