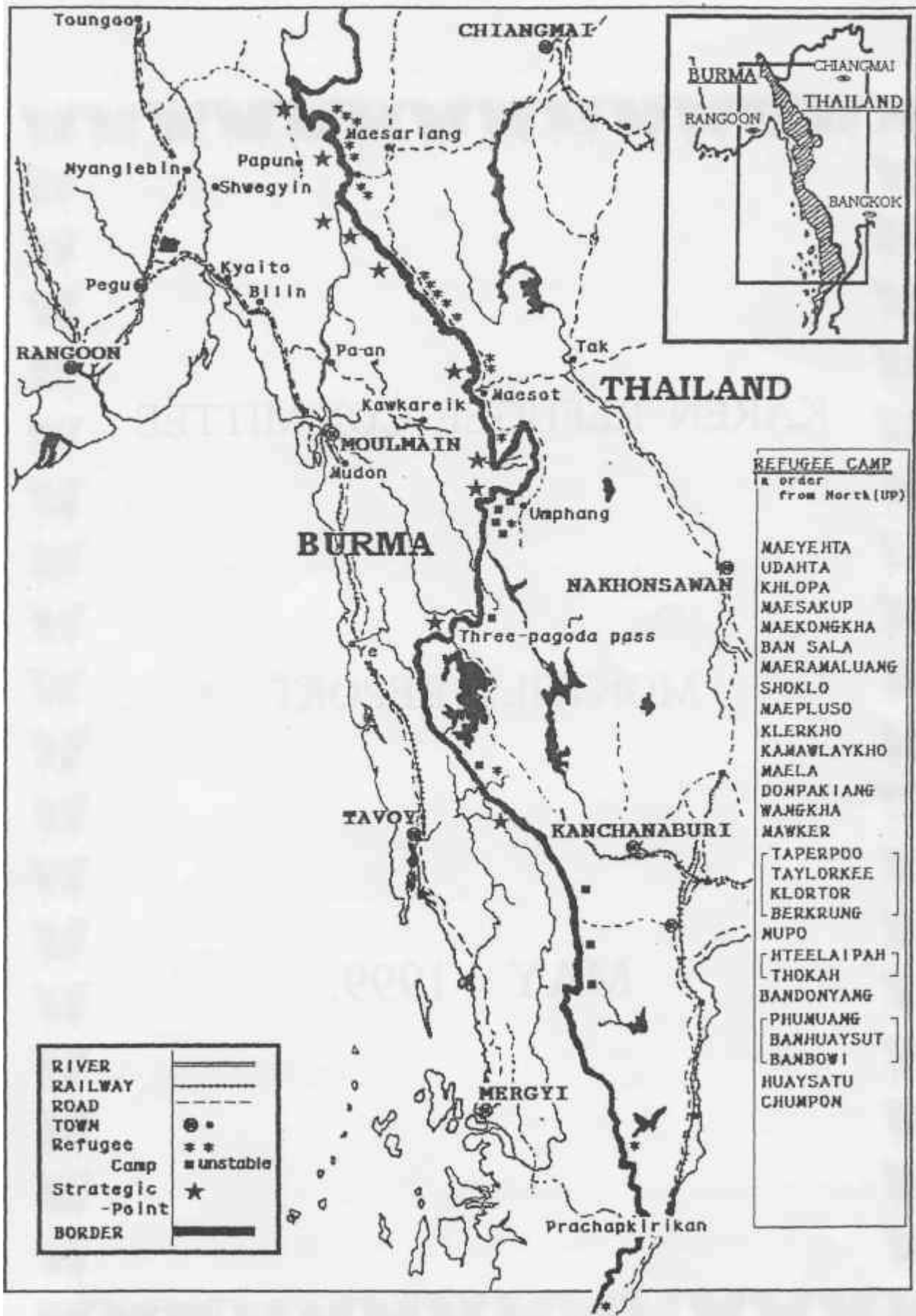




KAREN REFUGEE COMMITTEE

MONTHLY REPORT

MAY 1999.



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May 1999.

May first is Labour Day. The Day is being commemorated to show solidarity among Workers around the world.

But still, in many countries, workers' Rights and Privileges are being curtailed and abused , and calls to remedy them are often disregarded or ignored completely.

In this months report, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, alleged that over eight hundred thousand Burmese are still victims of forced labour, which under International Law is tantamount to slavery. Knowledgeable people contend that the figure is far too low, considering what is happening all over the country. Seeing is believing, said a Junta official. The thing is one can believe only what one is allowed to see.

Burma's Labour Minister was quoted as saying at a Press Conference that Voluntary Labour was a tradition in Burma. He was so right. It had been a Tradition during the reigns of by gone Despots, and which had emerged with the coming to Power of Gen.Ne Win and the Military. This Traditional Labour must be a bad thing, for Burma ,from being one of the richest in South East Asia, was reduced to the status of an LDC (Least Developed Country) in a matter of a decade or so. The fact is that Burma's tremendous Work Force including Academics, Doctors, Lawyers, Engineers, Civil Servants were made to work under the direction of individuals , whose only qualification was their affiliation and total allegiance to the Military and the BWSP Party (Burmese Way to Socialism Party). Mute defiance on the part of the working people go unnoticed or simply ignored.

Burma's workers are certainly the worst treated and most exploited. Now, workers get paid at an average of around Kyats (1500) per month, which would come to about Baht (160) or less than five US Dollars in exchange. Take home pay after donations is considerably less. This on top of Labour contribution on week-end days.

Needless to say that the commitment of the workers is being affected. Erosion of the character has become a way of life. Long ago, when there was cry of "Everybody for himself "it was playful joking . But now its reality. Hospitality, the virtue we people of Burma pride ourselves on is very little to be seen these days.

The Asean Labour Ministers' Meeting in Rangoon was being hailed by the Junta as Burma's coming of Age, which development people can only watch and see. For, it is nine years since the Junta refused to recognize the election results of May 1990, the will of the People.

This month of May is also the Anniversary of the downfall of Suharto, which is a reminder that People's Power ought not to be treated lightly. Elsewhere, the International War Crimes Tribunal at the Hague indicted President Milosevic of Yugoslavia for his heavy handed handling of the country's Ethnic Problem.

On the brighter side, in Nigeria, after 15 years of military misrule, Mr. Obasanjo was sworn in as the Democratically elected President to run the country. The President Elect promised the return of Rule of Law to the country.

One thing to note is that Mr. Obasanjo was once the Military Strongman of Nigeria, which show that sometimes people can really expect "Change for the Better".

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NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE CAMPS MAY 1999.

MAE SOT AREA	CAMP	No.of families	Over 12 YRS		9-12 YRS		Under 8 YRS		Total
			M	F	M	F	M	F	
	Wang Kha (Huay Ka Lok)	1867	3512	3257	502	508	1220	1177	10176
	Mae La	5402	10226	9576	1772	1703	3345	3189	29811
	Maw Ker	1542	2949	2615	431	421	1154	1089	8659
		8811	16687	15448	2705	2632	5719	5455	48646
NORTH	Mae Ra Ma Luang	1265	2518	2188	482	456	831	841	7316
	Khun Mae Kong Kha And Sa La	1737	3257	2991	666	596	1216	1205	9931
		3002	5775	5179	1148	1052	2047	2046	17247
S O U T H	Noh Po	1499	2523	2340	913	868	536	560	7740
	Ban Don Yang	352	472	513	103	94	296	284	1762
	Tham Him	1654	2339	2381	1037	1017	680	745	8199
	Kho Thay Lu	69	63	83	7	6	52	64	275
		3574	5397	5317	2060	1985	1564	1653	17976
	Grand Total	15387	27859	25944	5913	5669	9330	9154	83869

RICE AND OTHER ITEMS RECEIVED DURING THE MONTH

FROM	Rice 100kg sacks	Salt Kilos	F- paste 16kg tins	Yellow Bean Kilos	BL	Mat	Mosquite Net Pes	Chilies, Kilos	Cooking Oil 13.75 liter tins	Cooking Fuel Kg.
B.B.C	7,451	20,100	1,675	70,380				6,279	46,716	311,430
COERR	350									

We shall always be grateful to the Thai People and Government for their sympathy and understanding in allowing us safe refuge.

We are also indebted to the NGOs for their Supports and Services.

BBC- Support in Food and Shelter Material.

MSF- Support in Medical and Health facilities.

AMI -

ARC -

MHD -

ZOA(ABWAid)- Support in Educational facilities.

ICS. (Asia)- Support in Educational facilities.

TOPS - Support in Educational facilities.

COERR- Rice and Educational Support.

K.R.C. Mae Sot.