



Bringing home the trophies won at the 2nd Asian Film Festival, held this year at Singapore, are MFU directors Osman Haji Shamsuddin and Mohamed Zain Hussein . . . Thomas Hodge, MFU Chief . . . and Noni Wright, scriptwriter . . .

IF the advanced democracies of Canada, Australia and New Zealand feel the need to tell their people about their countries by film, this necessity should be readily understood in a country like Malaya, which is a plural society—of several races, of separate communities, of many beliefs old and new. Set up in 1946, the Malayan Film Unit is charged with a large order.

It exercises certain revenue-earning capacities by renting out equipment, technicians and services to visiting film production teams. It accepts commissions to make sequences for films being produced abroad. It supplies, on a sales basis, stock shot material from its library, and sells prints of its own productions. Its laboratory also undertakes outside printing jobs for Singapore film companies. It earns money where and when it can. But only so long as this does not interfere with its primary aim and purpose, as an arm of the Government's Information Services, to help Malaysians of all races to understand the problems and ways of life of other Malaysians. Its function is, further, to combat illiteracy; to promote public education and information among all groups of the community; and to assist them in mastering the techniques of self-government in their development toward this eventual end.

For the accomplishment of its purpose the Malayan Film Unit makes four or five subjects a month, almost always in four languages: English, Malay, Tamil, Mandarin Chinese. These productions are welcome in the theaters of Malaya. (In 1954 there were 6190 showings.) These films are also taken to every village and kampong of the Federation by 92 mobile units—five of which are river conveyances. Over the past two years the output of the Film Unit has been such that it is now possible for the mobile units to program entirely with MFU productions—among them, *WORRY FREE* (Employees' Provident Fund); *SURE CURE* (scabies); *EGGS GALORE* (kampong poultry); *RUBBER FROM*

Presenting— THE MALAYAN FILM UNIT

In the past three years it has been completely refurbished with the most modern cameras, developing machines, editing apparatus, printers . . . is now technically one of the best equipped film studios in South-East Asia . . .

MALAYA: ROAD SAFETY; FOOD FOR STRENGTH (proper feeling of school children); *ROHANI STEPS OUT* (Women's Institutes); *WHY REGISTER* (preparation for Federation elections); *32 GOOD ONES* (dental hygiene); *WE SERVE TO DEFEND* (self help against the terrorists); *KNOW YOUR MALAYA* series; *HOW TO USE THE AUTOMATIC TELEPHONE*; and many others. Groups and organizations with their own projectors can borrow prints from the Federal Film Library. The annual Malayan nontheatrical audience is estimated at 10 millions.

Much of the free world too has learned more about Malaya from such MFU films as *TOMORROW IS THEIRS*, about Malaya's children, which is being shown theatrically and nontheatrically in 28 different countries. *CHIK'S GREAT ADVENTURE*, about scouting in Malaya, is in 21 countries. Some of the countries which have taken these or other MFU films are: Australia (16); Brunei (61 in English, 17 in Malay, 1 in Mandarin, 2 in Hakka); Burma (60); Canada (7); Ceylon (26); Egypt (5, plus printing materials for copies in Arabic); Germany (7, with materials for copies in German); Gold Coast (15); Iceland (4); Indo-China (42, and material for copies in Vietnamese); Indonesia (61, in English and Malay, for theater use); Israel (3); Japan (10); New Zealand (31 copies of 13 films); Sarawak (67); Singapore (89 in English, 78 in Malay, 76 in Mandarin, 67 in Tamil); South Africa (25 copies of 7 films); Southern Rhodesia (10 copies of 6 films); Tasmania (24); Thailand (51 English, 5 Mandarin, 2 Malay, 1 Hakka); Yugoslavia (3); U.S.A. (220 copies of 14 films).

Of five films entered for showing in the Edinburgh Film Festival of 1954—*BEFORE THE WIND*, *THE LETTER*, *BUILDING BONNY BABIES*, *BUFFALOES FOR PLOWING* and *LETTER FROM HOME*—the first and last were honored by being selected for showing. At the first South-East Asian Film Festival, at Tokyo in 1954, the judges unanimously gave the Malayan Film Unit two of the three Golden Harvest trophies awarded for the Best Photography and Best Planning. At this year's South-East

Asia event, *HASSAN'S HOMECOMING* was judged first film of the year in the "non-dramatic" section, and *YOUTH IN ACTION* (made at the 1954 World Assembly of Youth in Singapore) was awarded a special prize for merit as a newsfilm.

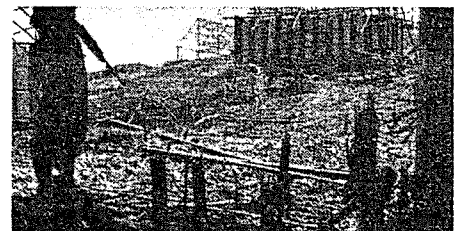
MFU material in the form of commercial and television newsreel has been spectacularly successful also, not only in Great Britain where this might be expected, but in the United States.

The staff of the Malayan Film Unit consists of 135 members, 70 of whom are Malay, 30 Chinese, 22 Indian, 9 Eurasian, and 4 European. Of its five directors two are Malay, one Chinese, one Indian. The facility of MFU's members in handling the various phases of film-making has been acquired within the Unit, for the most part. A highly successful training device was the plan followed in 1953, of bringing specially selected, top rank film technicians from other countries to work as "guests" at the Film Unit. Since it is not feasible to send the men abroad; since, also, many technicians at once can benefit from working alongside a "guest" at the Unit's own headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, consideration is being given now to reinstating the scheme. Particularly in the light of plans already underway for re-housing Malayan film activities early in 1956 in thoroughly modern premises, means for further and advanced training are obviously basic.

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Of the 135 men and women workers at MFU, only six had film experience before joining the Unit . . .



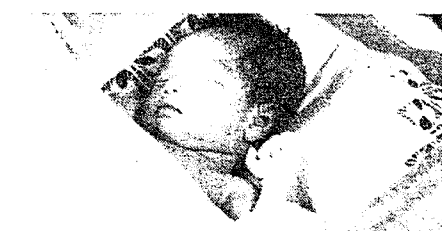
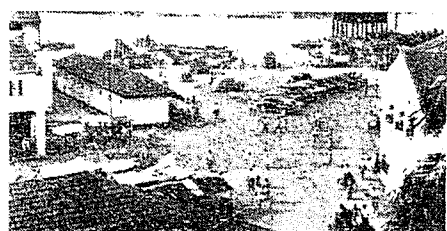


Films From

Reviewed

Malaya

by ROHAMA LEE



LETTER FROM HOME

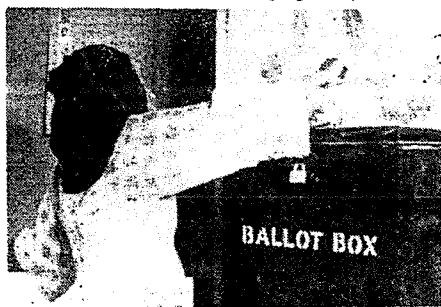
THOUGH he likes his job in town, it's good to get a letter from home," says the young man of this film. We meet him as he comes off traffic duty in Malaya's busy capital, Kuala Lumpur. The letter he finds awaiting him in the station house is from his mother and, as he reads it to his fellow Traffic Police Constables, we see the kampong from which he comes, and the way his people live there.

It is his mother who writes. Her voice picks up the narration over scenes from the kampong, until the film's return in finale to the city and the young constable as he folds the letter with the proud remark: "A pretty good kampong, don't you think?" It is indeed, and a pretty good program that is being followed in Malaya too, if this is a fair representation.

"Everyone in the kampong is showing a new spirit of helping all together in the planting, and to clear the canals and ditches," the mother writes. "We are learning new ways of getting water onto our fields . . . Another new thing is the training center where whole families can go for six months to learn new ways together, of growing food, raising poultry, and using machinery . . . There is a cooperative rice mill now too. It works fast and the charge is low. Some are still using the old methods"—(an engrossing sequence indicates what these are)—"but the mill is so busy that we need another," the letter continues. "and I hope you can save some of your wages and buy a share in the new one to be built."

These and other activities enumerated, though the film does not state so, are integral to a Six-Year Development Plan being carried out with some financial assistance from Britain but under a Malay chairman, to enable the country to look after itself economically and socially. The political aim is self-government within the British Commonwealth along with Canada, Australia, India and the other members. A good start toward this end has been made

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JUNGLE FORT

SINCE mid-1948 when they failed in their attempt to take over the Malayan government, the Communists have been conducting a sortie warfare from the jungle. Their program has been to raid in small groups, with the idea of creating economic chaos. The situation was saved by the speed with which defense measures were improvised by the British, officially charged with protection of Malaya, and by the alacrity with which the Malaysans enlisted in their own defense. But the problems attendant on complete resolution of the situation cannot even be realized without an understanding, as given by this film, of the extent and impenetrability of the jungle that covers four-fifths of Malaya's total area of 50,850 square miles.

The purpose of the jungle fort is not simply the establishment of military outposts in the heart of country the terrorists would like to think is theirs. It is, also, to prevent the jungle attackers from con-

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PROUDLY PRESENTING YONG PENG

ON the main highway from Malaya's capital to Singapore, this kampong not long ago was a terror spot. Now its name is "Everlasting Peace," and its story is an example of the security achieved by re-settlement into protected communities of jungle "squatters," as a tactic in the struggle to drive and keep terrorist Communism out of Malaya.

During the world slump in the 'Thirties, immigrant Chinese labor on the rubber estates and in the tin mines of Malaya turned to the land for livelihood; and many Chinese families fled from the towns during the Japanese occupation of World War II. The result was more than 500,000 "squatters" living as peasant farmers on the fertile land of the jungle fringes.

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All the films on this page are in b&w; all were produced in Malaya by the Malayan Film Unit and are available for sale or rent in the U.S.A. through British Information Services, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, N.Y.C. 20.

BEFORE THE WIND

ABU BAKAR, the fisherman, listens to the rising wind, sees it lash the waves, and goes home. No fishing today. And no food in the hut for his family. How can one go on like this? . . . His wife asks, why don't you look for another job? But Abu asks, what can I do, I know no other trade? At this moment there is nothing to do but the usual, which is to borrow money for rice from the fish dealer. As usual too, he strikes a hard bargain.

The weather changes two days later. Abu Baker and his fishermen who own a share of the net with him, set off before dawn so they may arrive at the fishing grounds by noon. But their catch is small, the wind rises again, and they are forced to return with little. Then Abu hears about a lecture to be held in the village and, having nothing better to do, he goes to find out what it is about.

A Government man talks about the Rural Industrial and Development Authority (RIDA), and its interest in helping fishermen to stand on their own feet and be free of debts. Abu investigates. RIDA introduces him to the boat "with a propeller that will defeat the wind," and driven by power that can take the fisherman to new fishing grounds. RIDA helps Abu, with a loan, to build a motor boat, and there is a wonderful feeling of participation in the sequence that records its building. When the "Sengin" (a good fish) is consecrated and launched, there is music, dancing and festivity. There is joyful excitement in the first trip, when it tows many small boats quickly and easily to a good catch, then homeward with more than enough fish for everyone, including the fish dealer.

Perhaps there is not quite such sudden

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STARVE THEM OUT

IN a drive to prevent the terrorists, hiding in the Malay jungle, from obtaining food from civilians intimidated into supplying it, a stringent system of checks was introduced. This film is designed to explain their necessity to the people of Malaya, and to enlist cooperation in a concerted effort literally to starve the marauders into surrendering themselves to the local authorities.

The message of this film may be a matter of history by the time this review appears, if the Malayan Government's recent amnesty plan is accepted, whereby the Communists still in the jungle are assured of opportunity to become useful citizens if they lay down their arms and choose to be law-abiding. But whatever the political situation, STARVE THEM OUT will continue to merit attention. It shows, in terms of a personalized experience, how terror works; and it is universally human, at the same time as it is dramatic. A wife in any language can identify with the feelings and thoughts of Achu's wife as she stands in the doorway of their home watching her husband push his bicycle toward the inspecting officer at the village barrier. He must be searched before he can proceed to his work of tapping rubber trees in the jungle, and he is carrying forbidden rice in the sash 'round his waist which, if discovered, will mean his being in serious trouble with the authorities. But she herself wound the rice into the sash for fear the bandits in the jungle will carry out their threat to do him harm if he brings no food for them . . .

Achu is lucky. He gets through the barrier, and he manages to persuade one hungry Communist to give himself up. In

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ABODE OF PEACE

IN the British-protected Sultanate of Brunei on the northern coast of Borneo, royalty money from the Seria oil fields, largest in the Commonwealth, is making possible great progress toward modern housing, industry, and social services. Malaria and tuberculosis have been practically conquered, malnutrition is almost no more, new schools express Brunei's determination to become completely literate. Labuan, port for Brunei's terrific export-import trade, is being rapidly transformed, according to a planned program, into a 20th century city. But —

As near as across the river from bustling Labuan is the village of Kampong Ayer, built on poles, with waterways instead of streets, a floating market place, and door to door service by boat. The white and silver thread sarong for ceremonial occasions—such as the Coronation of the 28th Sultan, recorded here—is woven by hand as of old. Silversmiths, metal workers, potters, turn out their tireless work using tools and Chinese designs of by-gone centuries. There is "a quiet tempo" in Brunei still, and wonderful gardens, to delight the student and visitor in the flesh or via the screen. This film asks: will the riches from its oil challenge Brunei's claim to be "The Abode of Peace?" That would be a pity. (14 mins.)

LAND OF THE HORNBILL

EXTENDING along the northern shore of Borneo for over 500 miles, Sarawak was originally a province of the Sultan of Brunei. For help in quelling a revolution, and chasing the pirates who preyed on the South China Seas' trade route, the Sultan made Sir James Brooke the first white Rajah of Sarawak. Of Sarawak's prior history little is known, or of the Dyaks, one of its aboriginal races. Akin to the Malays but differing in language, race, stature, type and customs, the Dyaks were head hunters. The hornbill, a large bird of tropical Asia and Africa, was their symbolic war god.



TOMORROW IS THEIRS

DESPITE the money and effort that have had to go into defense in the "post-war" years since 1946, Malaya has built hundreds of new schools, and can claim a higher literacy standard than most of the countries of South-East Asia. The obvious intention of TOMORROW IS THEIRS is to point out, for the Malayan, the ways of modern education, the aims and ideas of the nursery school, the benefits of household science and manual arts for pre-teen boys and girls, of a health and sports program on all levels, and of self-governing youth clubs. The narrative of the film is a translation of the original, and so seems to be "talking down" to more sophisticated audiences. Pictorially, however, TOMORROW IS THEIRS is very satisfying. For adults it is an excellent study of youth training in any country. In-school young people will readily identify themselves with the rising generation of Malaysans of all races now learning not only to work and live together for their country (a fundamental stress in the film) but, incidentally, to hold their own with their Western brothers and sisters, perhaps even to surpass them in some important way. As the film's title indicates, there is an enthusiastic striving here toward a goal, and a feeling of adventuring into a new, brighter world. (16 mins.)

There is peace today in the land of the hornbill, youngest colony in the British Commonwealth, and it "has really to be grateful to its white Rajahs for its new importance," as is pointed out in the narrative, not too diplomatically. A kind of travelogue, LAND OF THE HORNBILL sketches Sarawak's new prosperity, based on rich oil and mineral deposits, valuable timber, rubber, the turtle egg and the revived pepper industry. The film's most interesting moments, however, are those spent with the Dyaks, seeing their long houses and customs, watching them dance, listening to their subtle music—performed by their beautiful, naked-breasted young women. (13 mins.)



Jungle Fort

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tinuing to prey on settlements and the aborigines for vital food supplies. It is hoped all this will soon be history, but the action described in JUNGLE FORT is still current, at this time of writing. It is also tensely dramatic and interesting.

The fort in this film, is literally cut out of the jungle with the assistance of local aborigines. Their skill in building with bamboo—not to mention the unusual properties of the bamboo itself—is fascinating to contemplate. And there is much food for thought in the cooperation exhibited here, as well as in the juxtaposition of ancient, aboriginal but still valid methods, and 20th century machines and techniques. In the simple shot of aborigines watching an aerial dropping of supplies there is a kind of symbolism, and in the unpacking of these supplies there is cameraderie seasoned with mutual amusement.

Along with its functions as a defense, offense, reconnaissance center, the jungle fort affords protection, within its high walls of wire, for the cultivation of food in safety. It is also a trading post, hospital-dispensary, and schoolhouse. In these functions it is expected it will continue when peace comes again to the deep jungle. (15 mins.)

Malayan Film Unit

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For the past two years the urgent need has been to provide an adequate supply of films to meet specific needs within the country and, although production quality improved enormously at the same time, "it must be admitted," in the words of Thomas Hodge, Head of the Unit, "that quality had to be sacrificed to quantity more often than it should . . . We would like," Mr. Hodge continues in his report to the Malayan Government, "to have time to experiment, to record more 'live' dialogue, to make some films in color, to discover local composers of music, cartoon artists and puppet experts, whose talents can be applied to film making."

From the MFU films we have viewed, Malaya as background for motion pictures is a rich reservoir of fascinating material; the Malaysians are a photogenic, friendly people, with a dignity and a philosophy deserving of world understanding and admiration. It is to be hoped that the Malayan Government, having made it possible for its Film Unit to achieve so much in so short a time, will build on this admirable start, and encourage further effort to present Malaya as it could and should be presented, not only to its own people, but to the world.

Letter From Home

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with the Constitution agreed upon in 1948, by which each State and Settlement will still largely control its own domestic affairs but which established a federal government for the whole of the mainland and an agreed formula for Malayan citizenship. Of particular interest to the world audience as well as the local populace is the section of the film which describes the kampong's first Local Council Elections in terms of the letter writer's own experience, and that of the young constable's fiancée. A hint is given here that not all the men are pleased with the idea of women voting. It also indicates that, at present, most of the voters are women—the reason given being that many men are absent from the kampong, serving Malaya in its long struggle against the terrorists.

Presenting a great deal of important information with skillful simplicity and in warmly human, reasonable terms, A LETTER FROM HOME won an award at the First South-East Asia Film Festival in Tokyo (1954), and was selected for showing at last year's Edinburgh Film Festival. As an excellent and enjoyable introduction to Malay it should find a receptive audience in our classrooms and community groups. (11 mins.)

Starve Them Out

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turn, this one persuades the others of his party, and Achu is rewarded for service to his village. The pragmatism of the reward system detracts somewhat from the high level of the presentation as a whole, but it makes sense in this kind of emergency situation. It will be noted in this film that the Communists usually pay in money for the food that is brought to them, willingly or otherwise. For what they do not get, they pay with a fearsome violence. The uniformed soldier receives compensation for his efforts, even in a cause near to his heart. Why not, then, the un-uniformed Achu's who jeopardize their lives, and the lives of their families, when they function as front-line, face-to-face fighters, armed only with the weapon of hunger? (14 mins.)

MFU Entries 2nd South-East Asia Film Festival 1955

- HASSAN'S HOMECOMING — problems of the rice farmer. Traditional Malay music.
- MALACCA: THEN AND NOW — An impression, in color, of its beauty.
- RUBBER FROM MALAYA.
- SINGAPORE: THE FIRST 400—Training for self defense.
- YOUTH IN ACTION — Representatives of 62 countries in Singapore.

Yong Peng

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Remote from effective government administration and police protection, they became the prey of the Communist guerillas in the jungle, who used them to secure food, clothing, money, even recruits. General Briggs' Plan, launched in 1950, proposed to re-settle these victims of terror-domination, for their own betterment, and in order to cut off the terrorists' source of supply.

How the people of this particular village were helped to establish themselves on new land given each family for farming and small rubber holdings is shown here, in a spirit of accomplishment indicated by the film's title, PROUDLY PRESENTING—YONG PENG. This spirit tends occasionally to give the narrative a slightly saccharine quality for the non-Malayan audience, and the achievements depicted are in nowise mitigated by reference to possible flaws or failures. The sequence about the Women's Institute and the adult night classes are thrown at the viewer too quickly, and only a frustrating, fleeting glimpse is given of the school for which the villagers themselves raised over \$60,000. But these dissatisfactions notwithstanding, the film is important as a revelation of what can be done when people are prepared to work together for their own good. It is further interesting because of the insight it gives into the kinds of people who make up the village, and the occupations by which they gain their livelihood as, for instance, the clog maker, the butcher who is also a shareholder in the local power station and cooperative sawmill, the soya bean and soya bean sauce entrepreneur, etc. Of interest to out-of-school groups, PROUDLY PRESENTING YONG PENG is also a good social geography subject for classes from junior high school, and for college sociology study. (15 mins.)

Before the Wind

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success in every fisherman's case as in that of Abu Bakar. But there is a revelation in the vast difference there is between a life completely dependent on the vagaries of nature, and one in which control of power assures man of a chance, at least, to sail "before the wind." The film itself, despite some not too suitable music here and there, and some confusion resultant on talk of a "new method" of fishing not clearly related to the main idea, is one of the most enjoyable and artistic of the Malayan productions we have seen. BEFORE THE WIND further merits attention and study as having been one of the award winners at the First South-East Asia Film Festival, in 1954. (20 mins.)