

Biographical Notes

Alexander Arthur Josey (1910 – 1986) – Journalist/Author

Alexander Arthur Josey – better known as Alex Josey – was born in Poole, Dorset, south of England, to working class parents.¹ He left school at the age of 14 to work in a factory. From a young age he enjoyed writing and had an ambition of being a reporter or a writer. He joined the local newspaper, the *Poole Herald* in 1926.²

In 1941, Josey was recruited for the Royal Air Force. He was first stationed in Cairo to engage in psychological warfare, and later, he was seconded to the Palestine government to help with public relations. There, he met Sir Henry Gurney who was Chief Secretary of Palestine.³

After the war, Josey went to Paris to work at the United Nations. In 1948, Josey received a cable message from Gurney asking him to come to Malaya to assist him with psychological warfare against the Malayan Communist Party. Josey took up the offer, and was stationed in Singapore. He was in charge of public communications during the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960), and hosted a radio programme entitled “Malayan Affairs”.⁴

When his contract ended in 1950, Josey went to work for the *Singapore Standard*. At the same time, he also wrote for foreign newspapers and magazines including the *New Statesmen*, the *Economist* and *Time* magazine. Josey served as president of the the Singapore Union of Journalists in 1953.⁵

During his time in Singapore, Josey was well acquainted with local politicians, especially from the PAP. Josey was a house guest of former Minister of Foreign Affairs, S. Rajaratnam for nine years.⁶ They shared similar views considering Josey had subscribed to socialist views from a young age.⁷

From 1962 to 1972, Josey accompanied then Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, on his overseas trips. Josey served as Lee’s press secretary, adviser and speech writer. Arranging his itinerary and issuing communiques and statements.⁸ In July 1965, Josey was banished from Malaysia for allegedly writing articles that interfered in domestic politics.⁹

Josey was a prolific author of more than 30 titles, in addition to numerous newspaper articles and speeches. His political books included *Lee Kuan Yew – The struggle for Singapore*, and the *Singapore General Elections 1972*.¹⁰ Besides writing about regional politics and politicians, Josey was also regarded as a “pioneer of the criminal documentation circuit” with books such as *The trial of Sunny Ang*, *The Murder of a Beauty Queen* and *The David Marshall Trials*.¹¹

¹ Corfield, Justin. *Historical dictionary of Singapore*, Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press (2011), p. 128.

² Oral History Centre, *Oral history interview with Alex Josey*, accession no. 259, reel 7, retrieved from: https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/oral_history_interviews/record-details/3d12d60d-115f-11e3-83d5-0050568939ad; Corfield, *Historical dictionary of Singapore*, p. 128.

³ Oral History Centre, *Oral history interview with Alex Josey*, reel 7.

⁴ Oral History Centre, *Oral history interview with Alex Josey*, reel 7.

⁵ “S’pore newsmen elect officials”, *Singapore Standard*, 2 February 1953; “Farewell luncheon”, *Singapore Standard*, 10 July 1954.

⁶ Oral History Centre, *Oral history interview with Alex Josey*, reel 7.

⁷ Oral History Centre, *Oral history interview with Alex Josey*, reel 17.

⁸ Oral History Centre, *Oral history interview with Alex Josey*, reel 18; “Condolences”, *Business Times*, 18 October 1986; Oral History Centre, *Oral history interview with Alex Josey*, reel 13.

⁹ Oral History Centre, *Oral history interview with Alex Josey*, reel 22; “Josey told: Be out in two weeks”, *The Straits Times*, 7 July 1965; Rajaratnam, S. *Speech at the farewell dinner given for Mr Alex Josey at Sri Temasek* (18 July 1965), retrieved from <https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/PressR19650718a.pdf>

¹⁰ “Alex Josey – the man”, *The Straits Times*, 5 September 1981.

¹¹ “Crime sells”, *The Straits Times*, 6 September 1986; “A penchant for criminal trials”, *The Straits Times*, 2 September 1984.

Josey was a keen sportsman who participated in golf, squash, race-walking and cycling.¹² In the 1930s, Josey was assistant editor of *Cycling* (magazine) and he later became an avid collector of books and papers on cycling.¹³ He wrote a book in 1969 entitled *Golf in Singapore*.¹⁴

From 1973 to 1984, Josey worked as publications manager of the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce.¹⁵ In 1976, Josey was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. At some point, he had intended to return to Britain but decided against it in order not to burden his sister who was caring for his ill brother.¹⁶

Josey passed away in Singapore on 15 October 1986.¹⁷

Link to [Alex Josey Private Papers Index List](#)

¹² "Friends bid Alex Josey a last farewell", *The Straits Times*, 19 October 1986.

¹³ "Papers of Alexander A. Josey", *Archives hub website*, retrieved from <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/6e6fb889-f87f-356a-8730-670d9a2e30ca>

¹⁴ "Gifts for the gifted golfer", *The Straits Times*, 24 November 1985.

¹⁵ "Friends bid Alex Josey a last farewell", *The Straits Times*, 19 October 1986.

¹⁶ "Why Josey can't leave", *The Straits Times*, 23 June 1985.

¹⁷ "Writer Alex Josey dies at 75", *The Straits Times*, 16 October 1986.