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**DALLEY**  
**AND THE MALAYAN**  
**SECURITY SERVICE,**  
**1945–48**



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**DALLEY**  
**AND THE MALAYAN**  
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**1945-48**

**MI5 VS. MSS**

**LEON COMBER**

**ISEAS** YUSOF ISHAK  
INSTITUTE

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*Email:* [publish@iseas.edu.sg](mailto:publish@iseas.edu.sg)

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# PREFACE

This book is the result of a conversation I had with the late Mr S.R. Nathan, the distinguished former President of Singapore, whom I had first known in Johor Baru where he was working for the Public Works Department (PWD) before he moved to Singapore and eventually became President of Singapore. I was then in the Johor Special Branch. Much later, when he moved to Singapore and became President, and I was no longer a Special Branch officer but had become a Visiting Senior Fellow at ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore, we renewed our acquaintance and we used to meet sometimes, at his invitation, in his office at the Singapore Istana to discuss intelligence matters in which, having been at one time Director of the Security and Intelligence Division of the Singapore Ministry of Defence before he became President, he maintained a keen interest.

He knew that I had written a book on the Malayan Special Branch,<sup>1</sup> and he asked why I did not write a similar study about the Malayan Security Service (MSS), which was the domestic intelligence agency established by the British covering both Singapore and Malaya from its headquarters in Singapore when they returned to Singapore after the Japanese surrender in August 1945. When I said I was interested, he arranged for me to be allowed to use the digitized records of the MSS that were held by Singapore's ISD (Internal Security Department) in the ISD

Heritage Centre, Onraet Road. It was then I started my research on this book, *Dalley and the Malayan Security Service, 1945–48: MIS vs. MSS*, although as I explained to Mr Nathan, I would perhaps sometimes have to rely on some of the background material I had used in my earlier paper “The Malayan Security Service (1945–1948)”<sup>2</sup> and book *Malaya’s Secret Police 1945–60: The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency*,<sup>3</sup> although I would incorporate in my present writing, wherever necessary, further information and insights which had come to light since then.

In writing this study, full use has therefore been made of the fortnightly reports of the MSS’s *Political and Security Journal (PIJ)* and its *Supplements*, complete runs of which have been digitized and held in the ISD, which I did not have access to when I wrote about the MSS so many years ago.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps it may be of interest at this stage to record the earliest post-WWII mention of the MSS, which appeared in Serial No. 1/1946 of the MSS’s *Political Intelligence Journal*, dated 30 April 1946, which relates to MSS’s position as a combined Singapore/Malayan political/security intelligence organization, with its headquarters in Singapore:

#### *Note on MSS Organisation*

At present temporarily on a pan-Malayan basis, pending a final decision by the two Malayan governments, the MSS is responsible for civil security intelligence throughout the country. Proposed that HQ should be in Singapore, with a sub-headquarters office in Kuala Lumpur and branches in Singapore, Selangor (to include Negri Sembilan, Perak South, and Pahang), Penang (to include Province Wellesley, Kedah, Perlis and Perak North), Johor (including Malacca) and Kelantan (to include Terengganu).



Owing to shortage of officers the organisation is at present operating on skeleton framework, with officers in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Johor Baru, Penang and Alor Star.

[The] Journal is [a] successor of [the] *Political Intelligence Journal* previously published by Special Branch, Singapore, C.I.B. (Political) Kuala Lumpur, and the office of the Civil Security Officer Malaya.

However, in addition to the important *PIJ* files of the MSS available at the ISD Heritage Centre, it has been necessary, too, in order to obtain a broader picture of the intelligence canvas, to carry out additional research relating to intelligence matters held for the relevant period in (a) the National Archives of Singapore (NAS); (b) Arkib Negara Kuala Lumpur; (c) the Australian National Archives (ANA), Canberra; and (d) archival documents ordered by the ISEAS – Yusof Ishak Institute Library from the Public Records Office, Kew, that I had not seen before, for which the author is grateful, such as DVD FCO 15 141/14360, “Singapore: Pan Malayan Security Service Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE)” (1946 Jan 01–1946 Dec 31); DVD FCO 15 141/16880, “Singapore: Internal Security in Malaya” (1946 Jan 01–1947 Dec 31); and DVD FCO 15 KV 4/423 “Organisation and Functions of Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE)” (1948 Oct 07–1949 May 14).

There is a little information, too, but only on the fringes of the topic I am dealing with, in some of the following reports for the period:

- (a) Malayan Weekly Situation Telegrams
- (b) Malayan Weekly Police Summaries
- (c) Monthly Chinese Affairs Reports
- (d) FARELF (Far East Land Forces) Reports

- (e) Malayan Monthly Chinese/Malay/Tamil Press Summaries
- (f) Malayan Monthly Political Reports from Federation of Malaya
- (g) Monthly Political Reports from Singapore.

In more recent times, further interest has been shown in the MSS since the author's earlier contributions by Roger Arditti and Philip H.J. Davies in their "Rethinking the Rise and Fall of the Malayan Security Service, 1946–48" (2014),<sup>5</sup> Arditti's PhD thesis "Our Achilles Heel — Interagency Intelligence during the Malayan Emergency" (2015),<sup>6</sup> and Alexander Nicholas Shaw's "MI5 and the Cold War in South-East Asia: Examining the Performance of Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), 1946–1963" (2017),<sup>7</sup> which are useful and add to our knowledge of the MSS.

Perhaps it may be pertinent, however, at this stage to say a few words about the above studies before passing on to the present concern of this book, which focuses on Dalley and the MSS.

While Arditti and Davies's excellent paper does mention Lai Teck, the Secretary General of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP),<sup>8</sup> they do not bring out that he had actually been a Singapore Special Branch (SB) "double agent" supplying information to the Singapore SB since pre-war days — in fact, in his time he had been a "triple agent" employed consecutively by the French, British, and Japanese secret services. He was, too, one of MSS's primary sources of human intelligence during Dalley's time. There is no doubt, however, that his absconding with the MCP's funds in March 1947 must have resulted in the loss of an important source of inside information about the MCP and its operations.

Referring further to "Rethinking the Rise and Fall of the Malayan Security Service, 1946–48", and "Dalley's return to Malaya at the end of 1946", actually, Dalley returned to Singapore on 5 February 1947, and there is a photograph of him in the

*Straits Times* of 6 February 1947 taken immediately after he had disembarked from the ship that had carried him from the UK to Singapore, where he gathered around him some of his supporters to address them.

Referring to footnote 82 in Arditti and Davies's paper concerning the title used for MSS officers, perhaps it should be brought out that the authority for the use of the term "Local Security Officers" (LSO) to indicate MSS officers is to be found in the official Colonial Office *Malayan Establishment List*.

The MSS posted an LSO to each of the Malay States except for Kelantan, Terengganu, Melaka and Pahang, where it was prevented from doing so by a shortage of staff. However, in these four states, arrangements were made for the relevant state Criminal Investigation Department (CID) to cover intelligence matters for the MSS. Although it may not have been completely satisfactory, it was better than nothing.

Perhaps Roger Christopher Arditti could have mentioned in his PhD, too, that the Malayan Special Branch was often used with the uniformed branch of the police in an infantry role to fight the MCP's jungle army for the first year or so of the First Malayan Emergency (1948–60), when there were insufficient army units on the ground in Malaya to counter the uprising. Clearly this must have had a serious effect on the provision of intelligence until at least army reinforcements arrived from the UK and various parts of the British Empire, such as Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand and Fiji, which enabled the Special Branch to revert to its normal function of providing operational intelligence.

## Notes

1. Leon Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police 1945–1960: The Role of the Special Branch in the Malayan Emergency* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies/Monash University Press, 2008).

2. Leon Comber, "The Malayan Security Service (1945–1948)", *Intelligence and National Security* 18, no. 3 (Autumn 2003): 128–53.
3. Comber, *Malaya's Secret Police*.
4. Some copies of the *PIJ* are held in CO 537/3751 and CO 537/3753 but they do not appear to be complete runs and not all the Supplements are attached.
5. Roger Arditti and Philip H.J. Davies, "Rethinking the Rise and Fall of the Malayan Security Service, 1946–48", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 43, no. 2 (2014): 292–316.
6. Roger Christopher Arditti, "Our Achilles Heel — Interagency Intelligence during the Malayan Emergency" (PhD dissertation, Brunel Centre for Intelligence and Security Studies, September 2015).
7. Alexander Nicholas Shaw, "MI5 and the Cold War in South-East Asia: Examining the Performance of Security Intelligence Far East (SIFE), 1946–1963", *Intelligence and National Security* 32, no. 6 (2017): 797–816.
8. Arditti and Davies, "Rethinking the Rise and Fall", pp. 302–3.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

API	Angkatan Pemuda Indonesia (Enlighted Youth League)
ASP	Assistant Superintendent of Police
BAM	British Association of Malaya
BMA	British Military Administration
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CDL	China Democratic League
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CO	Colonial Office
DSO	Defence Security Officer
GLU	General Labour Union
GOC	General Officer Commanding
IGP	Inspector General of Police
ISD	Internal Security Department
KMM	Kesatuan Melayu Muda (Malay Youth Union)
LSO	Local Security Officer
MCA	Malayan Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MCS	Malayan Civil Service
MIC	Malayan Indian Congress
MNP	Malay Nationalist Party
MPAJA	Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army
MSS	Malayan Security Service
NDYL	New Democratic Youth League

OCPD	Officer-in-Charge, Police District
PAP	People's Action Party
PARI	Partai Republican Indonesia
PETA	Ikatan Pemudah Tanah Ayer (Youth Defence Corps.)
<i>PIJ</i>	<i>Political Intelligence Journal</i>
RAF	Royal Air Force
SB	Special Branch
SEAC	South East Asia Command
SFTU	Singapore Federation of Trade Unions
SHLU	Singapore Harbour Labour Union
SID	Security and Intelligence Division
SIFE	Security Intelligence Far East
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
WFDY	World Federation of Democratic Youth Convention
WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions