THE ISSUES...

AN ASIAN APPROACH

The annual meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is scheduled to be held in Brunei this July and once again Burma has been invited to attend as guest of the host country. Burma most certainly views this invitation as a springboard for eventual entry into this important regional forum. However, recent actions by the military government, such as the attack on the Karen, SLORC's incursion onto Thai territory and the likelihood that Aung San Suu Kyi will not be released in July, have again raised concerns within the international community. ASEAN has the greatest ability to address these concerns and the greatest potential for influencing the future direction of Burma.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:  
U Aung Ko

Director John Boorman's new film, BEYOND RANGOON, has transformed U Aung Ko from a language teacher in France to the co-star of a major motion picture. Set in Burma in 1988, the film depicts the political struggle of the time through the lives of a Burmese university professor, played by Aung Ko, and a young American doctor, portrayed by actress Patricia Arquette. In his own words, Aung Ko tells us about the making of BEYOND RANGOON, the message it sends and his thoughts about the events of 1988.

REGIONAL SECURITY

With the establishment of the ASEAN Regional Forum in 1994, political and security concerns have been brought into sharper focus and given a greater emphasis by the ASEAN members. Having one of the largest armed forces in the region and ever-growing ties with China, Burma must play into any discussion around security issues. What impact would an expanded ASEAN have on regional security? What would be the advantages for the current members? How does China view future prospects for its relationship with Burma?
THE DEBATE

4
ASIANs MUST TAKE THE LEAD WITH BURMA
By Kim Dae-jung

11
U AUNG KO
In His Own Words

15
AN EXPANDED ASEAN:
The Security Implications
By John B. Haseman

22
SINO-MYANMAR RELATIONS AND ITS PROSPECTS
By Mr. Wang Jun-Fu

IN BRIEF

27 MEDIA UPDATE
28 ROUND TABLES
29 INSIDE WASHINGTON
30 BRIEFINGS AND DEVELOPMENTS
31 S L O R C SPEAKS
30 BUSINESS WATCH
31 MEDIA RESOURCES
31 VOICES OF BURMA

BURMA DEBATE
JUN/JUL 1995
ASIAN APPROACH

ASIANS
Must Take the Lead
WITH BURMA

BY KIM DAE-JUNG

Kim Dae-jung is Chairman of the Kim Dae-jung Foundation
and Co-President of the Forum of Democratic Leaders in the Asia-Pacific.
He has been a long-time democracy advocate, opposition leader,
and three-time presidential candidate in Korea.
Among Asian nations, there is an immense and striking diversity of cultures, societies, and economic and political structures. Unlike Western Europe, where modern political and economic systems have been steadily consolidated since the second world war, Asia still has communist, authoritarian, and democratic states in various stages of development and with varying degrees of liberty. At the same time, the economies of the region have grown at a tremendous rate, part of a revolution in technology, industry and communications. In the current atmosphere, all responsible leaders, governments and institutions are working to preserve peace and security and encourage the free flow of information.

In this environment, Asia has achieved a record of democratic progress over the past twenty years that is both remarkable and encouraging. The developments of economic growth, increased openness and greater democracy have been mutually reinforcing. Yet there remain places where this general march of progress has been thwarted.

One of Asia's most tragic cases of interrupted democratic development is in Burma. In 1990, Burmese in great numbers voted in national elections. The electorate overwhelmingly supported the National League for Democracy, led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. But the military government refused to recognize the winners of the 1990 election and confined Ms. Suu Kyi to house arrest. The resulting instability and uncertainty, together with condemnation by the United Nations and isolation by governments all over the world, plunged the country into a period of economic and social stagnation. This happened despite the opening of the country to increased investment.
The tide of progress in Asia will certainly catch up with Burma. The necessity of openness and participation will erode the structures of repression. We saw this happen in Korea. But we cannot wait for these forces to gain strength. It is simply unacceptable for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to wait indefinitely to realize her potential as a Burmese and Asian leader, and for that country’s population to breathe the air of freedom. We must commit ourselves and encourage our friends to work actively for Burma’s democratization.

The legacy of decades of military rule is a country that not only fails to provide participation and social leadership for Burma and its peoples, but also disrupts regional and international relations. The continuing tragedy of Burma has great and lasting impact on issues of security, trade, health, diplomacy and democratic development in the Asian region. For these reasons, it is important to determine what can be done to remove this roadblock to our collective development.

**BATTLE OF IDEAS IN ASIA**

Today, a great battle of ideas rages about the proper shape of Asian societies and governments in the new post-Cold War environment. Questions of government structure, human rights and societal obligations are fiercely debated. But we must always remember that these are not merely theoretical arguments. The outcome of such debates has a direct effect on the lives of citizens. As one who has suffered greatly at the hands of illegitimate military governments, I can testify to the terrible cost paid by individuals under such systems. We cannot be content to wait for repressive governments to come to their senses. We must support democrats and work peacefully, but firmly, for increased freedom and attention to human rights in this region. I can easily sympathize with the shameful situation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. Only eight years ago I, too, was under house arrest for political reasons. Just as support from democratic leaders around the world was responsible for my survival, it remains critical for Ms. Suu Kyi, our courageous Asian voice of dignity and universal human values.

Concern for the struggling democrats of Asia, and for the specific cause of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Burmese democracy, led Corazon Aquino, Oscar Arias and me to launch the Forum of Democratic Leaders in the Asia Pacific (FDL) in December 1994. Over three hundred democratic leaders from across Asia and around the world joined in our inaugural conference. Among the FDL’s first acts were a resolution supporting a return to democracy in Burma and the creation of an FDL Commission on Burma. The resolution states that the Commission’s mandate continues “until the will of the Burmese people is fulfilled.” Further, the FDL pledged to observe three conditions in pursuit of its goals: non-interference in the legitimate internal affairs of countries, advocacy of peaceful and legal methods of change, and consultation with all peoples in Asia about our future. Our first anniversary conference, in Manila in December 1995, will focus on lessons learned during transitions from military to democratic rule in other countries. We hope to apply these lessons to Burma, and have received encouragement from Ms. Suu Kyi in this regard.

It is important to be clear about our hopes for Burma’s future. Nothing is accomplished by demonizing or slandering the SLORC leadership. They may believe, however wrongly, that it is their patriotic duty to deny freedom to the population and defy the chorus of condemnation from outsiders. We intend to remain open to any sincere suggestion, from any party, which might advance a dialogue on democracy in Burma. As noted in the founding resolution, the FDL offers its good offices as a new channel, complementing existing channels, for this dialogue. But the forces for democratic, peaceful change in Burma must remain united and in constant contact. We may disagree on tactics, but we all agree on our goal.

Finally, the kind of democracy we struggle for need not be rigidly “Western,” or ignore traditional strengths of Asian societies. Those of us who formed the FDL, and many other Asian leaders, have said that our region can learn from the mistakes of Western democracy, and build systems that emphasize ethical education, give high regard to spiritual values, and promote high standards in culture, the arts, government and business. This is our great challenge. But we cannot proceed when one of us is stuck in unhealthy stagnation.
Burma's leaders say they are unconcerned with the condemnation by the international community. This, however, is most unlikely. In the modern world every country is very much influenced by the opinions of other governments, international business, and world opinion. And those with the most influence on the Burmese leaders are those neighboring countries most engaged with them. Some Asian leaders explain their support for the SLORC as a counterweight to Chinese influence there. But there is no reason to think this support will lessen their influence.

During our struggle for democracy in Korea, the military governments were able to intimidate, jail, torture and even kill those of us who resisted their tyranny. For many years, U.S. and South Korean security concerns about North Korea, Vietnam, the Soviet Union and China were used to justify authoritarian excesses in South Korea. But it is only now, when the decline of communism has weakened North Korea and democracy is expanding in South Korea, that we are becoming strong enough to make peace with the North. Similarly, worries about Burma becoming a "colony" and strategic launching pad for a more aggressive China are encouraging neighboring countries to ignore abuses of freedom and human rights as they con-
duct trade and diplomacy with the SLORC. But only when Burma ceases to be a fragile dictatorship and becomes a strong democracy can it have a healthy, respectful relationship with China.

Furthermore, the SLORC will always face a crisis of legitimacy. During the decades of military government in South Korea, the generals proved unable to construct a successful policy to address the security concerns with North Korea. This is largely because they were weakened by their lack of legitimacy. Without the support of the people, they could only maintain a policy of confrontation. For thirty years I have maintained that South Korea must be a broader and more open democracy before it can confidently and successfully negotiate a peaceful reunification of the peninsula. This is in fact proving to be true, and it suggests that illegitimate governments will be unable to solve any major national problem.

Another lesson can be taken from the U.S. "engagement" with Korea. Koreans will always be grateful to America for its friendship and protection. But during the "people power" movements in 1980 the U.S. did not use its influence to support an end to the military regime. In 1987 however, there was clear U.S. support for democratic forces, and people were emboldened to press for peaceful change. Both the U.S. and other countries can learn from this example. Investment in democrats is a smart security policy.

**Serving as Burma's crucial bridge to the world offers ASEAN much leverage over a future course for that country. This influence also means that the ASEAN nations have a great responsibility to act in a way that promotes the long-term peace and prosperity of both Burma and the Asian region.**

One of the most important multilateral initiatives in post-World War II Asia was the creation of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. In the three decades since, it has far outgrown its origins as an anti-communist alliance. Despite substantial differences among the member nations, this regional association has become a valuable vehicle for consultation and confidence-building by both member and observer governments. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), established in 1994 to address security concerns, is already helping to promote dialogue on long-standing and potentially dangerous conflicts. ARF members have agreed to publish military doctrines and spending levels, and have offered a forum to China for discussing the recent escalating tensions in the Spratly Islands. Because it is one of the only regional organizations able to address political issues, and because the collective economic and political power of ASEAN is already significant and steadily growing, the organization could exercise great influence on the Burmese leadership.

For Burma's military rulers, the trade and political engagement by the ASEAN governments is preserving their regime from almost total isolation and stagnation. Serving as Burma's crucial bridge to the world offers ASEAN much leverage over a future course for that country. This influence also means that the ASEAN nations have a great responsibility to act in a way that promotes the long-term peace and prosperity of both Burma and the Asian region.

There will continue to be honest debate about the best way to treat a repressive and isolated regime such as the SLORC. The question of engagement is relevant also to the current negotiations with North Korea, a subject to which I have devot-
ed considerable study. Although the governments, histories and societies are different in the two situations, both deserve the sustained attention of democrats to promote openness and participation.

In the case of Burma, the recent history of diplomatic pressure by the international community, led by the United Nations, and the policy of "constructive engagement" employed by the ASEAN nations, must be evaluated for their long-term impact. It is fair to say that neither policy has been successful.

Over the past two years, there has been a clear lack of progress in Burma on a range of important issues affecting not only Burma but the whole region. Despite the strong efforts of the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG), the United States and other countries to encourage democratization, and despite the engagement by Burma's neighbors, the response from Rangoon has been minimal. There is little sign of a relaxation of political repression and other human rights violations detailed in distressingly numerous reports by the UN, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and others. In fact, there are increased military crackdowns on ethnic groups, and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi continues to be denied her freedom.

**THE INTERESTS OF ASEAN**

Why should ASEAN press for change in Burma? First and foremost because it is in their own self-interest. There is only short-term and limited profit from engaging the current government. A long-term view should convince Burma's neighbors that they have much more to gain from helping to bring about a peaceful and prosperous Burma under democratic rule than by making short-term accommodations with the SLORC regime. There are several compelling reasons to believe this is so:

**Lack of progress toward democracy** — While the SLORC is seeking to improve its international image, there is no meaningful change toward greater democracy in Burma. The current "National Convention" is drafting a new constitution that consolidates and legalizes military dominance for the foreseeable future. Such a constitution cannot be accepted by pro-democracy forces or Burma's ethnic minorities. Without a basic agreement among all groups, Burma cannot move forward.

**Cross-border instability** — Continuing military action by the SLORC forces against Karen rebels are producing many casualties and new flows of refugees into Thailand. These actions cast further doubt on the SLORC pledge to pursue peaceful reconciliation with ethnic minorities. Thai military retaliation at targets inside Burma is raising the stakes, and both countries are building up their military presence along the frontier in a situation that could spiral out of control.

**Ethnic peace** — Only a democratic government in Burma will be able to address long simmering disputes among Burma's many ethnic groups regarding legal status, access to land and resources, and justice. It is crucial for these problems to be resolved in order to ensure peace along the country's frontiers.

**The heroin threat** — The flow of drugs from Burma is a danger to the region and the entire world, as well as an increasingly terrible scourge within Burma itself. Sadly, the drug trade damages the young most of all. Countless lives are being destroyed. Today, heroin trafficking continues unabated. Assistance of any kind to the SLORC for the purpose of addressing the drug flow is unlikely to be effective.

**Regional Security** — Burma's huge military establishment, which is far larger than needed to face any external threat, is a severe drain on the country's resources and a tool for internal repression. China's growing military and economic influence in Burma is destabilizing to all of southern Asia and could help set off a costly regional arms race that will divert much needed resources from development. It is also highly resented within Burma, and could lead to dangerous ethnic tensions.

The only way to limit China's dominating influence of Burma is to encourage a government which can engage the rest of the world in diplomacy, development and trade. Only a democratic government will no longer need massive amounts of Chinese weaponry to control its peoples.

While keeping the above points in mind, it is also clear from recent events that the SLORC regime is highly resistant to direct pressure. The best hope
for change remains with the Burmese leaders themselves. They can start a meaningful discussion about national reconciliation with the democratic opposition. If they do not, the United Nations-led international movement to restore elected government will continue to try to promote change. But Asian governments should take the lead in the dialogue on Burma. We should demonstrate to the world

As Burma's closest neighbors and as examples of economic success, the organization can encourage the SLORC to open Burma in order to allow genuine peace, citizen participation and international engagement, benefiting all of East Asia.

that in the Asian neighborhood we will not allow our history of hard work and human and economic progress to be put at risk by a backward-looking neighbor. And a crucial component of the Asian effort must be ASEAN, following its member states' long-term self interests.

AN ASIAN-LED SOLUTION

n-going diplomacy through the office of the UNSG serves as an important symbol of international solidarity on an issue of universal human values. The March 1995 resolution of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights was another damaging condemnation of the SLORC. United States bilateral efforts at quiet diplomacy have produced little. Because quiet diplomacy has not worked, trade and diplomatic pressure must be tried. A policy without sanctions and without a timetable does not demonstrate seriousness.

It is much better for Asians to solve this problem among ourselves. Burma's neighbors should take the lead in organizing a truly coordinated policy to bring the country out of isolation. Such coordination has been lacking so far, and could make a difference. Japan's role is important, and Tokyo should not renew aid programs or encourage large-scale investment until real progress is made toward democratic reforms. If the situation does not improve, several levels of pressure would have to be considered. At a minimum, a code of conduct for companies doing business in Burma should be adopted. Other options such as a UN weapons embargo and trade sanctions should be among the tools of the international community.

ASEAN's role, however, is central. Participation in ASEAN by any country, be it as guest, observer or member, is viewed as a valued prize. A prize that should not be awarded casually, but earned through a commitment to principles such as democracy and citizen participation that are held by its members. It may be that ASEAN is in the strongest position to set Burma on a course in this direction. As Burma's closest neighbors and as examples of economic success, the organization can encourage the SLORC to open Burma in order to allow genuine peace, citizen participation and international engagement, benefiting all of East Asia.

A lesson we in Korea have learned at the cost of great suffering is that a country's growth and maturity can only come with broad participation by all of society. A senior SLORC leader recently said the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will have to wait until there is "peace and tranquility" in Burma. But I would suggest a different order: the Burmese leaders must accept that political change and reconciliation with their patriotic opposition are the necessary first steps to stability. In other words, peace and tranquility in Burma will await the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
In this special interview, the co-star of the new film, BEYOND RANGOON, shares his experiences with Burma Debate. Directed by John Boorman, the film is set in Burma during the turbulent months of 1988 when the pro-democracy movement was brutally suppressed by the military regime. BEYOND RANGOON was shown at the Cannes Film Festival in May and is scheduled for release in the United States this August. This interview was conducted by Sunda Khin.
BURMA DEBATE

Can you tell us about the theme of the film BEYOND RANGOON?

AUNG KO

The central theme of the film is Burma’s fight for freedom from the brutal and oppressive military regime and of the journey of a young American woman to Burma. In the film, the two main characters, a doctor, and myself, an older Burmese professor, meet and have a compassionate relationship, as is in the Buddhist culture, a love based on metta, or loving kindness. These two people slowly erase these differences in race, religion, color and culture when they journey together through turmoil. They are able to do this because of their regard for the five hundred and twenty eight strands of metta (the basis for a pure compassionate love and affection).

Where was it filmed?

The filming took place mostly in Malaysia and at the Thai-Burma border.

Tell us more about the characters in the film.

The leading role of the American doctor, Laura Bowman, is played by the actress Patricia Arquette. I play the lead role of the Burmese university professor. My role is that of a devout Buddhist whose values are simply based on metta. To give an example of metta, Laura Bowman feels compassion and cares for me, Professor Aung Ko, who has been shot and wounded. In spite of the dangers around us, she acts selflessly and in fact, saves my life. Laura Bowman herself had gone through a great personal trauma and tragedy. Her husband and son had died in an accident. She comes to Rangoon as a result of that tragedy. She goes on a world tour to try to ease her pain. And so we meet in Rangoon and a simple caring for each other develops in time; she cares for the sick as a doctor, and I, with my simple Buddhist background, help to lessen her pain. In the end, she becomes conscious of her own worth and is able to look at what the future might hold.

How were you selected for the role?

It was through Alan Clements of Burma Project/USA that I first heard that director John Boorman was looking for a Burmese man to act in the film. Alan persuaded me to send my photograph for consideration. After that, as in the tradition of the film selection process, I went through the screen test and many other film-making activities and was finally selected for this role.

Could you please tell us about your background? When did you leave Burma to live in France and what you have been doing all these years?

Well, my life and the events in my life are not so important. What is important is my participation in this film. But I can speak of the time when I was in Burma and participated in politics. It was the time of the Burmese Way to Socialism. There were so many conflicts between this ideology and practice that many times I took to pretending not to know anything at all and continued doing my work. Eventually, I became demoralized and left Burma with a silent prayer and a resolution to myself that someday when I am needed by my country and my people I will be available. So I came to France to live for these reasons, with my wife and child in 1975. I have been living in Paris for the past 20 years. I had lived here briefly in 1966 as a student for about three and a half years. After studying in Paris and upon my return to Rangoon, I worked as a French language interpreter and translator.

I notice that your real name, Aung Ko is also used for your character in the film. Why is that?

The name selected at first was Ko Aung, but later John Boorman liked Aung Ko better and asked me what I thought. I didn’t mind using my own name, and since the character is
Ko and the real life person is of the same name, it's even better. In Burma, close friends sometimes call people named Aung Ko, Ko Aung. But the selection of my name was not an easy matter. Let me tell you what else we did in search of a name. We went to a monastery to consult with the learned monks. They insisted that any name we choose must have "Aung" in it, which means success. Finally, John Boorman said to me, "Let's just use Aung Ko."

BD • You said earlier that in the film you portrayed a university professor who got caught up in the tumultuous events of 1988. Which university is depicted?

AK • The Aung Ko in the film is a physics professor from the Rangoon Institute of Technology (RIT). In the story, he helps the students during the uprising by hiding them from military intelligence men. When this is discovered, they imprison Aung Ko and dismiss him from his teaching job. But while he is in detention, his wife dies due to lack of money to purchase medicine for treatment for her illness. After his release, Professor Aung Ko sends his daughter and grandchild to the Thai border where they eventually end up at one of the refugee camps. Because he helps the students, he is punished. In the film, the students are seen to have much love and respect for their teacher. Many scenes show the professor always surrounded by his students. Even when he leaves for Bangkok, he does not have to go alone; there are two students who go along with him.

BD • How well do you think the film depicts the 1988 uprising that took place in Burma?

AK • There is a scene of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi out in the streets of Rangoon, a night scene when she is on her way to give a speech to thousands of people. She is stopped and surrounded by soldiers who warn her that they will shoot if she advances. She does not stop, but instead keeps walking, showing no fear in the midst of soldiers with guns aimed at her. This scene shows the strength of one woman who took courage from the thousands of those on the streets to demonstrate their desire for freedom and democracy. It also is Laura Bowman's first experience of such selflessness and courage and moves her deeply as she watches this scene from the crowd. For my part, because of my assistance given to the students during the uprising, the military intelligence imprisons me, fires me from my job and then I am forced to flee the country. Many other scenes portrayed in the film depict very well the mood and events of the '88 uprising.

BD • In your opinion, what is the main objective of the film? What is its message?

AK • The film focuses on three things: one, on the events of 1988 and their aftermath; another is the commitment of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to her beliefs and her willingness to risk her life for her country; the third is on compassion or metta, the most beautiful, pure, compassionate love that can be found in all of us. It also shows a hope, mine as well as many others around the world, that some day Burma may be free. Another thing Mr. Boorman hoped to bring out in the film is the gentle characteristics of Burmese culture, to show that the Burmese are compassionate and polite, and practice a religion which is a way of life. He wants to show not only the cruelties and brutalities that the military commit, but also the beautiful nature of our people.

BD • What about the young actress who portrays Aung San Suu Kyi?

AK • Adele Lutz is excellent as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Adele is a Japanese-American woman who does resemble Aung San Suu Kyi particularly in her mannerisms. Before the filming, she and I had long discussions about Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, about Burmese culture and tradition,
tradition, about how we show respect towards monks.... I told Adele that the best way to learn more would be to watch videos of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, which she did many, many times. I think she did master some characteristics of Daw Suu. For example, in one scene she was filming, there happened to be about seven or eight Burmese who worked on the set and had come to watch. These people were stunned to see how much Adele resembled Aung San Suu Kyi in her walk and movements. In close-ups though, you can see she is not Aung San Suu Kyi, but from afar, it is so realistic. I was told later by the Burmese watching that scene that they were so moved they had tears in their eyes as they watched.

BD • According to Mr. Boorman's interview with the international press in Cannes (where the film opened in May), he said that the Burmese government asked the Malaysians to deny permission for filming there. What did happen?

AK • We all heard on the set that the Burmese military junta protested to the Malaysian government and asked that we be denied permission to stay and complete the film. But there was a continuous dialogue and many discussions between the film team and the Malaysian officials. On the production side, because of this, they tried to move along as quickly as possible to complete the filming. From one day to the next, it was a race to finish the film. In the end, it was successfully completed despite all these difficulties. The Malaysian government graciously gave us full assistance the whole time we were guests in their country. We felt quite welcome in all the little villages where we were building sets such as pagodas, monasteries and shrines, in Binat, in Ipoh, everywhere.

BD • What were your thoughts while filming scenes of the students demonstrating, marching in the streets and the army opening fire on these peaceful youths?

AK • You know, during the filming, I felt as if I was actually taking part in the true events as it happened during the uprising in Burma. It was so real. Having viewed actual videos of the demonstrations, having had contact with students who had to flee the country, having felt their agony and having friends who are pro-democracy opposition leaders, I naturally experienced a great outrage during these scenes. As I said earlier, I didn't feel as if I was acting since I had a character role much like myself in real life. It was not a strange nor an uncomfortable feeling in any way. At the recent Cannes Film Festival, when I was interviewed by several journalists, they asked me if it's true that I had never acted before. They seem surprised to hear from me that, indeed, I am an amateur. So maybe they liked my "acting".

You asked me what my feelings were regarding scenes with the students and the army. Those thoughts were also so real, the sympathy I felt for them, again the metta towards them, was all a natural feeling.

BD • In your view, how will the screening of BEYOND RANGOON have an impact on the Burmese people? Will the people inside Burma ever have a chance to see it?

AK • This is the question many journalists have asked me also. The most important thing is that for right now — Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the students, monks and the people of Burma deprived of a voice — can be heard through this film. The world can hear their voices. And it will act as a reminder. That's the most important impact the film can have, I feel.

As to whether people inside Burma will have the opportunity to see this film is something I personally cannot say, and have no way of knowing. I think it rests with those in the film world who might try to find a way to reach those inside. I certainly hope so.
AN EXPANDED ASEAN: The Security Implications

INTRODUCTION

The six-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) seems certain to expand this year with the addition of Vietnam to its membership, and until recently, it was likely that Burma would become ASEAN's eighth member, perhaps as early as 1996. Burma's prospects for early admission may have stalled, however, due to its renewed assault on the Karen National Union (KNU) and continued concerns over the country's abysmal human rights record. Assuming mutual interests on all sides, both Laos and Cambodia would seem likely candidates for ASEAN membership as well. Thus by the year 2000, ASEAN could well have expanded to include all ten nations in Southeast Asia.

BY JOHN B. HASEMAN

Photo above: Military checkpoint along a street in Rangoon (1995).
Although the inclusion of new members into ASEAN would not immediately alter the security situation in the region, the political-military aspects must be considered. ASEAN has already indicated its desire to move beyond the association’s original focus on economic and social concerns with the formation of the ASEAN Regional Forum, designed to examine political and security issues. Expansion of ASEAN to include Vietnam and Burma poses some intriguing security issues. For the current ASEAN members, China’s hegemonic tendencies are a constantly looming security concern for which Vietnam and Burma may be viewed as possible buffers. Vietnam and Burma have Southeast Asia’s largest and second-largest military establishments (see Table). Their military capabilities, however, have been moving in opposite directions in recent years.

**VIETNAM-ASEAN SECURITY ISSUES**

Vietnam’s military establishment has contracted, steadily in size since it left Cambodia in the late 1980s and its precarious domestic economy mandated a reduction in armed forces. At the same time, improvement in its relationship with China reduced tensions and conflict along their land border, the major security threat to the country. In spite of the improved relations, Vietnam has much in common with its ASEAN neighbors in the area of regional security affairs. It shares, for example, a concern over Chinese expansionist rhetoric and actions, particularly China’s claim to sovereignty over much of the South China sea.

China’s claims have raised security concerns throughout the South China Sea littoral region. Several ASEAN states — Malaysia, the Philippines, and Brunei — also have claims in the region, primarily in the Spratly Islands where China, ASEAN states, and Vietnam share a confusion of overlapping claims. While the Spratlys in themselves are of little strategic value, their importance lies in the potential wealth of sub-surface oil and natural gas deposits. The need to maintain a security presence to enforce territorial claims has led several of these countries to establish small military bases perched on various tiny islands in the Spratlys.

Indonesia, while it has no stake in the Spratly Islands, does have an overlapping claim with Vietnam further south around Indonesia’s Natuna Island group. And Indonesia is concerned, along with its ASEAN partners, about China’s huge territorial designs in the region. The ASEAN countries share a view that a significant threat to regional security lies in the potential for conflict between its members and between ASEAN states and China and Vietnam over the multitude of claims in the Spratly Islands. Thus, the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia — ASEAN states with claims in the South China Sea — may view Vietnam’s admission to ASEAN as a start toward defusing some of the potential friction in the region and would view Vietnam as a strong card in resisting Chinese claims as well.

Ironically, Thailand, which contributed two divisions in support of South Vietnam during the Vietnam War, has been a leading advocate of ASEAN membership for Vietnam. Although

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**COMPARISON OF MILITARY STRENGTH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASEAN COUNTRIES</th>
<th>POPULATION*</th>
<th>SIZE OF ARMED FORCES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brunei</td>
<td>285,000</td>
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<td>256,000</td>
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**POTENTIAL NEW MEMBERS**

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<tr>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>44,277,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>10,265,000</td>
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<td>Laos</td>
<td>4,702,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>73,104,000</td>
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<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>400,000</td>
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<td>Laos</td>
<td>88,500</td>
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<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>37,000</td>
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Note 1: U.S. Embassy estimate.
Thailand has no territorial claim in the South China Sea, it shares its ASEAN claimants' view of Vietnam as a buffer against the Chinese military threat. Indonesia, which has championed Vietnam's cause for many years because of its admiration for its strong anti-colonialist struggles, shares Thailand's view of Vietnam's security role in the region.

**BURMA-ASEAN SECURITY ISSUES**

In contrast to Vietnam, Burma's military has expanded steadily in recent years and it is the only armed force in the region undergoing a significant increase in size. The Burmese Army has almost doubled (from about 180,000 to nearly 400,000) since the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) seized power after brutally repressing pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988. Burma has bought over one billion dollars worth of weapons systems from China. Much of the increase in manpower and weapons systems have been used in a steady campaign against Burma's many ethnic insurgent forces rather than to intimidate its neighbors. But Burma's well-armed military establishment remains a potential regional threat and is capable of destabilizing any of its land borders, as illustrated by the latest incursions into Thailand.

Burma's neighbors are also concerned with the extent of expanded influence and access that China may have gained in Burma as part of its large arms support program. Rumor of radar sites, military basing access, or other strategic security concessions remain unconfirmed, but the subject is very...
important within ASEAN as well as to Burma's other large neighbor, India.

Thailand is the country most anxious to add Burma to ASEAN. After 1988 it shifted its policy from support of ethnic insurgents along the border to give support instead to the SLORC's anti-insurgent operations, in search of a more friendly relationship with an historic enemy. Since obtaining lucrative commercial contracts and joint ventures with the SLORC, leading Thai politicians and military leaders have been anxious for Burma to stabilize its domestic situation. They feel that a formal ASEAN tie between the two countries will reduce the threat to its border. Nevertheless, Thailand has been insulted by the flagrant disregard for its territory by the Burmese Army and its surrogates, which resulted in the deaths of Thai security personnel and civilians.

While recent events have provoked dissent among those in the Thai government regarding the effectiveness of their "constructive engagement" policy, some officials apparently still hope that a formal ASEAN tie, as well as continued mutually beneficial commercial arrangements, will ease the troubled situation along the Thai-Burma border. Like other ASEAN members, Thailand too has become anxious about China's increased influence on the Burmese and at Burma's increased reliance on China for both arms and commercial trade. Burma's tie to ASEAN is seen as a way to reduce Chinese influence there.

In addition to Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore

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**BURMA SETS SIGHTS ON ASEAN MEMBERSHIP**

HANOI, March 10 (Reuter) - Burma wants to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and believes this will strengthen regional security, Burmese Foreign Minister U Ohn Gyaw said in an interview published on Friday.

"We welcome the concept of the ASEAN 10 and consider it an active step in the direction of strengthening peace, stability and prosperity in this region," he told Vietnam's Communist Party daily, *Nhan Dan*.

Gyaw, accompanying Burma's military leader General Than Shwe on his first official visit to Vietnam, also expressed his support for Vietnam to become an ASEAN member in July.

ASEAN currently groups Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Laos is an official ASEAN observer and Cambodia has said it wants to join.

Gyaw said Burma, also known as Myanmar, believed that cooperation among regional countries boosted progress. Now that Burma was moving towards a market economy, "the conditions are all the more favorable to tie up relations between Myanmar and ASEAN," he said.

Than Shwe, chairman of Burma's ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and prime minister, held talks with Vietnamese Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet on Thursday.

They reaffirmed their resolve to implement signed agreements on cooperation in forestry, agriculture, precious stones, drug control, culture, education and oil, the official Vietnam News Agency reported.

They welcomed the scheduled signing next month of an agreement on sustainable development of the Mekong River Basin.

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in particular have stressed commercial interests in their relationship with Burma. Since 1988 the ties forged by business, government, and political leaders in the various countries have steadily increased, with leading civilian political and military personalities taking advantage of business opportunities that the Burmese regime presented.

While Thailand's commercial expansion in Burma is the largest of the ASEAN countries, Malaysia has interests in both commodity trading and infrastructure development. Singapore has interests in commercial business trading, tourism, construction, and arms sales. Indonesia has come late to the Burmese market but has recently entered into major contracts in timber harvesting, commercial air service. Its state-owned airlines and aircraft industry would also like to expand into the Burma. Brunei and the Philippines, having less commercial interests in Burma, appear to be the most noncommittal on Burma's admission to ASEAN.

ASEAN'S POLITICAL INFLUENCE

The combined population of Vietnam and Burma would add over 100 million people to ASEAN's membership. Both countries are authoritarian regimes which share an antipathy for democratic principles and which have been viewed as regional threats by various of ASEAN's current membership. Both governments are among the most repressive in the world. ASEAN, as a globally respected regional organization, should look to protect its hard-earned credibility as it expands its membership. ASEAN has a vested interest in maintaining political and economic harmony in the region and by exerting as much influence as possible to encourage both countries to respect regional stability and to speed reforms in their political, social, and economic systems. Whether ASEAN will be willing to exert either collective or individual influence to the issue of improved human rights in Vietnam and Burma remains to be seen.

In the face of constant criticism by Western democracies at the Burmese government's atrocious human rights record, several ASEAN countries — notably Thailand and Singapore — have stressed the prevalent Asian view that challenges the concept of the universality of human rights. Singapore in particular has been critical of the United States' approach in this regard. Thailand's politically strong and commercially-oriented military establishment has its own recent human rights problems and has been shamefully silent on the lack of political reform inside Burma.

A flurry of criticism from ASEAN's three Islamic countries — Brunei, Indonesia, and Malaysia — followed Burma's persecution of Moslems in Rakhine State, which sent hundreds of thousands of Burmese Moslems fleeing to Bangladesh for safety. That criticism has become muted during the past year after a United Nations-sponsored repatriation program began. There is considerable doubt, however, over the long-term security of returning Rakhine Moslems in view of the Burmese Army's history of campaigns against ethnic minorities.

ASEAN's reliance on "constructive engagement" rather than confrontation has failed to bring about any real change in Burma's atrocious human rights record or enlightenment to its isolated military leadership. ASEAN countries have consistently viewed their relationships with Burma in commercial rather than political terms. They have resisted the efforts of the U.S., European Community, and earlier Japan, to isolate the SLORC politically and commercially until improvements in Burma's human rights practices have been made.

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BURMA DEBATE
ADVANTAGES FOR VIETNAM AND BURMA IN JOINING ASEAN

Just as ASEAN sees benefits to adding Vietnam and Burma to its membership, the two countries also view ASEAN membership as a major factor in enhancing their prestige and credibility.

Vietnam’s halting but apparently irreversible progress from state communism toward a market economy, and its desire to improve the relations with its regional neighbors, combine to make ASEAN membership highly desirable to the Vietnamese leadership. Belonging to ASEAN provides legitimacy to the Vietnamese government and would trigger increased international trade, commerce, and financial assistance.

The SLORC too seeks to improve its political legitimacy and economic ties with its neighbors through Burma’s membership in ASEAN. Support from ASEAN neighbors has enabled the SLORC to largely ignore Western attempts to influence domestic reform. Burma’s membership in ASEAN will strengthen the SLORC’s hold on power. Closer formal ties with its ASEAN neighbors could also help to quiet anti-Sino rumblings among the Burmese people as concern grows over the increasing influence of China and the influx of Chinese immigrants. This would hopefully provide insurance for the regime against the type of public turmoil that disrupted the country in the 1960s when people voiced similar concerns.

CONCLUSION

There is little likelihood that ASEAN membership will bring about quick changes in either Vietnam’s or Burma’s totalitarian governmental structures or politics. One can be hopeful that more openness between countries of the region might inexorably bring change within both countries and increase movement toward democracy and human rights. This argument does not make a strong case for Burma and Vietnam’s inclusion into ASEAN, however, given the perspectives of the current members on these matters.

From a security standpoint, Vietnam and Burma’s entry into ASEAN could possibly result in reduced military tensions in the region. However, given China’s huge size and its modernizing military establishment, it is not likely that an expanded ASEAN will have a greater impact in confronting Chinese expansionist tendencies than in the present situation. A larger ASEAN, however, may well gain additional outside political support that would bring to bear greater influence and perhaps eventually have an impact on the issue of Chinese sovereignty claims in the South China Sea.

One thing is certain, ASEAN itself will decide its priorities and approaches when considering expansion, be it from a security, economic or political standpoint. China looms large in everyone’s mind. As regional security becomes more essential to ASEAN, those concerns will weigh in heavily when considering the entry of new members into the region’s most important multi-lateral forum.

John B. Haseman retired from the U.S. military in 1995 with the rank of Colonel, after thirty years of military service. He spent eighteen years in a variety of assignments in Southeast Asia, including service as the U.S. Defense Attaché in Rangoon, Burma (1987-1990) and in Jakarta, Indonesia (1990-1994). A speaker of Burmese, Indonesian and Thai, Mr. Haseman has published more than three dozen books, articles and book reviews on Southeast Asia and general political-military affairs.
BURMA AND THE PARROTS

By Kiattichai Phongphanit

While the Thai political parties were still scrambling to find politicians to contest the upcoming election under their party’s banner, by hook or by crook, I stole away to attend an international conference in Chiang Rai June 1-3, along with about 70 Thai and international academics and journalists. The conference, entitled ‘Myanmar Towards the 21st Century: Dynamics of Continuity and Change’, organized by Chulalongkorn University’s Institute for Strategic and International Studies with financial support from the Asia Foundation, looked at Burma from several diverse viewpoints.

What an interesting and appropriate time to hold such a conference. There were many tense moments for all participants concerned with Burma issues. While there were several Thai academics among the participants, there was virtually no representation from the Thai government.

How strange. While the situation along the Thai-Burma border is intensifying and Burma issues are being closely followed, Thai officials whose jobs are concerned with these issues don’t seem to be concerned at all about what others with partisan interests in Burma are doing — partisans these very Thai officials may have to ‘explain.’

A high-ranking Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs official agreed to give the keynote speech and open the conference, but failed to appear or send regrets. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs didn’t even bother to send a representative to the conference. This is most unacceptable and unjustifiable. Many foreign embassies in Bangkok and Rangoon, as well as several NGOs, sent enthusiastic delegations to the conference, but offices of the Thai government concerned with these same issues didn’t send any representatives to this conference in their own backyard. No wonder our officials can speak about Burma in only the most rudimentary way, sounding like parrots, imitating what they’ve heard others say.

But it is well known that Burma is a pressing issue, very close to home. These officials had better do their homework and do a better job at it than several other countries have done in order to respond to questions and suspicions about Thailand’s Burma policy. Lip-service and mindless repetition of a superficial party line do not suffice.

While we still can’t know who will lead the next Thai government, we do know that Burma will be one of the first pressing issues to confront the new government. The new government had better prepare itself. The tension along the Burma border must be quickly resolved. We cannot allow the Burmese to claim that hostilities along the border are the result of Thai internal political games. This is not smart: it gives the outside world the impression that Burma can attack Thailand militarily and diplomatically with impunity, while our diplomats sit by idly.

Just two weeks after the elections, on 20 July, the appointed date for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, Thailand will be preparing to deal with reactions and policies of the countries which are following her predicament. Thailand had better prepare responses and defenses of Thai policy both in regard to the release or continued incarceration of Aung San Suu Kyi and the upcoming ASEAN meeting.

Is such shiftless, lazy diplomacy up to this challenge?

The above editorial appeared in the Thai-language newspaper KHAO SOT on June 8, 1995.
Mr Wang Jun-Fu is Vice President of the China Association for International Friendly Contact, a semi-official agency of the Chinese Government.

The following is a section from an unpublished paper presented at the conference "Myanmar Towards the 21st Century: Dynamics of Continuity and Change" held June 1-3 in Chiang Rai, Thailand. The conference was sponsored by the Asia Foundation and Chulalongkorn University's Institute for Strategic and International Studies.
BROAD PROSPECT FOR SINO-MYANMAR FRIENDSHIP

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE ARE THE CORNERSTONE FOR THE TWO COUNTRIES' FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIP

In the 1950s, China and Myanmar jointly initiated the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The later close exchanges between the two countries strengthened the mutual understanding and friendship, laying a solid foundation for the two countries' exchange and cooperating in many fields. In recent years, the China-Myanmar friendly neighboring relations and mutual beneficial cooperation witnessed new growth. They supported and assisted each other in preserving sovereign rights and national dignity, in safeguarding regional peace and in the undertakings of regional economic development. The leaders of both countries voiced that they will carry forward the spirit of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and make joint effort for the establishment of a more peaceful, stable and developed society.

China and Myanmar share the same or similar views on many international issues. Both regard that all countries are equal, no matter big or small, strong or weak; that because of the difference in culture, historical tradition and economic developing standard, it is quite natural for different countries to hold different views on human rights; that any country has its right to choose its own social system and developing way, the western countries should not impose their own human rights and democratic standard on other countries, not saying to use this as an excuse to interfere with other countries' internal affairs.

During Premier Li Peng's visit in Myanmar, some people deliberately propagated that China wants to attack ASEAN countries from both sides by building military bases on the Andaman Islands, that the "Rangoon-Beijing Axis" threatens regional security, even that China's willingness to develop friendly ties with Myanmar is aimed at expanding its own influence in the Indian Ocean. All these sayings are groundless. China is a developing country, concentrating on modernization and adopting an independent foreign policy of peace. Opposing hegemony, China has never, and will not take hegemony itself or seek any influential area. China has no military base in another country's territory, and has not stationed a single soldier in overseas area[s].

During his visit to Myanmar, no military issue was touched in Premier Li's negotiations with Myanmar leaders. China and Myanmar have both adopted the independent foreign policy of Peace, which serves as precondition for the expansion of mutual cooperation.
Peace and development are the universal call of today's world. The trend of regionalization of world economy has created a favorable environment for the friendship between China and Myanmar. Over the past 16 years, the Chinese government has steadfastly implemented the policy of opening to the outside world while devoting its full attention to the development of national economy. The Chinese government will carry out a more open policy to develop friendly cooperative ties with neighboring countries and promote growth. In order to get rid of the solitary situation in the world and to gain more support, the Myanmar military government had sped up its opening since 1994. While making ceasefire through negotiations with ethnic groups' armed forces in Myanmar, the government enforces political, economic and diplomatic relations with the outside world, making efforts to develop peaceful friendly ties with countries in the world. All these create an advantageous internal and external environment for further friendly cooperation between China and Myanmar.

SINO-MYANMAR TRADE COOPERATION ENJOYS BROAD PROSPECTIVE

1. MUTUAL SUPPLEMENT MAKES SINO-MYANMAR COOPERATION POSSIBLE AND NECESSARY.

Both Myanmar and China's Yunnan Province and the Southwest area are abundant in resources, yet with a difference. Even if they share the same resources, a clear difference exists in the extension of exploiting because of different natural conditions and economy developing standard. So far as market is concerned, China's
The leaders of China and Myanmar have expressed their wish to enhance trade cooperation, willing to further cooperate in the field of economy, agriculture, environment, culture, travel, forestry, education and technology. During General Khin Nyunt’s visit to China last year, he had been to Yunnan Province and made the proposal of jointly rebuilding the Jinghong-Jingdong Road, noting that Yunnan can use Myanmar as its goods import and export marketing place. Both sides made general agreement on the rebuilding of Mujie-Larong, Jinghong-Jingdong Road, on the cooperation of jointly building Bamo Developing Zone, and decided to enhance cooperation in small hydropower station, family electronic equipment production and traveling. After Premier Li’s visit to Myanmar, Yunnan shows their decision to seize the chance to promote further economic cooperation between Yunnan and Myanmar.

2. CHINA AND MYANMAR SHARE A STRONG DESIRE TO ENHANCE TRADE COOPERATION

production standard is higher than that of Myanmar, while the consuming standard and import-export goods composition of both countries are not the same. Myanmar exports wood, agricultural by-products, mineral products and raw materials, while engineering equipment, machinery and electronics, light industry and textile products need to be imported. The level of resources exploration in China’s Southwest region is higher than in Myanmar, with clear advantage in processing technology and strong basis in both heavy industry and light industry. So no matter in resources, technology or market, there are many aspects to cooperate and supplement between China and Myanmar. Both Yunnan and Myanmar are rich in travel resources, the potential of cooperation in this field is great.
Once again map-makers in Red China have encroached upon the Union of Burma. In their latest maps the Sino-Burmese border has jumped down to south and west of Myitkyina. Is this Panchasila? Is this co-existence? Is this goodwill by Red China for her tiny and foolish neighbour? The whole of south and south-east Asia looks up to Red China. Will Red China let this trust be forfeited in exchange for certain plots of land? If so, there is no bigger fool than New China. It seems the Chinese, both red and white, are determined to disturb the little peace that we have. While the Red Chinese station themselves in Pimaw, the White Chinese harass the Shan State. Neither danger is small.

The above excerpt appeared in 1958 in the NEW BURMA WEEKLY (July 12, 1958).

3. THE PROGRESSIVE PERFECTING OF BASIC FACILITIES HAS CREATED FAVORABLE CONDITIONS FOR FUTURE TRADE EXCHANGE

Over the past two years, the construction of basic facilities in China's Yunnan Province got quick development. The rebuilding of Kunming and Dehong airports makes it more convenient to link Yunnan with home and abroad. With Rili, Wanding as opening cities, with the building of a group of national and provincial port cities, China's infrastructure is greatly improved. So it is with that of Myanmar. The support and low interest loan given by China to Myanmar values several tens of millions US dollars, mainly used in helping Myanmar's construction of road, railway, bridge, port, water conservancy and power facilities. More than 3,000 Chinese technicians and workers are taking part in the building of three roads and railways, leading from the China-Myanmar border to the South Coast of Myanmar. Rili River Bridge was finished in 1992, and Teng Chong-Michina [sic] Road was open to traffic at the end of 1994. The economic cooperative projects between China's Yunnan Province and Myanmar are large in number and broad in scale. Yunnan Machinery Import-Export Company not only contracted to build Mandalay International Airport but also signed with Myanmar Railway Ministry a supply on loan contract valuing tens of millions US dollars. It signed an agreement with the Myanmar Traffic Ministry, supplying ships to the latter. At present time, there occurs some new features in the development of border trade; one is the trend towards large dimensions and pluralism; the other is the combination of border trade and national trade, with many trade-industrial, trade-agricultural and trade-traveling enterprises, emerging, and another is that border trade continues to extend to both countries' inland, with market further expanding. Along with the opening of road, the exploring of Meigong River and bettering of basic facilities in the future, the trade exchange and cooperation between China and Myanmar will be more convenient.

The two-thousand-year history of Sino-Myanmar ties proves that friendly cooperation is the chief melody of Sino-Myanmar ties, that PhakPhaw (brotherly) friendship cannot be severed, that Sino-Myanmar friendship is in keeping with the wish and interests of the peoples in both countries. As the world goes into the 21st century, peace and development are the main trend of nowadays society. With the social progress providing good external and internal environment for Sino-Myanmar cooperation, the prospects of Sino-Myanmar friendship is broad.
BURMA’S REVOLUTION OF THE SPIRIT: THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRATIC FREEDOM AND DIGNITY, published by Aperture Foundation in the United States, has now been translated into Thai and Burmese. This photographic essay by Alan Clements and Leslie Kean, with commentary by several Nobel Peace laureates, a forward by the Dalai Lama and an essay by Aung San Suu Kyi, depicts the richness of the country’s cultures and the dramatic battle for democracy from the time of British colonialism through the present.

The overseas editions, which includes a soft-cover English language version, have been published by White Orchid Press. To place orders contact:

White Orchid Press
P.O. Box 1093
Silom Post Office
Bangkok, 10504, Thailand
Fax: (66-2) 652-0097
WASHINGTON, DC — A Roundtable featuring Congressman Bill Richardson is scheduled for June 16. Congressman Richardson, who recently returned from Burma and Thailand, will provide a briefing on his trip where he met with SLORC officials and opposition leaders. The Washington Roundtable is co-sponsored by Human Rights Watch/Asia, The Jesuit Refugee Service, The US Committee for Refugees, The International Center and Refugees International. For more information contact Refugees International by phone: (202) 828-0110 or fax: (202) 828-0819.

NEW YORK — The meeting of June 13 will feature a presentation of the report recently released by Médecins San Frontières/Holland on the repatriation of the Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh. Ms. Rian Landsman, the MSF Country Manager for Bangladesh and Mr. Jercon Iansen, MSF Bangladesh Program Director will discuss concerns regarding the protection of the refugees and the voluntary nature of their return.

The New York Roundtable is a periodic meeting of organizations and individuals interested in Burma. For more information contact the Burma Peace Foundation by phone: (212) 338-0048 or fax: (212) 692-9748.

MASSACHUSETTS — The Roundtable held on May 8 featured a showing of the Canadian documentary on Aung San Suu Kyi entitled The Prisoner. Discussion also took place to plan events around the July 20 anniversary of Aung San Suu Kyi's detention. The Educational Evening & Vigil will take place on Thursday, July 20 at 6 pm at the First Parish Unitarian Universalist Church in Cambridge.

The scheduled speakers for the June 12 meeting are Kate Redford of the Bangkok-based NGO, EarthRights, who will speak on the growing efforts to take legal action against the SLORC and corporations that support it, and Dr. Kathleen Appleton, the Clinical Director of the Indochinese Psychiatry Clinic and Medical Director of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma in Boston. Dr. Appleton will discuss the increasing difficulties being faced by Burmese students in Thailand.

The guest speaker for the July 10 meeting will be Ann Stewart, a lobbyist for issues concerning indigenous peoples, who will discuss the Burma Selective Purchasing legislation before the Massachusetts State House.

The Massachusetts 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 Billemess of Franklin Research & Development Corporation by phone: (617) 482-6179 or fax: (617) 482-6179.

SAN FRANCISCO — The Bay Area Burma Roundtable is held the third Wednesday of every month. For more information contact Jane Jerome by phone: (415) 424-8643 or e-mail: jjerome@igc.apc.org

SEATTLE — A meeting of the Burma Interest Group was held on May 9 to discuss the attacks on the Karen refugees along the Thai/Burma border and activities of the oil companies along the gas pipeline area. The next meeting scheduled for June 15 will include an update on the film Beyond Rangoon due for an August release in the United States.

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 Burma Briefing is a periodic meeting of NGOs working on Burma. For information contact Edmond McGovern by phone: (441-392) 876-849 or fax: (441-392) 876-525

HONG KONG — Hong Kong's first Burma Roundtable held on May 26, featured Edith T. Mirante of Project Maje. Ms. Mirante presented a slide show of the Tennasserim gas pipeline project. A photo exhibit by the environmental group Green November 32 was also on display.

For information contact Asian Human Rights Commission by phone: (852) 2698-6339 or fax: (852) 2698-6367.

BRUSSELS — 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.
US SENATOR TO CALL FOR SANCTIONS AGAINST BURMA

Senator Mitch McConnell is preparing legislation calling for economic sanctions against Burma. The Republican Senator from Kentucky, who initiated sanction legislation against South Africa in 1986, plans to introduce the bill on July 11. This is the date Aung San Suu Kyi will complete her term of detention, although the Burmese regime has announced that she will not be released.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE "DISAPPOINTED" BY SLORC

During a May 17 press conference held in Bangkok, Winston Lord, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs expressed disappointment at the lack of progress by the Burmese military rulers in the areas of human rights, democracy and narcotics control. In November of last year when Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Thomas Hubbard visited Burma, the U.S. had laid out steps that might be taken by the regime to improve relations between the two countries. Mr. Lord is quoted as saying, "They have not released Aung San Suu Kyi, indeed not even talked to her since Mr. Hubbard was there, and they've effectively stymied talks with the Red Cross about visits to prisoners. They did release some prisoners, including some prominent ones, but on the whole their record has been very disappointing." Lord stated, however, that the U.S. has not "drawn any conclusions" with regard to future action toward the Burmese regime.

SLORC APPOINTS NEW MINISTERS

SLORC has appointed six new ministers and transferred four ministers in a major cabinet shift. The newly appointed ministers have been promoted from the rank of regional commanders and include Central Commander Major General Kyaw Than, who is now the Minister for Defense Services within the government. Lieutenant General Maung Hla as its minister. Some have seen this reshuffling of the cabinet as a move to strengthen and solidify the Defense Services within the government.

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS URGE STRONG POLICY ON BURMA

In a letter to President Clinton dated June 1, 1995, Members of Congress expressed their disappointment in the lack of progress in the areas of the restoration of political rights and the protection of basic freedoms in Burma. The sixty-one members of the House of Representatives who signed the letter urged the Clinton Administration to "...enunciate a clear and strong policy toward Burma and to seek cooperation with our allies in Asia and Europe on U.S. policy initiatives." The bi-partisan group pledged their support and commitment to working toward improving conditions for the Burmese people.

HOUSE TO HOLD NARCOTICS HEARINGS

A hearing on the issue of narcotics in Asia will be held by the Sub-committee for Asia and the Pacific of the U.S. House of Representatives International Relations Committee on June 21. Those scheduled to testify include Dr. Lee Brown, Director of the Administration's Office of National Drug Control Policy, Robert Gelbard, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of International Narcotics Matters and Stephen H. Greene, Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency. Dr. Brown is expected to unveil the Administration's Heroin Strategy which will include an increase in counter-narcotics assistance to Burma.

BRIEFINGS AND DEVELOPMENTS

AUNG SAN SUU KYI RECEIVES NEHRU AWARD

India has decided to present the jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding to Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. In a statement released to the press, the eight-member jury chose her for her "brave, non-violent and unyielding struggle for freedom, democracy and human dignity — the ideals that promote international understanding and goodwill and the ideals cherished by Pandit jawaharlal Nehru." The honor carries with it a citation and a $48,000 cash award.

SLORC RE-ARRESTS U KYI MAUNG

Burmese pro-democracy activist and key opposition figure, U Kyi Maung, was arrested again on June 2 along with four others. This arrest followed his release from prison in March after serving nearly five years. According to reports, Kyi Maung was re-arrested because of meetings he had with diplomats and foreign journalists. He was released a week later without being charged.

INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION BLASTS BURMA

In its most severe form of censure, the United Nations International Labor Organization (ILO) has cited Burma on the issues of forced labor and freedom of association. On June 16, the Committee on the Application of Standards, which is made up of representatives of governments, business and labor, discussed Burma's failure to comply in law and practice to Convention No.29 concerning forced labor and Convention No. 87 concerning freedom of association. Following a long and heated debate, the Burmese government was unsuccessful in changing the view of the Committee members that the numerous and grave instances of forced labor in the country were not improving but in fact worsening. With regard to Convention No. 87, the Committee noted that the government has made no progress toward allowing the existence of independent trade unions in Burma and that no freedom of association exists. These concerns will be highlighted in two "Special Paragraphs" of the committee's general report to the annual ILO conference being held in Geneva. This is the most severe and most visible form of censure available to the committee.

SLORC APPOINTS NEW MINISTERS

Burmese state-run radio announced on June 15 that the government has appointed six new ministers and transferred four ministers in a major cabinet shift. The newly appointed ministers have been promoted from the rank of regional commanders and include Central Commander Major General Kyaw Than, who is now the Minister for Industry-2, and Northeastern Commander Major General Aye Kyaw, who becomes the Minister for Information. A new ministry, the Ministry of Immigration and Population, has also been formed with Lieutenant General Maung Hla as its minister. Some have seen this reshuffling of the cabinet as a move to strengthen and solidify the Defense Services within the government.
BURMA SIGNS OIL DEAL WITH AUSTRALIAN COMPANY

Empire Oil Co. (Pacific) has signed an agreement with the Burmese Energy Ministry’s Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, for the exploration and production of oil and gas in the southwestern state of Arakan. This is the second contract to be signed for oil exploration in Arakan state. The South Pacific Oil Company has already begun drilling in the area.

HILTON HOTEL CHAIN CONSIDERS OPERATING IN BURMA

The New Light of Myanmar has disclosed that the Hilton International Hotels Group of the United States plans to enter the hotel business in Burma. According to the newspaper, Mr. Alain Mahillon, the Hilton Group’s Vice-Chairman, met with General Kyaw Ba, Minister for Hotels and Tourism, on June 20 to discuss the building of a hotel in Pagan.

UNOCAL SHAREHOLDERS QUESTION OPERATIONS IN BURMA

For the first time in its 105-year history the UNOCAL Corporation held its annual shareholders meeting outside of California, hoping to deter protests against its operations in Burma. The company was not successful as the May 22 meeting produced demonstrations by human rights activists demanding UNOCAL’s withdrawal. Activists were able to present their case against the construction of a gas pipeline to be used by UNOCAL. During this meeting, however, a shareholder resolution designed to enhance the company’s code of ethics was defeated.

CITY OF CHICAGO CALLS FOR SANCTIONS ON BURMA

Chicago City Council unanimously passed a resolution calling for a federal law that would ban U.S. business in Burma. The resolution, introduced by Joe Moore (D-49th ward), joins initiatives taken in other cities in the United States. In April, a similar resolution was passed by the Seattle City Council and Berkeley, California passed a Selective Purchasing law that prohibits city contracts with companies that are engaged in Burma. Comparable legislation is pending in Oakland and San Francisco, CA, New York City, Madison, WI and the State of Massachusetts. Such initiatives demonstrate substantial grass-root support for federal legislation on economic sanctions that is being drafted by Republican Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

SLORC SPEAKS

MESSAGE BY CHAIRMAN SENIOR GENERAL THAN SHWE ON THE OCCASION OF 1995 PEASANTS DAY.

All esteemed peasantry,

... The State Law and Order Restoration Council is making all round efforts for the country to become a peaceful, prosperous and modern nation and achieve all round development.

The year 1994-95 was designated as All Round Development Year and efforts are being made in all economic sectors with added momentum to achieve development. Due to such efforts, it is encouraging to note that the energy sector and agriculture sector have achieved considerable progress.

It is fully believed and expected that the entire peasantry will make further efforts to intensify the progress achieved and will make energetic efforts to improve production in all sectors.

It is also necessary to step up production of other crops in addition to paddy and other industrial raw materials by linking up agriculture to other economic sectors. Then only will we be able to move from the development of the agricultural sector to further efforts for achieving economic development of the State.

Concerted efforts are being made to achieve success in environment protection, greening of regions, and conservation and forest conservation tasks which are linked to the agricultural sector.

All are specially urged to discharge the national duties to which they are assigned for national reconciliation and emergence of an enduring Constitution for which the State is making efforts so that Myanmar Naing-Ngan will exist perpetually in the comity of nations.

The entire Myanmar peasantry has a fine tradition of repulsing all kinds of dangers faced by the country in times of emergency. In accordance with these fine traditions, they should never lose sight of and guard against the instigation, agitation and incitement of internal and external destructionists, who are trying to cause disturbances in the country and undermining national solidarity and are like obstacles lying on the path of the country’s development.

All esteemed peasantry,

All are urged to hold in high esteem Our Three Main National Causes — non-disintegration of the Union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and perpetuity of sovereignty — which is the national policy of the Union of Myanmar and discharge the national duties unwaveringly with a view to serving the interest of the State.

The above is an excerpt from text that appeared in The New Light of Myanmar, March 2, 1995. (Reprinted in the Burma Press Summary)
Life Under SLORC Rule...

The Tax Levy Burden. Money is constantly collected from us, many times at gunpoint. I give a few examples of what I know from my own experience.

a. I must contribute for pagoda-building. I am a Christian.
b. For each Buddhist occasion when monks come, they collect money from me.
c. To build a military camp, they collected bamboo and timber from everyone. These are absolutely required, you can’t say you have nothing.
d. We are required to find wood to build covers for soldiers’ trenches.
e. We must fetch thatch to roof the soldiers’ camp.
f. We must buy cars from them, motor bicycles, bicycles, and, I understand, horses in Shan States, all the time.
g. The soldiers live on rice grown by people, so we must work in the field to feed them.
h. They take away paddy fields from people.
i. Forced labor; every village must give at least four workers every day.
j. In Hpakan, money is collected for all cars, to build roads, they say. But every time the military officer is transferred, he takes the money, and the new one will start the whole collecting over again.

Punishment for those who are not Buddhist.

a. They take things from churches, like amplifiers, rugs, drum sets.
b. They strip the Christian crosses from Catholic homes and they throw them in the ditches. They say houses are not graves.
c. In many places, SLORC agents say the minister can remain a Christian, but everyone in the congregation must worship the Buddha. They had guns when they came to say this.

I shall write about many more persecutions later...

Reprinted from KACHIN NATIONAL NEWS BEACON (WUN-PAWNG SHI SHANAN), April 1995

Sowing the seeds for border development
Burma Debate is a publication of The Burma Project of the Open Society Institute.

Mary Pack, Editor

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.

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