WHERE THE DRUGS ARE IN THEIR OWN WORDS:
Narcotics on the Net

THE WRITER'S PAGE

Online discussion:
Drugs in Burma
THE ISSUES....

WHERE THE DRUGS ARE

In some circles, Burma has become synonymous with the narcotics trade. The debate on how to deal with the flow of illicit drugs from this country has taken place in capitals around the world and possible solutions continue to be explored by numerous international agencies. But what is currently happening inside Burma? Has the situation worsened or improved? Who is benefiting most from the resources earned through the narcotics "business"? Is the regime making any significant progress in tackling this global plague? Here, three different sources report varying points of view on Burma's "War on Drugs."

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

While governments and international organizations have their official means of reporting on the narcotics situation in Burma, the internet has provided an additional vehicle for analyzing this topic. In a recent on-line chat, participants from around the world discussed the issue of drugs in Burma and reaction to a decision by the international police organization, Interpol, to hold its Fourth International Heroin Conference in Rangoon this past February.

THE WRITER'S PAGE

Daw Khin Myo Chit came of age during one of Burma's most important historical moments. A friend and compatriot of some of the country's most influential figures such as General Aung San, U Nu and General Ne Win, she authored numerous articles and short stories expounding on the politics, history and everyday life of the Burmese people. Khin Myo Chit died on January 2, 1999, at the age of 83, but through her writings, leaves behind a vivid portrait of twentieth-century Burma.
INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT, 1998
Released by The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, U.S. Department of State

MYANMAR LAUNCHES DRUG ERADICATION PROGRAM
By Stephen Brookes

THE SITUATION AROUND Ho MURNG
An Independent Report by the Karen Human Rights Group

IN THEIR OWN WORDS
Narcotics on the Net

OBITUARY: KHIN MYO CHIT
By Anna Allott

DANDRUFF IN MY HAIR
By Khin Myo Chit
I. Summary
Burma continues to be the world’s largest source of illicit opium and heroin. Production and cultivation declined significantly from 1997 levels, marking the second year in a row that production declined. The 1998 crop estimates indicate there were 130,300 hectares under opium poppy cultivation, down 16 percent from 1997, which could yield up to a maximum of 1,750 metric tons of opium gum. This is the lowest potential production figure in ten years and a drop of 26 percent from 1997 figures. The government engaged in significant opium crop eradication efforts in 1998. During 1998, seizures of ethamphetamine tripled, although opium and heroin seizures were below last year’s record levels. The Government of Burma (GOB) cancelled a U.S.-funded crop substitution project, however, and made little if any effort against money laundering during the year. While there were cases of interdiction and arrests of members of some cease-fire groups for narcotics trafficking, the GOB has been unwilling or unable to take on the most powerful groups directly. Cease-fire agreements with insurgent ethnic groups dependent on the narcotics trade involve an implicit tolerance of continued involvement in narcotics for varying periods of time.

Released by the Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, U.S. Department of State

WASHINGTON, DC, MARCH 1999
II. Status of Country

Burma has been and continues to be the world's largest producer of illicit opium. According to USG estimates, Burmese opium production doubled in 1989, the year after the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), now known as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), took power. Production levels remained high and stable for several years, began to decline in 1997, and dropped significantly in 1998. The decline in potential production in 1998 reflects the impact of GOB eradication efforts as well as drought. The USG discontinued most U.S. direct assistance to Burma in 1988 in response to massive human rights abuses.

Burma currently accounts for approximately 90 percent of the total production of Southeast Asian opium. Most of this supply of illicit opiates is produced in ethnic minority areas of Burma's Shan State. Over the past few years, the GOB has increased its presence in this region, particularly the south, an area formerly under the control of Chang Qifu (Khun Sa). Since 1989, Rangoon has negotiated cease-fire agreements with most of the drug-trafficking groups that control these areas, offering them limited autonomy and development assistance in exchange for ending their insurgencies. The regime's highest priority is to end insurrection and achieve some measure of national integration; counter-narcotics interests in these areas are a lesser priority. Moreover, the cease-fire agreements have had the practical effect of condoning money laundering, as the government encouraged these groups to invest in "legitimate" businesses as an alternative to trafficking.

The ethnic drug-trafficking armies with whom the government has negotiated cease-fires (but not permanent peace accords), such as the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA-Kokang Chinese), remain armed and heavily involved in the heroin trade. Through cease-fire agreements, the GOB appears to have given the trafficking armies varying degrees of autonomy; for example, Burmese troops cannot even enter Wa territory without explicit permission.

Among the top leaders of those ethnic groups believed by the USG to be involved in the heroin and/or amphetamine trade are: Sai Lin (Lin Mingxian) of the Eastern Shan State Army (ESSA); Yang Maoliang, Peng Jiasheng, and Liu Goushi of the MNDAA; Pao Yuqiang, Li Zuru, and Wei Xuekang of the United Wa State Army; Mahtu Naw of the Kachin Defense Army (KDA); Mong Sa La of the Mongko Defense Army (MDA); and Yawd Serk of the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), which was formerly part of drug lord Chang Qifu's Mong Tai Army. Chang Qifu disbanded his army in January 1996 in return for generous terms of surrender, which allowed him to avoid criminal prosecution.

There is reason to believe that money laundering in Burma and the return of narcotics profits laundered elsewhere are significant factors in the overall Burmese economy, although the extent is impossible to measure accurately. Political and economic constraints on legal capital inflows magnify the importance of narcotics-derived funds in the economy.

An underdeveloped banking system and lack of enforcement against money laundering have created a business and investment environment conducive to the use of drug-related proceeds in legitimate commerce.

Drug abuse — in particular intravenous drug use — is on the rise in Burma and is accompanied by an alarming spread of the HIV/AIDS virus, especially in the ethnic minority areas that are the source of the drugs.

In the past three years, as overt military challenges to Rangoon's authority from the ethnic groups have diminished somewhat, the government, while maintaining its primary focus on state security, has stepped up its counternarcotics enforcement efforts. The GOB garrisoned troops on a year-round basis for the first time in the Kokang region during 1997, but it does not have troops in Wa territory. Last year the MNDAA, the KDA, and the MDA in Shan State declared their intention to establish opium-free zones in territory under their control by the year 2000; the ESSA has already declared its territory an opium-free zone. The Wa have announced their territory will be an opium-free zone by the year 2005.

Ethnic groups have made "opium-free" pledges since 1989, but, with the exception of the Kachin, results have been limited. Kachin leader Peng Jiasheng said in March that he had eradicated 25 per-
cent of opium in Kokang areas west of the Salween River. Although we cannot verify this claim, observers noted eradication had taken place in areas near the Chinese border. In view of the extensive opium cultivation in northern Shan State, the area of greatest opium density, expanded reduction in cultivation will require considerable eradication, much greater law-enforcement, and alternative development efforts by the authorities. Such efforts necessitate vastly greater financial resources than the government has, however. Implementation of such a program would also require increased cooperation between the government and the ethnic groups involved in production and trafficking.

The GOB, for its part, stated that it would support its eradication efforts with development assistance in the form of infrastructure improvements and advice on crop substitution. The GOB also requested USG assistance in verifying whether these groups fulfill their commitments. The USG has requested additional information to pinpoint the areas in question. This information has been provided. Exchange of information on the status of opium cultivation could then occur during the annual opium poppy survey carried out jointly with the GOB. In view of China’s long border with the Wa area, the GOB asked China for assistance in curbing Wa trafficking. Both countries have established a regular forum for discussing counternarcotics cooperation.

III. Country Actions Against Drugs
Policy Initiatives. Burmese counternarcotics efforts in 1998 made progress with regard to eradication, increased methamphetamine seizures, and the destruction of heroin refineries. An improved secu-
rity situation in parts of northern Shan State permitted the Burmese anti-drug forces to conduct more vigorous law-enforcement efforts, especially in the Kachin and Kokang regions. The GOB announced plans to plant opium substitute crops on 14,565 acres in the Kokang Region during 1998-99 in cooperation with Japan. Such efforts must be stepped up, if they are to have a significant impact on the overall trafficking problem.

With encouragement from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and U.S. embassies in Rangoon and Bangkok, the Burmese and Thai governments agreed to undertake joint operations against drug trafficking along Thailand's northern border with Burma. Operation of a joint anti-drug task force in Tachilek, Burma and Mae Sai, Thailand, however, has been hampered by political disharmony between the two countries.

The Burmese continued to refuse the rendition of drug lord Chang Qifu on grounds that he had not violated his 1996 surrender agreement. This agreement reportedly stipulated that if Chang Qifu ended his insurgency and retired from the drug trade, the GOB would provide him with security in Rangoon and allow him to conduct legitimate business. Burmese authorities assert that he will continue to enjoy immunity from prosecution in Burma or rendition to another country as long as he does not violate his surrender agreement. This issue remains a source of friction between Burma and the U.S.; the 1988 UN Drug Convention obligates parties, including Burma, to prosecute such traffickers. GOB officials have stated they would be willing to prosecute Chang Qifu or his subordinates, if it can be proven that they have engaged in narcotics trafficking after the surrender agreement was signed.

The SPDC (Burma's Ruling Military Junta) affirmed its intention to increase its efforts to implement the ongoing "Master Plan for the Development of Border Areas and National Races." The plan calls for a program of integrated development combined with law enforcement aimed at improving living standards in the ethnic areas and providing viable economic alternatives to opium cultivation. Few GOB resources have been devoted to such development projects, however; health, education, and infrastructure in border areas remain poor. GOB policy is to force the leaders in the ethnic areas to spend their own revenues, including from the drug trade, on social and physical infrastructure. The GOB's ability to continue or expand its opium eradication efforts is likely to be adversely affected by the lack of such economic alternatives.

The UNDCP is beginning an integrated rural development project in the southern portion of the Wa region in furtherance of the United Wa State Army's unilateral decision announced in 1995 to establish five "opium-poppy-free zones" in its area of control where opium cultivation will gradually be reduced. The project is part of a planned five-year, $15 million rural development project aimed at crop substitution and alternative development. At present, nine villages are scheduled to participate in the first stage of the project. UNDCP has begun distributing seeds as part of the crop substitution portion of the project. The Wa project will incorporate a monitoring and evaluation component designed to measure progress in eliminating opium cultivation. As an integrated development scheme, it will also focus on developing the infrastructure as well as providing educational and health facilities in the Ho Tao and Mong Pawk districts of the Wa region.

**Accomplishments.** While the extent of the drug threat from Burma remained high, law enforcement efforts, particularly on seizures of amphetamine,
showed some improvement, and opium production during 1998 showed a significant decline. Seizures of amphetamine greatly increased in 1998, but opium and heroin seizures as of October had not reached the record 1997 levels. The combined police and military Narcotics Task Forces seized 386.8 kilograms of heroin between January and October 1998, down from a record 1,401 kilograms seized in 1997. By October, officials seized 5,200 kilograms of opium gum, compared with 7,883.9 kilograms for all of 1997. The seizure of over 16 million amphetamine tablets as of November is triple last year's total and included one record seizure of 5 million tablets in July. The authorities destroyed 32 heroin refineries, close to the record of 33 set the previous year. DEA from the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon provided information on the location of most of those refineries. As indicated above, opium cultivation dropped by 16 percent and potential opium production by 26 percent to the lowest level in ten years. Another significant development was the arrest in July of Lu Lao-Te, the Deputy Finance Minister for the MNDAA, in connection with seizures of 7 million amphetamine tablets. Lu is one of the highest-ranking officers from an ethnic trafficking group to be arrested by the GOB.

Law Enforcement Measures. The 1993 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Law brought the Burmese legal code into conformity with the 1988 UN Drug Convention. As such, the 1993 law contains useful legal tools for addressing money laundering, the seizure of drug-related assets, and the prosecution of drug conspiracy cases. However, Burmese policy and judicial officials have been slow to implement the law, targeting few if any major traffickers and their drug-related assets. Burmese drug officials claim they lack sufficient expertise to deal with money-laundering and financial crimes, but money laundering is believed to be carried out on a massive scale.

Formally, the Burmese government's drug enforcement efforts are led by the Office of the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control (CCDAC), which is comprised of personnel from various security services, including the police, customs, military intelligence, and the army. CCDAC now has 18 drug-enforcement task forces around the country, most located in major cities and along key transit routes near Burma's borders with China, India, and Thailand. The CCDAC, which is under the effective control of the Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence (DDSI) and relies, in part, on military personnel to execute law-enforcement duties, continues to suffer from a lack of adequate resources to support its law-enforcement mission.

Corruption. There is no evidence that the government, on an institutional level, is involved in the drug trade. However, there are persistent and reliable reports that officials, particularly corrupt army personnel posted in outlying areas, are either involved in the drug business or are paid to allow the drug business to be conducted by others. Army personnel wield considerable political clout locally, and their involvement in trafficking is a significant problem. The Burmese have said that they would welcome information from others on corruption within their ranks, though only a few military personnel are known to have been arrested for narcotics-related offenses.

The lack of an enforcement effort against money laundering encourages the use of drug proceeds in legitimate business ventures by traffickers or former traffickers. Businesses owned by family members of former or present traffickers have invested heavily in infrastructure projects, such as roads and port facilities, as well as in hotels and other real-estate development projects during the year. Some of these investments are intended to supplement government expenditures on rural development projects in areas under control of the ethnic insurgent and trafficking groups. There is solid evidence indicating that drug profits formed the seed capital for many otherwise legitimate enterprises in the commercial, services, and manufacturing sectors. In February, the GOB effectively suspended the operations of the Myanmar Kyone Yeom Company, which had strong ties to the Wa, for violating the Myanmar Company Act, although the government did not indicate that this was a counternarcotics action. The company's chairman, a former high-level United Wa State Army officer, was reportedly later sentenced to 9 years imprisonment. The company had been active in construction, real estate, tourism, and trade projects in Burma.

Agreements and Treaties. Burma is a party to the 1961 UN Single Convention, the 1971 UN Convention on Psychotropic Substances and the 1988
UN Drug Convention. The Rangoon regime, however, has always refused to extradite Burmese citizens to other countries. The United States does not have a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) with Burma. The USG believes that a U.S.-U.K. extradition treaty, which was accepted by the post-independence Burmese government in 1948, remains in force and is applicable to U.S. requests for extradition of drug fugitives from Burma. The GOB continues to refuse to recognize the applicability of this treaty.

The GOB is a member of a six-nation (Burma, Cambodia, China, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam) Memorandum of Understanding, which includes the UNDCP, on a sub-regional action plan aimed at controlling precursor chemicals and reducing illicit drug use in the highlands of Southeast Asia. At a meeting in Hanoi in mid-May, the six Mekong Region Countries signed three more agreements for projects on demand reduction, improving drug abuse statistics, and enhancing cross-border cooperation to reduce opium cultivation. The GOB signed bilateral drug control agreements with India in 1993, with Bangladesh in 1994, with Vietnam in 1995, and with the Russian Federation, Laos, and The Philippines in 1997.

**Cultivation and Production.** Burma remains the world’s largest producer of opium. Potential production decreased sharply from 1997 levels, however, marking the second straight year of decline after a decade of high and steady production. Opium cultivation declined an estimated 16 percent and production declined an estimated 26 percent to 1750 metric tons. Since the early 1990s the areas of most intense cultivation have gradually shifted from southern to northern Shan State. The bulk of the opium crop has been in areas controlled by ethnic minority groups such as the United Wa State Army, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (Kokang Chinese), the Mongko Defense Army (Kachin), the Kachin Defense Army, and the Palaung National Organization, with which the Burmese military junta has sought cease-fires since 1989. In the last two years, however, the GOB has begun to increase its presence in areas previously under ethnic control, with the notable exception of the Wa region. Government eradication efforts increased during 1998 with the launching of a campaign in northern Shan State. These efforts, along with a drought in southern Shan State, were responsible for the sharp decline in potential opium production in 1998. The GOB conducted a baseline survey of opium cultivation from January to June 1998 aimed at determining actual opium production (as opposed to potential production that the USG measures) throughout the country. According to Burmese figures there were 151,201 acres of poppy crops yielding 665.28 tons. The methodology used to arrive at these figures is unknown, and the U.S. must rely on the higher figures resulting from the joint opium yield survey.

**Drug Flow/Transit.** Most heroin in Burma is produced in small, mobile labs located near the borders with Thailand and China in Shan State in areas controlled by ethnic narco-insurgencies. As a result of increased deployment of troops in northern Shan State and more aggressive law-enforcement efforts, the GOB was on pace to match last year’s record destruction of refineries. A growing amount of methamphetamine is reportedly produced in labs co-located with heroin refineries in the Wa region and the former Shan United Army Territory in southern Shan State. Seizures of amphetamine labs trebled in 1998, reflecting the growing popularity of methamphetamine production among traffickers. Heroin and methamphetamine produced by Burmese ethnic groups are trafficked largely through unmarked transit routes crossing the porous Chinese and Thai borders; to a lesser extent over the Indian, Bangladeshi, and Lao borders; and through Rangoon onward by ship to other countries in the region. Although Thailand remains an important route for Burmese heroin to exit Southeast Asia, trafficking through China is on the increase.

Acetic anhydride, an essential chemical in the production of heroin, and ephedrine, the principal chemical ingredient of methamphetamine, are imported primarily from China. Traffickers continued moving heroin through central Burma, often from Lashio, through Mandalay to Rangoon or other seaports, such as Moulmein, for shipment to Singapore or Malaysia. Trafficking routes leading through Kachin and Chin States and Sagaing Division in northern Burma to India continued to operate as secondary routes.

**Demand Reduction.** Drug abuse is a growing problem in Burma. Official estimates put the drug-
addicted population at approximately 66,463, but UNDCP and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working in the health sector estimate the actual number is significantly higher, totaling about 400-500,000. Heroin is cheap in Burma, and intravenous use of heroin contributed to the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS, particularly in the Kachin and Shan States. According to the GOB’s "Rapid Assessment Study of Drug Abuse in Myanmar" sponsored by the Ministry of Health and UNDCP in 1995, drug treatment services are not reaching most drug users because of a lack of facilities, lack of properly trained personnel, and inadequate treatment methods. A $300,000 UNDCP-funded demand-reduction project is being implemented by the NGO, "World Concern," in Kachin State.

IV. U.S. Policy Initiatives
Direct material USG counternarcotics aid to Burma has remained suspended since 1988, when the Burmese military brutally repressed the pro-democracy movement. In September, the GOB refused to renew a crop substitution project, Project Old Soldier, being carried out by the U.S. NGO "101 Veterans, Inc." in the Kutkai area of northern Shan State. The project, which had been in operation for two years with USG funding approved by Congress, had assisted 25 villages with cultivation of corn and other crops as viable, economic alternatives to opium cultivation. The project more than doubled the yield of corn compared with local varieties as a result of improved seeds, use of fertilizers, and application of herbicides. The GOB's decision to end the project was based on bilateral political frictions with the U.S. and undermined farmers' hopes to develop alternative income sources to opium.

Currently, the USG engages the Burmese government on counternarcotics on a very limited level. DEA, through the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, shares drug-related intelligence with the GOB and conducts joint drug-enforcement investigations with Burmese counternarcotics authorities. Various U.S. agencies have conducted opium yield surveys in the mountainous regions of the Shan State in 1993,
Undertake opium poppy eradication on a wide scale in areas under its direct control or immediate influence; Press ethnic groups, such as the Wa, the Kokang, and the Kachin, who have pledged to create opium-free zones in their regions, to make good on their commitments; Enforce existing anti-drug, conspiracy, and anti-money laundering legislation; Provide strong support to multilateral drug-control projects in the Shan State.

**Bilateral Cooperation.** USG counternarcotics cooperation with the Burmese regime is restricted to basic law-enforcement operations and involves no bilateral material or training assistance from the U.S. due to U.S. concerns over Burma’s commitment to effective counternarcotics measures, human rights, and political reform. DEA’s liaison with Burmese policymakers and military officials-conducted mainly through DEA’s office in Rangoon—will continue and will focus on providing intelligence on enforcement targets and coordinating investigations of international drug-trafficking groups. During the year, the USG encouraged contacts between Burmese and Thai law-enforcement agencies and facilitated joint anti-drug operations.

**The Road Ahead.** Based on experience in dealing with significant narcotics-trafficking problems elsewhere around the world, the USG recognizes that ultimately large-scale and long-term international aid, including development assistance and law-enforcement aid, will be needed to curb fundamentally and irreversibly drug production and trafficking. The USG is prepared to consider resuming appropriate assistance contingent upon the GOB’s unambiguous demonstration of a strong commitment to counternarcotics, the rule of law, punishment of traffickers and major trafficking organizations (including asset forfeiture and seizure), anti-corruption, enforcement of anti-money laundering legislation, continued eradication of opium cultivation and destruction of drug-processing laboratories, and greater respect for human rights.

from the surveys give both governments a much more accurate understanding of the scope, magnitude, and changing geographic distribution of Burma’s opium crop.

The U.S. Government continues frequently to urge the Burmese government to take serious steps to curb Burma’s large-scale opium production and heroin trafficking. Specifically, the Rangoon Regime has been encouraged to:

Prosecute drug-trafficking organizations and their leaders, such as Wei Xuekang, and deprive them of assets derived from the drug trade;

Take action against drug-related corruption, including prosecution and appropriate punishment of corrupt officials and money launderers;

Take action against fugitive drug-traffickers and turn them over to third countries;

USG counternarcotics cooperation ... is restricted to basic law-enforcement operations and involves no bilateral material or training assistance ... due to U.S. concerns over Burma’s commitment to effective counternarcotics measures, human rights, and political reform.
In late April 1996, hundreds of international diplomats, journalists and government figures gathered for the opening of the world’s first museum dedicated to the fight against narcotic drugs. The location of this unusual museum? The small town of Mong La on the remote border between China and Myanmar, in the famous "Golden Triangle" where much of the world’s opium crop is grown.

"It is a well known fact," said Lt. General Khin Nyunt, one of Myanmar’s top officials and the leader of the fight against narcotics, "that in Myanmar, the Government and the whole populace residing in the border area have wholeheartedly committed themselves to eradicate the narcotics drugs problem. However, some Western countries who turn a blind eye to our successful efforts in this regard are still unfairly accusing Myanmar by disseminating untrue reports and exaggerated news".
According to U.S. Government figures, Myanmar is the world's largest grower of opium, and production grew by nine percent in Myanmar during the 1995-1996 season. An estimated 2,560 tons were produced enough to make at least 250 tons of refined heroin, total global production of opium is estimated to be about 4,000 tons.

But the opening of the new Museum reflected a key fact about Myanmar's fight against narcotics. Having reached ceasefire agreements with the insurgent groups along the border, where most of the opium is grown, Yangon can now move ahead with its plan to make the remote areas into "opium-free zones" by the year 2000. Working together with local leaders, the ruling State Peace and Development Council is now implementing crop substitution and infrastructure development programs so the local hill peoples, many of whom have depended for decades on profits from the opium trade, can develop an economy based on legal crops and local manufacturing.

"We've been fighting for 30 or 40 years, and now we are looking for development" says U Phone Kya Phu, a Koban Leader in Shan State, and a former guerrilla with the Communist Party of Burma. "Our most important responsibility is to upgrade the living standards of the people who are growing the poppy. So with the help of the Government, we are introducing crop substitution programs. The people living in the high mountains, their only crop is poppy. So we are relocating them to the plains, and setting up soup factories, cigarette factories. The Government is helping us, but it isn't enough. We are looking for some kind of support from the international community."

That view is echoed by U Mung Sa La, chairman of Special Region Number 1 in Northern Shan State. "We have promised the Government that we will be drug free zone by the 2000, and now we're working with them to build infrastructure. We're growing rubber, tea, corn, and some other crops. But I want to be frank. If we push hard to get rid of the poppies, then our people will suffer, and they will be angry, so we have to provide a better alternative. But in the mountains it is difficult, because not many other crops grow there. And if the international community is interested in helping us, this will speed up the pace of reform."

Government officials have made dramatic displays of the fight against narcotics, and holds very large gatherings of international guests and diplomats and Government officials watched, 424 kilos of heroin, 766 kilos of opium and 5.2 million amphetamine tablets and various amounts of other drugs were set on fire on large metal grills, producing billowing clouds of dark smoke that rose for hundreds of feet into the air. Nearby, three steam rollers drove back and forth across hundreds of bottles of phensedyl and opium-containing syrups, crushing the glass into the ground.

"We burn the drugs because we would like to show the world the extent of our hatred and abhorrence for narcotic drugs," Police Major General Soe Win secretary of the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control, told the crowd. "We would like to instill in the hearts and minds of the international community the will to fight this evil menace."

In his remarks, General Soe Win noted that "the production of illegal drugs had dramatically declined in our country' during 1996, the result of the (exchanging of arms for peace) of former drug baron Khun sa and his Mong Tai Army in January. He also noted that new administrative bodies had been set up to fight drug production. Another official noted that the Government had made "unprecedented commitments of new resources... in law enforcement, treatment, prevention efforts, education and rehabilitation programs", he said, adding that the armed forces "had to sacrifice 700 lives" fighting narcotics traders.

Despite these efforts, the United States has continued to criticize Myanmar's fight against narcotics. "Burmese authorities have made no discernible efforts to improve their performance," senior US narcotics official Robert Gelbard stated in November 1996. "From a hardheaded, drug-control point of view, I have to conclude that State Law and Order Restoration Council has been part of the problem, not the solution."

Despite the evidence of Myanmar's anti-drug campaign, the US State department issued a report last March accusing Yangon of not cooperating in the international war against narcotics, a report that officials immediately denied. "We are cooperating as much as we can with any country," said Colonel Kyaw Thein, who is also a member of the Central Committee for Drug Abuse Control. He called the report "absolutely untrue," and noted that "the US Government's system of acquiring information seems to be wrong."
Many foreign drug experts in Myanmar agree, and say that Myanmar is being made a scapegoat for America's failed war on drugs. "The (United States) State Department says that opium production has doubled since SLORC came to power in 1998, therefore SLORC is responsible, one Western drug enforcement official in Yangon said recently. "But the key factor in 1988 was that the U.S. decertified Burma and stopped its drug assistance. The U.S. was providing about 80 percent of the funding for fighting drugs, so naturally when that money dried up, opium production increased. But rather than admit their error, the U.S. is blaming SLORC."

Other drug enforcement officials agree. "The Burmese were extremely cooperative with U.S. Law enforcement during the time I was there," said Barry Broman, who spent two years at the U.S. Embassy before retiring in 1996. "They provided major assistance. The problem was the limited amount of assistance we could give the Burmese."

There have also been accusations that drug traffickers play an important role in the Myanmar economy. In May 1997, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright claimed that drug money had penetrated all reaches of society and traffickers were becoming "leading lights" in Myanmar. "Drug money is so pervasive in the Burmese economy that it taints legitimate investment", she warned.

But Broman, who is one of America's most knowledgeable experts on the complex world of Asian drug trafficking, questions Albright's opinion. "There are a lot of accusations that SLORC is involved in narcotics, but no one's produced any evidence — so where's the smoking gun?" he said, during a recent trip to Yangon. "In my experience, the trade is not institutional in Burma. There's indirect profiting from the narcotics trade. But across the border, you find Thai politicians and Generals in bed with the traffickers. That's not the case here."

Despite criticisms from the West, Myanmar officials often point out that it was the British who introduced opium production in the northern Myanmar states in the 19th century, in order to increase supplies for the opium trade with China. As Lt-Colonel Hla Min of the Office of Strategic Studies noted in a recent speech to the Institute for Strategic and International Studies, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency also became involved. "The CIA not only encouraged the production of opium in this region to help finance its KMT allies' activities, but also to finance considerable arms supplies to the KMT and the various ethnic groups in Myanmar. Myanmar, like China and India, has been a victim of the British colonial power and later became a victim of the United States. Regrettfully, Myanmar has been victimized again by the same two countries on this narcotic issue for politicizing under-currents. Contrary to their accusation and allegation, the present Government of Myanmar has been able to achieve tremendous success single-handedly in the fight against the drug menace."

American experts like Broman agree. "On their own, the Burmese effected the (exchange of arms for peace) of Khun Sa," he said, referring to the insurgent leader who (exchanged arms for peace) in 1996 and is believed to have funded his activities by taxing opium trade. "They made a major dent in the drug trade, and we gave them no credit. The human rights people say they cut a sweetheart deal, but I don't believe that. In the U.S., we call it a plea bargain. And in this case, justice was served, because Khun Sa is out of the drug business. And that means, 12,000 armed men (soldiers in Khun Sa's army) are no longer in the drug business."

Myanmar officials say they will continue the fight against narcotics, for the simple reason that it is in their best interest. But they acknowledge that it may take some time to fully eradicate the poppy crop although progress will be faster if the West stops criticizing and starts helping to solve the problem.

As U Aung Khin Hti, leader of the Pa-O ethnic groups, says, "The growers are not rich people; they live in remote areas, some can not even eat twice a day. It's a survival crop. Many of our soldiers have been killed in the fight against drugs, but for political reasons, we get no recognition, only blame. We hear the same thing, that Myanmar is not serious enough. But for a long time, we have had no support from the US, not even moral support. To solve the problem, we need to educate people and improve the economy. Only then will the drug problem be solved."

The article appeared in the October 26, 1998 issue of Burma's state-controlled newspaper The New Light of Myanmar. Stephen Brookes is an American freelance journalist living in Rangoon.
n January 1996, well-known drug warlord Khun Sa officially surrendered to the State Law & Order Restoration Council (SLORC) military junta ruling Burma, ending his leadership of the Merng Tai Army (MTA). Khun Sa moved to Rangoon, where he is now a successful businessman, and the MTA ceased to exist, though a large portion of it became the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA) under commander Yord Serk. The SURA has since become part of the new Shan State Army (SSA) alliance and is now actively fighting a guerrilla war against the State Peace & Development Council (SPDC), which is what the SLORC now calls itself. The headquarters of Khun Sa and the MTA was at Ho Murng (often spelled Ho Mong), a remote village in southwestern Shan State near the Thai border which had grown to the size of a small town under the MTA's influence. Immediately following the surrender of the MTA, SLORC troops moved in and occupied Ho Murng. Up until that time villagers from the area say they had lived fairly peacefully, most of them farming rice and sesame. Some opium farming existed, but Khun Sa bought most of his raw opium from other areas for refinement into heroin. According to the villagers, when SLORC first occupied Ho Murng there was little change for the first few months, but after that life in the area changed entirely. Once the SLORC battalions had firmly installed themselves in the area they began making heavy demands on villagers for money, livestock, alcohol and other goods, as well as forced labor. Villagers were forced to tear down empty houses and to help the troops build Army camps,
ation around Ho Murng
and now they are being used as forced labor breaking and carrying stones to pave one of several roads being worked on in the area. This road goes from Ho Murng towards Lang Kher, a town about 80 kilometers further north where the SPDC operations command for the area is located.

Forced labor and other abuses in the area have become such a heavy burden on the villagers that several villages have almost completely emptied out, with most of the villagers fleeing to Thailand. The situation only got worse when fighting broke out between the SPDC and the SSA in the area earlier this year. In March 1998, a group of several hundred villagers from the Ho Murng area fled and arrived at Pang Yon in Thailand. SPDC troops crossed the border and threatened to attack them, so the Thai Army had to move into the area and eventually many of the refugees were moved out of the area and into an existing Karenni refugee camp. According to the refugees, the SPDC troops contacted them and tried to convince them to go back, most likely because they need villagers in the Ho Murng area to do forced labor and to provide loot and extortion money for the SPDC officers. To convince the villagers to go back, the SPDC troops told them they would help them to begin growing opium so that they could make a lot of money. Most of these villagers had never grown opium before, and they all refused.

Villagers, porters who have been through the area and SPDC deserters have reported that many new opium fields have been created near Ho Murng since the SLORC/SPDC occupation of the area, particularly in late 1997 and early 1998. For several years now farmers from Shan State have stated that anyone in SLORC/SPDC-held areas is free to grow and transport opium as long as they pay the required tax to the local military. Those who are arrested are simply those who have not paid the taxes. Occasionally people who have paid the taxes are also arrested, most likely when local battalions receive orders from above to produce a certain number of arrests within a certain time frame so that the junta can show impressive statistics to some international aid donor. Even when this happens it is never the key people who are arrested, just the small farmers or itinerant laborers who are carrying the opium to make a living. People from Ho Murng area now claim that some of the opium fields have been set up by the Army, that villagers are forced to do labor in these fields, and that much of the buying, selling and transportation of opium in the area is done by SPDC officers. It appears that the SPDC Battalions also control almost all of the business producing and selling Ya Ma (known as 'crazy medicine' or 'horse medicine'; 'myin say' in Burmese), an amphetamine-type drug popular in Burma and Thailand. One villager from near Ho Murng claims that since the SLORC/SPDC occupation of Ho Murng the price of Ya Ma has dropped from 50 or 100 Baht per tablet to 10 Baht, and that SPDC troops tightly guard the Ya Ma factories.

As this report is being printed, SPDC representatives are attending a United Nations conference on drugs in New York in order to plead for money to combat drug production. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) is claiming that by working with the SPDC and providing them with tens of millions of dollars they can completely eradicate opium cultivation in Burma within 10 years, despite the fact that experienced U.S. drug agents in Thailand have stated that during 30 years in Thailand, even with the help of a cooperative government, they have still only managed to cut 70 percent of Thailand's drug production — which was never more than a small fraction of what Burma's production is today. The SPDC and the UNDCP say that the first priority in order to reduce drug production in Shan State is to construct all-season roads into all the remotest areas of the state, so that farmers can get crops to market in the rainy season as part of the crop substitution programs. Large sums of aid money are supposed to be needed to build these all-season roads. In fact, very few crops in Burma are harvested in rainy season, they are harvested before or after rainy season. And as one villager points out in this report, even if the SPDC has a budget to build a road they generally keep it and use villagers for forced labor instead. Another villager adds that even Khun Sa used bulldozers and backhoes, but the SPDC prefers to use villagers. When the villagers flee, the SPDC suggests to them that if the human rights abuses are making life too hard for them, they could always come back and survive as opium growers. When villagers do so because they have no other choice, the SPDC can then point to the rising opium production as a reason to receive even more international anti-drug aid.
However, the money-driven bureaucracies mandated to fight drug production go on acting as though they believe there is no connection between human rights and fighting drugs. The villagers interviewed in this report could tell them otherwise. Even the mere discussion of implementing crop substitution programs in Shan State, where the SLORC/SPDC has systematically destroyed over 1,400 villages and forcibly relocated over 300,000 people since 1996, sounds absurd to Shan farmers who have already been driven off their land by human rights abuses.

INTERVIEW

Following are excerpts from an interview with Sai Heng, age 30, a Shan Buddhist from Nong Yao Village in Ho Mung township.

Sai Heng who is married with two young children, farms rice and sesame in his village near Khun Sa's former headquarters at Ho Murng. He recently fled to Thailand and was interviewed on April 29, 1998.

Q • Where are you from?

A • We are originally from Nong Yao village close to Ho Murng, then we moved to Pang Yon [a place in Thailand where many new Shan refugees took temporary refuge]. We arrived at Pang Yon the second week of the fourth month [in March by the Shan calendar] and we stayed there more than 20 days. Sorry I don't remember exactly, but we fled our village after the celebration of Union Day [February 12th]. Nong Yao is two hours' walk from Ho Murng, north of Ho Murng. There is a road to get to the village but the road is quite old.

Q • Why did you flee from your village?

A • Because we were oppressed by the Burmese soldiers so we could not live there any longer. That is why we moved. And I want to say how they oppressed us. Very often they forced us to carry stones to pave the road, so we didn't have time to earn our own living. We didn't have any chance to work in our farms because they were forcing us to carry rocks all the time. We couldn't stand it anymore so we had to escape that situation. When we refused to go [to forced labor] we were tied and beaten. Even our village headman was seized and beaten. That is why we could not stay at all, and finally the village became empty of its people. Nobody dared to stay. Besides, all our chickens, cooking oil, rice, our pigs, our chillies, even our pots and dishes, whatever they [SPDC soldiers] saw they took it away by force. They ate our food and our livestock, and even though we begged them not to do it they just tied up the owners and then killed their cattle, pigs and chickens. Then they ate them while they drank alcohol. Even worse, even after we had nothing left to give them we were supposed to go and buy things from other villages to give to them. When we went to the other villages to buy the things that they asked for, sometimes the house owner was not there and the neighbors said, "Oh, the owner of this house is not here, he went to the jungle to become a revolutionary." Then when we went back and told the soldiers that the person wasn't there, they went and broke open the lock and took all the house owner's belongings.

Q • Did the Army come to your village very often?

A • They came and camped in the village for a few days, then they went and camped for a while in every village around there. In Nam Kuyt they caused problems. There were three women who were on their way to buy things to eat in Ho Murng, and they met some Burmese troops in Nong Laeng. The soldiers said "Come, we have rice", and they made the three women go into their camp, and then they raped those three women. After that they gave them one pyi of rice each [about 2 kg/4.4 lb] and they said "You don't have to pay for this rice." They were from Nam Kuyt, not our village. I don't know the names of the women, they were Pa'O and we live five miles away from them.

Q • What about the other villages around?

A • The other villages also had the same problems as we did. The first village is Lon Yao, the second is
Ho Kit, the third is Nong Ai, the fourth Myo Yat, and the fifth Mayk Houng; all of these villages are totally empty now because they [the soldiers] did as I have explained. They started emptying out two months ago. They treated us badly and we could not stand this kind of oppression. Whenever we couldn’t give them what they asked for we were supposed to give them money.

When the soldiers realized that we had all moved to the border of Thailand they sent someone to tell us, "Come back, all of you come back, come and work in your opium fields again. When you grow it we will buy all that you produce, and we will pay you the same price that you could get from others." That is what they said. They were three battalions, #525 [LIB], #332 [LIB] and #99 [IB] from Murng Pan and Lang Kher. We answered, "No we don’t want to come back." We didn’t even farm opium before. I farmed rice and sesame. We told them that we don’t want to farm opium and that we won’t go back.

Q • Isn’t it forbidden to cultivate opium?
A • When the Burmese soldiers arrived in that area [in 1996, after Khun Sa’s surrender] it was full of people, but later there were fewer and fewer people because of their oppression. They didn’t like that [they need villagers for forced labor and as a source of loot and extortion money]. They tried to find out why the villagers left their villages. They were wondering, "Why did people leave after we arrived?" So finally they tried to make us go back home by telling us that if we did, we would be allowed to cultivate opium. They said, "If you farm opium you will earn good money, you will have money and gold, you will do good business. If you don’t know where to sell it we will buy it, but we’ll collect a tax."

Look, when Khun Sa was there it was said that Khun Sa was an opium warlord but we never saw this kind of thing happening around our village. But now, since Khun Sa surrendered, the price of Ya Ma ['crazy medicine,' known in Burmese as 'myin say,' an amphetamine-type drug common in Burma and Thailand] has gone down to 10 Baht per tablet, and the Burmese soldiers carry their opium and their Ya Ma along with them from place to place. They even come and sell it in Thailand, in Mai Kai On and Mai Kai Long villages. Before I’d never even heard about these kind of things, but now I’ve seen it myself.

Q • Do you know if there is a place where they produce Ya Ma in your area?
A • Only the Burmese [soldiers] produce Ya Ma and it is forbidden to go to the factories where they make it. It is forbidden and the places are guarded by soldiers. They make the Ya Ma outside the villages. In our area the man who transports the opium drives a 4-wheel drive truck [small pickup truck]. No matter what checkpoints he has to pass by he is never checked, and he has all kinds of equipment for transforming opium [into heroin] in his 4-wheel drive truck. He is an operations commander [byu ha mu; strategic commander]. He buys the rough opium with gold, he buys one and a half viss [2.4 kg/5.2 lb]. I don’t know his name but he is from that same regional command, from Lang Kher. Now he’s already moved, but the other units also do it the same way. Now only the Burmese do that business, the Shan and Pa’O don’t do it. In Ho Murng there is a lot of Ya Ma, plenty! The sellers and the buyers are both Burmese. The Burmese soldiers just put on their mufti [civilian clothes] and then they sell the stuff from village to village as far as Mai Kai Long [in Thailand]. They go there not only to sell Ya Ma, they sell opium as well. They sold what they seized from the opium merchants after Khun Sa surrendered. After that they made their own fields at Gong Sarng and Gong Mai Houng and they forced the villagers there to work for them.

Q • Would you say that there are more opium fields now than before Khun Sa surrendered?
A • In Khun Sa days people were talking all the time about opium, but I had never seen it. I didn’t even know what it looked like. But now, since the Burmese came to rule the area we’ve had the chance to see what opium, Ya Ma, and also heroin are. But we don’t buy it, we don’t use it. We just saw it when they came to deal in it. Before when Khun Sa was there, we just heard people mention opium and we saw opium in pictures, as though it were some kind of vegetable. [Khun Sa bought most of his opium from other areas before refining it into heroin.]
The decision by the France-based international police organization, Interpol, to hold the Fourth International Heroin Conference in Rangoon February 23-26, sparked controversy among many of its member governments and outside observers. Burma, the country that produces over 60 percent of the world's heroin and whose government has been widely condemned for its association with known drug lords, was seen as an odd choice indeed for a counter-narcotics meeting. U.S. Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, Frank Loy, stated that "Interpol's secretariat chose the venue for this meeting without consulting Interpol members." In the end, countries including Britain, Denmark, the United States, Belgium, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Luxembourg, boycotted the conference.

A further response to Interpol's decision was an internet discussion on Burma and the narcotics trade which was conducted by a coalition of organizations and scheduled to coincide with the Rangoon conference. Following are excerpts from that on-line conversation. These excerpts have been edited by Burma Debate and participants have chosen whether to identify themselves or remain anonymous. A complete transcript of the discussion, which was coordinated with the help of the French NGO, Info-Birmanie, can be found on http://www.ifrance.com/_forum/?ForumName=mhaubert.
ESCobar Birmans?
Alain Labrousse, directeur de l'OGD (OBSEVA-
TOIRE GEOPOlItIQUE DES DROGUES)
L'Observatoire géopolitique des drogues (OGD) et ses correspondants ont été parmi les premiers à signaler l'implication de la junte militaire birmane dans le trafic des drogues. Au point de lancer, lors d'une conférence de presse tenue à Paris à la veille de l'attribution du prix Nobel de la Paix à Aung Sang Su Khi en 1991, le terme de «narco-dictature birmane» qui a fait fortune depuis.
La Dépêche Internationale des Drogues et les cinq rapports annuels de l'OGD n'ont cessé ensuite d'étayer cette prise de position de preuves ou de faits de présomptions convergents. Ces dernières étaient recueillies par les meilleurs spécialistes de cette question, soit sur le terrain, soit au titre d'envoyés spéciaux. Les uns comme les autres après s'être livrés à une analyse critique des données fournies par de nombreux correspondants locaux appartenant à des mouvances extrêmement diverses. Il a été longtemps de bon ton dans les milieux officiels d'un certain nombre de pays, de qualifier les affirmations de l'OGD de «polémiques». Ainsi, la DEA, jusqu'au virage du Département d'État à l'égard de la Birmanie qui s'est produit en 1997, continuait à affirmer, contre toute évidence, que le trafic d'héroïne était uniquement le fait de minorités ethniques et de milices établies sur des territoires échappant au contrôle de l'État (la DEA aurait d'ailleurs insisté pour participer à la Conférence sur l'héroïne). La France, dont l'entreprise TOTAL construit en collaboration avec l'entreprise américaine UNOCAL, le fameux gazoduc, est remarquablement discrète sur l'implication du gouvernement birman dans le trafic de drogues et lutte au sein de l'Union européenne pour qu'il ne soit pas frappé de sanctions. De là à décider que la 4ème Conférence internationale sur l'héroïne se tienne dans le pays qui en est le premier producteur mondial sous l'égide de son gouvernement, il y avait plus qu'un pas. Assez curieusement les arguments avancés par certains pays, Comme la France, pour se désister se situe dans le même registre que ceux qui défendent, comme Interpol sa tenue. En réponse à une question d'actualité d'une parlementaire, le ministre des Affaires étrangères répond que la situation politique en Birmanie ne devrait pas permettre la tenue de cette conférence (sous entendue la répression menée contre le mouvement démocratique et les atteintes aux droits de l'homme). Raymond Kendall, dans sa lettre à Jack Lang, président de la Commission des Affaires Étrangères se place sur le même terrain lorsqu'il écrit qu'Interpol s'interdit «d'intervenir dans les questions présentant un caractère politique, militaire, religieux ou racial (article 3 du Statut). Ce n'est pas de cela qu'il s'agit, mais bien de discuter de la lutte du trafic d'héroïne avec les représentants d'une junte militaire dont les membres les plus influents sont liés aux plus grands réseaux de trafic de cette drogue sur la planète et au blanchiment qu'elle génère.
Une partie de la presse internationale admet que l'argent de la drogue est aujourd'hui le soutien de l'économie birmane.
Elle est plus dubitative sur l'implication des militaires dans le trafic dont on ne posséderait pas les preuves. Pourtant, un seul élément est à lui seul une preuve accablante : Khun Sa (Le Pablo Escobar birman) s'est rendue au début de 1996 et depuis coule des jours paisibles sous la protection des militaires tandis que ses enfants investissent ouvertement l'argent issu du trafic d'héroïne dans la construction d'hôtels, de casinos, de supermarchés, etc. Seul les naïfs croiront que cette situation de résulte pas d'un deal et que les maîtres de Rangoon n'en tirent pas un profit personnel. Nous renvoyons ceux qui voudraient d'autres «preuves» à se reporter aux deux rapports de l'OGD pour 1995-1996 et 1997-1998, disponibles sur Internet (www.ogd.org).
Alain Labrousse, directeur de l'OGD.

(TRANSLATION)
Alain Labrousse, director of OGD (Observatoire Géopolitique des Drogues)
Geopolitical Drug Watch (OGD) and its correspondents were among the first to point to the Burmese military junta’s implication in drug trafficking. They coined the term “Burmese narco-dictatorship” during a press conference in Paris the day before the Nobel Peace Prize was given to Aung Sang Suu Kyi in 1991, a term that has become widely used ever since.
OGD’s publications and its five annual reports have attempted ever since to back this position with proof, or converging presumptions, which were found by the best specialists or special envoys on the field.
For a long time OGD’s statements were referred to as "polemics" in official circles. The DEA, until the State Department reversed its position on Burma in 1997, continued stating against all evidence that heroin trafficking was solely the deed of ethnic minorities and militias operating in territories outside the state’s control (The DEA is said to have insisted on participating in the heroin Conference).

France, whose TOTAL [a France-based oil company] is building the famous pipeline with American [oil company] UNOCAL, is remarkably discrete concerning the implications of the Burmese government in drug trafficking and is fighting against sanctions within the European Community. Organizing the 4th International Conference on Heroin in the country that is the world’s foremost producer then becomes imaginable.

Curiously, the arguments given by certain countries, like France, to refrain from participating in the conference closely resemble those given by Interpol to defend it. In answering a parliamentarian’s question, the minister of foreign affairs said that the political situation in Burma does not allow the holding of the conference (referring to the repression against the democratic movement and the violations of human rights).

Raymond Kendall [Interpol’s Secretary General] in a letter to Jack Lang, president of the Commission of Foreign Affairs, takes the same stance when he writes that Interpol is forbidden "to intervene in questions relating to political, military, religious or racial matters (article 3 of the Statutes)." The point is that it is not wise to discuss the fight against heroin trafficking with the representatives of a military junta whose most influential members are linked to the largest drug trafficking network in the world and to money laundering.

Part of the international press admits that drugs do sustain the Burmese economy today. They remain doubtful on the participation of the military because of a lack of proof. Yet the sole exception is in itself devastating proof: Khun Sa (the Burmese Pablo Escobar) gave himself up, in 1996 and is leading a peaceful existence under the protection of the military while his children openly invest drug money in the construction of hotels, casinos, supermarkets, etc.... Only the naive will believe that this situation is not the result of a deal and that the masters in Rangoon don’t profit personally. We therefore advise those who seek additional "proof" to read OGD’s two reports for 1995-1996 and 1997-1998, also available on the Internet (www.ogd.org).

Alain Labrousse, Director of OGD

JE DECOUVRE LE PROBLEME ...

Quelles sont les relations économiques et politiques entre la France, l’Europe, et la Birmanie? Comment expliquer ce manque d’information en France?

HC

(TRANSLATION)

What are the economic and political relations between France, Europe, and Burma? How can we explain this lack of information in France?

HC

FRANCE, PREMIER INVESTISSEUR OCCIDENTAL

La france est le premier investisseur occidental en Birmanie, par l’investissement de TOTAL, cela a fait de Paris, jusqu’à cette conférence d’Interpol le seul soutien européen de la narco-junte. Pour plus de détails, Info-Birmanie vous fournira bibliographie récente.

AB

(TRANSLATION)

France is the foremost Western investor in Burma, through TOTAL’S investment. This has made Paris, until the Interpol conference, the only European [capital] to support the narco-junta. For more details, Info-Birmanie can provide a recent bibliography.

AB

H

MAFIA CONNECTION?

If the burmese military junta is such a mafia involved in narco-trafficking, who are its accomplices? Are there any links with the Chinese triads or with the traditional Sicilian mafia? Who distributes the drugs around the world? By which routes? Who is in charge of money-laundering and how do they proceed to do so?

[Internet Respondant]

Links go way back in time with Chinese criminal trades: Former Red Guards, who were volunteers along with the Burmese Communist Party in the 70s and 80s, turned to drug trafficking after the PCB’s demise in 1989. Some, as Li Min Xin, who have become real drug kingpins and Khun Sa rivals, signed with the chiefs of the junta, namely General Khin Nyunt, agreements of cease-fire and of economic freedom (opium and the production of its derivatives being the sole lucrative trade in the region). The routes are all the exit routes from Burma: By land...
through 5 neighboring countries (Bangladesh, India, China, Laos, Thailand), by sea and by air. In 1992-93, convoys loaded with opium and escorted by Burmese army units were observed on their way to new laboratories, on the western side of the country, near India’s border. Some of these labs were inside military installations. The money-laundering of Burmese drug profits is the only financial activity in the country: it can only operate with the help — whether voluntary or not — of foreign partners.

FACTS AND FIGURES?
Burma is said to be the largest producer of heroin in the world. Up to what amount? and what percentage of it gets to the European and American markets? Who are the other producers, in order to get the picture right?
franci@imaginet.fr

FACTS
Under the present dictatorship, in the last 10 years, the opium production has tripled, from 800 tons a year to 2400, which yields some 200 tons of heroin a year. In the USA, Burmese “white” amounts to 60% of the American market. The percentage is much lower in Europe where it faces competition from Afghan-Pakistanese exports.
Casnier@wanadoo.fr

WHAT ABOUT SPEED?
Why does Interpol’s conference focus only on heroin when it is said that Burma is also a large source for the production of amphetamines that flood all over Asia?
76251.2652@compuserve.com

WHAT?
Maybe it’s because Burmese amphetamine exports concern only the regional market, whereas Burmese heroin is a world “success.”
Casnier@wanadoo.fr

EXPLORING THE CORPORATE DRUG CONNECTION IN BURMA
For the past two years, the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers International Union [OCAW] (now known as PACE International Union) has been actively involved in exploring the link between oil companies operating in Burma and heroin money laundering. At the past two UNOCAL shareholder meetings and last year’s ARCO [U.S.-based oil company] shareholder meeting, OCAW members and shareholders sponsored resolutions which stated the following:
Be it resolved: The shareholders request that a committee of all outside directors of the Company, conduct extensive research and publish a report on: (1) the allegation that the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE) has in the past and is currently serving as a conduit for illegal drug money laundering in Burma; (2) the extent to which Company officials have been aware of any facts linking MOGE to drug money laundering; and (3) a recommended course of action for the Board of Directors to take based on the findings.

Needless, to say UNOCAL and ARCO did everything possible to have these shareholder proposals eliminated. However, the Securities and Exchange Commission essentially ruled that the shareholder resolutions had real substance, and the oil companies were forced to publish these resolutions and send them out to hundreds of thousands of shareholders. These resolutions, although they received little support from the large institutional shareholders who hold the bulk of company stock, served to educate many shareholders about the dangers and ethical lapses of operating in a country dominated by drug traffickers, whom U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright described as people “who once spent their days leading mule trains down jungle trails (and who) are now leading lights in Burma’s new market economy and leading figures in its new political order.”

Representing workers at both of these companies, we clearly felt an obligation to raise these issues. If, in fact, the allegation (as first reported by the Geopolitical Drugwatch in Paris) that these companies’ partner, MOGE, was the major channel for laundering the revenues of heroin produced and exported by the Burmese army, then these American-based companies were directly contributing to the illicit heroin market in the U.S. and elsewhere.

Recently, PACE members in Los Angeles played a critical role in securing the passage of a selective purchasing law banning commerce with companies which continue to operate in Burma. A large part of the compelling case presented was based on the alleged connection of U.S. companies to drug money laundering. As Secretary of State Albright also stated, “Drug money has become so pervasive in Burma that it taints legitimate investment and threatens the region as a whole.”

We have recently learned that more information is starting to emerge about the drug economy in
Burma. Unfortunately, this information comes only in tidbits and probably at great risk to whomever provides it. What we learned from our members sponsoring shareholder resolutions over the past two years was if these allegations of drug money laundering were unfounded that companies could have easily dismissed them and cleared their names by conducting the recommended study. By refusing to act, the companies were obviously refusing to indict themselves. It is our opinion that the companies clearly understood that "looking the other way" was part of the price of doing business in Burma — whether it was drug money laundering, forced labor, or murder. In more than a few cases, direct company participation in atrocities may have occurred.

Any cooperation with the Narco-Regime of Burma in halting the drug trade can only be a great farce. Yes, one day the truth concerning the pervasive and government-supported drug operations in Burma will emerge. But bringing us to that day, can only come if a sense of purpose emerges among governments, international organizations, NGO's and international law enforcement agencies to pursue these allegations. We in PACE will not wait, because we understand that restoration of democracy in Burma is the precondition to address this problem. Inhibiting the drug trade in Burma can only come, after the people of Burma are given a chance to make this decision. Therefore, we will continue to support the movement to restore democracy and trade union rights in Burma.

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GERMAN BANKS EAGER FOR BURMESE DRUG MONEY

[Editor's note: The translation of this article was provided by the internet contributor, with editing by Burma Debate. It first appeared in the German language newspaper Tageszeitung on February 22, 1999.]

INTERPOL TRUSTS THE CAT TO KEEP THE CREAM

by Silke Blum

The drug conference, which starts in Burma today, could be useful for the drug lords there. German banks, which want to do business in Rangoon, could also help the drug dealers involuntarily. (…)

Many generals got rich [through] blackmail money. General Maung Aye, the current head of the army of the military council, was paid off by the opium king, Khun Sa, when he was commander-in-chief of the government troops in the opium hills. A [confidential] paper of the Thai anti-drug authority tells that the '70s-death-sentenced drug lord, Lo Hsin-han, was given the privilege of smuggling heroin to the Thai border from secret service head, KhinNyun, in 1993.

Burma has surpassed Thailand in being the turntable for money-[launderers]. When Thailand announced [plans] to liberalize its banking system and so broke the monopoly of the Sino-Asian family clans, the bankers were alarmed. The Burmese business partners became convinced of the advantages of an economic opening. The "Visit Myanmar Year" [editor's note: A tourism and foreign exchange promotion by the regime] offered the opportunity of "laundering" drug money through large-scale investment in tourism. Since then, more and more drug money gets laundered through the Burmese economy. The financial markets are booming. (…)

The Deutsche Bank, the Dresdner Bank, the Berliner Bank and also the West/LB [the four biggest German banks] have applied for permission [to operate] in Burma. While German bank employees, since 1992, can get prison terms even [for accepting] drug money, German banks have nothing to fear in Burma. Thereby, according to estimations of the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, half of the money circulating in Burma is coming out of illegal businesses. But money laundering is legal in Burma. Although money laundering is as important for drug dealers as production and transport of their wares, the goal of the German government is to improve the possibilities of the police in the [drug] producing countries in the struggle against drug smuggling: "Material support for observations, delivering of communication and transporting equipment [and] information technology" were on the 1990 action schedule of the German government, whose international goals are also adopted by the new government. Liaison agents of the Bundeskriminalamt [German "FBI"] are already in contact with the Burmese leaders. The possibility of getting monitoring equipment for free must sound like music to the ears of the Burmese security forces. In international circles, the Burmese junta complains often about the lack of technical help from foreign countries. Thereby the [counter-
narcotics agency] doesn't belong to the police, but to the Ministry of Home Affairs. Despite this, the Burmese police are very well equipped. The special unit "political examination" is especially feared by the democratic opposition. Human rights groups estimate that there are over 2000 dissidents in jail. There is torture in the prisons. [Therefore] it sounds strange that the general secretary of Interpol claimed last year in Vienna that international cooperation of the police has to be done in the spirit of the general declaration of human rights. Meanwhile more and more internationally-wanted drug dealers openly find shelter in Burma without disturbance by the authorities, this month, for example, the amphetamine king Wei Hsueh-kang. The USA is offering two million dollars for his head.

*Posted by Heiko Schaefer, Burma Group Tuebingen*

**WHAT IS THE EXTENT OF THE INTERACTION BETWEEN BURMESE HEROIN AND AIDS?**

Burma (Myanmar) is the world’s largest single producer and exporter of heroin, accounting for between 40% and 60% of world supply. Recent outbreaks of HIV-1 in Burma, India, China, and Vietnam have been geographically associated with Burmese heroin trafficking routes. Findings from a variety of fields, including narcotics investigations, molecular epidemiology studies of HIV-1, and epidemiologic and behavioral studies of injecting drug users (IDU) in the region suggest that Burmese heroin export routes are playing a key role in the spread of both injecting drug use and HIV infection in South and Southeast Asia. We reviewed the medical and narcotics literatures, the molecular epidemiology of HIV, and did key informant interviews in India, China, and Burma with IDU, drug traffickers, public health staff, and narcotics control personnel to further investigate the relationship of Burmese overland trafficking routes and HIV spread.

**Findings:**

The heroin route through western Burma, across the Indo-Burma border, and into the northeast Indian state of Manipur has lead to an explosive dual outbreak of injection drug use and HIV infection in South and Southeast Asia. We reviewed the medical and narcotics literatures, the molecular epidemiology of HIV, and did key informant interviews in India, China, and Burma with IDU, drug traffickers, public health staff, and narcotics control personnel to further investigate the relationship of Burmese overland trafficking routes and HIV spread.

**Conclusions:**

Burmese overland heroin export routes are associated with very recent dual epidemics of injecting drug use and HIV infection in at least 3 Asian countries. Single country narcotics and HIV control programs are unlikely to succeed unless the Burmese narcotic-based economy is addressed.

*Chris Beyrer, MD, MPH*

*Johns Hopkins University*

**FBC STATEMENT ON BURMA DRUG/BUSINESS TIES**

Members of the Free Burma Coalition (FBC) have long been concerned by rising narcotics production in Burma under the current military junta. Institutionalized drug-money laundering is rampant in the Burmese economy, even involving "joint ventures with foreign firms," according to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright....


As a grass-roots organization, the Free Burma Coalition has responded to several cases of business ties to those identified by governments and researchers as "narco-traffickers." In November 1996, the FBC announced an international boycott of Wente Vineyards of California, because of that company’s announced relationship in Burma with Asia World Company, chaired by Lo Hsing Han, and run by his son Steven Law [Lo]. Lo is called a "narco-trafficker" by the U.S. Government, and Law has been barred from entering the U.S. because of suspected narcotics ties. Within days, the company released a statement saying, "Wente Vineyards shares the concern of U.S. government officials and human rights organizations regarding allegations of human rights abuses by the government of Myanmar (formerly Burma) and heroin exports from that coun-
try to the US. Due to its concern, Wente decided ... to suspend any further promotional activity in or shipments to Burma." The boycott was called off.

"The case of Northwest Airlines
In March 1997, the FBC called for Northwest Airlines, based in Minneapolis, to stop a promotion offering Northwest frequent flyers extra "bonus miles" if they stayed in the Traders Hotel in Rangoon. The Traders is co-owned by the Shangri-La Group of Singapore, and Lo Hsing Han's Asia World Co. By April, Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts, which manages the Traders Hotel, reported 'Our office received notification the Traders Hotel, Yangon (Rangoon) has been withdrawn from Northwest Worldperks Frequent Flyer Program on April 14, 1997.' Clearly there is a pattern of responsible businesses choosing to distance themselves from the Burmese narcotics and drug-money laundering industries.

"What about TOTAL and UNOCAL?
In that light, the FBC would very much like to see a deeper investigation of the allegations, widely made in the French media, of drug-money laundering by the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, an arm of the junta currently in partnership with oil companies TOTAL and UNOCAL.

"The Singapore Connection
Further, the present moment is an opportune time to investigate charges made by the U.S. itself, that ties between Singaporean investors and Burmese narco-traffickers are extensive. Three Singapore Government Ministers are currently visiting Rangoon, at the same time as the widely boycotted Interpol heroin conference.


"Singapore's Government Investment Corporation (GIC)
Singapore's Government Investment Corporation (GIC) once invested millions of dollars in Lo's Asia World Co., through a Hong Kong based "Myanmar Fund."

After these ties were exhaustively investigated in The Nation magazine ("Singapore's Blood Money," Oct. 20, 1997), and after Voice of America radio reported that FBC protesters had followed Singapore Prime Minister Goh during his 1997 visit to the U.S., demanding accountability, the Singapore Government announced that the Myanmar Fund, and thus the GIC investment in Lo's Asia World, were liquidated. Nonetheless, Singapore ties to Lo remain in hotel investments, and in a controversial container port project. Have Singapore's co-investments assisted Lo and others in laundering narcotics money? Are Singapore's co-investments with Lo consistent with Singapore's tough-on-drugs reputation? Are Singapore's co-investments with Lo part of Singapore government policy, and do they constitute the actions of a responsible member of the regional and global community?

"Media report

"Conclusion
Those who look deeply into the issue of narcotics production and drug-money laundering under the current military junta find a very troubling picture.

Clearly, the junta has created an environment where narcotics trafficking and drug-money laundering are accepted, in the interests of political survival for the junta.

Inevitably, foreign investors, whether from Singapore, France or the U.S., have become entangled in an illegal industry. These links must be relent-
lessly investigated and exposed. ...  
Posted by a member of the Free Burma Coalition

STATEMENT ON INTERPOL BY THE EMBASSY OF MYANMAR, PARIS
A total of 71 delegates representing 28 Nations & 3 organizations (Interpol, UNDCP, UNAIDS) are participating.

The Conference will take place from 23 Feb. until 25 Feb. and the 3th Destruction Ceremony of Seized Narcotic Drugs will also be held on the morning of 25 Feb.

On 26 Feb. a trip to North Eastern Shan State to observe the drug eradication projects being implemented will take place.

... Interpol has extended the invitation to the Myanmar Government to host the conference as its first choice, not only because the Government of the Union of Myanmar always gives staunch support to the organization’s goals and objectives against the illicit production and trafficking of heroin. The invitation of the Interpol was submitted to the Government of Union of Myanmar. The Meeting nº.27/98 of the Government of Myanmar, which was held on 13 august 1998, gave consent to convene the conference in the nation.

... Myanmar has accepted the invitation.

... We welcome the Fourth International Heroin Conference as it will surely highlight the rising dignity of the nation.

Posted by Info-Birmanie

INTERPOL A RANGOON: ASSISTANCE DE A TRAFIQUANTS
Réunir à Rangoon des techniciens de la lutte contre le trafic de stupéfiants revient à donner aux trafiquants birmans de précieuses informations pour éviter la saisie de leur "marchandise". Divulguer à Rangoon les dernières techniques de ciblage et de détection des cargaisons les condamne avant même qu’elles aient pu faire leurs preuves.

A qui attribuer ce sabotage? est-il délibéré?

un policier désabusé

(TRANSLATION)
Discussing the technical issues of heroin trafficking in Rangoon is nothing less than providing assistance to the most powerful heroin trafficker’s network. Up-to-date technologies of targeting, detection and scanning cargoes are now obsolescent.

Who is responsible for this sabotage? Was it deliberate?

A disillusioned police officer

RE: INTERPOL
BRAVO POUR CETTE REMARQUE
(TRANSLATION)
CONGRATULATIONS FOR THAT REMARK

LE MYSTERE S’ÉPAISSIT
Les propos de M. Kendall publiés à Rangoon (les efforts des autorités birmanes en matière de lutte contre le trafic ... doivent être salués) sont aussi de l’assistance à trafiquants. Comment qualifier autrement ce soutien d’INTERPOL aux généraux responsables du triplement, en 8 ans, de la production d’opium dans le pays qu’ils écrasent sous leur botte. C’est la validité de la “guerre à la drogue” en vigueur depuis 25 ans qu’INTERPOL ruine avec sa conférence à Rangoon. Un moyen, peut-être de sortir de l’hypocrisie inefficace (sauf pour les trafiquants) qui préside aux discours sur la drogue ...

(TRANSLATION)
The words of Mr. Kendall published in Rangoon (the efforts on the part of the Burmese authorities to fight drug trafficking ... must be acknowledged) are also assisting traffickers. How else could we rationalize Interpol’s support to the generals responsible for tripling, in 8 years, the production of opium in the country that they crush under their boots. It’s the credibility of the [25-year-long] "war on drugs" that Interpol is ruining with its conference in Rangoon. Maybe a way out of this ineffective hypocrisy (not for the traffickers) that prevails in the discourse on drugs ...

OFFICIAL LIE?
Lyon, February 16
Raymond E. Kendall to Jack Lang, chairman of Foreign affairs Commission of French Parliament "... Myanmar proposed to host the 4th international Conference ..."
February 23
Paris, Embassy of the Union of Myanmar "... The invitation of the Interpol was submitted to the Government of the Union of Myanmar ..."

WHO? QUI?
Who is really behind the Rangoon selection? Now, names have to be named, inside INTERPOL gener-
In the case of Burma you cannot achieve either of the two objectives outlined by the Interpol conference without addressing the issue of how the country is run. The SPDC's use of military rather than political solutions have had a devastating effect on the country and no significant reduction in the export of heroin. This is recognized by the international community, in particular western nations of which some have decided to boycott the conference as a result of the SPDC's disregard for political and human rights.

In 1998, The Southeast Asian Information Network (SAIN) released a report detailing both the current HIV/AIDS and heroin epidemics not just in Burma, but also within neighboring countries. Below are excerpts from that report:

**1) Opium Production and Ethnic Rights**

Opium is grown and refined to heroin in the ethnic states of the Wa, Shan and Kachin regions of Burma, and this is readily admitted by the ethnic leadership of those states. Since the signing of cease-fires with Rangoon, the drug industry has been able to continue operations with little threat from the SPDC. Ethnic and political groups involved in narcotics have in the past agreed to a plan to gradually cease the cultivation of opium when the regime in Rangoon at the time negotiated cease-fires. However, without a viable economic program to assist communities now reliant on the opium crop, little progress has been made. If you look at how the Generals that control the country view the issue of ethnic rights it is clear that their priority appears to be one that ensures the armed ethnic groups are silenced. This is then followed with vague promises of an economic future. In the meantime any open criticism levelled at the SPDC from the democracy movement inside the country is responded to with threats, torture and finally imprisonment. Not exactly the kind of atmosphere conducive to conflict resolution at any level.

The cease-fires represent a military solution, which gives Rangoon and its drug partners greater access and an easier distribution of heroin. Discussions that include political solutions that include the diverse and resource rich ethnic states in building the country are simply non-existent.
2) SPDC Battalions: How Close?

Heroin refineries which produce Burma's heroin have reportedly been placed well within the reach of the SPDC's battalions. The 52nd Regiment has its headquarters near Singkaling Hkamti, and a heroin refinery sits north of there. An outpost of the 52nd Regiment at Tamanthi has a second refinery. The 22nd Regiment HQ is based at Homalin, where there is another refinery. And a major route into India, Kalemyo, is where the 89th, 228th and 235th Regiment have their headquarters; another refinery is placed there. The 89th Regiment outpost has a heroin refinery at Tiddim and on the western edge of Chin and Arakan states. A refinery is at Paletwa, where heroin is also transported into Bangladesh. According to testimonies obtained from field research conducted over a period of two years it is clear that with cease-fire agreements allowances are made for SPDC soldiers to travel through what was previously ethnic controlled areas. Security gates are now manned by SPDC soldiers and contraband including timber, gems and narcotics pass through. However, illegal goods are not stopped if regional commanders and low ranking officers receive their "cut" from the profits made either domestically, or through neighboring countries.

3) Indo-Burma Border

The border between India and Burma is extremely porous and difficult to police in its entirety. Since the early 1990s, Manipur has increasingly become a major trade route for Burmese heroin. In terms of official border points, Gate #2, which is situated opposite the Manipuri town of Moreh and the Burmese town of Naphalong, is now known as a busy route for #4 heroin trade between Burma and India. In 1991 information pertaining to a change of venue and routes from Burma into China appeared suggesting that "heroin laboratories and drug-export routes have been shifted Southwest. Mandalay has now become the hub for drug trading from the eastern growing areas (Kachin, Wa, and Shan areas) to the western (Indian) border. Traders from India cross in to Burma to buy either #3 (heroin base) or #4. They report not only buying heroin, but testing it as well, through injecting, to assay its potency and purity. Transmission of HIV through the use of needles sharing by traders appears to have had a profound effect.

4) Passes Signed by Secretary 1 of the Regime, Lt. Gen Khin Nyunt

The traders and carriers that come from Burma into India all state that large amounts of either #3 or #4 reach the Indian border by truck. The trucks are owned by several different ethnic groups that have signed cease-fires with Rangoon. To cross Burma from East to West, without checks by soldiers at the various gates along the route, passes are given, which are signed by Secretary 1 of the regime Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt. These passes are also in the form of a sticker that is shown on the windscreen of the trucks and which also ensure safe passage for trucks carrying heroin. There has been a considerable rise in the amount of heroin crossing the border since the signing of the Indo-Burma trade treaty in 1995. One sign of this rise in local consumption in India is that heroin was previously sold in 1 kilogram bags for trade, but is now available in small packets for personal use. The trade is dealt with by the Burma army in one way, and local carriers in another. When stopped by the authorities they are asked to show permits which are then checked in Rangoon. Khin Nyunt issues passes after cease-fire agreements were made between some ethnic groups and SLORC, he gives them passes to travel.

5) What Are the Current Routes for Burmese Heroin Trading?

The major towns from which drugs are shipped are: Lashio in the Shan State, Mandalay in upper Burma, and Monywa in the Sagaing Division. Heroin is transported from these major towns across the following routes from Mandalay to Monywa:

- onto Kalewa, Yuwa, Tamu, Nanphalong, and then across to Moreh on the India side of Manipur state.
- onto Kalemyo, Kale, Tiddim, then Tunzan across the border onto Churachandpur in Manipur state.
- onto Monywa to Kalewa to Homalin to Leshi, (in the Somra Track) and across the border into Manipur state north of Ukhrul, then north onto Kohima in Indian Nagaland.
- onto Kalewa, Kale, Tiddim, then south, to the border of Mizoram state in India. The nearest vil-
lage at this border area is Kpawbung. There is no legal gate along this stretch of the border.

— onto Gangaw in the Chin State, onto Haka, to Klangklung, and through the border into Mizoram state. ...

Faith @gn_apc.org

BREAKING NEWS: DR. CHEE SOON JUAN (SINGAPORE), WHO WAS TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS CONFERENCE, HAS JUST BEEN ARRESTED

Dr. Chee would like to have participated in this online conference, but was prevented from doing so by being jailed for 12 days starting today, for giving a political talk without an "entertainment license."

Dr. Chee's public speeches, for which he has been jailed, consistently included questions about Singapore ties to Lo Hsing Han and family, including the routine practice of this family to visit Singapore, run a bank in Singapore, own businesses in Singapore, despite their worldwide reputation for involvement in the narcotics trade.

DR. CHEE WAS EXPECTED

Le Dr. Chee Soon Juan, Président du Parti Démocratique de Singapour, a été emprisonné Mercredi à Singapour pour avoir enfreint la loi sur la liberté d'expression.

Le week end dernier, il avait, par e-mail, donné son accord "enthousiaste" pour participer au forum/conférence INTERPOL/BIRMANIE/DRUGUE.

Sa contribution était d'autant plus attendue que le Dr. Chee a démontré sa compétence et sa détermination à mettre en lumière les circuits de l'argent de la drogue birmane.

Sans lui, le plus grand scandale singapourien : la joint-venture unissant le fonds d'investissement de l'état (GIC) et le baron birman de la drogue Lo Hsin Han, n'aurait pas éclaté.

(TRANSLATION)

Dr. Chee Soon Juan, President of the Democratic Party of Singapore, was imprisoned Wednesday in Singapore for having broken the law on freedom of expression.

Last weekend by e-mail he 'enthusiastically' agreed to participate in the forum/confERENCE INTERPOL/ BURMA/DRUGS. His contribution was even more awaited since Dr. Chee showed his competence and his determination in bringing the Burmese drug and money laundering circuits to light.

Without him the biggest Singaporean scandal: The joint-venture linking the state investment funds (GIC) and Lo Hsing Han, the Burmese drug baron, would never have been revealed.

DR. CHEE ALREADY CONTRIBUTED TO DRUG MONEY LINKS EXPOSITION

[Statement by the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma]

The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), an Australian television station, aired a program called 'Singapore Sling' on October 12, 1996. The program linked well-known Burmese drug lord Lo Hsing Han and his son Steven Law to several legitimate Singapore-based businesses.

The SBS program also showed that the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC) is a core shareholding in the Myanmar Fund. The Fund was set up in 1994 by the Robert Kuok Group of Singapore and Malaysia (Shangri-La Hotels), and the Ho family of Thailand. The Fund is registered in Jersey and listed on the Irish Stock Exchange in Dublin.

The Myanmar Fund has a 5.5% share in both the Traders Hotel and the Shangri-La Hotel in Burma, as well as a 25% option in Asia World Industries Company. The parent Asia World Company was "instrumental in the structuring of the Kuok Group's Traders. Yangon and Shangri-La projects," and holds a 10% option in both. The Chairman of Asia World Company is Burmese drug lord Lo Hsing Han.

In a November 2, 1996 statement, the Government of Singapore confirmed its investment of US$10 million (21.5%) in the Myanmar Fund. It listed other shareholders as Air Liquide International of France, Coutte & Co of Britain and the Swiss Bank Corporation. Singapore claims to be a passive investor and defended the Fund's decision to invest in the Burmese companies identified in the SBS program as "straightforward investments in bone fide commercial projects." Instead, it took to task Dr Chee Soon Juan, leader of the opposition Singapore Democratic Party and SBS for attacking the Singapore Government. ...

DRUGS: A BOON FOR THE ARMS TRADE AND ITS INDUSTRY

Burma illustrates at best the correlation between drugs and the arms trade. Drug lord Khun Sa, thanks to his drug money, could get the latest weapons to equip his defunct Mong Tai Army (MTA) strong of
more 18,000 men. This, however, doesn't match the level of military equipment acquired by the Rangoon dictatorship, Khun Sa's former archenemy before [his] "surrender" in 1996.

Since the late 80's, the regime — formerly known as SLORC — has spent over 1.2 billion U.S. dollars in arms supplied by China. Not to mention other arms deals the SLORC did with countries like Singapore, Israel, Poland, Portugal, to name just a few.

There are tremendous suspicions to believe that SLORC purchased those weapons with narco dollars. How could a country debt ridden as Burma (since 1987, designated a Least Developed Country by the UN) and with as little as 100 million dollars in reserve, afford such luxuries, if not with drug money? ...

PV

OIL COMPANIES & DRUG MONEY LAUNDERING IN BURMA

The key question of drug money laundering has to be addressed. Until now, as referred upon, it has been eluded by the main operators themselves. The oil companies operating in Burma, publicly accused of complicity in drug money laundering with the junta, never protected their image in suing the media. An internet brainstorming is exclusively dedicated to this issue.

MOGE watcher

BLANCHISSEMENT D'ARGENT, MOGE, TOTAL


(TRANSLATION)

You will find a lot of documents on this subject [Money-Laundering, MOGE, TOTAL] and on TOTAL at http://www.euroburma.com/asia/euro-burma/drug/.

ACTION JUDICIAIRE CONTRE TOTAL POUR BLANCHIMENT

Les conditions sont désormais réunies pour entamer une action judiciaire contre TOTAL pour blanchiment d'argent de la drogue. Par son partenariat et ses opaques relations avec la MOGE, la principale "lessiveuse" des services secrets birmans, TOTAL est complice par fourniture de moyens. Même si le boycott de la conférence d'INTERPOL à Rangoon n'a pas été "total", il est parvenu à faire échouer le seul objectif de ses promoteurs (toujours recherchés): blanahir la junta et lui faire perdre son préfixe narco.

En France, seule une association existant depuis plus de 5 ans et ayant la lutte contre la drogue dans ses statuts peut se porter partie civile. D'autres possibilités existent en Europe, où TOTAL vient, par sa fusion avec PETROFINA, d'étendre ses activités.

(TRANSLATION)

The conditions are ready to take legal action against TOTAL for drug money-laundering. Because of its partnership and its relationship with MOGE, the main money-laundering arm of the Burmese secret services, TOTAL has become an accomplice. Even if the boycott of INTERPOL'S conference in Rangoon has not been "total," it has succeeded in thwarting the only goal of its promoters (still being looked into): to drop the prefix "narco" from the junta's name.

In France, there is one association that, for the past 5 years, has had in its mandate the struggle against drugs and can act as a party claiming damages in this case. But other possibilities exist in Europe, where TOTAL has, by merging with PETROFINA, extended its activities.

Let all those concerned be notified.

RE: ACTION (DRUG MONEY LAUNDERING LAWSUITS?)

There [is much talk] of drug money laundering allegations regarding the Yadana gas scheme, but so far little has been done on this matter to nail down the oil company involved in Burma. ...

If money laundering is a criminal offense and the U.S. authorities (and others) are reluctant to bring such charges against the oil companies involved in Burma, is a civil suit brought by private individuals (as the current one against TOTAL & UNOCAL for complicity in human rights abuses) a realistic option under the provisions of the U.S. anti-racketeering law (known as RICO), for instance? I guess it would be tricky to bring such charges against the oil companies anyway.

In my opinion, one of the reasons might be because no gas from the Yadana field has been sent to Thailand yet. (The construction of the Ratchburi power plant [the recipient of that gas] has been stalled [because of] financial problems and Thai disjunction of electricity demand doesn't justify anymore the [continuing] of that gas project) ... thus, no money to Rangoon has been paid yet.

Conclusion: The logic would be that until money is paid for that gas, it would be difficult to prove a
crime (money laundering) has taken place. But not quite sure actually ... Any legal experts around?

PV

INTERPOL 4TH INTERNATIONAL HEROIN CONFERENCE ADOPTS TEN RECOMMENDATIONS

Having exchanged all necessary information, expertise and experience regarding the illicit production and trafficking of heroin and other related matters, the 4th International Heroin Conference organized by ICPO-Interpol General Secretariat and hosted by the Government of Myanmar at Yangon on 23-26 February 1999, urges governments of all the Interpol member countries to:

Recommendation 1 — continue to consider drug abuse and trafficking as a serious threat to the social, economic and moral development of their societies;

Recommendation 2 — provide all necessary administrative, legal and material support to their drug control agencies;

Recommendation 3 — adopt balanced strategies regarding the reduction in supply of and demand for illicit drugs;

Recommendation 4 — modify, if necessary, their drug-related laws, particularly in respect of money-laundering to bring them in conformity with the provisions of the 1988 UN Convention on Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances;

COMMENT: IF SUCH LEGISLATION WAS ENFORCED IN BURMA, MOST OF THE PRIVATE & STATE FIRMS, INCLUDING MOGE (MYANMAR OIL & GAS ENTERPRISE) WOULD BE CLOSED, THEIR MANAGEMENT PROSECUTED AND JAILED, AND THEIR FOREIGN PARTNERS IN DEEP TROUBLE ...

Recommendation 5 — take all necessary measures including appropriate legislation and vigorous law enforcement to prevent the diversion into illegal channels of the chemicals and precursors frequently used in the illicit production of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances;

COMMENT: IN BURMA, CHEMICALS AND PRECURSORS ARE CARRIED IN MILITARY TRUCKS, OR WITH LAISSER PASSER SIGNED BY GENERAL KHIN NYUNT, SECRETARY 1 OF THE SPDC.

Recommendation 6 — expand and consolidate co-operation among their law enforcement agencies on a regional as well as international level especially in the areas of the exchange of drug-related intelligence, training, judicial assistance, extradition control deliveries, immigration processing system;

COMMENT: ONE MORE RESOLUTION BURMESE JUNTA IS BLATANTLY VIOLATING, KHUN SA AND LO HSIN HAN, AMONG OTHERS, ARE SYMBOLIZING THAT DRUG MONEY IS THE MAIN MONEY SUPPLY OF THE ECONOMY. EXCHANGING INTELLIGENCE WITH BURMESE AUTHORITIES IS EQUAL TO ADVISING THEIR TRAFFICKERS ASSOCIATES.

Recommendation 7 — make, for their fight against the heroin traffickers, greater use of the Interpol facilities including its modern and safe communications system and computerized criminal records;

Recommendation 8 — call upon the Interpol General Secretariat Drug-Sub Directorate to especially focus on heroin-related activities of the organized criminal groups and collect, collate, analyse and disseminate all possible information regarding their cross-border alliances, criminal networks, sources of raw material, places of manufacture, means of transportation, modus operandi, assets, investments, etc;

Recommendation 9 — appreciate the need and usefulness of alternative development in the opium poppy producer countries and invite the world financial institutions and international organizations concerned to contribute liberally to the successful execution of alternative development plans;

COMMENT: HOW CAN THE BURMESE JUNTA INITIATE ANY ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT WHEN ITS COMMON PRACTICE IS VASCILLATING BETWEEN ETHNIC CLEANSING AND FORCED POPPY CULTIVATION (EXCEPT IN SOME PILOT AREAS, THE ONLY PLACES WHERE UN EXPERTS ARE ACCEPTED).

Recommendation 10 — effect greater co-ordination in their struggle against the drug problem by adopting positive policies and practices based on enhanced understanding of each other's problems and difficulties, shared responsibility and strict respect for sovereignty.

OVERALL COMMENTS: THIS 10-POINT RESOLUTION COULD HAVE BEEN APPROVED IN ANY OTHER PLACE. TO FINALIZE IT IN RANGOON IS JUST GIVING THE WORST SIGNAL ...
Following the 1962 military coup in Burma by the army chief General Ne Win, Khin Myo Chit became an editor of the new government newspaper published in English, *The Working People’s Daily*.

But it was in this job that she incurred Ne Win’s wrath with her increasingly outspoken criticism of the repressive socialist regime and its propaganda methods. Her article "Dandruff in my Halo", on 21 July 1986, was the final straw. In it, she described how friends would praise her for being prepared to visit political prisoners on their release from jail, and for not being scared that "They" — Military Intelligence or MI — would assume guilt by association. While pouring scorn on their fear, she admitted to an enduring guilt for having once shunned a friend released by the Japanese for fear that she too might become a target.

That experience aside, her refusal to be cowed endured until her death. She was one of the few Burmese brave enough to play host to the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, an old family friend, after her release from house arrest in 1995. (The latter’s own article "Freedom from Fear" echoes sentiments in "Dandruff").

She continued to write short stories and articles after her dismissal. Her story "Infinite Variety" won first prize in 1970 in a South-East Asia competition. Many regard her English language writings as more effective than her Burmese ones, and
her articles on history and everyday life such as "Colourful Burma" (1990) have been published both inside and outside Burma.

They reflect her wry, mischievous sense of humour. Perhaps it was this which had prompted her to send Ne Win a complimentary copy of a Wonderland of Burmese Legends which had been published outside the country (1984). A few days later the MI called at her house and instructed her to await them the following day. An unmarked car duly arrived and she and her husband board ed it with trepidation. An hour of circling Rangoon followed. It was only after they had been reduced to nervous wrecks that it transpired that the driver was simply killing time until the appointed hour for them to take tea with the dictator. Ne Win greeted them warmly and asked about old friends, before turning to what he considered to be errors in the book.

Khin Myo Chit developed a rebellious streak as a young girl. Her childhood was disrupted by her policeman father's postings around Burma and she tried in vain to win the affection of a mother who preferred her other children to her disappointingly ugly and headstrong eldest daughter. As a result, Khin Myo Chit buried herself in schoolbooks and grew up on a diet of Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, Victor Hugo and Dickens, determined to make a career as a bluestocking if she could not be a traditional Burmese beauty, or better still, a boy.

She began to support herself by writing romances and articles, after a first unsuccessful attempt at taking a degree. Ironically her first successful novel was about the life of a female university student, still quite a novelty at the time.

Against her parents' wishes, she moved down to Rangoon in 1937. There she fell in with the Thakins ("Masters"), a group of left-wing, pro-independence activists who included Aung San, who was to become the father both of Burmese independence and of Aung San Suu Kyi. Another member of the group was Ne Win, Burma's authoritarian ruler from 1962 to 1988.

At one point Khin Myo Chit shared a house with Thakin Nu, who, as U Nu, was Burma's first post-independence Prime Minister, and Thakin Than Tun, who later led Burma's Communist insurgency. The latter's questioning of Burma's dependence on Buddhism struck a chord with her own youthful skepticism. Both Thakins encouraged her patriotism and the anti-colonial views which had been ignited by her grandparents' first-hand accounts of the banishment into exile by the British in 1885 of Thibaw, the last Burmese king.

She took part in the anti-government strikes of 1938 and later toured the delta region with U Nu, making pro-independence speeches. When the Japanese invaded Burma in 1941, she and her writer husband, Khin Maung Latt, whom she had married at the beginning of the war, took refuge in up-country monasteries. They returned to Rangoon in July 1942. Reluctant to seek favors from their Thakin friends who, as members of the Burma Independence Army, had been installed in government by the Japanese, they sold slippers for a living.

But eventually they joined the Burma Defence Army and Khin Myo Chit worked in the Women's Section until the end of the war. After the war she returned to writing short stories and articles on Burmese history and culture for magazines. Between 1949 and 1952 she worked for the newly established Burma Translation Society. From 1958 until General Ne Win's 1962 military coup, she was features editor of the English-language Guardian.

Despite her staunch opposition to British rule, Khin Myo Chit had many foreign friends and loved English literature. In the 1980s and 1990s she and her husband taught English to students using works such as "King Lear" and Shaw's "Antony and Cleopatra," drawing out the political parallels as well as the linguistic lessons.

The students enjoyed her tales of the independence movement even if they were astonished by her confession that the 1930s "Freedom Fighters" had begun their secret meetings by standing and singing "God Save the King". This, she stressed, was on the grounds that they made a clear distinction between their sovereign and the government they were seeking to overthrow.

During the "Rangoon Spring" of August 1988, she and her husband, like many others, produced a newspaper with articles on politics and democracy. But 10 years of debilitating and disfiguring arthritis followed, which prevented her from writing. Neither medication nor the Buddhist faith she had rediscovered could overcome the pain. This, coupled with deep frustration at the state of Burmese politics and the death of her husband in 1996, finally bowed her indomitable spirit.

Khin Myo Chit, writer and journalist: Born 1 May 1915; married Khin Maung Latt (one son; died 1996); died Rangoon 2 January 1999.

Reprinted by permission from London's The Independent, Obituaries, February 9, 1999. Our thanks to Anna Allott and Vicky Bowman for their assistance in compiling material on Daw Khin Myo Chit.
Now that this page is blossoming forth with poetry, I cannot help but quote poetry from memory, for, poor me, I can’t write poetry to save my life. I quote these lines, so simple and beautiful and bearing a timeless message to humanity, as written as could have been written only by Shakespeare.

These immortal lines often spring to my lips unbidden, for friendship seems to be as rare a commodity as any these days, and there are few, if any, who will bear a part in your griefs, especially if you happen to be a person frowned upon by Fortune.

I often wonder what Fortune looks like, but now, I began to think she wears many guises, one of them being what people refer to as THEY, that faceless horde with badges of authority.

When a few years ago the government had to take a number of people into detention many of them happened to be the ones my husband and I had known closely at one time of our life. We could not have gone through the last thirty years of our country’s history without having known those who are today either sitting on the seat of power or in detention camps.

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He that is thy friend indeed,
He will help thee in thy need,
If thou sorrow, he will weep;
If thou wake, he cannot sleep,
Thus in every grief in heart
He with thee doth bear a part.

Perhaps I should wear a halo as an angel of mercy but there is a patch of dandruff in my halo and it is giving me such itches that go straight into my fingers now tapping on the typewritten

That patch of dandruff began during the Japanese regime, when one of our friends was arrested by the much-feared Kempetai, the Japanese Military Police. That friend had helped us when we, during the earlier months of Japanese occupation, were walking along the streets seeking work, half-starved, with a young toddler on my husband’s shoulders. According to the Burmese way of friendship we should be the first to rush to his house and comfort his frail little wife with heart trouble and two young children. My husband and I, who had never failed to visit our thakin friends in British jails at Rangoon and Insein, did not even think twice about not going near his house, for fear of being a suspect of the Kempetai. We had sunk this low. We denied friendship with a man who had saved us from starvation!

Fortunately, we had the chance to see that friend again and ask his forgiveness. HE understood and assured us that there was nothing to forgive, but we have never forgiven ourselves, nor can we ever forget the shame of it.

The old wounds hurt when today we see so many people degraded — degraded and sunk as low as we once were during the darkest days of the
Fascist terror. We felt depressed and infected with their fear. The only thing that made us overcome our fear is our unshakable faith in General Ne Win and the Revolutionary Council. They would not let this happen if only they knew the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about what is happening in the country.

From the look of things, once a man is taken into detention his family might as well put a cross on their door like people of medieval Europe did when they were stricken with Black Death. Such a house is shunned by those who once were his friends. Even those who had once lived on his bounty not only shun the house, but turn their faces away should they, by accident, meet the children of his family on buses.

When many of the detenues were released, we rejoiced over the many happy reunions. However we came to know that the ex-detenues are still shunned and they themselves dare not go to the houses of those they once called friends. Even the show of joy when the detenues were released was not considered in the best of taste. (How manners change!) Not all of them who came out of the detention camps are my friends, but my heart felt joy for every single one of them that went back to the bosom of their helpless families, and breathed a prayer of gratitude to the Revolutionary Council on their behalf.

Life within the four walls, under very uncertain conditions and for a very indefinite period, is something I would not wish for my bitterest enemy, and to be given freedom from such a life seems to me to be a cause for universal joy. And so I rejoiced. I felt happy for friend and foe alike, for their good fortune, just as I would weep and cry and protest if a similar misfortune should — God forbid — overtake any of my friends now in happier circumstances in this fortuitous, unpredictable world.

When the news of Bo Zeya's death was splashed in the daily papers, I could not read them, for my eyes were dimmed with tears. I wept remembering the old times when we fought together for national independence, first against the British, and then against the Japanese.

I wept for Bo Zeya, though God knows that I could not care less for his politics or ideology. I wept for a friend dead and gone. But these days one cannot do a single natural thing without getting dubbed a capitalist or communist.

It reminds me of an incident somewhere in 1946 when Ko Ba Hein, a member of the BCP (then a legal organization) died in Mandalay. My husband and I went to the memorial meeting which was held at the City Hall in Rangoon, the most natural thing for us to do. But to our utter dismay, we were charged, by our own friends of the Socialist camp, with having gone communist.

I tried to explain to them that Ko Ba Hein had been a good friend to us since college days. But "friendship" is something not in their dictionary. One of them said: "You always find some excuse to go to them; but you never come to us."

I lost patience, I retorted: "We went there because someone had died. If you want us to come to you that much, why don't you go and die yourself? We will come without fail even if no one else does."

So, that's that.

In spite of such experience I am still human enough to offer sympathy for a friend in misfortune and to shed a few tears for the one dead and gone. Surely, we can be human as well as Socialist (in the truly Burmese Way) at the same time, can't we?
WASHINGTON, DC — The January 21 Washington Roundtable featured Congressman Tony Hall, recently returned from a visit to Burma where he met with SPDC representatives and Aung San Suu Kyi. Congressman Hall reported on the humanitarian issues facing the country.

Chargé d’Affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Rangoon, Mr. Kent Wiedemann, was the guest speaker at a roundtable held on February 19. Mr. Wiedemann shared his views and perspective on recent political developments in Burma.

A discussion on the Massachusetts Burma Law and the constitutional court case took place on February 26. Presentations were made by Frank Kittredge, President of the National Foreign Trade Council and the plaintiff in the federal court case, and Robert Stumberg, Professor of Law at the Georgetown Law Center, regarding last November’s decision by the U.S. District Court in Massachusetts on the case.


NEW YORK — Columbia University’s Center for the Study of Human Rights held a February 10 briefing entitled "Nowhere to Go: Displaced People from Burma" with speaker Pornsuk Koetsawang. Ms. Koetsawang is a human rights activist with Forum Asia, a Thailand-based NGO.

The Burma UN Service Office, in collaboration with the Quakers UN Office and the Open Society Institute's Burma Project, hosted the March 3 briefing, "Health and Women Under Military Rule in Burma." Guest speakers were Dr. Khin Saw Win, former physician of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi; Naw May Oo, president of the Karen National League; and Dr. Win Myint Than, a physician who has worked with refugees along the Thai/Burma border.

The New York Roundtable holds periodic meetings of organizations and individuals interested in Burma. For more information contact: Burma/UN Service Office by phone: (212) 338-0048 or fax: (212) 692-9748.

NEW ENGLAND — The New England Burma Roundtable is an informal group of individuals and organizations working to promote human rights and democracy in Burma. Meetings are held the second Monday of every month. For information contact Simon Billenness of Franklin Research & Development Corporation by phone: (617) 482-6655 or fax: (617) 482-6179.

PHILADELPHIA — The Philadelphia Burma Roundtable hosts a monthly activity. For more information contact Dan Orzech by e-mail: Orzech@well.com.

SAN FRANCISCO — The Bay Area Burma Roundtable is held the third Wednesday of every month. For more information contact Jane Jerome by phone: (408) 995-0403 or e-mail: jjerome@igc.apc.org.

SEATTLE — The Burma Interest Group is a non-partisan forum attended by representatives of NGOs, business, academia and other interested parties that meets monthly to discuss Burma related topics. For more information contact Larry Dohrs by phone: (206) 784-6873 or fax: (206) 784-8150.

LONDON — The Britain-Burma Society meeting of February 2 "Burma Over and Over Again," featured Professor Stephen Smith, a clinical pharmacologist who has traveled extensively in Burma.

The March 11 gathering of the Britain-Burma Society, "A Burmese Antiques Road Show," hosted a number of experts, including Richard Burton of the British Museum; Patricia Herbert of the British Library; and Elizabeth Dell of the Art Gallery, Brighton. The panelists shared their expertise in the areas of Buddhist sculpture, lacquerware, silverware, books, pictures, and textiles.

Further information on the Britain-Burma Society can be obtained by email: sec@britainburma.demon.co.uk or phone: 0118-947-6874.

A Burma Briefing, which is a meeting of NGOs working on Burma, is held periodically in London. For information contact Edmond McGovern by phone: (44-392) 876-849 or fax: (44-392) 876-525.

BRUSSELS/PARIS — The NGO communities in France and Belgium host periodic roundtables in Paris and Brussels. For more information on this European forum contact Lotte Leicht of Human Rights Watch by phone: (32-2) 732-2009 or fax: (32-2) 732-0471.

NETHERLANDS — The Netherlands Burma Roundtable is held once every two months with the goal of updating organizations and individuals on current events and activities surrounding Burma. For more information contact: Burma Center Netherlands (BCN), by phone: (31-020) 671-6952 or fax: (31-020) 761-3513.

HONG KONG — Information on Burma Roundtables can be obtained by contacting the Asian Human Rights Commission by phone: (852) 2698-6339 or fax: (852) 2698-6367.
A. We get support from our people, and we get taxes from the gem mining and some other businesses. We don’t need to buy our weapons now. We use the weapons remaining from the MFA [Mong Tai Army] troops.

Q. How do you get support for the army?

A. We get support from our people, and we get taxes from the gem mining and some other businesses. We don’t need to buy our weapons now. 

Q. What is your present policy on drugs?

A. In order to eradicate the drug problem in Shan State, we have four stages:
1. We would like the world to solve the ethnic problem.
2. We would like the world to come and observe what is happening in Shan State.
3. Prohibit the international drug dealers from coming and getting involved in the Shan State.
4. Our people must have the rights and power to decide themselves. Only they can solve these problems.

Right now we can do very little, because of the oppression by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). As for the trading, if there were no international dealers coming in, then people would not have the incentive to grow more poppies. When we talk about traders, it’s not only the traders inside Shan State, but also the traders outside the country too. If we can prevent them from coming in, we will have a better chance to solve the problems.

When we talk about drug problems, there is always a connection or relationship to the ethnic problem. If you separate the ethnic problem [from the drug problem], you will have no way to solve both these problems.

At the beginning we were trying to set up a federal union. But later on, the Burmese turned it into a unitary state and became aggressive instead, and the drug problem worsened. The UN has helped the Burmese government for 30-40 years now, but the problems have never improved. The situation has become worse. If the Burmese military is going to continue to cling onto political power and the suppression continues, there will be no way to solve the problems.

Q. What has been the response since the drug-burnings in mid-December by the Shan State Army (SSA), signifying your readiness to work with foreign governments and the UN on the drug problem?

A. After the announcement of our drug eradication program, on 5 March 1998, we began to implement this plan. When we burned the drugs on the 29th of November, 1998, we released the information to all the news agencies, and many journalists and reporters came from many places. But the international community has not given us any response yet. Especially it [the burnings] will have a high impact on the SPDC’s income. And as a consequence of this, they [SPDC] plan to have an international Interpol conference to save their dignity.

Q. As many countries are the recipients of drugs produced in Burma — and the fact that the UN and the international community have said that they cannot negotiate with the SSA directly — what can they realistically do to reduce drug production and trade in Burma?

A. In my opinion, if the international community really wants to eliminate the drug problem, they should not just talk separately with the groups involved, but with all the groups together. For example, if they really want to eliminate the drug problem, drugs are connected to the Shan State as well as the Shan people, so the international community should come and help. If they refuse, it means they don’t want to support the Shan people, and they don’t really want to eliminate the drug problem.

Q. Have you approached other ethnic groups regarding your new drug policy and what has been their reaction?

A. Since the beginning of the reformation of the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA) we have explained our six guiding principles to every group. These principles are:
1. To get unity amongst our people.
2. To stand by the Panglong agreement.
3. To establish democracy.
4. To improve our people’s standard of living.
5. To fight the narcotics problem.
6. To achieve peace.

We sent our six guiding principles to all the ethnic groups and they also approved of them. All the armed ethnic groups are patriotic. They do not take up weapons for the sole purpose of trading opium. If the world does not clearly understand this, they will continue to think that we are drug dealers. The problem can only be solved when the SPDC stops oppressing the people.

Q. What can the international community do specifically to fight the drug problem?

A. The SPDC does not want to hold a tripartite dialogue. They know that if they do, they will lose. But the international community must give pressure to the SPDC to conduct a tripartite dialogue.

These are examples of how [the international community] can pressure [the SPDC]:
1. Withdraw all investment from Burma.
2. The world has to study more about what the SPDC is actually doing and not only highlight what is happening in Rangoon, but must study how the SPDC oppresses the ethnic minorities.
3. ASEAN and the international community must set more conditions before allowing the SPDC to attend their conferences. If they [SPDC] cannot accept this, let them stand alone.

Q. The international community has asked why they should trust your new drug policy, as you were a former high-ranking command-
der under Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA), and the MTA were seen as drug traffickers by many?

A. I dare to say that I was not a former commander under Khun Sa. I joined the struggle with the SURA [Shan United Revolutionary Army], which was led by General Korn Zerng. It was General Korn Zerng who started anti-narcotics policy, even before Khun Sa joined him. I am following his steps and not those of Khun Sa.

Even before General Korn Zerng died, he set up a 6-step anti-narcotics program and submitted it to Khun Sa. It was only because Khun Sa accepted this, that they [the MTA] made their own principles, and we then were able to join them.

Q. Can you explain why amphetamine production is rising in comparison to heroin production?

A. I think that amphetamines are easier to produce than heroin. They can be produced anywhere. That is why amphetamine production is increasing in comparison with heroin. It is easy to produce and sell as well. The production of amphetamines not only takes place in Shan State, but also in Thailand and China, in private houses. Also, the producers are chemists. The ordinary Shan people cannot do it. They can only buy and consume it.

Q. Has heroin production reduced, or is there just more amphetamines being produced?

A. The heroin production has not been reduced yet. It is increasing more, because in the past Khun Sa used to control the heroin production area, but now these areas are monopolized by the SPDC. The number of transportation routes for heroin have also increased, in the last three or four years.

Q. What effect has this had on the Shan, Burmese and Thai people (in terms of usage and addiction)?

A. Amphetamines have a worse effect on people than heroin. You can kill yourself [on amphetamines] and you can even kill your own mother. Opium makes you lazy, but amphetamines make you crazy. The prevention and elimination of amphetamines will be more difficult than heroin. Because the roots of the heroin problem are in Shan State, if we have democratic rights, [we would be able] to replace the poppies with other corps, and then the people would grow opium no more. As for the amphetamines, we will not be able to stop it, because they are easily produced in many places. That is the big problem.

Q. Can people afford to buy amphetamines in Shan State?

A. There are very few people who are addicted to amphetamines [in the Shan State]. More people are addicted to opium. The problem must be very large in other countries. The country most affected is Thailand.

Q. What would you like to say to Interpol and the countries attending the Interpol conference on heroin in Rangoon?

A. From my point of view, they should not attend. Because if the international community attends it, first, they will not get real insight and knowledge of what is really happening inside Burma. The international community may believe the SPDC, which oppressed Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and this will legitimize the SPDC. Secondly, it would be like helping them [SPDC] to suppress the people who are demanding democracy and freedom. And thirdly, the aim to eliminate opium will not be successful. It will become even worse.

The international community should know how the SPDC are linked to drugs. After the MTA [Khun Sa] surrendered, the Burmese army took control of that area and now the number of refineries there has increased. Our soldiers burned down 20-30 refineries there.

If you are going to have an Interpol conference it would be better to have it in Thailand than in Burma. In Thailand there is democracy. In Thailand, maybe even people like us would be able to attend ... In Thailand, we would be able to present our six-point political policy, the five principles that are our anti-drug policy. Furthermore, the countries that are going to attend it, would be hesitant to find fault with the host-country.

I would like to express this at the [Interpol] meeting. What the Burmese [SPDC] are doing is seizing a small portion of drugs at one time, but they will make propaganda as though they have made three or four seizures. After the seizure, they will just show it to the press. After this they should burn the drugs, but instead they will just sell it. If they really burned the drugs they may be able to better solve the problem.

Q. How do you feel about Burma's admittance into ASEAN and what should ASEAN's policy be?

A. I think that Burma being accepted into ASEAN was a big mistake. Why? Because if they want to support Aung San Suu Kyi to attain democracy, by admitting Burma as an ASEAN member, it is giving indirect support to the SPDC to suppress Aung San Suu Kyi. Also ASEAN countries are supporting the military to continue to violate human rights. If they had not admitted the SPDC into ASEAN, Aung San Suu Kyi could have gained power, and other problems might have been resolved. The admission of SPDC into ASEAN lends legitimacy to the regime. One policy that I would like them to review is the policy of "non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries."

Q. How is the SPDC involved in the heroin trade? Can you give specific examples?

A. One very obvious example is the laboratories along the border. After the MTA [Khun Sa] surrendered, there were few laboratories left along the border, but now they have many more under the protection of Burmese soldiers. They [the Burmese soldiers] are being paid 100,000 baht every seven days in protection fees. And also they [the drug laboratory operators and the Burmese army] work hand in hand together in Tachileik. Tachileik is the center of the heroin and amphetamine trade. In northern Shan State, the SPDC commanders deal drugs.

Q. At what level is the SPDC involved?

A. They [his men] call Khin Nyunt 'Four-Khin Nyunt'. "Four" means "Number Four." [The term used to describe heroin refined in a certain
ETHNIC VIEWS (CONTINUED)

way that mainly comes from Burma}. He also joined hand in hand with those drug-dealers in Tachileik, Murng Lar, and near the Chinese border.

Q. What are your criticisms of the SPDC drug policy? Is it working?

A. It is a political weapon for them [the SPDC] to suppress the people and Burmanise them, and also to suppress the revolutionary groups. Only after these are eliminated will they start to eradicate drugs, but not right now.

Q. SLORC claims that they have an anti-drug policy in conducting drug-burnings. Is it effective?

A. The UNDCP [United Nations Drug Control Programme] does not have any real insight. They only have the reports and dictates of the SPDC to listen to.

Q. What happened to the armed Shan groups after the Khun Sa/MTA surrendered?

A. After Khun Sa surrendered, three things happened:
1. We were able to cease the armed conflict amongst our groups [in Shan State].
2. All the soldiers who were involved with drugs, or those who had bad reputations, have gone with Khun Sa. So, the remaining soldiers are not involved with drugs anymore.
3. The most serious thing that happened after we gained peace among our ethnic groups in Shan State was that the suppression by the SPDC considerably increased.

Q. Can you describe the difficulties facing the people of Shan State following the MTA/Khun Sa surrender?

A. Firstly, forced relocations, secondly, no means of livelihood, and then thirdly, the taking away of people’s rights.

Q. Can you explain the forced relocations in more detail?

A. When we first started the Union [of Burma] we had equal rights. The insurgencies are a consequence of the fact that we lost those equal rights in the Union [of Burma]. In order to break the unity of the insurgencies, they [the Burmese Army] started the ‘Four-Cuts’ operations [anti-insurgency operations aimed at cutting connections between insurgents and the local populations].

Q. How many people have been affected by these operations over the last year? How big is the area affected?

A. About 3,000 villages, with a total population of hundreds of thousands. The area is from Mung Karng, from the Kesi road south to the Karenni border.

Q. Can you describe the moves of the SSA towards the SPDC in terms of cease-fires?

A. Their policy is to have only one armed forces there. As long as the oppression continues, we cannot accept surrender.

Q. Can you describe your policy towards Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the NLD, and the SNLD? What are your views on future cooperation with these groups?

A. According to reports, SNLD and NLD have an alliance and coordinate with each other. As for future cooperation, it depends on the results of tripartite dialogue.

Q. Do you support the idea of tripartite dialogue?

A. If there is tripartite dialogue, there must be equality among the participants. Only if there is equality among the participants will tripartite dialogue be meaningful and successful. The SPDC’s troops must withdraw from ethnic lands. If they refuse, then the tri-partite dialogue will not be fruitful and the result will be the same as before. The Burmese have lied too many times to the people, so many times, that the people do not trust them.

Q. Can you explain the recent alliance the SSA made with the KNPP [Karenni National Progressive Party]

A. As the Shan and Karenni share the same border, our soldiers and their soldiers are joining hands. We will never surrender our political system to the SPDC.

BUSINESS WATCH

EU SUSPENDS WTO PANEL ON MASSACHUSETTS BILL

The European Union announced on February 8 that it would suspend the World Trade Organization panel tasked with looking into whether the law passed by the State of Massachusetts, which targets foreign companies doing business in Burma, is in violation with WTO rules on government procurement. This dispute panel was established last October in response to a request by Japan and the 15-nation European Union. An EU spokesperson stressed, however, that the panel has been suspended because of a court ruling by a U.S. federal court which struck down the law as unconstitutional, but could be revived if the ruling was overturned in appeals that are scheduled to begin in U.S. courts this May.

JAPAN-BURMA BUSINESS COUNCIL FORMED

In a March 16 statement, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI) announced its intention to establish a Japan-Burma Council to promote business opportunities between the two countries. The Council, which will be made up of over 30 manufacturers and trading firms, will make proposals to the Japanese and Burmese governments to support Burmese small businesses, dispatch economic survey missions, and collect data on Burma’s economy and investment climate. The decision to form the Council followed a JCCI mission to Burma last year.
BRIEFINGS AND DEVELOPMENTS

DR. MICHAEL ARIS DIES IN OXFORD

Dr. Michael Aris, respected scholar and husband of Burma's democracy leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, died in England on March 27 from cancer. Dr. Aris, formerly the tutor to the royal family of Bhutan, was a professor of Tibetan studies at Oxford University and a member of the Governing Body at St. Antony's College. Despite numerous requests to the Burmese regime, Dr. Aris was not granted a visa to visit his wife in the months before his death. He was last given permission to visit her in 1996 and had not seen her for over two years. Governments from around the world, including Thailand, Norway, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan, as well as the United Nations Secretary General, appealed to the Burmese authorities over the past few weeks to issue a visa to Dr. Aris on humanitarian grounds. The appeals, however, were ignored. Dr. Aris, who is survived by his wife and two sons, Alexander and Kim, died at a London hospital on his 53rd birthday.

MA THIDA RELEASED FROM PRISON

Dr. Ma Thida, a medical doctor and writer, was released from a Burmese prison on February 11, reportedly because of her deteriorating health due to a lung infection. Ma Thida, who was a close colleague of Aung San Suu Kyi and a democracy activist, was arrested in 1993 and sentenced to 20 years in prison for "illegal distribution of materials published by armed terrorist groups and unlawful organizations." Despite Dr. Ma Thida's release, the regime continues its crackdown on democracy supporters, particularly members of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party. Some suspect that the decision to release Ma Thida was aimed at improving the regime's image just as a debate was taking place as to whether or not to allow Burma's participation in upcoming EU-ASEAN meetings in Europe.

MEDIA RESOURCES

INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL STRATEGY REPORT
March 1999
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
A comprehensive report on illicit cultivation, production, distribution, sale, transport and financing of narcotics in countries around the world, the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report evaluates whether countries are meeting the goals and objectives of the 1988 UN Drug Convention. See next entry for information on how to obtain this document.

1998 COUNTRY REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES
February 1999
U.S. Department of State
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
Serving as a basis for the U.S. Government's efforts to promote the observance of internationally recognized human rights, the Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1998 covers situations in countries around the world. It examines compliance with internationally recognized individual, civil, political, and worker rights, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The above reports are available through:

Public Information
Bureau of Public Affairs
U.S. State Department
Washington, D.C. 20520-6810
Tel. 202-647-6575
publicaffairs@us-state.gov

BURMA: THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM
A Resource Guide for Teachers
American Federation of Teachers
International Affairs Department
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A collection of articles, speeches and first-hand accounts aimed at educating educators on the situation in Burma and the struggle for democracy in that country, this guide serves as a resource on the historical background of the movement, the state of education, the environment and political conditions as well as information on advocacy outside the country. It provides sample lesson plans and classroom activities to educate students about Burma. The Guide is available to teachers free of charge and at a cost of $5 USD for the general public.

BURMA DEBATE 42
BURMA – ACTS OF OPPRESSION

ARTICLE 19
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Published by ARTICLE 19, this report examines the way in which, under successive military governments, the law in Burma has been used as an instrument for the suppression of rights, particularly with respect to freedom of expression. It points out specific instances of incompatibility with international law.

HUMAN RIGHTS YEARBOOK 1997-98, BURMA

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Published by the Human Rights Documentation Unit of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), this book is one of the most comprehensively documented reports on the situation of human rights violations perpetrated by the military regime of Burma.

BURMESE MIGRANT WOMEN IN THAILAND: GUIDELINES ON STRATEGIES AND RESPONSES TO THEIR NEEDS

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This 1999 report on Burmese migrant women in Thailand is available through the publisher.

A REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN MYANMAR, 1999

United Nations Publications
DC-2, Room 853
New York, NY 10017
Tel. 212-963 3489,212-963 8302
Fax. 212-963 3489
Email: publications@un.org

Jointly prepared by the United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) and Myanmar Ministry of Health. This report is available from the UNFPA through United Nations Publications at the above address.

SPDC SPEAKS

The active participation and cooperation of armed national groups who have elected to live within the legal-fold have also led to the successful establishment of a drug free zone in Shan State East, Special Region (4) (Mongma-Mongla) as of April 1997. Efforts are now underway to establish and designate similar drug free zones in Shan State, Special Region (2) by the year 2005. In addition, the Government has drawn up special projects and programs to achieve more significant results aimed at total elimination of poppy cultivation in the entire country within the next 15 years. Up to now, the Government has spent more than (10) trillion kyats on the development of border areas where poppy is grown.

The Government in its ceaseless struggle against the scourge of narcotic drugs has cooperated fully with non-governmental organizations, United Nations organizations, neighboring countries and countries in the region.

Excerpt from "The Drug Control Situation in Myanmar" presented by Col. Kyaw Thein, Member of the Committee for Drug Abuse Control, March 1, 1999.

INSIDE WASHINGTON

BURMA FAILS DRUG TEST

The United States government once again declined to certify that Burma has either cooperated fully with the U.S. or taken adequate steps on its own to combat the illicit drug problem. Burma and Afghanistan were the only two countries denied certification. In a February 26 announcement released by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), White House Drug Czar Barry R. McCaffrey was quoted as saying: "In Burma, no noticeable inroads were made in 1998 against drug trafficking and production, and no major traffickers were arrested. A U.S. funded crop substitution program was canceled, and a lack of enforcement against money laundering has created an environment conducive to the use of drug related proceeds in legitimate commerce."

U.S. RELEASES HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

The U.S. Department of State released its annual human rights report on February 26. In the Burma section of the "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1998" the State Department widely condemned the military regime for a litany of human rights abuses and stated that "... long-standing severe repression of human rights continued during the year. Citizens continued to live subject at any time and without appeal to the arbitrary and sometimes brutal dictates of the military dictatorship." The report cited violations with regard to freedom of speech, association, religion and movement as well as numerous reports on extrajudicial killings, disappearances, arbitrary arrests, forced labor and discrimination.

WHITE HOUSE EXPRESSES CONDOLENCES ON DEATH OF DR. ARIS

In a statement dated March 28, President Bill Clinton conveyed expressions of sympathy to Aung San Suu Kyi and her sons on the death of her husband Dr. Michael Aris. The President stated: "I want to reaffirm to Michael’s family and to all the people of Burma that the United States will keep working for the day when all who have been separated and sent into exile by the denial of human rights in Burma are reunited with their families, and when Burma is reunited with the family of freedom." Washington also joined several other countries in appeals to the Burmese authorities to grant the dying Dr. Aris a visa to visit his wife prior to his death. U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright criticized the regime for its continued refusal of Dr. Aris’ request and stated that: "The authorities’ callous disregard of the most basic humanitarian principles is emblematic of the continued struggle for human rights and democracy."
THE OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE (OSI) was established in December of 1993 to promote the development of open societies around the world. Toward this goal, the institute engages in a number of regional and country-specific projects relating to education, media, legal reform and human rights. In addition, OSI undertakes advocacy projects aimed at encouraging debate and disseminating information on a range of issues which are insufficiently explored in the public realm. OSI funds projects that promote the exploration of novel approaches to domestic and international problems.

The Burma Project initiates, supports and administers a wide range of programs and activities. Priority is given to programs that promote the well-being and progress of all the people of Burma regardless of race, ethnic background, age or gender.

OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE
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website: http://www.soros.org/burma.html