

# DOCUMENTARY 'I LOVE MALAYA' PREMIERES

By Asia Witness Production

25 Nov 2006

Asian Civilisations Museum

Five Singaporean filmmakers delve into the history of their country's independence and discover a group of forgotten soldiers, a people who had once given their lives for the land they called Malaya.

I Love Malaya, documents five young Singaporeans' exploration of their country's communist past, spurred by the court case of the former leader of the Malayan Communist Party, Chin Peng, and the silence surrounding this period of history.

Their journey began more than a year ago in April 2005 when Chin Peng's court case first surfaced in Penang, Malaysia. Intrigued by the man and his legacy, they sought to meet with the former guerilla leader. They contacted his publisher, tracked down his family in Singapore and Sitiawan, and subsequently visited his former comrades in the villages of southern Thailand.

In putting together the documentary, they realised that their focus was not a search for Chin Peng or an attempt to chronicle the history of the Malayan Communist Party. Instead, it was to tell the stories of people left behind in the wash of history because of the choices they made. These people might be our uncles, aunties, fathers or grandmothers who had given their lives for a cause they had believed in.

I Love Malaya is the first film funded under the ISEAS Film Programme. This new programme hopes to promote appreciation of Southeast Asia filmic material as well as to explore synergy between film-making and scholastic research on the region.



Programme:

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7pm Opening remarks by:  
Mr K. Kesavapany, Director, ISEAS  
Mr Andrew Glassop, Head of Educational Services, ACM

7.10pm Screening of Film

8pm Q & A with Filmmakers

Contact:

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Documentary Dossier:

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English Title: I Love Malaya  
Chinese Title: 我爱马来亚  
Film: Digital format  
Length: 45 mins  
Language: English, Mandarin, Malay with English subtitles.  
Location: Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand  
Production: Completed Nov 2006  
Production Company: Asia Witness Production  
Website: www.ilovemalaya.com

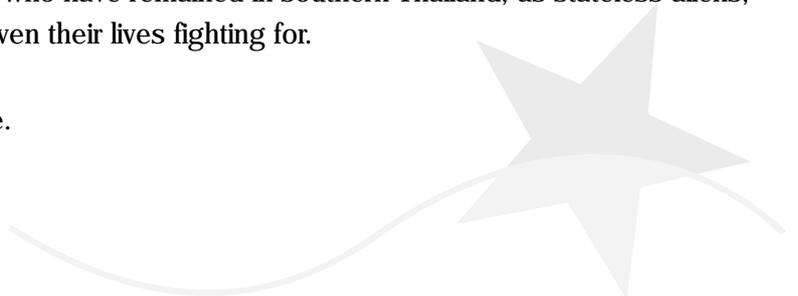
Synopsis:

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In 2005, an 81-year-old man sued the Malaysian government for denying him entry into the country of his birth. Chin Peng was the leader of the Malaysian Communist Party, which waged the longest and most difficult war lasting more than 30 years, first to overthrow the British colonial government and then against the Malaysian state.

When peace was finally secured in 1989, more than 200 guerillas returned to Malaysia. But Chin Peng was not one of them. In fact there are many like him who have remained in southern Thailand, as stateless aliens, unable to step foot into the country they had given their lives fighting for.

I Love Malaya is the story of their journey home.



## Filmmakers' Bios

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### Ho Choon Hiong

Choon Hiong is an independent filmmaker. His documentary "Innocent" won the Special Jury Prize and Special Achievement Award at the Singapore International Film Festival (SIFF) 2004. His works have been showcased at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London and Yamagata Film Festival 2005.

### Wang Eng Eng

Eng Eng is a producer with a local TV station. She has worked on projects with Discovery and ESPN and was formerly a news reporter with a Taiwan TV station, Da Ai TV, covering social and current affairs.

### Chan Kah Mei

Formerly a broadcast journalist at Mediacorp Radio, Kah Mei covered local and regional politics of Southeast Asia. She was awarded the Dato Tan Cheng Lock scholarship by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in 2003.

### Eunice Lau

As a journalist with seven years of experience, Eunice has witnessed the political evolution of post financial crisis Asia – from the independence of East Timor to the change in political leadership in Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. She is currently working on a documentary on the Khmer Rouge.

### Christopher Len

Christopher Len is based in Sweden and does energy security research on Central and East Asia. He is also Assistant Editor of the China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly. In 2000, he co-founded a community project in Kosovo for the local ethnic Roma minority focusing on post-conflict ethnic reconciliation between the Roma and the Albanian communities.

## About AWP

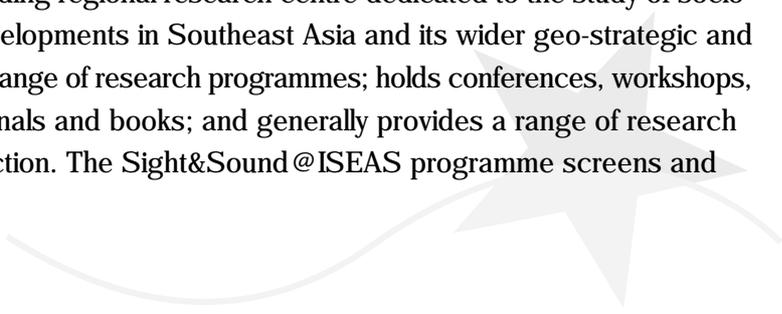
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Asia Witness is an independent production house based in Singapore. Drawing from our strength in investigative works, we aim to provide stories that create impact, contention and focus on Asia without deviation from the truth.

## About ISEAS

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The Institute of Southeast Asian Studies is a leading regional research centre dedicated to the study of socio-political, security and economic trends and developments in Southeast Asia and its wider geo-strategic and economic environment. The institute conducts a range of research programmes; holds conferences, workshops, lectures and seminars; publishes research journals and books; and generally provides a range of research support facilities, including a large library collection. The Sight&Sound@ISEAS programme screens and funds films relating to Southeast Asia.



## I Love Malaya FAQ

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### 1. Who were the Malayan Communist Party (MCP)?

The Malayan Communist Party, also known as the Communist Party of Malaya, was established in 1930. Their aim was to overthrow the British colonial government and to establish an independent People's Republic of Malaya. Although the MCP was pre-dominantly Chinese, there was a Malay regiment, several Indian communists and even an Orang Asli unit.

### 2. What happened during the Malayan Emergency?

The British colonial government declared a state of emergency in Malaya on 16 June 1948, after three English planters were killed in a series of communist attacks. More accurately, it was a guerrilla war launched by the MCP in a bid to free Malaya from colonial rule. The British took twelve years to quell the emergency at a cost of about £700 million.

### 3. Who is Chin Peng?

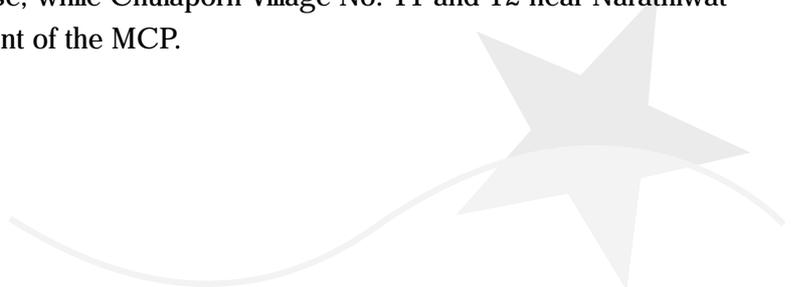
Chin Peng was then the Secretary General of the MCP (right until the peace accords in 1989) and became the most wanted man in the British Empire during that period. Ironically, not long before the Emergency, he was awarded the OBE - Order of the British Empire, a highest honour awarded by the British monarchy, for his alliance with the British in fighting the Japanese during World War II. Chin Peng was born in Sitiawan, Perak and is married with two children.

### 4. When did the war end?

Although the Emergency ended in 1960, a protracted, low intensity war carried on between the MCP and the Malaysian government. An attempt was made at peace in 1955 when the soon-to-be leaders of Malaysia and Singapore - Tunku Abdul Rahman, David Marshall and Tan Cheng Lock - met with MCP leaders - Chin Peng, Chen Tien and Rashid Maidin - in Baling, Kedah. Unfortunately the talks collapsed. The MCP retreated to the border jungles between Malaysia and southern Thailand. The war only ended officially in 1989 when a tripartite peace agreement was signed between the MCP, the Malaysian government and the Thai authorities.

### 5. Where are the communists now?

When the peace accords were signed in 1989, MCP numbered close to 1,200 members comprising Malaysians, Singaporeans and Thais. Following that, more than 300 former comrades returned home to Malaysia as agreed under the terms of the agreement. But some 150 members originally from Malaysia or Singapore remained in Southern Thailand. Some did so by choice, others like Chin Peng were barred for various reasons. They settled into villages funded by the Thai government under the patronage of Thai Princess Chulaporn. There are four 'peace' villages in all, housing the former MCP members and their families. Chulaporn Village No. 9 in Banlang and No.10 in Betong are predominantly Chinese, while Chulaporn Village No. 11 and 12 near Narathiwat province, are home to the former Malay regiment of the MCP.



Further Reading:

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Singapore, 2004

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Alias Chin Peng: My Side of History  
Media Masters  
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Strategic Information Research Development  
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Ratanachaya, Kitti  
The Communist Party of Malaya, Malaysia and Thailand  
Duangkaew Publishing House  
Bangkok, 1996

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