MYANMAR: Open For Business

23-25 May, 1996
The Strand Hotel, Yangon, Myanmar
Meet with the Government at the Ministerial level, Visit Operating Joint Ventures, Network over Golf and Evaluate

Forum will be opened by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Union of Myanmar

Expected speakers include:

The Politics of Doing Business

In Their Own Words

Giving Myanmar a Break
THE ISSUES....

THE POLITICS OF DOING BUSINESS

There has been a flurry of activity over the past several months to promote business opportunities in Burma: trade fairs, workshops, trade delegations, and the establishment of Myanmar business councils within various countries. In a land so tightly controlled by its military rulers, however, what becomes more and more obvious is the integral relationship between business and politics. This is vividly illustrated in the letters and memorandums of New York businesswoman, Miriam Marshall Segal, who has long prided herself in having direct access to the military hierarchy, thus enabling her to facilitate business ventures for herself and others. Ms. Segal in turn, dropping names from the White House to the World Bank along the way, offers SLORC not merely foreign capital, but inroads to the international foreign policy arena as well. Although there may be money to be made in Burma, with the experience of Ms. Segal as an example, one must wonder if the returns are worth the effort.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Recent Developments in Burma," a hearing held by the U.S. Congress, included testimony by representatives of the Department of State, the business community, academia and non-governmental organizations. Responding to such questions as: Should the U.S. ease its opposition to funding by the international financial institutions? Is Burma moving toward a liberalized economy? and Has the time come for the U.S. to normalize its relations with Rangoon?, a diverse panel of experts debates approaches for a U.S./Burma policy.

GIVING MYANMAR A BREAK

Does SLORC get a bad rap? Is the Western press slanted too far in favor of the opposition? The author of this article believes so, and suggests that much of the analysis of the situation in Myanmar is superficial at best. From his point of view, Myanmar, which has only recently begun to emerge from decades of isolation, compares relatively well with other countries in Asia, and the rest of the world. What is needed most now, the writer argues, is a perspective that is more in tune with the Asian mentality and that could better assist in integrating Myanmar into the global community.
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Ms. Segal, who has been doing business in Burma in one form or another for nearly two decades, established herself in the prawn industry in 1990. The plaintiffs in the case are off-shoots of Peregrine Investment Holdings Ltd., a Hong Kong investment bank with offices in 16 Asian countries. In 1994, Peregrine bought out 80% of Segal’s company and formed Peregrine Myanmar Ltd. (PML), making Ms. Segal its executive chairman. Shortly thereafter, PML entered into a joint venture with Burma’s Ministry of Livestock, Breeding and Fisheries to found, Myanmar American Fisheries Co. (MAFCo).
The relationship between Peregrine and Ms. Segal began to unravel in mid-1995 when the firm alleged that Ms. Segal was secretly courting the Japanese conglomerate, Mitsui & Co., and was involved in a plot to regain control of the prawn venture. Peregrine removed Ms. Segal as chairman of PML and, in October of last year, filed a $20 million civil suit in New York federal court. In the suit Peregrine claims that "...Miriam Marshall Segal may be taking active measures, in contravention of her fiduciary duties and otherwise in violation of the law, with the purpose and effect of harming
plaintiffs in their business... including importuning the Government of Myanmar to fabricate charges against plaintiffs' employees and facilitating (after her termination as executive chairman of plaintiffs' Burmese operations) the sale of the inventory of plaintiffs' operating subsidiary [MAFCo]." Ms. Segal has denied these allegations and has filed a countersuit alleging breach of contract and defamation.

The selections that follow are from Miriam Marshall Segal's letters and memorandums to Brigadier General Maung Maung, Burma's Minister of Livestock, Breeding and Fisheries, and Michael S. Dobbs-Higginson, retired chairman of Merrill Lynch Asia Pacific and consultant to Mitsui. Peregrine has also filed suit against Mr. Dobbs-Higginson as a co-conspirator of Ms. Segal.

... As you know, I want to do all I can to bring Mitsui full speed ahead into the country for two reasons: economics and the fact that Mr. Endo sits on the Japanese Foreign Aid Committee. We now also [have] Jimmy Wolfensohn, who is President of the World Bank; therefore we have two good allies. So we must do all we can to facilitate everything for Mitsui. I have already brought up the subject of additional aid in a joking way with Mr. Endo, and I have promised Jimmy that I would not bring the subject up until we have dinner the second time. The first time is on the 21st, the second on the 27th....

... Tonight TS' friend is coming to my house for dinner with two high ranking Thai officials. They are en route to Washington D.C. I think to lobby their cause with D.E.A.

With warm regards,
Miriam

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From a memo to
Brig. Gen. Maung Maung
of March 20, 1995

My dear Minister for Help [sic] and Welfare,

Re Mitsui group, I am assured by my office that all suitable arrangements have been made for them.

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A June 12, 1995 memorandum to General Maung Maung...

My dear General,

Report on Washington Trip:

• Richardson, who put pressure on Ambassador to issue visa — I know it was requested by State Department, State to State, but the USA does not have an Ambassador. This could have been made the issue. There was nothing to gain and everything to lose by giving visa — it has set us back one year.

• The White House has now become involved because of friend of Hillary Clinton on Human Rights Watch.

• The State Department was taking softer stand. Now White House won't allow this.
• D.E.A in full support of aid program.

• Be prepared for lots of internal pressure in July, now being organized. People in Ministries actually helping opposition. Pressure will also mount here.

• Watch for ex-pats or ex-Burmese Nationals. They are planted to organize local Burmese with money and strategy while they remain in the background and act as business people.

• I showed video and pictures, which shocked the socks off them.

• Richardson visit — why am I so involved — leave it alone. I advised him that what I know of the people of Myanmar as a whole after twenty years, that you can achieve nothing by force and broken promises and everything if you keep your word, compromise and try to be constructive

• John McCain: In between — he is being pushed by veterans to take a more active role in recognition and sending Ambassador.

• Bill Archer: working hard in the background. I have agreed to be his front woman.

• Richardson, at the pushing of the White House, is going to go for embargoes again.

• Appointment is being set up for me with Vice President A1 Gore. So I am now in constructive engagement at the source.

• I must stay here and keep throwing darts. They must know that someone will take and is taking action....

• ... The transcripts were very helpful as Richardson was obviously embarrassed when I asked him if he had been given any assurances on anything or had he given any assurances — both ways in writing — no response. I intend to use his letter on TV and press if okay.
I can say I got copy of letter from State Department sources. They will never know the difference.

Hector is very active — pin something on him, frame him — anything — get unknown person to make RKP's acquaintance and get his political thinking — you will see what Hector is doing in the brain washing department. Multiply that and you get frightening answers. I would raid Hector's house!

Watch for ex-pats or returning nationals in trading business. They are your most active organizers and invisible. Any you know or suspect — harass a lot.

KA is very worried about Japan — play that card to the hilt — try and get M.O.U. with Gen. Chit Swe signed — for business financial center for sites Sawmill 3/6 — consortium consists of international big time investors — makes it more difficult for embargoes.

Audit any new TV or business with Thais present.

Peregrine has asked me to stay out of politics — Hector and Rajan at work — I have refused — I have the right to do with my private life as I see fit. I speak on my behalf, not Peregrine's....

Do not give an inch — This is the stand of the country. It is yours to rule as you see fit to keep the country united — a quote from Lincoln.

If lady has let out [sic], who will take responsibility for her life and lives of others. Perhaps they should advise her to compromise — in other words — attack mildly — show your security — but your willingness to talk not to be dictated to.

Re launching of companies by locals or foreigners, if it is public money being raised, put strict laws in on overseeing. Government will get blame for anything that goes wrong. People are going to be trying....

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_A memorandum dated June 13, 1995 to General Mating Maung..._

My dear General,

Regarding Hector, why can't his visa revocation be implemented — undesirable citizen, mistreatment of local staff, suspicion of illegal actions, too many lost passports, etc. My job is difficult enough without his undermining everything....

... Please see the attached faxes.... All these should be hand delivered to the people by hand [sic], particularly to Gen. Abel. Hector and others paid off or have relationships in most ministries. They get all the news before the ministers at times.

I also think in response to these proposals, all good people involved — Gen. Abel has already offered to help — alternating chairmanships — and I should be honorary chairman — it helps me here — we have to act strong as if the USA cannot push us around. But bottom line is we need the USA for infrastructure — and work must continue on changing their minds. Now I have to tackle the White House. I have also arranged to see Bob Dole, hopefully our next president....

... I did not realize, until now, just how many good friends I have. Enemies are meaningless.

Best regards,

Miriam
It is not that I am patting myself on the back, but I am recognized throughout the world as being the strongest and most influential person with the government of Myanmar. That is worth a great deal. I will not get involved in the business side, other than to give my suggestions as to how and what the Burmese are thinking and making sure that whatever projects we have get through on behalf of our clients. All banking, operational and administrative matters will be run by the appropriate people, and I will do public relations. I currently have slated for appearance 5 television shows, 3 press interviews and an investment forum on Asia. I will refer to my colleagues all business matters that I am not certain of.

Looking at the facts simply, coldly and from a business point-of-view, what I have described above would be the most sensible route for Peregrine to take.

The same applies for Mitsui as I influence the Burmese government and the Burmese dependency grows stronger daily. I have done an enormous amount here in the U.S., in Australia and the UK, producing positive political and economic results for the Burmese. I have managed to diffuse the fallout from the movie "After Rangoon" [sic] by pointing out that all this took place before 1988, and it has changed. I have videos and photos taken by independent non-Burmese news organizations to back up what I have to say. I have a meeting scheduled
with Al Gore, and I believe I can pull off a big public relations coup by having the Burmese government represented for very little money by a lobbying firm, the head of which is doing it for me and believes in what I am doing. He has overruled his board, and now it is a matter of convincing the Burmese to do it, which I believe I can.

Claude discussed with me your concerns over the alternating chairmanship. This idea came from Gen. Abel, not because he thinks I am brilliant or that it should be that way, but it is their way of showing Gen. Khin Nyunt that they are being respectful of me and treating me the way he has instructed them....
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The following discussion took place at the September 7, 1995, Congressional hearing on "Recent Developments in Burma" which was called by the Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific of the House Committee on International Relations. Those testifying before the Subcommittee and participating in this discussion included Ms. Holly Burkhalter, Director of the Washington office of Human Rights Watch; Mr. Ernest Bower, President of the U.S./ASEAN Business Council; Dr. Josef Silverstein, professor emeritus of Rutgers University; and Mr. Thomas Vallely, Director of the Indochina-Burma Program at the Harvard Institute for International Development.

The following was taped and transcribed for Burma Debate.
Questions & Answers

CHAIRMAN DOUG BEREUTER • Should we ease our opposition to multilateral development bank assistance to Burma now or maintain the current tough line that we have had?

MR. VALLELY • It [multilateral development bank assistance] may be the only lever that the U.S. has left. It is a rather large lever, but it's not so large that it's determinative. If we skillfully put [down] a road map, unspoken or not, I think the leverage of the international financial communities is important. The question is what would you use it for? Part of the lending can be used to solve one of the very important problems in US foreign policy in Burma and that is, narcotics. This idea of policing and going around and patching up the relationship to get some narcotics alleviation is basically a fairy tale. You need to integrate the country. Rather than have the various ethnic groups deal through the Golden Triangle, China, and Thailand and others, the country needs to be integrated. And I think that integration is a controversial political issue, but a fundamental political issue as well.... I think connecting [the assistance] to two U.S. problems, 1) narcotics and 2) getting a constitution, would be a good use of that aid.

CHAIRMAN BEREUTER • All right, who else would like to comment? Dr. Silverstein?

PROFESSOR SILVERSTEIN • I would hope that we will not relax our financial weapon. I think that's the one [place] where the Burmese military is most vulnerable. Today its currency is worthless. The internal value of 6 kyat to 1 U.S. Dollar is shown to be its true value by what it is worth outside at 110 to 1. Tourists going in are befuddled by the various currencies, as are businessmen. The PepsiCo Company, for example, which has invested there, cannot take its money out directly. Instead, it must use its profit to buy mung bean and things to sell abroad. You can't do business this way.

The Burmese in my estimation gave up Aung San Suu Kyi... to get us to relax on the financial questions. They are sinking in debt. There are 5 and 1/2 billion dollars owed abroad. They have something like a billion dollars in debt service. And they have financial reserves... about a half billion dollars. You can't rebuild a country this way.

Second of all, we hear that there are two-point-something-billion dollars in investment. We don't hear how much actually has been anted up and how much has been promised. Very little has been
that will produce the wealth. My answer to you Sir, is that this is the one area where SLORC cannot control anything. It needs money. We are in the position to control it and we should control it.

And if I can just add a couple of points to what I've just said, about the internal question. The minorities have been members of Burma since long before the West arose. And they enjoyed autonomy under the Burmese kings. They were given a federal structure when the constitution was written in 1947, but it was a faulty constitution which led to unhappiness, unrest and civil war. Today they stand ready to be part of Burma in a federal structure that will give them local autonomy and control in their own area, something that is not an outrageous demand. They are ready to live with a central government that is politically free and democratic. So, the ground work for a solution is there, if people would listen to it.

MR. BOWER • Just one additional point if I may. When you say we can control the money, I think we can... the question is U.S. multilateral lending. You have to be careful because the isolationists [are] controlling the money. Bilateral aid from other countries is something that we won't be able to control. And, I will argue that we should use multilateral lending and our power there as leverage. I agree with Mr. Vallely on that point. I think that's good leverage. I think it had an impact in our relations with Vietnam.

MR. BURKHALTER • On the question of sanctions, Mr. Wiedemann [Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs] said two things in his testimony that I like very much. One, he said that we have no intention of lifting the sanctions that are currently in place. That is the policy we support. I believe he said that increased sanctions are an option. They can be avoided if they, meaning the Burmese government, take positive steps beyond Aung San Suu Kyi's release. And though he went on to say that we are not looking at increased sanctions at this moment, I think the fact that he held out the possibility that, if there is no real human rights progress beyond the release, we would look at something further, ...was a very, very welcomed statement. And I think that combined with the concept of a road map, it could make a real contribution in exercising greater leverage on the SLORC.

You'd be surprised to hear me say it, but one of the most successful exercises of sanctions on a human rights question was during Ronald Reagan's time and it was the Reagan sanctions against the regime in Poland. What made those sanctions effective was that they were comprehensive. There were a whole list of them: everything from banning airplane flights to cultural exchanges, to entry into the IMF — the big ticket items that the Poles really wanted. But what the Reagan Administration did so successfully was that they made out a road map, to use the [words] of my fellow panelist. They laid out quite precisely and quite publicly what it was Poland was going to have to do. And as Poland did do those things, sanctions were lifted, one at a time, and it was very carefully [tied to trade] so that the response was compatible with the initiative.

Now in my view, we should not have a road map for lifting the sanctions that exist now. In the present climate of deteriorating human rights abuses, we ought to have a road map for what is going to happen; additional sanctions that are going to be clamped down in Burma if we don't see positive movement in the right direction.... if [we] don't see reasonable progress in [a] reasonable amount of time. [That] would be very good idea indeed.

CHAIRMAN BEREUTER • Thank you very much. I'll turn now to my colleague Mr. Berman for his questions.
CONGRESSMAN BERMAN • I’d like to understand a little more of what’s happening in Burma economically right now? You have vastly different pictures — Mr. Bower, [in his testimony] described [a] Burma that is making efforts to open up the economy, boost commercial activities by privatizing state owned enterprises, reducing regulations, and easing foreign exchange restrictions. $2.6 billion dollars in foreign investment has been approved. The economy has a far brighter future; sharp increases in trade and investment will occur. Dr. Silverstein says "ain't so." What's a guy like me supposed to think? By the way, what relevance does the answer have to the question of what we should do in the international financial institutions?

MR. VALLELY • You didn't hear me. I wasn't particularly positive on the Burma economy. I said that the Burmese economy is one of the most closed economies in the world. I said the level of foreign investment in Burma is extremely low. I think Burma is not on a reform course of fixing its economy. However, I think Burma has some great potential to have a market economy. It does not now have a market economy.

Professor Silverstein is wrong. They have not gone from the Burmese Road to Socialism to the Burmese Road to Capitalism. They're still on the Burmese Road to Socialism. They use intervention in all markets. Markets are not opened. Newspapers are not in existence. Markets, wage rates vary from one town to another as much as 100 percent. There is no information on the market. There is no market in Burma. There is an urban market. But most people don't live in Rangoon. Most people live in the countryside. Though Rangoon, I agree, has a lot more automobiles, the growth in the country is driven by resources being sold, not by the creation of wealth.

We have a thing called [the] twilight zone in which 0 is a planned economy and 10 is Hong Kong. Vietnam is at 8, going back and forth. And Burma is at 3, going towards the middle, but sometimes stalled. You ask the question. "What does that mean?" It means this, Burma is very, very poor. And that the people... have been living off the resources of Burma since the isolation began in 1962. And because they lived off the resources for so long... the minerals, the wealth of the earth... You know they don't have enough fertilizer. You can go and see in the dry zone that they are using dung to cook with, which means it's not going into the ground, which means the production is not going to be very strong....

Burma [is not] looking to be East Asia. We almost have Burma looking to be Easter island, which is a Polynesian island that went out of business, basically. So what we have here is, which I think is a very complicated thing, is if you just fix the politics, you still have a very serious problem. So what I am advocating is that you have to fix the economy as well as fix the politics. And I think SLORC is not necessarily a barrier to that. But I don't think even SLORC, or the NLD, understand the power that could come about [if they] began to fix the economy. The economy is in very bad shape. The potential is much greater than say, Cambodia, which doesn't have the basic structures of a rapidly growing, sophisticated economy. At the other end of this spectrum of what you need [in order] to have a rapidly growing economy, Burma has some of those things — very well educated people.

CONGRESSMAN BERMAN • So from your point of view, this [is not] a "liberalizing economy," promoting free market, encouraging foreign investment, developing infrastructure, and that political liberalization will flow from this economic liberalization. You're saying there is no economic liberalization.

MR. VALLELY • It's the opposite of Tianaman Square. Tianaman Square came about, Mr. Berman, because of economic growth, because of the rise of the middle class, of people who wanted more communication, more markets,
I accept the criticism that was made when I [said that they] went from the Burmese Road to Socialism to the Burmese Road to Capitalism. I said it more or less facetiously because they talk about [the fact] that they have changed their hats and gone this way. But it is State capitalism. It is State controlled all the way. And the kinds of consumer goods that we see, and the adding of hotels in the urban areas and two or three of the resort areas, or the treasure such as Pagan, and the karaoke bars and the others, are designed to attract foreigners to come and spend their money, not to improve the social economic conditions of the people. And I would argue that [improvements] will not come about under these leaders. It will only come about with political change in the country.

Mr. Bower • And my point... is that this is the potential of Burma. I am saying that this is an historic moment where you have an opportunity and an openness, the wedge is opening in the door because of the failure. I agree with your remarks. These are numbers that have come from our Embassy’s presence in Burma that tracks commercial flows. I think the black market is quite active. I know that Burma is the second largest country in Southeast Asia, with 45 million people, [who] have a history and a lot of potential to engage in the economy.

What I am talking about... is the potential of Burma. There are very small steps towards opening; opening the markets, privatizing. And the potential is something I think that we need to focus on. And focus on it in a positive sense so that we can be involved in building the Burmese economy and bringing them out of the shell that they have been in, isolated. Sanctions will probably take them back.

Professor Silverstein • I just want to make two points. One, the exports that have gone out of Burma legitimately, that we have traced and know, are essentially unfinished things, unfinished raw logs, raw minerals taken from the earth that have no addition, in other words no value-added. So... the Burmese have provided a kind of a growth statistic that is a draining the country of its natural resources, without the country being able to convert and improve and develop an industrial sector to go around it.

Secondly, I would like to call your attention to the Asian Development Bank Annual Outlook, April, 1995, in which it points out [that] between 1990 and 1993 imports had been almost totally in consumer goods, not in the kind of industrial materials that you need in order to build an economy. So, we have mismanagement.

Congressman Berman • You don’t sound like an advocate of "trickle down."

Professor Silverstein • No.

Mr. Vallely • I think it is another piece to the economic puzzle which is that both the army and the democracy movement need each other to make the country work. I think the idea of total victory is ludicrous.

Congressman Berman • You indicated that you wanted to talk about a series of moves related to responses that we should be making.

Mr. Vallely • What will be in the road map I guess is the question. I think number one, would be a new constitution and how you get a new constitution. Number two, I think would be liberalizing the economy. I think liberalizing the economy is something that SLORC does not want to do either... I would do this in a joint effort with the Japanese. The Japanese
CONGRESSMAN BERMAN • I just want to interject... my reaction is that other than Japan's general economic interest and what they can produce from the investment, their major focus on Burma and constructive engagement is all based on how they are thinking about China right now. And that [Japan] is very much motivated by a very strong awareness of China, what it is doing, and concerns about China....

MR. VALLELY • I think we should have the same concern. I call it the new domino theory. [With] the old domino theory, you used to be worried about communism spreading from [the] Soviet Union and China to the countries of South, Southeast Asia, East Asia. The new domino theory is Chinese influence. And what is the US response to that?

If you go to Mandalay, you will see almost a Tibet-like strategy in northern Burma where the drug money and the very positive capital flow from China, which has a market economy, which generates personal savings, which is a very successful economy, Mr. Berman, that investment is coming into Mandalay city. You almost have ______ I don't want to overstate this thing... a very competitive Chinese economy in a very outdated Burmese economy and that's weakening Burma as a nation.

The Japanese, and I think the United States as well, should be concerned about balance of power arrangements in Asia. And I think Burma is one of those places where balance of power arrangements can help if the US participates more along with Japan, creating a political mechanism and an economy that begins to work. I think those are huge issues, but I think they are possible. And I think the political movement that we are seeing is a positive thing. I would not have characterized it the way that the Administration characterized it [in Mr. Wiedemann's testimony], I don't think you can marginalize Aung San Suu Kyi.

CONGRESSMAN BERMAN • But you have told us what we should be seeking, a new constitution, economic liberalization.... You haven't told us what we should be changing. Should we be providing OPIC guaranteed loans? Should we be changing our vote in international financial institutions? Should we be peddling arms? You probably don't think that....

MR. VALLELY • I think the constitutional process needs to have some sort of multinational agreement, with Japan, the U.S., ASEAN. An agreement that will say, we want the constitution to look like "X." And the Burmese themselves have to figure out what "X" is, but we have enough liability to have dialogue among the parties in Burma to know what in general terms we might want. And then use the multilateral mechanisms to try to encourage the forces in [the] NLD and other places, and the forces inside the Burmese army, that want that change.

I am not a diplomat in Burma and don't know how to structure the road map perfectly, but I think I can paint the picture of how to try to do that.

CONGRESSMAN BERMAN • Dr. Silverstein, what is your reaction?

PROFESSOR SILVERSTEIN • My position would be, the Burmese know how to solve their own problems. They need our help, and we give them our help by bringing pressure on this military to realize that they're going to have to step back and allow the people to be their own government and have the decision-making process in their own hands. [The people] cannot continue to be the hand-maiden of the military, to be abused in the way that they are.

There is no indication from what has been going forward in the last seven years under the military, that the military has a clear idea of spend money on these things and we don't. So if we are going to do it, we need to use somebody's money, and since we are not going to spend any money, why don't we use theirs?
what kind of an economy they're trying to build. Rather, they have used the various kinds of contracts that they are in to siphon off added wealth through the signature money mechanism, through the sale of opium outside of the country. And the people are not benefiting.

Mr. Vallely is perfectly correct. Outside of Mandalay, the country is a disaster. If you go into the border areas where I have spent a great deal of time, you find the people hungry, short of basic items that are not circulating. There is no internal mechanism to distribute these goods and these people are suffering. So, there is no growth going on at this point.

MR. BURKHALTER • What I understood the gentleman to be saying, was that the Burmese have reached the point where, through sanctions, isolation and pressure, they have given a little; we should now bribe them to give some more, with Japanese money. And if that's the roadmap, it wouldn't be mine. Mine would look more like this: It is precisely because Suu Kyi is free to move about, though not to speak internationally — a tape of her remarks that was played at the Beijing conference had to be smuggled out, the government wouldn't let it go [out]... — but more that it's pretty clear that they do feel the need to respond.

I think that now the message, and the roadmap, if you will, should be that within a reasonable amount of time, if the International Committee for the Red Cross is not working in Burma in a way that they find satisfactory; if there is not a substantive dialogue between Aung San Suu Kyi and the SLORC; if the country has not been opened up to journalists and others to look about freely; and if there has not been some substantive movement on the issue of forced labor and the release of political figures, then my roadmap would look something like this: There would be a ban on additional U.S. investments; there would be an end to this drug assistance which should never have been started up in the first place; we would turn off our support for the UN operations there, we would be even tougher in international fora; and heighten the isolation and stigmatization of Burma, not lessen it.

MR. VALLELY • And you will end the dialogue between the parties.

MR. BOWER • And condemn the Burmese people to another 30 years of living in a time machine under a repressive military dictatorship.

MR. BURKHALTER • It was not constructive engagement that led to Suu Kyi's release. It was not constructive engagement.

PROFESSOR SILVERSTEIN • If I can just make one remark. I think we have to recognize there are two forces at work here. The military has the guns. Aung San Suu Kyi has the people. Until you find a way of bringing this together, [put] the guns back into the warehouses and let the people run their own country, and help them to achieve that, nothing is going to change.

CHAIRMAN BEREUTER • Thank you. We're certainly not at a point of consensus, but I appreciate the inter-panel dialogue. Now, I turn to the Chair of the full committee, Congressman Gilman....

MR. GILMAN • Is Burma now jamming the BBC or VOA? Do we have any information with regard to that?

PROFESSOR SILVERSTEIN • It has been reported that BBC has been jammed. I asked the VOA people here today that if our American broadcasts were being jammed and they didn't know. But the only one that has been reported in the press has been BBC, and that's from BBC sources themselves.

MR. GILMAN • We've had a great deal of debate in the Congress about whether or not we should have normalcy of relations with Burma, despite our objections to the form of government; that we may be doing a disservice to ourselves by not having a lot of communication. I'd like to ask all the pan-
Ms. BURKHALTER • If by normalcy it means the removal of sanctions and lack of isolation and ending of stigma, of course I will be opposed to that. But we strongly favor ongoing dialogue, which has to happen at the same time it's happening with the SLORC authorities, also with Aung San Suu Kyi as the legitimate head of that government. We strongly favor dialogue and a lot of it, at every possible opportunity, ... towards a resolution of the political crisis. But it must be in three parts. You can't have a dialogue with SLORC that excludes Aung San Suu Kyi and her people.

MR. BOWER • I agree with Ms. Burkhalter that dialogue and contact are the most important things that we must implement. I think Mr. Valletty's comments on a road map towards achieving a more normal relationship is something that should be pursued in earnest by our policy makers. And I can say that I think that the business community should be considered as part of the equation, as a positive influence on what we can do in Burma to help take the very small cracks of openings that we see in Burma and work with the Burmese people to open their country and become a more open economy, open society and open market.

PROFESSOR SILVERSTEIN • I absolutely believe that we need to be present and we need to talk to Burma and I think dialogue is imperative. I do think, however, that we ought to speak with one voice. I don't think our commercial attaché should be talking about great investment opportunities when the policy of the government is not to encourage or to discourage. Secondly, I don't think we should have a narcotics officer doing things that are behind the back or apart from what the State department position is on the question of narcotics. In short, we should have dialogue, we should be present, and we should have a consistent poli-

MR. VALLELY • I think it's impossible to get one U.S. policy. It doesn't work that way. Its competing policies that ultimately lead to the foreign policy of the country. And I think upgrading of our relationship with Burma in some way and a series of confidence building steps for both [the] NLD and SLORC [would] be the way that I would upgrade it. I would very much think that the United States' interest would want Burma to join ASEAN. I think if we had more academic contact with Burma, that would help the forces of democracy. One of the things that is missing in Burma that you very much need: Burma has no reformers. Burma only has the army and dissidents. You need to find a confidence-building way from the United States to create the ideas that have been talked about here at the panel, to create reform. We need to find that extra step, Mr. Chairman, to upgrade our relationship so that we can have the forces of reform that have been so repressed in Burma for so long to take hold, become part of American foreign policy and become part of the balance of power in Asia, which I do not mean to be confrontational necessarily with China, but [might then] have the sense of stability that we need for our own national interest.
"TIME OUT" — as the Americans say. Enough is enough. Sensationalist cries that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize winner, is another Nelson Mandela must be tempered with reason. Objectively, a comparison with the former Philippine President Cory Acquino [sic], brought to power after Marcos, is more appropriate. Other than being installed as the result of a democratic election, the laudable, yet inexperienced and naive Acquino did little to alleviate the chaos and confusion pertaining at the time of her election. It was only when President Ramos, a former senior general, was subsequently elected, that the Philippines started making real national and economic progress.
Little fundamental credit seems to have been given to the current Myanmar government (which took over in 1992) for what it has done to date in gradually bringing about order and economic progress with comparatively little of the wholesale repressive, brutal and corrupt practices of other regimes elsewhere in the world, in both the past and now. Its unconditional release of Suu Kyi in July '95 and others has received an initial flurry of plaudits. However, the importance of these moves, thanks to the liberal/human rights brigade, which hangs on every word Suu Kyi utters, have [sic] been completely overshadowed by Suu Kyi's statement that "all that has changed is that I have been released, nothing else". Further, and more dangerously, she has advocated that no foreign aid be granted until democratic elections have [been] held — a ludicrously naive position to take. Without aid, how can Myanmar get itself to the point, in terms of sufficient economic critical mass with the concomitant benefits to the people, where such elections [could] be held with a reasonable chance that the people will then have enough not to want to lose it in another bout of the 1988 chaos? On a related, more practical issue, in 1993, the National Convention, which is represented by 700 delegates drawn from a wide range of different groups, including the Military, was convened by the Myanmar government to draft a new State Constitution. In this new Constitution, the military wishes to follow the Indonesian Constitution model (which ensures the Indonesian military a substantial role in the country's government), and thus ensure that the Myanmar military can also play a role in the evolution of the country towards a more democratic system of government by participating in the national leadership of the future State government. While there has been little global, public outcry about Indonesia's system, no doubt Myanmar's current military government will continue to be bashed for their temerity in thinking that they too should continue to be involved in their country's government. A more valid criticism, which has been levelled by some, is that this drafting process is taking too long — the government estimates that such process will take another two years or so to finalize it. To be fair, this begs the question of how long other countries [took] to put their new constitution in place?

Having been numbed into virtual insensibility by the endless international media on the problems...
of, inter alia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia with their respective crazed ethnic warfare and the UN's, the EU's, and the US's inability to arrive at a consensus, about what to do to resolve these problems, surely it is reasonable that we give some objective media air-time to Myanmar, which is conversely making a constructive effort to sort out its problems. Yet it is a country that seems to attract little serious, in depth and balanced media interest — other than endless articles on Suu Kyi!

Why has there been little media interest in interviewing senior members of the current military government — they have a point of view and in the interest of fairness, they should be given an opportunity to express such views. It should be noted that, in the current military government, there is no individual military "dictator" like, for example, the former Philippine President Marcos or some of the former Korean military presidents. Rather, it is a collective leadership and thus, much more balance[d] and reasonable in its approach. Unfortunately, what little exposure it has been given to date tends to have been very cursory, [with] every article being overlaid with a strong negative bias and much more information about the Suu Kyi point of view. Sensationalism and/or human rights oriented reporting seems to be the order of the day. Whatever happened to objectivity?

From the perspective of recent Asia regional history, it is interesting to note that many of today's economic successes in Asia have largely been the result of strong authoritarian governments, many of them military in origin, imposing order and discipline on their respective countries, so as to create
the structural building blocks for economic and social development. What is, therefore, often forgotten in the process of looking today at individual countries in Asia is that each country, both has started at a different point in time and has been evolving at a different pace.

For example, just after World War II, the Kuomintang military government in Taiwan started this process and it has only recently in the last few years evolved into a democratic society — only possible due to the economic success of Taiwan leading to the development of a strong, confident middle class obliging the KMT to relinquish its hold on the reins of power. After the Korean War effectively ended in 1953, South Korea entered onto a period of confusion as Syngman Rhee's democratic party was unable to bring order to the country. He was toppled by a military coup led by General Park Chung-hee, who used draconian measures to bring discipline and thus, more importantly, "progress" to the country. The events in Korea eventually followed, more or less, the same process as in Taiwan, with a democratic government finally being established by the current President Kim Young-sam in late 1992. Thailand’s and the Philippine's past is relatively similar. Indonesia is still evolving towards... this result. China, while following a somewhat different path, is also evolving, although, in the process, giving no clear clues as to what the post-Deng Xiaoping China will be like. Particular emphasis should be given to the fact that, under a somewhat different process, Singapore and Malaysia have benefited enormously from strong, authoritarian, yet visionary governments.

Therefore, in the context of these individual countries' recent histories and their undeniable success in moving towards their respective system of increasingly more democratic governments that meet the requirements of their own cultures and societies, why is the Myanmar government being so often singled out as a being the most pernicious and repressive regime in Asia, if not in the world? To put Myanmar's own history in the proper perspective, it must be realized that when General Ne Win toppled the previous democratic government of U Nu with a military coup in 1962, he sealed off the country [from] the outside world and promulgated the "Burmese Way to Socialism." Thus, unlike the other Asian countries' evolution towards economic success (during the '60s, '70s and '80s), Myanmar then entered into a period of stasis and everything came to a grinding halt.

Finally, after Ne Win "retired" in early 1988, with the advent of lessening military control, the country faced the pent-up frustrations accumulated during the Ne Win regime, which led to mounting protest against the one-party rule; the independence aspirations of the 135 different ethnic groups — particularly those in the north, including some hard-line, extremist, armed insurgent groups — and the so-called democratic aspirations of numerous, embryonic political groups. Consequently, the country then rapidly entered in to a period of anarchy and chaos. All this resulted in the breakdown of internal and international communications, rioting, looting, wanton destruction of property (60% of Yangon's industrial base was destroyed), public executions carried out by different groups, all of which... took place throughout the country over a period of some 6-8 months. And all of which, comparatively speaking, made China's 1989 Tiananmen Square incident pale into insignificance.

As the country was literally in a state of anarchy, the Tatmadaw (the armed forces) formed the State Law and Order Restoration Council on the 18th of September, 1988, to ensure law and order, safe transportation and communication, adequacy of food, housing and other essential public needs and the preparation for the holding of multi-party, democratic elections, all in the interests of both the State and the people. Following the State Law and Order Restoration Council crackdown to effect these objectives, an uneasy "truce" came into being. At the same time opposition parties of all types; from the naive idealists to the hard line, insurgent extremists, continued to jockey for power and influence over how to create the new, post-election Myanmar world.

Thus, by July, 1989, the inexperienced and naive Suu Kyi, albeit with all the right theoretical motives, found herself dealing with a wide range of different interests, in a manner which put her and her supporters (real and otherwise) at considerable risk vis-a-vis the then law as prescribed by the then government. After all, Suu Kyi et al. represented the forces of light against the forces of darkness. In this context, I am reminded of the early 1930s' hunger march...
on Washington, DC, when troops, under General MacArthur, fired on the marchers, killing and wounding many of them. More recently, there was the 1960s’ Kent State University, USA, incident; namely the US government versus the Vietnam War protesters, when a number of student protesters were wounded or killed by the USA’s National Guard forces — comparatively speaking not so long ago! Then, there was the Waco, Texas, incident last year. There were relatively few cries from the world’s international media about the inaccessibility of all these incidents. Then, what about Mexico and its previous government’s excesses — what sanctions were imposed on it? The list is endless. To coin a new, hybrid phrase "self-interest is the mother of political hypocrisy" particularly in the developed, OECD world! How quickly people forget history, or ignore other comparable events. When it suits them.

Even the most subjective of partisans must accept that, even if only theoretically, there are invariably two sides of perceived reason to every confrontation (Hitler, Stalin and those of their ilk being excluded). The new State Law and Order Restoration Council, by now only some nine months old, was still extremely jumpy and obviously hypersensitive concerning its responsibility for ensuring both an orderly transition of power and no new repetition of the previous anarchy. Therefore, it is not surprising that it decided to place Suu Kyi under house detention in order to maintain some element of control over what could be another potentially explosive situation — it no doubt had very clear memories of the anarchy that prevailed throughout the country only some nine months ago — an interesting case of "damned if it did and damned if it didn’t."

Despite this specific action, most observers conveniently forget that the government still allowed the press towards democratic elections to continue. As a result, the promised multi-party, democratic elections were subsequently and successfully held in May, 1990. Out of 235 parties that sprang up, only 93 parties were able to put up actual candidates, with only 27 parties actually winning seats. The net, summary result was that the Suu Kyi party, the "National League for Democracy," won around 82% of the available seats, with various other parties each winning small percentages. It should be noted that the military allowed its personnel to vote freely and there was also no coercion by it on the public to vote for its party — as the results most clearly demonstrated! Conversely, many acknowledge that the other parties, employed considerable coercion of both a monetary and physical nature.

At this point, what most people, once again, often forget is that national societies need to have time to evolve from an authoritarian environment, where the individual is told what to do, to a democratic environment, where the individual has the free choice concerning what he/she wishes to do. However, it must also not be forgotten that, before the democratic system can work effectively, such individuals need to have sufficient education and a sense of personal moral responsibility and accountability for their activities. An objective, in depth look at the world’s so-called developed countries, such as the USA, will rapidly bring one to the conclusion that even in developed countries, in an educational and moral sense, their societies are imperfect at best. To give the USA a break, one could instead look at the long standing, appalling and endemic corruption in Italy, the recent corruption cases in France, Germany and Belgium, all being just a few examples of such imperfections.

In this context, rightly or wrongly, the military government came to the conclusion that, from one day to next, transferring power to the National League for Democracy was a recipe for a democratic "Tower of Babel" disaster. Further, it could be argued that the government, quite rightly, took the view that [the] country was simply not ready for full democracy until a solid, well-rooted governmental and economic infrastructure had been put in place. Accordingly, they refused to transfer power and they continued to keep Suu Kyi under house detention. The world, already frustrated by Suu Kyi’s detention, was astonished, shocked and outraged — after all, perception is 9/10’s of most peoples’ view of reality — in this regard, amply assisted by the developed world’s press. I hope that, in the fullness of time, they, and their readers, will remember the chaos that followed the UN sponsored "successful democratic elections" in Cambodia! This action caused Myanmar to be turned overnight into a pariah state by the West plus Japan — an attitude easy to take as there were no business interests at stake.
However, when the new leadership took over in 1992, they determined that, for the country to evolve, Myanmar had to develop an open market economy and that it could only do so, provided a basic structure of law and order could be developed and maintained. This policy has already begun to bear fruit, thanks in no small part to the support of its more reasonable and pragmatic Asian neighbors, who have themselves already been through the same process. Thus, the West's, in particular the USA's, uninformed, superficial and often voter-oriented views, concerning the necessity for immediate democratic elections and, in the interim, the inappropriateness of extending aid and other forms of support (again with the redoubtable USA leading the way), are largely counter-productive.

Such views will, in fact, delay the reforms that these governments are so naively pressing Myanmar to now produce like a rabbit out of a hat — perhaps they are waiting for, in some rather nostalgic way, the arrival of a modern King Arthur or, possibly, a reincarnation of Houdini! It must also be appreciated that, unlike many other countries in Asia, Myanmar has, as stated above, 135 different ethnic groups, from which some 16 armed insurgent groups have evolved, some dating back to the beginning of Myanmar's independence in 1948. This fact, in turn, has dramatically increased the difficulty of the government to encourage a sense of national unity and purpose during the period since independence. For example, Myanmar's situation could be compared with that, say, of the Philippines, which fortunately has only had to deal with one primary insurgent (Muslim) group in the south of the country. It is interesting to note that, despite the magnitude of its task, the Myanmar government, under the new leadership which took over in April, 1992, has succeeded in coming to peaceful terms with 15 of the 16 insurgent groups and it has initiated concrete discussions with the ethnic groups to create self-administered zones or divisions, so as to accommodate at least some of these groups' requirements for a degree of autonomy. Further, since July, 1989 to date, the Myanmar government has released some 38,000 [people], who were detained both during the period of anarchy and subsequently, for political reasons. It should also be noted that political detainees were often merely placed under house arrest — as
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was the case of Suu Kyi — as opposed to being imprisoned. Finally, after the 1988 "disturbances," although the Civil Courts and Military Courts imposed a considerable number of death sentences, none were actually carried out. No doubt because of the strongly felt Buddhist faith of just over 80% of the Myanmar population, the Myanmar people including the government, are a gentler people than some of their regional neighbors, such as China and Cambodia — a fact which is almost always also overlooked. Remember Pol Pot and his deranged desire to reduce Cambodia to ground zero — in the process eliminating some one million people plus, who got in the way of the grand plan.

The point, therefore, of this brief historical summary is to emphasize that firstly, Myanmar only really emerged from isolation in 1992, decades after countries such as Taiwan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and even China (1978) started their respective arduous roads to economic success and changes in their forms of government; in virtually all cases towards a more democratic form of government. It is therefore hardly reasonable to expect Myanmar to be at the same stage of development as its Asian neighbors. Comparatively speaking, in law and order terms, it is also well ahead of virtually all the ex-Soviet bloc Asiatic country counterparts — not too bad for a mid-1992 start or, if one insists on being a purist, a late 1988 start.

Further, in human rights terms, its confinement under house arrest of Suu Kyi in a large house with spacious grounds on the beautiful Inya Lake, its otherwise respectful treatment of her and its offer to allow her to leave Myanmar at any time, contrasts rather positively with the prison cells or "work camps" that major opponents of other governments have found, or now find, themselves in. In terms of the comparative number of political detainees, again Myanmar compares well with some other countries. Put in another way, various informed estimates claim that as a percentage of their respective total population, the USA has 0.4-0.5 percent and Myanmar has 0.1-0.2 percent of their respective population in jail and/or in "work camps" and no different (possibly even better) than many other countries', past and present, attempts to bring order and progress to their respective countries. At this point,
it should be clearly acknowledged that the liberal and human rights activists play an important role in bringing the world's attention to the excesses and abuses of various countries' governments. However, such activists, unfortunately, are often too unrealistic, too demanding and, as a result, too often end up taking irrational, impractical and, sometimes, destructive positions.

What is also interesting is that, in late June this year, in terms of the complexities of these "political equations", the US government announced that, despite opposition from human rights officials, it was resuming limited aid to Myanmar in order to provide assistance to Myanmar in reducing the production of opium in the Northeast border area — again, due to self-interest. This, at least, is some belated recognition that the Myanmar military government is making serious efforts to deal with these problems and that such problems have substantial international implications. People also forget that part of the Northeast, ethnic/insurgent groups' problem is the opium triangle dominated by Khun Sa, the warlord [sic], aided, it is alleged, by certain Thai and Chinese friends. Thus, by extension, with more general economic aid and a concomitant general improvement of [the] economy, with this aid the Myanmar government will have even more resources to deal with these, and other, real and serious problems.

Finally, what is also not appreciated is that, under the previous socialist system's isolationist policies, the then Burma developed neither capitalist nor communist friends. Thus, at the end of the Cold War, even the most repressive regimes, such as North Korea, had some friends who were prepared to give it some support. Conversely, Myanmar, when it finally emerged from its time warp cocoon, had no friends, no old alliances and thus no moral support. Instead, it seems to have become a convenient whipping boy to be trotted out for some human rights bashing, when nothing much else is happening or when the human rights and other liberal white hat extremists, frustrated elsewhere by the business black hats need some soft target to attack. Who said the world was fair?

However, despite all these handicaps, since 1992, under the new, more enlightened and pragmatic military leadership, it has begun the real process of
transforming itself into an open market oriented economy — with some considerable success. Its Asian neighbors, primarily the ASEAN countries and in particular, Singapore and Indonesia, have refused to follow the US government's questionable (vote grand standing?) request that sanctions be imposed and Myanmar be isolated from the rest of the world until it mended its ways. And, very recently, the ASEAN member countries agreed that Myanmar be encouraged to work towards becoming a member state, as Vietnam became in July of this year.

Myanmar is now opening up — generally, conditions are improving and will continue to do so, but only if Myanmar, its government and its people are given enough room and time to catch up with their successful Asian cousins, who started a lot earlier! Its GNP grew at some 6 percent last year and is expected to exceed 6 percent this year (half that of China's) while inflation is running at around 30 percent (slightly more than China's), all without anything like the foreign-investment support China receives and separately, the political/size generated benefits, which China obliges the world to give it. Myanmar is an extraordinary country with enormous potential — the pre-war jewel in the British colonial crown. It is way ahead of Cambodia and Laos and, in my view, it will provide a strong investment alternative to Vietnam. Its military government is neither naive, nor out to line its own pockets on the scale seen in some other parts of the world, it is action-oriented and, thanks to it, the country is now, in a regulatory infrastructure sense, considerably ahead of Vietnam and China. It is also much less corrupt than these countries and, for that matter, [than] a number of Western countries such as Italy! It is also, in some senses, easier to deal with than India; given the latter's violent swings of its "democratic" Tower of Babel system, exacerbated by growing Hindu fundamentalism.

In short, having now made several recent visits to Myanmar to find out for myself what was happening, I confess freely that I was wrong in my initial, international-media-led, negative judgment, which I published in my recent book on [the] Asia Pacific (in late 1993). You could be wrong too, and hence my desire to give the above, different, and hopefully more objective, perspective. What should also be appreciated is that, in Asia, societies place a much greater emphasis on community rights. They believe that, quite reasonable in my opinion, individual rights must be subordinated to those of the community — otherwise the society will break down. If one looks at the West, where the exercise by a variety of self-interest groups of their individual rights to the point that such individual rights completely ignore community rights if not actually conflict with community rights, (for example, the racial problems in the USA, the Neo-Nazis in Germany, the anti-abortionists who kill pro-abortion doctors and destroy abortion clinic, etc., etc., etc.), the Asians' position on this fundamental issue makes a great deal of sense. This Asian position is not only a product of Asia's millennia-old cultures but is today a binding, common attitude and objective to the development of their respective countries' societies. There is therefore, not surprisingly, a great deal of Asian frustration and anger at the West's, particularly the USA's, insistence that, as their system is clearly superior, the Asian nations should slavishly follow suit! Possibly many in the West forget that many of Asia's cultures were in full flower at the same time, if not before, more of their Western counterparts — they also seem to forget that the Colonial era is over!

Give Myanmar a break, invest some time and indeed, some money — whether it is government aid or direct, private sector, investment money — and you could very likely be backing the last "dark horse" major winner of this region. You could also assist in the process of integrating Myanmar into the Asian regional community and making it a part, by extension, of the global community. In a more specific and immediate sense you could also be helping, as many other Asian governments and individuals are, to provide the country with the necessary wherewithal to improve its human rights record (the determination of which is often a subjective, unrealistic and generally unbalanced, obsession of many uninformed and/or, worse still, readership/voter manipulative observers). And, more generally, to create the necessary condition for the development of a thriving, articulate, educated middle class, who in turn will provide the necessary resources for a more rapid evolution towards as a more representational government system.
IN BRIEF

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

All letters must include the writer's name and address and are subject to editing. Letters may be mailed to BURMA DEBATE, P.O. Box 19126, Washington, D.C. 20036 or faxed to (301) 983-5011.

TOURISM

I should point out at least two errors in your piece by Khin Maung Kyi ['Oasis or Mirage: Should Burma Reconsider its Tourism Policy?,' Nov/Dec 1995]. On page 11, no mention was made of the beach resort of Chaungtha, which, in the opinion of this writer, surpasses either Ngapali or Maungmagan. Also, not all foreign visitors are required to pay US$300: package tourists, businessmen, children, etc. are exempt.

Whilst I accept that, in order to present a balanced argument regarding tourism in Burma, it is only fair to provide a spokesman from the SLORC camp, I object most vehemently to the choice of Paul Strachan as that spokesman. It is also inadequate to state at the end of his article that Strachan has "resurrected the old Irrawaddy Flotilla Co....", etc: you should have made it quite clear that Strachan is heavily involved in tourist projects in Burma which are solely benefiting himself and the military elite. I cannot possibly accept that printing an article by someone who is making money for himself out of the tourist industry can provide a balanced counter-argument. This is borne out by Strachan's mad rantings, viz expressions such as "cruelly hypocritical," "arrogantly refuse," etc., etc. The man is, as we say in the UK, clearly "barking."

Indeed, the only "cruelly hypocritical" person in all this is Strachan himself: from opposing the regime and publishing anti-SLORC books such as "Outrage," Strachan has become the arch-turncoat, and letters of his which I have, plus telephone conversations, bear this out fully. BURMA Debate should not provide Strachan with a platform to propagate his specious and obnoxious arguments. To state, as he does in the first lines of his second paragraph, that the SLORC had no idea of his arrival in Katha is complete claptrap. They knew — and approved of his every movement way in advance. And incidentally, "most of Burma" is not now open to "wandering foreigners." Does Strachan really believe that "wandering foreigners" can simply "wander" into Tenasserim Division, Karen State, Mon State, Kayah State, Chin State, Kachin State and vast tracts of both Shan State and Sagaing Division?

Personally, I believe that Strachan, his inane rantings and his SLORC-supporting "Irrawaddy Princess" should be scuppered along with "Visit Myanmar Year 1996" and all other nefarious traitorous schemes.

Yours sincerely,
Nicholas Greenwood
Travel Writer (Burma)
London

Paul Strachan's article, "Burma: To Go or Not To Go?" [Nov/Dec 1995] both simplifies and distorts the issue of tourism in Burma.

He plays on Western post-colonial guilt. "It seems cruelly hypocritical that well-intentional Westerners should arrogantly refuse the Burmese people all the comforts... that they take for granted." But it is not Westerners who deny comforts to the Burmese. It is their own rulers, the SLORC, who do this. It is not Westerners who have imprisoned dissidents and reduced Burma to penury.

"Judicial execution in Theravada Buddhist Burma is unknown."

Yes, but extra-judicial execution, together with torture, forced labor and forced relocation are very well-known and extensively documented.

Most of Burma is not open and free for wandering foreigners, and certainly not for wandering Burmese. The SLORC is, of course, trying to strike a delicate balance between the demands of international tourism and those of a military state. Naturally the 30 passengers of the Irrawaddy Princess were given good treatment. As a responsible tour operator, one assumes that Mr. Strachan had made the necessary arrangements in advance. It would hardly be good for his business were his clients to be hassled or inconvenienced. "Happy smiling natives" are what tourists like to see, and what their tour operators are there to make sure they do see.

Mr. Strachan imagines that international agencies and "specialists" could avert "the disastrous damage" which he admits SLORC has caused in Rangoon, Mandalay and Pagan. But how can these agencies operate effectively within a military dictatorship? Even that most impartially tolerant of agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, pulled out of Burma last year.

Rather more useful than refrigerators in saving children from disease and premature death is the provision of basic nutrition and health care. There is no suggestion that any of the hoped-for-tourist revenue will be spent on health or education for ordinary Burmese people. The SLORC spends 45% of Burma's GNP on armaments, despite the absence of outside enemies.

Mr. Strachan's Burmese friends are driving Japanese cars, installing air-conditioning and sending their children away to college. Leaving aside the question of whether or not this is an important step in the right direction, the fact is that the vast majority of people in Burma are living, at best, at subsistence level. Villagers have their crops decimated by war or requisitioned — as they are themselves — by the military. Rampant inflation in the towns makes life precarious for most. Of course a few clever or lucky ones will profit from an influx of foreign capital. This hardly alters the fundamental situation.

The response we have had at BAG [Burmia Action Group] to our Alternative Guide to Burma has been overwhelming. We are urging tourists to boycott Burma, encouraging tour operators to hold off from operations there, and actively discouraging promotion in the media of tourism in Burma. The use of forced labor and the summary relocation of entire communities are serious human rights abuses which ought not to be sidelined in the search for democracy in the country before booking their flights.

If things are so good in Burma these days, how come the refugees on the Thai/Burma border have steadily increased during the last year? They now number more than 90,000.

Look again at those faces on pages 12 and 13. They tell a far more ambivalent story than does Mr. Strachan.

Sincerely,
Yvette Mahon
Co-ordinator, BURMA Action Group
London

CORRECTION

In the article, "Oasis or Mirage: Should Burma Reconsider Its Tourism Policy?" [Nov/Dec 1995] Page 11, Footnote #1: The open market exchange rate should read $1=110 kyats.
WASHINGTON, DC — A Burma Roundtable was held in Washington on December 7 with guest speakers Zunetta Liddell, researcher with Human Rights Watch/Asia who discussed the debate on Burma at the United Nations General Assembly, and Ms. Hseng Noung Lintner, who reported on the issue of trafficking of Burmese women and girls from Burma to Thailand.

The Roundtable of February 14 featured Ms. Sarah Burns from the Washington office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Ms. Burns reported on her recent visit to Burma and UNDP operations inside the country.

Dr. Chris Beyrer, Field Director of the Johns Hopkins University/Chiang Mai University Program in HIV/AIDS Research, addressed the Burma Roundtable of February 15. Dr. Beyrer discussed the report, Out of Control: The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in Burma, which was recently released by the Southeast Asian Information Network (SAIN).


NEW YORK — The New York Roundtable is a periodic meeting of organizations and individuals interested in Burma. For more information contact: Burma/U.N. Service Office by phone: (212) 338-0048 or fax: (212) 692-9748.

MASSACHUSETTS — On January 8 the Massachusetts Burma Roundtable discussed the growing political crisis in Burma and planned activities for 1996.

The February 12 Roundtable featured Katharine Redford of Earthrights International. An expert in human rights and indigenous rights, Ms. Redford has spent more than two and a half years in Thailand, primarily along the Thai/Burma border. She recently returned from working with the Karen and Mon, on whose land Unocal and Texaco plan to build a gas pipeline.

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 Billenness of Franklin Research & Development Corporation by phone: (617) 423-6655 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.

SEATTLE — The December 14 meeting of the Burma Interest Group included a briefing and video presentation by Dr. Carrie Steinberg, who recently returned from three months of volunteer work with Dr. Cynthia Maung. Dr. Cynthia operates a string of hospitals and health clinics along the Thai/Burma border.

A Roundtable was held on February 22 to discuss the sanction legislation introduced in the U.S. Congress. Two video tapes, one depicting training of Karen soldiers and the other, showing a weekend speech by Aung San Suu Kyi, were also screened.

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 of January 29 featured updates on current NGO programs. Speakers includederoon Jansen of Medecins San Frontieres/Holland, which has programs around Rangoon and in Arakan and Kachin States, Florent Dounis, of AICF, a French NGO operating in Arakan, and Zhu Wei Xing of Health Unlimited with programs in areas controlled by the Kachin Independence Organization. The meeting also provided a report on the current European Commission proceedings regarding the petition to remove GSP benefits from Burma.

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 — Information on Burma Roundtables can be obtained by contacting the Asian Human Rights Commission by phone: (852) 2698-6339 or fax: (852) 2698-6367.

BRUSSELS/PARIS — A Burma Roundtable was held in Brussels on February 26 to discuss "Recent Developments in Burma." Guest speakers included Martin Smith of Article 19, and Michael Braulke, the former Burma desk officer for the International Monetary Fund.

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 or Info Birmanie at Agir-ici by phone: (33-1) 40-35-06-98 or fax: (33-1) 40-35-06-20.
SLORC SPEAKS

Over the past few months, the list of those who have been denied visas to Burma, or otherwise advised by the authorities that they are not welcome has grown steadily. The impressive roster includes:

- Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans was refused entry in December when SLORC feared he would want to meet with Aung San Suu Kyi.
- Assistant U.N. Secretary General Alvaro deSoto's request to visit Burma in March has been rejected by SLORC. Burmese authorities suggested instead that he come in August, far too late for deSoto to report to the U.N. Human Rights Commission, which is meeting in Geneva in March and April.
- Three members of the Japanese Diet had the door closed to them in January when SLORC learned that their itinerary included a meeting with Suu Kyi.
- Congressman Bill Richardson got the message that he was no longer welcome when he tried for a visa during a recent Congressional recess. The Congressman was among a handful of foreigners to meet with Suu Kyi in 1989 while she was still under house arrest.
- Germany's Development Minister, Carl Dieter, canceled his trip to Burma after he was told by SLORC that he could meet with either SLORC officials or Aung San Suu Kyi, but not with both.
- A Norwegian-led fact-finding team, made up of representatives from four nations, was refused visas when it was learned that their itinerary included meetings with Aung San Suu Kyi, opposition leaders, and government authorities.
- Two Congressional staff members of the U.S. House Committee on International Relations were denied visas during a recent visit to Asia. One of the staff members had met with Aung San Suu Kyi during a trip to Burma last year.
- Population expert Paul Ehrlich and retired admiral James Stockdale, Ross Perot's vice-presidential running mate in 1992, were among the Stanford alumni whose visit was curtailed by SLORC.

NOTABLES & QUOTABLES

"The woman related to a person with a long nose, whose alien race killed her great grandfather and father and enslaved the race, with negative attitude and usual ill will raised a question at a roadside talk in connection with the unconditional surrender and return to the legal fold of U Khun Sa's MTA armed troops. She said Khun Sa was given liberty but drug offenders were in jail and asked whether they could be forgiven like Khun Sa.

I would like to answer that question: U Khun Sa is a Myanmar citizen and has returned to the legal fold after surrendering unconditionally. The case will be dealt with according to existing laws and rules."


BOOK REVIEW

MyanView, a slender new quarterly published by the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, presents itself as plugging the information gap on Burma. This "review of economic and political trends" portrays Burma as breaking out of self-imposed isolation, and rapidly moving toward a market economy—questionable foundations for a credible publication. In reality, its information is based on distorted economic statistics purveyed by the military regime in Rangoon and dreamy reports of SLORC supposedly seeking to settle the nation's political impasse.

Reliable information is hard to find in this newsletter, which purports to inform busy executives of corporations. As MyanView tells it, Burma's authorities "have not encountered any obstacles in stage managing" a constitutional convention. What readers are not told, of course, is that the military government forbids free expression and imprisons those who dare to impose "obstacles" to whatever SLORC wants to do. The newsletter hails "peace accords" between the junta and rebel ethnic groups—when, in fact, there's merely a military ceasefire (already broken with one ethnic group) and nothing in writing.

A report in the first issue on "business opportunities" describes an economy that exists only in Burma's propaganda organs. In this cloud-land, there's "healthy economic growth" and no mention of the increasing economic disparity between the privileged few blessed by the military, and the rest of the population. Indeed, MyanView notes that the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings, the military's own slush fund, "has become not only the preferred economic developing [sic] vehicle for SLORC, but also the partner for joint ventures with foreign investors." What can be healthy about a regime that pinches investment in hospitals and social services, while splurging on defense spending? Yet the latest issue says that "there are many good reasons to invest in the country." A better title for this quarterly would be: Burma Through Rose-Colored Glasses.

Louis Kraar
New York
VOICES OF BURMA

LETTER FROM BURMA
By Aung San Suu Kyi

The Burmese are reputed to be one of the most hospitable people in the world. When I saw a child I took it for granted that formal invitations to lunch or tea or dinner were issued only to foreigners. Burmese friends simply dropped in and shared whatever you happened to be eating. And there was always enough for visitors, however unexpected. Often friends would suddenly appear in the evening, hot green tea, plum candy, fried beans and lapeh (preserved tea leaves) would be brought out and there would be an impromptu party. Sometimes the conversation flowed so happily and the atmosphere was so congenial, the guests would decide to stay for the night. That would be no problem at all: some smooth thinbyu mats, pillows and mosquito nets and any room with a fresh breeze blowing through would be instantly transformed into a pleasant guest dormitory. Night would descend on a household replete with food and the sense of hospitality well discharged.

There is no tradition of inns or hotels in Burma. Visitors from out of town stay with friends or relatives for as long as it is necessary. Considerate guests come laden with food and other gifts and everybody enjoys the opportunity to exchange news of births, deaths, marriages, mild scandals and success stories. Sometimes guests stay on so long the hosts become a little restive. But there are also guests so cherished their visit is extended day after day at the behest of the hosts. Having guests to stay is an informal and elastic process.

Hospitability is no longer so simple. Apart from the high food prices that make most people hesitate to impose themselves on friends, staying overnight in a house other than your own involves more than friendship, good conversation and a cool mat. Visitors must make up their minds before too late an hour if they intend to stay the night because their presence has to be reported to the local Law and Order Restoration Council (LORC) before nine o’clock in the evening. Failure to ”report the guest list” could result in a fine or a prison sentence for both the guest and the host. Nobody may go away for the night from his own home without informing the local LORC as well as the LORC of the place where he will be staying. The authorities have the right to check at any time during the night to see if there are any unreported guests or if any of the members of the family are missing. Households which shelter members of the National League for Democracy or their supporters tend to be subjected to frequent ”guest checks” these days.

These periodic checks can be a mere formality conducted with courtesy or they can be a form of harassment. There are no lack of cases where the authorities have marched in the dead of night and flung up mosquito nets to ascertain that the sleeping population tallied with the names and members on Form 10. Form 10 is the list of all members of a family. In some households which comprise more than one nuclear family there may be more than one Form 10. Domestic employees who sleep at their employers’ homes also have to be registered on Form 10 or they have to be reported as guests. A person may be registered on only one Form 10 so if it is necessary for him to be entered as a member of another family for some reason, his name has to be removed from the original family list.

During the days of the Burmese Socialist Programme Party, Form 10 played a central role in the daily lives of the people of Burma. It was in accordance with the household members listed on the form that it was decided how much a family was entitled to buy of such essentials as rice, oil, salt, chilies, onions, soap and milk powder from the government cooperatives. Today the cooperatives no longer supply consumer necessities so Form 10 has ceased to be important in the economic life of the average family. However, it still features large in the family’s social life because it decides who may or may not spend the night in a house without reporting to the authorities.

And what can happen if a family fails to let the local LORC know they have an overnight guest? Both the guest and the host are liable to a minimum fine of 50 kyats, or to a prison sentence ranging from two weeks to six months. Since 1988 the cases of prison sentences meted out to unreported guests have increased hugely. Some of the cases are tragicomic. A young man caught spending the night as an unreported guest was taken to court together with his host. The court handed down a prison sentence of six months to the guest and two weeks to the host. The host, a hospitable man with a long experience of paying fines for his unexpected and unreported guests, involuntarily clicked his tongue against his teeth in astonished disgust. The acting magistrate heard the loud click and promptly changed the sentence on the host to one month’s imprisonment for contempt of court. The price of hospitality in Burma can be very high.

This article is one of a yearlong series of letters in Japanese and English featured periodically in the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper.

INSIDE WASHINGTON

SANCTION LEGISLATION INTRODUCED

Bills to impose sanctions on Burma have been introduced in the U.S. Congress. On December 29, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky), on behalf of himself and co-sponsors, Senators Alfonse D’Amato (R-New York), Patrick Moynihan (D-New York) and Patrick Leahy (D-Vermont), introduced the ”Burma Freedom and Democracy Act of 1995” (S. 1511), which calls for sanctions on U.S. investment in Burma. In the House, Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R-California) introduced similar sanction legislation (H.R. 2892) on January 25. Both bills are now with the appropriate Committees. Hearings are expected to be held in the spring.

WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCES HEROIN STRATEGY

The Clinton Administration announced its Presidential Directive to stop the increasing heroin flow into the United States. In a statement released by the White House on December 18, Dr. Lee Brown, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, stated that international heroin control is ”a major foreign policy objective of the United States.” Brown went on to state that, ”We want Burma to take action against opium production and against the organizations that manufacture and distribute heroin, but that does not mean we accept the political practices of the present government. U.S. ability to work directly with the Burmese is constrained by their repressive behavior. Therefore, much of what can be accomplished in Southeast Asia will be with Burma’s neighbors, non-governmental groups operating in the area, international financial institutions, and the United Nations Drug Control Program.” It is estimated that over 60% of the heroin reaching the United States comes from Burma.
BUSINESS WATCH

TRADE FAIR HELD IN RANGOON
The Ministry of Trade sponsored the "Myanmar Trade Fair 96" from January 6-14. According to the official newspaper, The New Light of Myanmar, 180 companies from 15 countries, including The Peoples Republic of China, the Republic of Korea, Japan, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States, displayed products ranging from computers and VCRs to pharmaceuticals. The fair was held at the Myanmar Department Store on Shwedagon Pagoda Road.

NEW YORK CITY HOLDS HEARINGS ON SANCTIONS BILL
On February 23, the City Council of New York held hearings to consider legislation that would bar companies doing business in Burma from receiving contracts with the city of New York. The bill is being co-sponsored by four City Council members and is designed to discourage American investment in Burma by prohibiting companies from obtaining city contracts. Similar "selective purchasing" legislation has been adopted in Berkeley, California and Madison, Wisconsin and is now under consideration by the State of Massachusetts.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION CONSIDERS BURMA GSP CASE
The European Commission is conducting an investigation of forced labor practices in Burma in view of a temporary withdrawal of benefits from the European Union's Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP). A complaint, jointly filed by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) contends that Burma is in violation of Articles 9 and 10 of the Council Regulation (EC) 3281/94 which provides for the temporary withdrawal of tariff preferences for certain industrial products originating in developing countries which... practice any form of forced labor as defined in the International Labor and Geneva Conventions. Relevant information and testimony concerning this issue must be submitted to the European Commission by March 20, 1996.

COUNCIL FOR TRADE PROMOTION MEETS IN ROTTERDAM
The Netherlands-Myanmar Council for Trade Promotion (NMCT) is sponsoring an information meeting on "Doing Business in Myanmar" on March 13. Scheduled speakers include; Pyo Wai Win, son of General Ne Win; H.J. Stevens, Chairman of the Myanmar Council in the Netherlands; and P. van Zanten, General Manager of ING Bank. Founded in December, 1995, the NMCT's goal is to stimulate trade between the Netherlands and Myanmar.

BUSINESS FORUM TO BE HELD IN RANGOON
"Myanmar: Open for Business," a conference designed to bring potential investors together with government officials and the business community, will take place from May 23-25 at the Strand Hotel. Coordinated by Hong Kong-based INFOCUS (Investment Focus International), the forum's goal is to provide a comprehensive and balanced perspective on investing. Participants will have the opportunity to "meet with government at the ministries, visit operating joint ventures, and network over golf." Registration Fee is $1,395. For information contact: Heather M. O'Brien, Conference Manager, Tel: (852) 2581-8062, Fax: (852) 2851-0902, e-mail: heather@manager.com

MEDIA RESOURCES

MYANMAR BUSINESS
Trade, invest and make business connections in the emerging economy of Myanmar
U.S. office
Henree Weiner
San Francisco, U.S.A.
Tel: (415) 566-8475
Fax: (415) 773-9519

Myanmar Business, a monthly publication by Options Publishing Services, Information Specialists and Publishing Consultants, provides a trade and investment digest, news on infrastructure and other major projects, and "how to" tips on making business connections in Myanmar. Editor in Chief, Ashok K. Nath, is a Burmese expatriate based in Manila, Philippines.

OUT OF CONTROL: THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC IN BURMA
The Southeast Asian Information Network (SAIN) December 1995
SAIN
G.P.O. Box 217
Chiang Mai University
Chiang Mai 50200
Thailand
Tel/Fax: (66-53) 278-549

This report on the status of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Burma and current control measures summarizes available data, new information, and explores the reality of combatting the disease in the present political environment. Recommendations for policy options for dealing with the HIV epidemic in Burma are made.

ANNALES DE POLITIQUE ETRANGERE DELA BIRMANIE
1948-1995
Librairie Sudestasie
17 rue Cardinal Lemoine
75005 Paris
France
Tel: (33-1)43-25-18-04
Fax: (33-1) 46-34-72-75

This second edition, in French, outlining the history of the foreign policy of Burma, was revised and edited by Richard Sola. The book discusses Burma's role in the non-aligned movement and the inter-play of other countries, such as the Peoples Republic of China, the Soviet Union, and Cambodia. Published by L'Institut d'Etude des Relations Internationales (ILERI) of Paris, in collaboration with the Far East Intelligence Monitoring society (FEIM). Price: FF75.
MEDIA RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

MYANVIEW: A QUARTERLY REVIEW OF ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRENDS IN MYANMAR

MyanView
Institute of Southeast Asian Studies
Heng Mui Keng Terrace
Pasir Panjang
Singapore 0511

This quarterly publication is designed to provide information to business executives on vital issues related to economic trends in Burma, particularly with regard to tax laws, regulations and investment policies. Special supplements will be published as developments warrant. The annual subscription rate is US$ 130. (see review on p. 32)

A REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE LACK OF PROGRESS TOWARDS DEMOCRACY INBURMA (MYANMAR)

October 1995

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia
Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
Ms. Margaret Swieringa
Secretary
Human Rights Sub-Committee
Parliament House
Canberra, A.C.T. 2600
Australia

The report, in two volumes, contains 17 submissions by organizations and individuals worldwide on the human rights situation in Burma and is in response to an inquiry made by the Australian Parliament.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE REPORTS RELEASED:

• International Narcotics Control Strategy Report
  March 1996
  Southeast Asia and the Pacific
  (Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs)

• 1995 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices
  March 1996
  Burma Human Rights Practices, 1995

These reports will be available in print at the end of March but can now be found on the World Wide Web at:
http://dosfan.lib.uiuc.edu/dosfan.html
and at the Gopher sites:
• 1995 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices
gopher://dosfan.lib.uiuc.edu:70/0F-I-%3A23308%3ABurma
• International Narcotics Control Strategy Report
gopher://dosfan.lib.uiuc.edu:70/0F-I-%3A21342%3A5.7.f

BRIEFINGS AND DEVELOPMENTS

STANFORD ALUMNI BARRIED FROM ENTRY TO BURMA

A group of 100 Stanford University alumni and professors was denied entry to Burma despite the fact that all members of the group had valid visas. The scheduled three-day visit to Rangoon was to be part of a round-the-world trip to begin January 19 but the Burma portion of the trip had to be canceled when Burmese authorities rescinded Rangoon landing permits. The refusal by SLORC was believed to have resulted from an invitation the group extended to Aung San Suu Kyi to meet with them. Stanford officials unsuccessfully tried to appeal SLORC’s decision by explaining that the group was “not trying to make a diplomatic or political statement” by extending the invitation.

BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL FEATURES BURMA EVENT

The International Forum of New Film/International Film Festival Berlin offered a special presentation of Burmese films during this year’s event held February 15-25. The three entries: Mya Ga Naing, a silent, black and white film made by Maung Tin Maung in 1934 is a slapstick melodrama set in the jungle and in Rangoon. Nay chi Phyar Hma Ngwee Thaw Gyaunt by San Shwe Maung, also in black and white, was made in 1977. Set in the snow-capped mountains of Kachin State, it depicts the rural life of the Kachin people. Mon Shwe Yee, a classic backstage love story takes place in Pyay [Prome], The black and white film was made in 1970 by Win Oo. Prints of Mya Ga Naing and Mon Shwe Yee will remain available in Berlin. Contact: Freundes der deutschen Kinemathek, Verleih, Weltersstr. 25, 10777 Berlin, Germany. Tel: 49-30-211-1725, Fax: 49-30-218-4281.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON BURMA HELD IN INDIA

The International Convention for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma was held in New Delhi, January 4-6. Attended by more than 100 delegates from Europe, North America and Asia, including several prominent Indian political figures, the goal of the convention was to launch a global campaign focusing on Constitutional Issues, Human Rights, Constructive Engagement and the China/Burma Axis. Following the convention, the “New Delhi Statement” was released, calling for: tripartite dialogue between the SLORC and the Burmese democracy movement, Aung San Suu Kyi, and the ethnic leaders; all governments to not recognize conclusions adopted by the National Convention; the immediate release of political prisoners; a halt to all international investment and trade with Burma; a boycott of “Visit Myanmar Year 1996”; and for all countries in the region, particularly India, to recognize that a democratic Burma is the best means to ensure stability and guard against the possibility of domination by regional super powers.

KHUN SA "SURRENDERS" TO SLORC

Heroin kingpin, Khun Sa, commander of the 10,000 man-strong guerrilla-force Mong Tai Army (MTA), surrendered his strongholds in Shan State in January. According to SLORC, Khun Sa has surrendered unconditionally, although many inside and outside Burma are speculating that a deal beneficial to both parties was negotiated. Burma’s official newspaper, The New Light of Myanmar, has gone from referring to Khun Sa as a "half-breed" and "Satan Masquerading as Prince Charming" in August of last year, to now affixing the honorific "U" to his name and claiming him as a "Myanmar citizen" who has "returned to the legal fold." SLORC has also indicated that they will not extradite him to the United States where he would face an outstanding arrest warrant for drug trafficking charges.
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.

OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

George Soros, Chairman
Aryeh Neier, President
Maureen Aung-Thwin, Director, The Burma Project