

TRUE CRIME CLASSICS

# THE TENTH MAN THE GOLD BAR MURDERS

a  
true  
story

ALEX JOSEY

Author of Lee Kuan Yew: The Crucial Years

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THE TENTH MAN

Marshall Cavendish  
Editions

mc

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Ten men were involved in the robbery and gruesome murder of a gold merchant and his two employees. Stolen from them were 120 bars of pure gold. Nine of the men were subsequently found guilty. Seven were hung. Two narrowly escaped the gallows because of their youth.

The tenth man, however, escaped death.

A fast-paced account that captures the sinister excitement and drama of the plotting, and merciless and savage execution of the victims, by a twisted bunch of felons. Just who betrayed whom?


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## **INTRODUCTION**

THERE ARE THREE MAIN ELEMENTS  
IN THIS NON-FICTIONAL STORY:  
GOLD, MURDER AND SMUGGLING.

Murder is as old as history. Man discovered gold a long time ago but valued it little at the beginning. Today, men scheme, cheat, rob and kill to possess it, especially when the dull yellow, malleable metal is in the form of bars or coins.

How much gold remains to be discovered in the earth (and the oceans) is not known and cannot even be properly estimated, though calculations have been made about reserves in existing gold-fields. One thing is for sure: and that is that gold (like oil) cannot forever be squeezed or sucked out of the old rocks or picked out of the rivers: there must be a limit. For gold-lovers, however, there is the comforting thought that gold (unlike oil) is almost indestructible. Whereas most oil is burnt soon after discovery, gold for thousands of years has been treasured, hoarded and constantly used. Most of the thousands of tonnes of gold ever found still exist. Gold cannot be burnt. If lost or mislaid it is inevitably discovered again by someone or other, sooner or later. Slight particles of gold might be 'worn away', but the Egyptians have preserved gold ornaments, even gold chairs, for thousands of years. In Singapore, for a long time, the Consul for Saudi Arabia

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used a dinner set, plates, spoons, goblets, made entirely of gold.

Gold continues to turn up in the most unlikely places. In June 1980, gold was officially stated to have been found in Kelantan, in Malaysia. Across the other side of the world, in Brazil, about the same time, Deoclides Alberto de Limia, a prospector who'd been searching for gold for 40 years dug up a nugget weighing almost seven kilogrammes in the Sierra Pelada gold-field in Para State. Twenty thousand gold-diggers promptly converged on the gold-field which was hopefully renamed Sierra Forada (Golden Sierra). Mr Deoclides Alberto de Limia sold his nugget for 42 million cruzeiros (then SGD\$186,000).

Twice gold was believed to have been discovered in this part of the world, once in Malaya and again in Singapore. The first time was in 1853 when a group of Europeans dug deep at the foot of Mount Ophir. Several of the diggers died from malaria. No trace of gold was found. Twelve years later there was a rumour that gold had been found when a hill in Tanjong Pagar was blasted during construction work. The report proved to be false.

Smuggling, the third element in this wide-ranging story, is as old as the tax which the smugglers scheme to evade, as old as the law which forbids the export or import of the goods they smuggle across the frontiers. Throughout history the evasion of taxes and the flaunting of customs rules have irritated governments and profited smugglers. In 1736, the British made smuggling a felony, a crime which could be punished by a long prison sentence, or

death. Smuggling was a dangerous game to play, though history has clothed it with romantic references to old caves in which brave smugglers stored their booty.

Nowadays in most countries, including Singapore, smuggling means the forfeiture of the seized goods, a heavy fine, and perhaps a jail sentence. Much depends upon the goods smuggled. There is no need for anyone to smuggle gold into or out of Singapore. The law has been changed since the date of the murder described in this book. But if you are caught smuggling a certain amount of heroin into Singapore (and many other countries) the mandatory sentence is death. Several male and female smugglers have been found with heroin in their possession, and have been hanged.

Being a world famous port, a centre of communications, Singapore has known many types of smugglers. Fifty years or so ago, when the export of rubber was restricted, planters and dealers were tempted to smuggle out more than the quota permitted. They did not consider themselves criminals, although they were breaking the law. Tin smugglers who illegally export ore from Malaysia and Indonesia to Singapore for re-export, likewise look upon themselves more as speculators than law-breakers, whereas they are, of course, engaged in the worldwide illegal business of smuggling.

Old-time smuggling is often associated in people's minds with bootlegging, the term applied to the smuggling of illicit liquor. Bootlegging is an old name which goes back to the days when a smuggler concealed a bottle or

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two of brandy or wine in his large sea-boots. The term bootlegging was revived in the 20th century when alcohol was smuggled into the United States of America during the period of prohibition. In the end there was nothing romantic about it: bootlegging became a degenerate, large-scale industry and racket which afforded equal opportunity for the smuggling of poisonous concoctions peddled under false labels, and drugs and narcotics.

Involved in this story of gold, smuggling and murder is a man who smuggled gold bars out of Singapore, and his beautiful daughter who later smuggled drugs to London. The man was murdered in Singapore by a gang of greedy men. The girl was sent to jail for 14 years by a British judge who described her as being 'little less than an assassin'.

Like the tenth man who betrayed the other nine members of the gang which killed the gold smuggler and now has to live the rest of his days with a troubled conscience, the murdered man's daughter also faces a future darkened by the thoughts she must have from time to time, of the lives she helped to ruin with drugs.

## THE TENTH MAN

Vietnam was in turmoil. A bitter, costly war was raging between communist guerrillas, and American and allied forces. In South Vietnam, Saigon, the capital city, had become the most active black market in the world. Millions of American dollars were in circulation. People began to think that gold was safer than American dollar bills. By 1970, many Vietnamese were convinced that the Americans could not beat the guerrillas from Hanoi; they feared that in these circumstances neither the currency of South Vietnam nor the American dollar would be worth very much. The far-seeing in Saigon and elsewhere started to accumulate gold. Few of the thousand Vietnamese later to receive worldwide publicity as 'boat people' fleeing from oppressive communist rule after the North Vietnamese had taken over the whole of the country, could have believed that their very lives would depend upon their gold savings. All they were intent upon then, in the early 70s, was to turn their assets into gold. American dollars accumulated on the black market and in soldiers' brothels, must be turned into gold bars as quickly as possible. How? Saigon gold merchants were besieged. The sale of gold bars in

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Vietnam was forbidden. The demand for gold was intense. Shady enterprising businessmen knew that the answer was to smuggle gold in from places like Singapore where the metal was sold freely to non-residents. Ships' captains and aircraft pilots were tempted by generous commissions to become smugglers. Millions of American dollars changed hands. South Vietnam's privately held stockpile of gold bars grew higher each month. Many of the boat people would never have left Vietnam had they not been able to buy their freedom with these gold bars.

This is the story of the murder of a Singapore gold merchant and his two employees: they sold gold to the Vietnamese. They were robbed in Singapore of 120 gold bars intended for Saigon. The plotters knew they had to silence them forever, to prevent them seeking vengeance. Ten men were involved in the robbery and were responsible for the cold-blooded murder of three innocent men. Nine of them were found guilty and seven were hanged, two escaping the gallows because of their extreme youth. To save his own neck, the tenth man told all. He was a close friend of the chief plotter. He betrayed him, not for gold, but for his own life. The police detained him under a law introduced to keep suspected secret society gangsters in jail indefinitely without trial. In due course, the tenth man will be released (he might already be free). He will then have to live with his troubled conscience, for not only did he betray his friend, he also took an active part in murdering three men.

## THE GOLD BARS— TRIPLE MURDER CASE

The house in the Singapore suburb known as Serangoon Gardens, where the Chou brothers lived, was quiet and in darkness. The Christmas decorations, the paperchains and the sprigs of holly had been taken down, for it was now near midnight on 29 December 1971. Only the Christmas tree in the corner, fairy lights twinkling, remained. At the special request of the children, this symbol of the festival that called for goodwill towards all men, remained. "Just for a few more days, grandma," they had pleaded. They were asleep now. So was their grandmother and their young aunt. Their mother lived in another house. They lived with their father, David Chou, and his brother, Andrew. David and his wife were divorced.

In the kitchen and in the backyard, ten men went quietly about their business. They talked in whispers. They were preparing to murder three men. The backyard led from the kitchen. It had a concrete floor and a roof but was open on three sides. Most of the gang did not know the three men they were to kill. They had been told they were to be beaten and killed and their bodies thrown

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into a deep well. The gangsters were to be paid \$20,000 for the job. What most of the gang did not know was that the three men would be bringing 120 gold bars to the house. The gold bars then were worth about \$500,000. By the time the murderers were hanged, three years later, the value of the gold bars had increased to over a million and a half dollars.

Five minutes after the three businessmen handed over the gold bars, they were dead. Doctors gave evidence that they probably lived two minutes after intense pressure was applied to their windpipes. Andrew Chou had stipulated that the men were to be strangled. The job, he said, had to be clean and quiet.

David later told the court: “I went straight to my bedroom to check if my children were asleep. I opened the door and found them asleep. I shut the door. I opened the door of my mother’s bedroom. She was asleep. So was my sister.” He came back to the backyard and saw the gang carrying two bodies to a car. Still fearful that his mother would wake up, David helped to carry the third body. He was anxious for the gang to get out of the house as quickly as possible. He helped to take the gold bars to another car. Later, he helped Andrew and Augustine Ang wash the backyard to get rid of the bloodstains. Then he went to bed. He told the court: “Soon after 6:30 AM the next morning, I went to the backyard to feed my fishes and to hang up the bird cages.” Everything seemed normal. The children were still asleep. The lights on the Christmas tree twinkled ...

In another part of Singapore, a distraught wife was searching for her missing husband. He had not come home. She knew he had gone to deliver gold to the Chous. At 2:30 AM, they had told her over the telephone that he never reached them. Where was he? What had happened to him? Not until hours later was she to know that her husband and two others had been murdered, their beaten bodies thrown into the fringe of the jungle off Bedok.

This case was to be known as ‘The Gold Bars: Triple Murder’. Few murder plots seem to have been so badly organised. The idea of the robbery and murder was conceived by Andrew Chou. He worked for Air Vietnam and helped the crews smuggle gold to Saigon. His job was to receive the gold from dealers in Singapore, hand it over to the flight crew, and to receive from them American dollars in exchange. Chou then passed the money over to the Singapore gold dealers. He handled hundreds of thousands of dollars and a great deal of gold. For this work he was paid a commission both by the flight crew and by the gold dealers. On one occasion, a large sum of money from Saigon was missing. The travel bag, stuffed with American dollars, was picked up by another airport worker, and Chou had some difficulty in getting it back. In fact, he never succeeded in getting all of it back. In consequence, some of the Singapore gold dealers lost faith in him. They stopped sending out gold through Chou. This angered him. He decided to seize the next lot intended for Saigon, and to murder the men bringing it to his house. He asked a friend, Augustine



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Ang, a gangster, to arrange for a mob killing. The job should be quiet and clean, insisted Chou. He promised \$20,000 for the job.

In their defence, the Chou brothers and the gangsters swore they never intended to murder the three men. They said the plan was to rob them of the gold, then kidnap them and hold them until the gold was sold. Andrew Chou said Augustine thought up this idea. Augustine had argued that the gold dealer would never report the robbery to the police because he would then have to confess that he was engaged in gold smuggling. When Andrew protested that the dealer would come looking for him, Augustine said that it would perhaps be better if they did not sell all the gold after the robbery. Some could be held back so that Andrew could negotiate with the dealer. Andrew argued that the dealer, being a businessman, would negotiate for the best he could get out of a bad situation. What happened if, instead, the gold dealer sent gangsters to beat him up? Augustine assured Andrew that his own gangster connections would be waiting for them. He was confident the gold dealer would negotiate, would try to buy back his missing gold.

Andrew told the court that, in the end, he agreed with Augustine's plan. There was to be no violence. He said he left Augustine to arrange for some gangsters to be at his house to rob the dealer and to tie up and kidnap the three men. As proof of his insistence that there should be no violence, Andrew told the judges that, on the night of the robbery, when the gangsters arrived, he went into the

kitchen and removed a tray containing knives from the table and put it on the top of a cabinet. He wanted to make sure that none of the gangsters, or Augustine, could have access to them. He searched them to satisfy himself none of them carried knives or weapons. He stressed that the three men with the gold were not to be seriously hurt. They were to be attacked when Augustine started to count the gold bars, but they were not to be killed, just tied up and bundled into a car.

One of the glaring weaknesses of this story, which the judges refused to believe, was that at no time did the Chou brothers, or anyone else, explain just where the three men were to be held, or for how long, or how, and by whom, the negotiations were to be conducted.

Another weakness of the plot, even if it was, as Chou and the gangsters claimed, a kidnap and not a murder plot, was the serious possibility that someone in the house that night, their mother, their sister, or David's two young daughters, might have awakened and witnessed the terrifying scene of a gang beating up three men. David, in fact, told the court he was most worried about this. He said that even while the gold dealer was on his way to the house with the gold bars, David tried to persuade his brother and Augustine to call the whole thing off. Augustine and Andrew were getting things ready, pieces of nylon rope and pieces of cloth with which to tie up and gag the three victims.

"Andrew took the pieces of cloth and rope and put them under the food cover on the dining table. I asked

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Andrew not to be involved. What if Mother should wake up? She would faint from shock if she saw the men being robbed in our home! Augustine and Andrew seemed adamant to carry out the robbery. I was confused, unhappy and upset. Andrew told me all I had to do was to help Augustine catch one man. I did not have to be involved in the robbery.” With a grim sense of humour, Augustine told David not to worry. After all, he did not have to go down the street to help him catch the man. The man was coming to the house! Andrew argued with his brother that the quicker the three men were out of the house the less the risk of their mother getting up. David should help Augustine catch one man so that the three victims could be taken away from the house as quickly as possible. “I agreed. I had no choice,” said David.

In an effort to emphasise that he was involved in what he believed to be a kidnapping, not a murder plot, David told the court that the man he helped carry to the car tried to free himself and groaned.

The danger of the family waking up during the attack upon the three men was one possibility for the failure of the plot (whether murder or kidnapping). Another was the fact that the three men with the gold arrived in two cars, one a white Mercedes, the other a Volkswagen. They were parked outside Chou’s house in Chepstow Close. The car which brought the gangsters, a Cortina, was also nearby. Though Chepstow Close was a very quiet area, it was unlikely that this concentration of cars would go unnoticed. It did not. Chou’s next door neighbours,

Shirley Lim Yew Neo and her husband, returned from the cinema at 12:30 AM. The bodies of the three murdered men were lying in Chou’s backyard. David called ‘Good evening’ to her as she was opening her door. She saw Andrew talking to a group of men. She was not to know then that they were grouped around the bodies of three murdered men. She noticed the white Mercedes and the Volkswagen.

The trial of the Chou brothers and seven others took 40 days. The evidence came to 17 volumes running into 4,083 foolscap pages. On Friday, 1 December 1972, Mr A.W. Ghows, the Solicitor-General, made his final submission. He submitted to the two judges, who sat without a jury, that all nine should be found guilty as charged. The tenth man was Augustine Ang Cheng Siong, Andrew Chou’s close friend. He confessed to the police that he had been an accomplice from the outset and had taken part in the murderous attack on the three men. To save his own life, he had turned State evidence. The police thereupon decided to withdraw the murder charges against him, and Ang was discharged. The discharge did not amount to an acquittal, it being the law that a magistrate’s court has no power to grant an acquittal in such circumstances. Ang was promptly arrested under another law which permits the Government to hold suspected gangsters without trial indefinitely.

The two judges, Justice Chua and Justice Choor Singh did not take long to make up their minds. On Friday, at the close of counsel’s submissions, they announced that they

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would give their verdict the following Monday morning. They accepted Augustine Ang's evidence. They said he was a truthful witness. Accordingly, the judges convicted all nine accused. Seven were sentenced to death. Two youths escaped the death penalty because they were under 18 years old when the murders were committed. They were ordered to be detained at the President's pleasure.

In their Grounds of Decision, published later, the judges said: "After considering all the evidence we did not believe the story of each of the nine accused. We also considered the case against each accused separately in the light of his defence. Their defence did not create a reasonable doubt in our minds as to the strength of the case for the Prosecution nor as to the guilt of each of the accused. We were convinced that Augustine Ang was speaking the truth. His story runs true when considered in the light of the rest of the evidence and the surrounding circumstances. Andrew Chou was, without doubt, the prime mover of the conspiracy because without him there would have been no gold to rob. Augustine Ang was merely Andrew's errand boy and was all the time acting under his orders. David Chou was in charge of operations, while Peter Lim Swee Guan was the person who recruited the 'boys'."

Together with Augustine Ang, Andrew Chou, his brother and Peter Lim were the principal conspirators to kill the gold dealer and his two assistants for their gold. The judges said they had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that the common object of all nine accused was to kill the three men.

The only witness whose evidence implicated all the accused was Augustine Ang, Andrew Chou's long-time friend. He was a self-confessed murderer and was undoubtedly an accomplice. "We looked to see if there was corroborative evidence which confirmed in some material particular not only the evidence of Augustine Ang that the crime or crimes were in fact committed, but also his evidence that each of the accused committed the three offences charged. There was clearly no corroboration of Augustine Ang's evidence," said the judges. "We therefore warned ourselves of the danger of acting on the uncorroborated evidence of Augustine Ang. Augustine Ang was in the witness box for nine days, out of which seven were spent in his cross-examination. The cross-examination was not only long but also severe and very thorough as he was repeatedly questioned by five different counsels on all the essential facts of the Prosecution's case. His answers were consistent throughout. Furthermore, we observed his demeanour very closely while he was giving evidence in the witness box. It did not appear from his manner and conduct that he was inclined either to shuffle, to prevaricate, or to speak that which was false. He appeared to us to have all the marks of sincere contrition and we were well satisfied that, however iniquitous or obnoxious his former conduct had been, he was determined to speak the truth to the court. We also studied his evidence in the light of the other evidence adduced by the Prosecution and he struck us as a truthful witness notwithstanding the role

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he played in the whole affair. We had no hesitation in acting upon his evidence.”

Augustine Ang was visibly moved when the judges pronounced the death sentences on the two Chou brothers and the other five accused. All seven appealed. At the appeal, in November 1973, a British Queen’s Counsel, Mr Basil T. Wigoder, on behalf of the Chou brothers, submitted that the observation of the trial judges that Ang was a truthful witness was ‘wholly unwarranted and unsupported by the evidence’.

Mr Wigoder argued that Augustine Ang was not only a self-confessed murderer but was also a self-confessed liar with the strongest possible motive of implicating all the other accused in order to exculpate himself.

Mr Wigoder’s first ground of appeal was that the judges erred in law and in fact in refusing the application of Defence Counsel for separate trials and had thereby unfairly prejudiced the trial of the two brothers.

Referring to the judges’ Grounds of Decision, Mr Wigoder said that the judges had erred in law and in fact in finding that Augustine Ang was a truthful witness and that his uncorroborated evidence could be accepted. Although the judges found Ang to be a self-confessed murderer and an accomplice they had described him in terms of a ‘glowing testimonial for an applicant for high office’. Queen’s Counsel continued: “The judges had to come to that conclusion, that Ang was speaking the truth, if they were to uphold their finding of guilty against Andrew and David because once an element of doubt was allowed to

creep in, one would be left with no corroboration. Their observations are wholly unwarranted and unsupported by the evidence at the trial. I submit that when one looks at the way Ang’s evidence went, the trial judges must have been wrong by taking the view that they did.”

Mr Wigoder went on to point out that Ang at the time was under detention and did not know whether these charges would be preferred against him again. In other words, he was in a position of excruciating difficulty, so much so that in English law, such a position would not be allowed to arise at all.

Mr Wigoder also submitted that the finding that Ang was merely the errand boy taking instructions from Andrew was untenable. He said it was Ang who took the decision to exceed the bounds of the plot and turn it into a killing. He submitted that in order to make out a case on the charges, the Prosecution had to prove that murder was in fact the common object; that the common object was by members of an unlawful assembly and each accused was a member of such an assembly at the time of the murder. The trial court did not take any heed, counsel said, of the possibility that the accused had other defences in mind and did not know that murder was likely to be committed. It was clear from the evidence that three men had been attacked at the brothers’ home and that having been attacked, they either died there or shortly afterwards. “It was also not disputed that at the time of the attack all nine accused were either in or around the house, and that there was a tenth man,

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Augustine Ang, who was called by the Prosecution as their principal witness. The real issue was to which, if any, of the ten men should the charges be brought home by the Prosecution. It is clear that the motive of the attack was one of robbery.” This, he said, had arisen from the fact that the gold dealer was engaged in illicit dealings of gold bars. Added Mr Wigoder: “It would be tempting to regard all the explanations as untrue because of nine varying explanations, but the court must rather take each explanation on its individual merit.”

Mr Wigoder conceded that Andrew’s defence, that he did not conspire to kill but had only conspired to rob the dealer of the gold, stipulating that no violence should be used, if accepted, clearly involved him in other offences of some gravity. But it was equally clear that Andrew’s account was a defence against the three charges, and that he was not at any time a member of an unlawful assembly whose common object was to kill. The same could be said of David whose defence was that he turned down Andrew’s invitation to assist in the robbery but had been persuaded to help overpower a man that night.

Reviewing the ten-day testimony of Ang at the trial, counsel submitted that it was quite clear from Ang’s evidence that Andrew and David were parties to premeditated murder and robbery, ‘and this cannot be disputed’. The question then was whether it was safe to accept Ang’s evidence or regard him as a reliable witness. “One must recognise that Ang’s position in the witness box was obviously very difficult. He was giving evidence in

November 1972 about events that took place in December 1971. He was also subjected to the cross-examination of various counsel for five days. The court might well consider that Ang must be a superhuman person if some error did not emerge in those circumstances. But it is not merely such errors that we are referring to. What in fact transpired was one instance after another in which he changed his story in circumstances which are impossible to attribute to a mistake. Ang was deliberately lying. There were cumulative occasions when he contradicted himself as well as other evidence. This is consistent with our submission that he was relying heavily on his imagination in his endeavour to spread the blame on as many people as possible.”

Mr Wigoder submitted that the trial judges erred in finding that there was no evidence that Ang had tried to exculpate himself at the expense of the others. He asked: “In view of all these facts, is it reasonable to come to the conclusion that this man was a witness of truth, a reliable witness?” The case against the Chou brothers, counsel added, turned on the wholly uncorroborated evidence of Ang who was an accomplice. Mr Wigoder cited authorities on the dangers of convicting accused on such unconfirmed evidence and argued that the Court of Criminal Appeal should regard such convictions with caution.

Mr Wigoder addressed Chief Justice Wee, sitting with Justice Winslow and Justice Kulasekaram, for three days. In his concluding remarks, he argued that the undisputed facts in the case were consistent with a variety of common

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objects other than murder. He added that the trial judges had erred in finding that David was in charge of operations of a plot he knew hardly anything about. The trial judges, whose findings fell squarely on the evidence of the Prosecution's key witness, Augustine Ang, also did not consider the question of whether there were common objects other than murder. There was also, counsel contended, no supporting evidence for that part of Ang's testimony which incriminated the Chou brothers, so that once Ang was shown to be untruthful and unreliable one would only be left with the undisputed facts in the case. Even the implements that were chosen to carry out the attack on the victims—that is, rope and cloth—were far more consistent with robbery and abduction than with murder.

Mr Wigoder continued: "When the bodies were found, there was a piece of cloth wound around the neck of one victim and a piece of nylon cord on top of another victim's body. These are curious facts which perhaps indicate that something happened of which we know very little about ... something that happened after some of the accused left Chepstow Close with the victims." The undisputed facts were consistent with a variety of common objects, such as robbery and abduction of the victims, a mere disposal of the bodies or even assault with the knowledge of robbery, believing it to be business revenge. "All these common objects are possible and it is difficult to distinguish between them. It is not sufficient for the Prosecution to say that since it is clear that there was an

unlawful assembly and there was murder, therefore the common object was murder. It is essential to prove that each member of the unlawful assembly had intended to kill. The court had powers to convict the accused of any offence which was disclosed by the evidence even if that offence was different from the one for which the accused was charged. In this case it would be difficult to contend that on Andrew's own evidence a case for robbery and abduction could not be made out against him and that a case for robbery and assault could not be proved against David."

Three Singapore counsel followed Mr Wigoder, representing the rest of the accused. They were Mr G. Gopalan, who made no reference to Augustine Ang's testimony; Mr Leo Fernando, who described Ang as a 'diabolical bar with the Sword of Damocles hanging over his head'; and Mr J.B. Jeyaretnam, who said that his main ground of appeal was that Ang's evidence was insufficient in law and in fact to find his clients guilty. There must be a doubt for the evidence was 'too unsatisfactory, nebulous, and vague'.

Answering all the points submitted by Defence Counsel, the Solicitor-General, Mr Ghows, submitted that the trial judges were right in law in allowing a joint trial of all the accused: there was no reason for the Court of Appeal to interfere with their decision. As for the evidence of Augustine Ang, the Prosecution had to rely on the evidence of self-confessed cheats and self-confessed murderers because 'obviously, simple, God-fearing people don't get themselves

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involved in things like these'. Mr Ghows said that most of the discrepancies in Ang's evidence were due to his poor knowledge of English. At the preliminary inquiry, his evidence was quite slipshod and careless. His explanation was that his mind was disturbed then. "He had made so many contradictions and discrepancies, but an honest mistake is poles apart from dishonesty which was alleged by Defence Counsel. The trial judges have discovered him to be a truthful witness." As for Mr Wigoder's point about other common objects, the Solicitor-General sought to demolish that with the argument that although all the accused may have had other objects, 'the point is that it is clear as daylight that murder was an object common to them all'.

After an eight-day hearing, the Court of Criminal Appeal reserved judgement. Four months later, the Chief Justice and his two colleagues announced their decision to dismiss all the appeals. The Appeal Court rejected the submissions of counsel that the trial judges were wrong in their finding that all nine accused had the common object to kill the victims. The Appeal Court also upheld the trial judges' finding that Augustine Ang, although an accomplice, was a truthful witness, and that there was sufficient evidence to warrant the conviction of all the accused.

"We do not think that the verdicts of the trial judges were wrong nor do we think them in all the circumstances unsafe, or unsatisfactory or unjust ... We are of the opinion that the trial judges were correct in refusing the application for separate trials."

The seven condemned men petitioned for special leave to appeal to the Privy Council against the decisions of the Singapore Court of Criminal Appeal. Once again, the two Chou brothers were represented by the same British QC, now elevated to the English peerage. Lord Wigoder was opposed by Mr Christopher French, QC, representing the Singapore Public Prosecutor. On 4 December 1974, the Privy Council's Judicial Committee turned down the petitions. Only one hope for the seven condemned men then remained. This was a plea for mercy to the President. On 22 February 1975, it was reported that President Sheares had rejected the clemency petitions. Six days later, at 6:00 AM, all seven were hanged.

The last wishes of the Chou brothers, to donate their eyes and kidneys to hospitals, were not met. One report said that the medical facilities at the hospital jail were inadequate. Another report said none of the surgeons at the Outram Hospital Renal Unit was keen to perform the operation. "For the transplants to be carried out the surgeons have to be on stand-by during the entire execution and this, said the surgeons, would be a very unsavoury and unpleasant task and they do not have the stomach to do it."

The seven guilty men were hanged in Changi Prison on 28 February 1975, together with another man, a Malay labourer, sentenced to death for the murder of a one-armed man two years earlier. In the death cells, each of the murderers finally lost his identity and, like the labourer, became just another person to be hanged. Six of the

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condemned men walked to the gallows three at a time. The two others followed. More than 200 relatives waited outside the heavily guarded jail to claim the bodies.

By coincidence, shortly after the seven men were hanged (their bodies were still in Changi Prison), a Singapore Airlines Boeing 747 flew into Singapore's International Airport carrying \$233 million in gold bullion. The 1,700 gold bars had been bought by the Singapore Government from the United States Federal Reserve Bank. They were taken under armed guard to the Treasury vaults in Empress Place. Four months later, more gold bars, worth \$130 million, arrived. Just how much the Government of Singapore invested in gold is a State secret.

## THE LUST FOR GOLD

What is the allure of gold? What is the magic of its attraction? Why do men fight and slave and murder for gold? What makes men lust for gold? What is this substance that has wrought more havoc and destruction in the world than mankind itself? Gold is malleable, beautiful, treacherous and yet more enduring than life itself. You can beat it, squeeze it, heat it, boil it ... you can hardly get rid of the stuff ... it is gorgeous, desirable, all-powerful ...

The explorer, Christopher Columbus, said of gold: "Gold is the most exquisite of all things ... Whoever possesses gold can acquire all that he desires in this world. Truly, for gold he can gain entrance for his soul into paradise."

Man has been recovering gold from the earth for at least 7,000 years, yet for most of that period, gold was a useless metal in terms of its contribution to material progress. From bronze and iron, the early civilizations wrought tools and weapons which shaped the world, but gold was too heavy, too soft to be of much practical use. The early civilizations treasured gold as a symbol of the life-giving sun. The pre-Columbian Indians called it 'the sweat of the



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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Alex Josey (1910–1986) was a British journalist, political writer and commentator, and biographer, best known for his biographies on Singapore's former Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew. He wrote over twenty political novels and many political articles on Singapore and Malaysia for various Singapore and international newspapers and journals. He was the first foreign correspondent to be kicked out of Singapore (then part of Malaysia) by the Malaysian government in July 1965, but returned to Singapore after its independence from Malaysia and became Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's Press Secretary for ten years. He died in 1986 in Singapore, aged 76.