"The original United Nations' Resolution (No. 96-1), which declared genocide to be an international crime, was passed unanimously by the General Assembly on 11 December 1946. It was the almost universal horror at the devastation of the peoples of Europe by the Nazis during the brief period of their rule, which elicited this remarkable unanimity. The resolution described the crime as 'the destruction, entirely or in part, of racial, religious, political and other groups'. (International Action Against Genocide, MRG Report No. 53, 1984)

The crime of genocide may be taking place in Burma today. The international community, through the UN Security Council, should seriously look at this possibility before the suffering of the people becomes holocostic in nature.
ENVIRONMENT

The Politics of Logging

In March of 1993 Slorc suddenly announced that it was planning to end all logging concessions held by foreign countries by the end of 1993. The announcement came as a serious blow to the 21 Thai companies who have been operating logging businesses in Burma during the past four years.

To counter this possible disaster to the Thai logging business, the Thai companies formed a federation of Thai logging traders with the government operated Thai Forestry Industrial Organization (FIO) as one member. The FIO will negotiate with the Burmese military regime for a change of heart. Thai Minister of Interior, General Chavalit, immediately promised to hold talks with Burma aimed at asking Rangoon to grant logging concessions to the FIO which would then distribute these concessions to private timber companies. Chavalit, responding to criticism on this move, said that since Thailand is a democracy, he must listen to the demands of the people, and do what they require. It is well known that Chavalit and his family are themselves involved in various ways with logging companies presently working in Burma.

A further demand of the logging companies was for Thailand to reopen 14 of the Thai/Burma border crossing points so that they could quickly bring out some 500,000 cubic meters of logs already felled in Burma before the year end deadline. Under the Anant government in 1992, many of the border crossing points were closed making it extremely difficult for logging companies to meet their export quotas. The reason for the closures has always been a bit unclear, but people speculate that it was partially due to international criticism of Thailand's role in destroying Burma's environment, as well as Thailand's agreement with Slorc to curb the flow of arms from Thailand into the hands of Karen, Mon and Karenni opposition forces operating in the border areas. Now that the Thai logging lobby is more united and vocal, these concerns take second place. On April 27, the Thai cabinet agreed to open 14 more crossing points.

Slorc's decision to end all logging concessions by December of this year has also raised some debate among Burma watchers. Some say that Slorc is slowly bending to international pressure and criticism of their wanton destruction of their precious natural resources. Although Burma has one of the largest remaining teak wood forests in the world, the rate of cutting has been phenomenal. Some sources estimate that Burma is losing up to 800,000 hectares of forest cover annually. Along the Thai/Burma border, this negative effect of logging by Thai companies can easily be seen as large areas of land lie stripped of all growth. However, other observers feel that Slorc is not so concerned with international criticism, but is more interested in gaining more income from their concessions which were earlier signed too quickly and too cheaply. By ending the concessions, they can negotiate for better deals in order to gain more money to finance their war against opposition groups in the country. They can also pressure Thai companies who want these logging concessions to stop paying taxes to opposition groups along the border thus depriving these groups of funds needed to protect themselves from Slorc military operations in the area.

Meanwhile, sources in Northern Burma say that on the Burma-China road, more than 100 trucks loaded with Burmese teak logs are transported to China everyday. There has been no report that Slorc is planning to end logging business with the Chinese.

Logging along Burma's borders continues to be an economic issue with little concern given to environmental protection or human rights for that matter. As Thailand's Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Suthep Thaugsuban recently said, "If Burma sells timber, we will buy." In response to questions about the destruction of the environment he added, "If Thailand does not buy the wood from Burma, other countries will."

Sources:
TN 930506
TN 930425
TN 930427
BP 930429

Thai logging company extracting logs from Burma
MAY 1993

PAGE 3

B.U.R.M.A.

HUMAN RIGHTS

"The Contracting Parties having considered the declaration made by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its resolution 96 (1) dated 11 December 1946 that genocide is a crime under international law, contrary to the spirit and aims of the United Nations and condemned by the civilized world, recognizing that at all periods of history genocide has inflicted great losses on humanity; and being convinced that, in order to liberate mankind from such an odious scourge, international cooperation is required: hereby agree as hereinafter provided." (Introduction to the text of the U.N. Genocide Convention)

The Question of Genocide

The word "genocide" has often been used when speaking or writing about the situation in Burma. The term comes from the Greek word genos (race, tribe) and the Latin word cide (killing). The UN Genocide Convention sharpens the term a little by defining genocide as "...acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group..." Is the military junta in Burma today carrying out a policy of genocide against the many ethnic nationalities which make up the country? A debate on this would be long and arduous and would probably never be concluded. Prof. Leo Kuper has written in the "International Action Against Genocide", "It should be noted that the crime [of genocide] is not defined as aimed only at the total annihilation of a group, but as committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group. This, of course, introduces ambiguity." To charge Sloc with genocide in the United Nations, then, would require proving that the acts carried out by the Sloc military against the people of Burma is done with intent to destroy ethnical and racial groups.

While proving "intent" is probably impossible, it is very possible to look at several acts identified by the UN Genocide Convention as acts of genocide and compare them to realities in Burma today. The following stories represent only a very small fraction of the reports received regularly which relate to "acts of genocide."

- Act 1 - Killing members of the group.

For the past 45 years, villagers in the mountain regions of Burma have reported many instances of unarmed villagers being killed by Burmese military troops. This has been especially true of villages composed mainly of members of the ethnic minority groups in the country.

During a period from October 1991 until June 1992, villagers in the delta of Burma report that at least 200 Karen village leaders and church pastors, both male and female, were killed following severe torture. They were suspected by the Sloc military of having a connection to the armed Karen National Union which is based on the Thai/Burma border.

A May 1, 1993 report by the Karen Human Rights Group, says that several thousand Shan farmers from central Shan State were forced to serve as porters in Sloc's military campaign against the Karen stronghold of Saw Hta in the Karen State. The report states "treatment of the porters was horrifically brutal, and hundreds died." Many bodies of these Shan farmers have been seen floating down the Salween River with their hands tied behind their backs. There are both men and women.

- Act 2 - Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group.

A Karen woman from Thaton district recently reported on her attempt to free a fellow villager from detention by Sloc. "I went with two monks to beg his freedom, and saw him. If I were him I would have died because I wouldn't be able to breathe. They had tied rope around his neck and wrist like a bound pig. The rope around his neck was so tight I don't think he could have swallowed rice or water at all. The didn't free him. They untied his hands but left his neck and waist tied and put a military pack on his back. From in front you couldn't see he was tied up, only from behind. They took him to May Na Kee village as a porter, and tortured him there for another 7 or 10 days."

- Act 3 - Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

A 40-year-old Karen woman and two of her friends escaped from Sloc soldiers at the end of 1992. They had to take a very practical role in women related one of the torture methods used. "They had a fire. They heated the candle-oil we make from tree bark, and when it was burning they dripped it on our chests. Once they dripped burning plastic on my shoulders, and it gave me this big scar. They put their knives in the fire, and then put them on our bare arms and legs. They rubbed them back and forth up and down our legs, burning us. They flicked the blades so they cut us. I was screaming and crying." Almost the entire body of this woman was covered with thick burn scars from her experience.

A 19-year-old woman from the Karen State talked of being used as a porter and raped almost nightly. "At night we all had to sleep on the ground, like dogs or pigs. At night - it was terrible. The soldiers raped me. They pointed a gun, and forced us to follow them. I couldn't shout. Even if you shout, nobody can help you."

Should the UN ever decide to question the Burmese military junta about the issue of genocide, proving the actual "intent" of Sloc to eradicate any of the ethnic groups in Burma will be impossible. In the meantime, the villagers in the distant mountain villages continue to be killed, tortured and raped. Perhaps it is time for the UN to take a more active role in protecting the life and property of innocent and defenseless people.

- Sources:
  - Minority Rights Group, Report No. 53
  - Karen Human Rights Group
EDUCATION

SLORC's Educational Policy

During the first week of April the military junta of Burma summoned all heads of educational institutions to Rangoon to attend a Slorc-sponsored educational seminar. The academics, as always happens in Slorc-sponsored seminars, had to act exactly in the way instructed by the Slorc.

Chief of military intelligence Khin Nyunt, who was promoted to Lt. General late last month, delivered a speech in his capacity as the chairman of the Education Committee of Burma.

In his speech, Khin Nyunt said, "The educational policy must be such that we will be able to produce graduates who will defend and safeguard the three main causes in the country which are 1) the non-disintegration of the Union, 2) non-disintegration of national solidarity and 3) to ensure the perpetuity of sovereignty." What this Slorc-speak actually means in common English is that the educational system of the nation must be designed to safeguard the stability of military rule.

Sticking steadfastly to their erratic educational philosophy which gives first priority to their own security, the junta closed all schools for 2 years following the 1988 uprising, while the universities remained closed for 3 consecutive years. Then they were again closed for one more year in 1992. Hence two batches of students who had passed the university entrance exams remain stranded, waiting hopefully for admission to the universities.

A fresh graduate who recently left Rangoon to work abroad narrated his experience. "When universities were reopened in 1991, I was a third year student. The examinations were held after one and a half months of study. Since the questions were set from the lessons taught in those six weeks, nearly all of us passed though we didn't learn anything valuable or new during that time. After another six weeks of learning in 1992, I became a successful graduate."

A scarcity of jobs drove him out to look for work abroad. "Now I'm going to work somewhere in East Asia because my friends who have been working there for many years made arrangements for me. But I'm not going to use my certificate. I'll work as a manual laborer. Still I'll be able to earn much more from my manual labor job than a first class professional graduate in Burma".

During the years since General Ne Win staged his military coup in 1962, the educational system in Burma has steadily deteriorated from being one of the best educational institutions in the region, to becoming one of the worst. Thousands of highly qualified professors and lecturers have left Burma to find more challenging places to teach.

Since the popular uprising in 1988, the exodus of teachers has increased. In Thailand alone there are a very large number of Burmese teaching in private schools. One Burmese woman who was trained in Europe in a specialized medical field has chosen to teach an introductory course to biology in a Bangkok school rather than remain in an education system in Burma which provides little dignity for either teachers or students.

Who then is teaching in the universities of Burma today? Many of the lecturers are reported to be military people who have little teaching expertise, or even knowledge in the subjects they teach. The main goal of the universities today seems to be the control of the troublesome student population who have historically been in the vanguard of movements for change. If the military can keep the universities quiet, perhaps foreign confidence in the military's control over the country will increase which will mean increased foreign investments, and less international criticism. For the junta, democratic changes are not important. The most only important thing for the country now is a passive population as proclaimed by a sign board recently seen glaring down at passersby in Mandalay which said, "Democracy is the opposite of chaos."
ENDING THE CIVIL WAR

Human rights abuses, like obnoxious weeds, can not simply be wished away. Both are created and supported by roots which keep bearing new weeds as long as those roots remain intact and nourished. To eradicate both human rights abuses and obnoxious weeds, the central roots must be identified and removed.

In Burma, the decades-long experience of human rights abuses is deeply rooted in the militarization which has characterized the country since 1962. This militarization has exasperated ethnic tensions, which has, in turn, created a civil war in which human rights abuses will never abate unless the war itself is finally brought to an end.

The primary task in Burma, therefore, is the dismantling of the military system and its total control over the economic, social and political life of the country. Once this military system is removed, the civil war can come to an end, national reconciliation begun, and human rights abuses addressed in a constructive and decisive way. Until that time, we can at best, only continue to monitor human rights abuses both within Burma and in neighboring countries, and try to pressure the military junta to diminish, at least minimally, their destruction of the life and survival of the people of Burma. This process, however, gives little encouragement to the ethnic peasants who daily face the brunt of the military's policies to harass, displace, rape, interrogate, kill and enslave them.

The hope that the people of Burma can one day soon live in an atmosphere of peace and tranquility depends on our ability to identify the root causes of suffering, and on our creativity in finding effective ways of addressing those causes so that they can be dealt with directly.

Ethnic Conflicts and Civil War

The total population in Burma today is estimated to be 42 million people. The majority Burman population makes up about 32.1%, while the other ethnic groups include the Karen (20.0%), Shan (9.2%), Mon (9.0%), Rakhae (5.8%), Chin (5.7%), Palaung and Wa (3.5%), and Kachin (3.5%).

Following World War II, ethnic friction, which had been simmering for generations, began rapidly increasing due to the government's refusal to take seriously the demands of the ethnic minorities to exercise authority over their own lands and to be allowed to protect their traditional languages and cultures. The issue gradually escalated towards open civil war until finally, in 1949, the Karen and Mon started their armed revolutions against the central government which was predominantly ethnic Burman. Later other minority groups such as the Kachin, Shan, etc. also followed the course of armed revolution.

In 1962, a civilian government led by U Nu of the Anti Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), called the minority leaders together for talks to find a solution to this nagging and divisive issue. The meeting started on February 24, 1962 and before it could conclude, Gen. Ne Win, leading the Burmese military's "Revolution Council", took over State power on March 2, 1962.

This military government considers the ethnic minorities issue as simply Burma's heritage from their British colonizer's divide and rule strategy rather than critically seeking to understand what historical issues the minority groups were upset about. Thus the nation, under Ne Win, moved into a time of ever intensifying hostilities. All negotiations initiated by the military regime focused, not on developing a truly democratic process which could settle the ethnic issues facing the country, but rather only on a process of uniting the country as one single state at the expense of minority rights.

For the ethnic minorities, this concept of "national unity" by the military sounded too much like a process of "Burmanization". The Burmese language was being used as the common language for teaching in all the schools while it was forbidden to teach in the individual ethnic languages of each group. Moreover, members of the various ethnic minorities were moved out of almost all important government and military positions. Any demands by the minorities to rectify these, and many other similar issues were construed by the military as being activities to disrupted national unity. Rather than moving the country closer to national unity, Ne Win's policies actually drove the wedge of fear and suspicion even deeper between the ethnic minorities and the Burman majorit.

The nation's second constitution, drawn up in 1974 by Ne Win and his Revolutionary Council, created the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) as the country's only legal party, without consulting with the ethnic minorities. The BSPP was simply a military party in civilian dress. All other parties, unions, and people's organizations were banned. The nation was geographically divided into seven states and seven divisions. Any other parties, unions, and people's organizations were banned. The nation was geographically divided into seven states and seven divisions. The seven states represented the seven largest ethnic groups, and the seven divisions made up the areas where ethnic Burmans were the majority population.

Although these divisions were meant to give the appearance of at least some ethnic minority autonomy, the representatives from these states were in fact drafted by the BSPP and did not represent the ethnic minorities at all.

At the same time Ne Win transferred many ex-soldiers into the BSPP and thus the country came under an ex-
Weapons make militarization possible in Burma

tremely strong centralized military control policy. The ethnic minorities and their concerns were even further alienated.

Although several "new" governments have come and gone, the issue of the ethnic conflict and the resulting civil war remains untouched. This war continues to result in a multiplicity of human rights abuses which can never be brought under control as long as the war and its causes are not dealt with directly and with the utmost urgency.

**Militarization**

As mentioned above, the militarization of Burma began in 1962. During the period from 1962 to 1974, the country was ruled by Gen. Ne Win's Revolutionary Council. During this time key leaders from the previous AFPFL ruling party were imprisoned. The military also initiated political suppression against all types of anti-military/government activists including rightists, leftists and nationalists throughout the country.

In those days, the Revolutionary Council targeted two major groups for suppression whom they considered to be a danger to their rule. These were the ethnic minority insurgencies and the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). Many people were accused of being communist and arbitrarily arrested. The number of political prisoners abruptly increased.

On July 7, 1962, students from Rangoon University who were participating in anti-militarization protests were gunned down. Hundreds were killed.

During the 1960s, the Revolution Council concluded that communist activities were becoming a serious threat in the towns because of communist infiltration into the working classes. Trade unions, student unions and farmer's organizations were accused of being a political front for the communists and so were systematically persecuted.

On July 7, 1962, students from Rangoon University who were participating in anti-militarization protests were gunned down. Hundreds were killed.

Following the military coup in 1962, the military consolidated its control over public administrative and economic affairs. Industries were nationalized and all import and export businesses were placed under the unskilled administration of military officials. The BSPP, which was supposed to be a civilian government, was placed under the control of ex-soldiers who continued to carry strong influence in the military. Under the administration of these unskilled military people, the nation's economic, political and social existence declined until presently the country is considered one of the 10 poorest nations in the world.

The people of Burma have never accepted this military mis-rule and so the military has had to invest an ever greater amount of the national budget into building up a military strong enough to keep the population under control. Even though every aspect of life in Burma today needs to be developed, there is little money to do so because at least 50% of the national income is used for internal security as well as continuing the civil war. Burma has little to fear from its neighbors, yet today has an army of over 300,000 people. Military leaders have called for an increase in the strength of the military to at least 500,000 men. The only purpose of having such a large military is to keep control over every economic, political and social aspect of life within the country. Militarization in the country has resulted in increased poverty and political repression among the middle and poor classes. The country's upper class of military officers and collaborators has been the only group to share the benefits in the country. Such a clear class division has resulted in eleven major anti-government strikes by the working class since 1962. All strikes were ended when the military gunned down strikers in the streets. Underground activities continue to be the only way people can express their dislike for the continuing militarization which affects almost every moment of their lives.

Since human rights abuses in Burma can not be isolated from the country's militarization, ethnic tensions and civil war, it stands to reason that all actions relating to human rights in Burma must also directly and effectively confront these root issues. The point which needs to be emphasized over and over again is that human rights abuses will continue unabated as long as the present military structure remains unchanged, as long as the reasons for ethnic tensions are not identified and dealt with, and as long as the civil war rages on. Within this context, it is not sufficient to simply be busy doing good and useful things, but rather it is imperative to be doing things which will effectively bring positive change to Burma i.e. an end to the civil war, ethnic tensions and military rule.
China and Burma

The sad joke in Mandalay these days is that soon Burma will be divided into two sections. Upper Burma (from Mandalay north) will become a province of China and Lower Burma will become a province of Thailand.

The elderly Burmese man making the statement did not laugh or even smile. His eyes looked fearful.

Burmese, especially those in Mandalay, are indeed looking at China with much concern these days. They report to visitors to the area that they feel like third-class citizens in their own country and city. Most businesses, they claim, are rapidly being taken over by Chinese merchants.

A western visitor to Mandalay recently reported that new hotels have sprung up all over the city. When he tried to check into some of them, he found that the owners spoke Chinese, and that the hotels were not open for western visitors. They serve almost exclusively a Chinese clientele.

According to the Far Eastern Economic Review of May 6, at least 23,000 Chinese businessmen from Yunnan Province of China have already settled in Mandalay during 1992. Another 27,000 are expected in 1993. This rapid influx does give Burmese in the area reason to be concerned. The Chinese, often speaking no Burmese, have obtained Burmese citizenship and thus can buy property and open up businesses freely. A medical doctor working in a maternity hospital in the city claims that a large number of her patients are women with Burmese ID cards, but who speak only Chinese.

The military regime must be aware of this influx of foreign business people, and thus must also be providing at least tacit approval of their obtaining Burmese ID cards. One way which the Chinese use to become Burmese citizens is to purchase ID cards from poor Burmese families who have recently lost a family member. The death is not reported to authorities, and the ID card is turned over to a Chinese business family who will pay a good price for it.

A second sign that the Burmese military authorities are involved in this "take over" is the way in which the Chinese get property. During the past years a number of very large fires have burned down large areas of Mandalay. The last fire was reported on April 8 of this year and destroyed at least two city blocks in downtown Mandalay. The authorities set very difficult standards for the local owners or renters to rebuild. If they can not meet these standards, the land is purchased by the Chinese who are backed by a lot of money and can construct buildings according to the standards demanded by the Slorc.

Added to all of this are the rumors that the Chinese navy is constructing several ports along the Burmese coast. It has never been confirmed if the Chinese are actually doing the construction themselves, or simply providing the materials and funds, but it is enough to be seen as a threat by India. A navy base and a strong radar base off the coast of Burma would give China easy access and control over movements within the Indian Ocean. India and China have the largest and strongest navies in the region, and thus could easily get into a conflict over the use of Burmese sea space.

India's response has been to approach Burma in order to strengthen ties. On March 28, Indian Foreign Secretary, J. N. Dixit visited Rangoon and signed an agreement with Burmese military officials to cooperate in suppressing separatist movements and drug trafficking along their common border. Trade between the two countries will also be strengthened and suggests that India will begin to emulate the "constructive engagement" policy of the ASEAN nations. Presently Burma's trade with India is estimated at US$200 million. Burma exports food items such as rice and beans, two commodities badly needed within the country, and imports consumer goods from India.

The people of Mandalay, and Burma as a whole, do seem to have something to be fearful about. If Burma is not actually divided up economically between China and Thailand, it may become the arena for China and India's fight for military supremacy in the area. In either case, the people and country of Burma will suffer, and the military junta will continue to fill their own pockets.

Sources:  
AWS 930419
FEER 930415

Road Links

Mr. Aswin of the Thai Asia International Transport and Enterprise Co. Ltd., has reported that his company has offered to build a road for Slorc which will run from the Burma/Thai border town of Tachilek to the Chinese border town of Duluo. Construction took about 4 years and cost around 300 million baht (US$12 million).

A second road link is being planned from Thailand's Chiang Rai province to Burma's Chieng Tung province. This road is being contracted by the Thai Suk-Uah-Anant Co. and will cost around 326 million baht (US$13 million). Chieng Tun, in the Shan State of Burma, is reported to be home for some of the major illegal syndicates which trade in drugs, women and cars. A good road link passing from Thailand through Chieng Tun into China could simply make the operations of these syndicates more efficient and profitable.

Sources:  
AWS 930510
BP 930426
BP 930427
Ericsson Australia, the leading Australian exporter of telecommunications equipment in recent years, has supplied Burma with cellular mobile telephone network equipment. In response to criticism of their investment in Burma, Ericsson replied, "We do not become involved in the operation of telecommunications networks in any part of the world as a matter of principle, and we do not generally explore the application of the equipment we sell, other than for the purpose of ensuring engineering adequacy for traffic levels, dispersions etc."

There is concern that the equipment supplied by Ericsson will be mainly used by the military for increased communications efficiency throughout the country, and thus increase their ability to control the people. In a country which is as militarized as Burma, the general population tends to benefit only slightly, if at all, from such technical development.

Concern can be expressed by writing to:
Kjell Sonne, Managing Director,
Ericsson Australia Pty. Ltd., P.O. Box 41, Broadmeadows, Victoria, 3047, Australia.

Foreign Currency Certificates
In order to curb the trade in illegal dollars, the Slorc recently introduced Foreign Currency Certificates which visitors are required to purchase upon arrival at the airport. Each visitor must purchase a minimum of US$200 in certificates, and must spend this amount before departure. Theoretically this would end the buying and selling of US dollars on the illegal market. However, a recent visitor to Burma reported that Burmese are now also allowed to hold Foreign Currency Certificates, and so the illegal trading in these certificates is being run parallel with the illegal trading in US dollars. Visitors can go to a bank and purchase Foreign Currency Certificates and then go out and sell them at the illegal market rate of at least 100 kyats per one dollar certificate (legal rate is 6 kyats per dollar).

Printing More Money
The UNDP recently criticized the Burmese military government for printing more money to finance its almost US$1 billion budget deficit. The printing of more money has fueled a 36% inflation rate.

Offshore Drilling
Burma's three offshore test-wells sunk off the Tenasserim Coast in the Andaman Sea, struck oil and gas between October 1992 and the first week of April 1993. The wells are being operated by Britain's Premier, Texaco of the US, Nippon Oil of Japan and Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise of Burma. The first well is producing 2,600 barrels of crude and 107 million cubic feet of gas per day. The second well is producing an unknown quantity of gas and condensate, while the third well is producing 2,800 barrels of crude and around 85 million cubic feet of gas on a daily basis.

Source: TN 930425