

BURMA

D E B A T E

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**SLORC AND
THE NLD**

**IN HIS OWN
WORDS:
U Win Htein**

**TALKING
SANCTIONS**

THE ISSUES....



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ON THE COVER: U Tin U, Aung San Suu Kyi and U Kyi Maung of the NLD speak before a crowd in Rangoon. Photo by Leslie Kean.

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SLORC AND THE NLD

The announcement that the National League for Democracy (NLD) planned to convene a congress of its elected representatives in May prompted a swift and far-reaching crackdown on pro-democracy activists by Burma's military government. More than 250 people were arrested, including Aung San Suu Kyi's press secretary, her personal assistant and bodyguards, in what SLORC described as an effort to prevent "anarchy" and unrest. Although the meeting, minus many of the NLD members who had planned to attend, took place without incident, tension between Burma's main political opposition party and the regime continues to mount. The NLD's decision to draft a new constitution outside the government-sanctioned National Convention resulted in SLORC's introduction of a sweeping new law allowing for jail terms of up to 20 years for anyone seen to be interfering in its constitutional convention or attempting to write a rival charter. What will be the next steps taken by the NLD and how will the regime respond?

IN HIS OWN WORDS: U Win Htein

In 1988, U Win Htein worked closely with the leadership of the NLD and, as a result, spent five and a half years in Rangoon's Insein prison. Following his release, he resumed his political activities and has served as personal assistant to Aung San Suu Kyi. In this exclusive interview, U Win Htein speaks of his military background, his involvement with the democracy movement and life as a political prisoner. U Win Htein was rearrested this May and is once again reported to be in Insein jail. According to sources in Rangoon, he has been charged under the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act and could face a sentence of up to seven years.

TALKING SANCTIONS

Recent developments in Burma have served to further heighten the already intense debate in the United States on whether or not economic sanctions should be imposed on the military regime. In May, a hearing was called by the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs to discuss "The Burma Freedom and Democracy Act (S. 1511)," legislation currently before Congress that would prohibit U.S. investment in Burma. Here are three variant points of view submitted to the Committee as testimony.

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The National League

" A Few Introductions "

In writing about the activities of the National League for Democracy it will be necessary to mention the names of some of our key personnel from time to time, so I would like to introduce a quartet of retired army officers who are leading members of the executive committee of the party.

The chairman of the NLD is U Aung Shwe. He joined the Burma Independence Army in 1942, one of the educated young men (he had graduated from Rangoon University two years previously) who felt they had a duty to serve the country in any way they could during the war years. After Burma became an independent nation in 1948, he continued to serve in the armed forces and by the end of the 1950s, he had become a brigadier, a rank achieved by few in those days. In 1962, while serving as the Commander of the Southern Command, he was asked to retire from the army and sent as Burmese ambassador to Australia and New Zealand. No official explanation of any kind was given for the transfer at the time. However, as part of the campaign to try to discredit the leaders of the NLD in the eyes of the people, it has been written in government publications of recent years that U Aung Shwe had been allowed to retire from the army because he had displayed partisanship during the elections of 1960. It must therefore be assumed that he was a casualty of an attempt by the armed forces to defend themselves from accusations that they had tried to engineer the victory of the socialists in the said elections.

Subsequent to his posting in Australia, U Aung Shwe served in Egypt and then in Paris until his retirement from government service in 1975. He settled in Rangoon, where in 1988 public

Who
they
are
What
they
want

This article is drawn from a series
of letters written by Aung San Suu Kyi
that appeared in the *Mainichi Daily News*
on March 25, April 1, April 8 and
June 17, 1996.

for Democracy



NLD Executive Committee. Front Row: U Lwin, U Kyi Maung, U Aung Shwe, U Tin U, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.
Back Row: U Lun Tin, U Than Tun, U Hla Pe, U Nyunt Wai, U Soe Myint

demonstrations erupted that eventually spread across the country. The people of Burma were tired of the authoritarian rule of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) that had turned their country, once seen as the fastest-developing nation in Southeast Asia, into one of the poorest in the world.



U Aung Shwe

The predictable reaction to the collapse of the one-party system was the mushrooming of parties at a rate which would be familiar to those who knew Japan in the immediate postwar period. Among the parties that sprang up were the NLD, of which U Aung Shwe was an executive committee member, and its close official ally, the Patriotic Old Comrades League, formed by retired members of the armed forces, of which he was the chairman. Although there were over 200 political parties, including the

BSPP, under its new name of National Unity Party, it soon became evident that it was the NLD which had the support of the vast majority of the people of Burma. Even as the popularity and the organizational capacity of the party rose, persecution of its members and restrictions on its activities increased. In June 1989 U Win Tin, one of the two secretaries of the NLD, was imprisoned and in July, U Tin U, the chairman, and I, the general secretary, were placed under house arrest. In spite of such setbacks, the NLD was victorious in an overwhelming 82 percent of the constituencies during the elections of May 1990. This led not to a transfer to democratic government as the people had expected, but to a series of intensive measures aimed at debilitating the party. In September, U Kyi Maung, who was in

effect the acting chairman of the NLD, was arrested, leaving U Aung Shwe with the unenviable task of piloting the party through a period of burgeoning difficulties.

The only original member of the executive committee who was left after 1990 to help U Aung Shwe in his struggle to keep the NLD intact through the years that threatened its viability as a political party, was U Lwin, the treasurer. U Lwin had joined the Burma Independence Army as an 18-year-old boy at the outbreak of the war. In August 1943 he was among a batch of Burmese cadets chosen to go to Japan for training at the *Rikugun Shikan Gakko* (army academy). By the time the young Burmese officers had completed their training in April 1945, the anti-fascist resistance movement had started and U Lwin and his fellow graduates of the military academy remained in Hakone until October 1945, making charcoal, which they sold to buy food.

U Lwin continued with his career in the army after independence and was sent on training courses to England and West Germany. In 1959 he



U Lwin with his daughter

was sent to Washington as military attache. On his return from the United States he spent some years as deputy commander of the Central Command, then as commander of the South Eastern Command

before he was asked to come back to Rangoon to become a deputy minister. As the military government that assumed power in 1962 took on civilian garb under the Burma Socialist Programme Party, U Lwin served successively as minister of finance, deputy prime minister and a member of the state council. It was as a member of the state council that he resigned in 1980.

U Lwin joined the NLD in 1988 and was appointed treasurer because of his experience in finances and his unquestioned integrity. In 1992, when the NLD was forced to reorganize its executive committee, U Lwin took on the post of secretary, while U Aung Shwe became chairman.

Among the group of Burmese cadets with whom U Lwin went to Japan for military training in 1943 was a young man who became a particularly close friend and later, his brother-in-law: U Kyi Maung. At university, U Kyi Maung had been active in the students' movement for independence. In 1938, he marched at the head of a demonstration holding aloft the flag of the Students' Union. Mounted police sent to stop the demonstration rode into the ranks of the students with batons swinging. U Kyi Maung was one of the first students to be struck down, hit in three places on the head. Another student marching close behind him, Ko Aung Gyaw, also received on the head a single sharp blow that knocked him down. A few hours later, the young man died from his injuries in the hospital, causing great anger throughout the country and raising the tempo of discontent against the colonial government. "Boh Aung Gyaw," as the student martyr came to be known, remains an inspiration to students fighting for justice and freedom today.

At the outbreak of the war, U Kyi Maung joined the Burma Independence Army, where he came to know many of the men who would form the core of the armed forces of independent Burma. A staunch believer in the importance of an apolitical, professional army, he was strongly opposed to the military takeover of 1962. It was thus hardly surprising that in 1963, at which time he was serving as the commander of the South Western Command,

he was asked to retire from the armed forces.

During the quarter century that followed his retirement from the army, U Kyi Maung was imprisoned twice, for a total of seven years, on suspicion of opposing the military, later the Burma Socialist Programme Party, government. Soon after the outbreak of the democracy movement in 1988, U Kyi Maung was pulled into prison for the third time, but he was released within a month. In September 1988, he became one of the 12 members of the Executive Committee of the National League for Democracy.

When U Tin U and I were placed under house arrest in July 1989, the Executive Committee of the NLD decided on collective leadership, but it would not be wrong to say that U Kyi Maung was the man who led the party to its resounding victory in the elections of 1990. After the first few weeks of euphoria, the people of Burma began to suspect that the authorities had no intention of honoring the results of the elections. Their worst fears were confirmed when U Kyi Maung was arrested in September 1990, tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. He was, however, released in March 1995.

Another eminent leader of the NLD released on the same day as U Kyi Maung was U Tin U. As chairman of the NLD, he had been placed under house arrest in July 1989 and in December of the same year tried by a military tribunal and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. When the end of his prison term was approaching, he was tried again on the same charges as previously and given another prison sentence of seven years. The years U Tin U spent in Insein Jail from 1989 to 1995 were his second stint in the infamous prison. His first period of incarceration had lasted from 1976 until 1980.



U Kyi Maung

U Tin U joined the army as a mere 16-year-old in 1943. After the war, he was included in the 150 Burmese officers to be given commissions in the reorganized Burma Army which formed the basis of the nation when it became independent. During the 1950s, he was twice awarded for valor shown in action against Kuomintang troops, which had fled



U Tin U

into Burma at the time of the Communist victory in China. He rose rapidly from rank to rank through the 1960s and early 1970s, and in 1974 he was appointed chief of defense services and minister of defense.

The year 1974 was also when the meanness of spirit shown by the authorities over the funeral of U Thant, retired Secretary-General of the United Nations, scandalized the people of Burma and fermented anger among students already resentful of conditions imposed by the Burmese Way to Socialism. In the course of disturbances related to this episode, and even more during the 1976 demonstrations by workers, U Tin U was hailed as a champion of the people. It is likely that his popularity with the public had much to do with his dismissal from the armed forces in March 1976. In September of that year he was arrested, charged with alleged misprision of treason and sentenced to seven years' imprisonment.

On his release from prison under a general

amnesty program in 1980, U Tin U went straight to a monastery, where he stayed as a monk for two years. When he returned to lay life, he studied law and acquired the Registered Lawyers' certificate as well as the LL.B. degree. The democracy movement of 1988 drew him from a quiet, private life into the struggle to bring justice and human rights to Burma. He was appointed deputy chairman of the NLD in September 1988, and in December of the same year he replaced U Aung Gyi as chairman of the party.

"A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION"

I would like to make a special introduction, to make known to the people of Japan the only member of the original Executive Committee of the NLD who still remains in prison today: U Win Tin.

Unlike U Aung Shwe, U Kyi Maung, U Tin U and U Lwin, U Win Tin, born in 1930, was never a member of the armed forces. The world of letters was his domain. Even before graduation from university he had begun to work for the Burma Translation Society in the capacity of assistant editor. In 1954 he became advisory editor to a Dutch newspaper company. This was the beginning of a long career in journalism which culminated in his appointment on the *Hanthawaddy*, one of the leading dailies of Burma.

The years during which U Win Tin was chief editor of the *Hanthawaddy* were years which saw the consolidation of the Burmese Way to Socialism. Progressive restrictions were placed on free speech and expression but a handful of writers and journalists quietly persisted in preserving their right to intellectual freedom. In 1978, a paper critical of the Burmese Way to Socialism was read at the "Saturday Reading Circle," of which U Win Tin was a leading member. As a consequence he was dismissed from his job and the *Hanthawaddy* newspaper was shut down by the authorities. For the next decade U Win Tin earned his living as a freelance writer and translator.

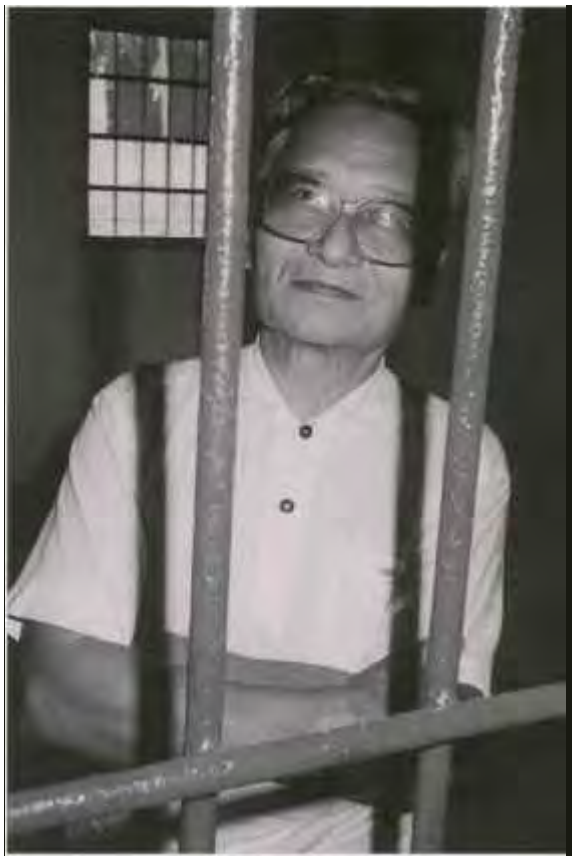
It was only natural that those who believed in intellectual freedom and justice should have been at the vanguard of the democracy movement which

began in 1988. From the beginning, U Win Tin played an active role in the Writers' Union that emerged during the early days of the movement. In September 1988, he became one of the secretaries of the executive committee of the NLD.

His undoubted ability and his strength of purpose made U Win Tin a prime target of those who opposed the democratic cause and in June 1989 he became one of the very first leaders of the NLD to be arrested. The charge against him involved an unproven telephone conversation with the father of an individual who had been declared a fugitive from the law. Telephone conversations are, in any case, inadmissible as evidence under the law but the law offers scant protection for those who challenge military rule in Burma. Immediately after his arrest, U Win Tin was kept without food and sleep for three days and interrogated about his activities in the democracy movement. It appeared that the interrogators wished to force him to admit that he was my adviser on political tactics, in other words, that he was my puppet master. A man of courage and integrity, U Win Tin would not be intimidated into making false confessions. In October 1989, he was sentenced to three years imprisonment. In June 1992, a few months before his prison term was due to expire, he was submitted to another farcical trial and sentenced to an additional 11 years in jail.

U Win Tin is little given to talking about himself. As secretary and general secretary he and I worked together on an almost daily basis from the time the NLD was founded, but it was several months before I discovered, quite by chance, that he was a bachelor who lived alone and managed his own household chores. Soon after he was sentenced in 1989, the lease on the state-owned flat where he had been living for many years was canceled and friends had to move his possessions out of the apartment.

U Win Tin's whole demeanor conveys such an impression of firmness, few people are aware that he suffers from a heart condition that requires constant medication. The long period spent in prison where medical care is inadequate and living conditions abysmal has aggravated his health problems. When U.S. Congressman Bill Richardson saw him in February 1994, U Win Tin was wearing a neck support: spondylosis had been added to his afflictions. He was also in need of dental treatment. But



U Win Tin

his mind was as clear as ever and his spirit upright and unwavering. In the full knowledge that his every word would be reported to the authorities, he commented on the National Convention that had been arranged by the SLORC with his customary incisiveness and sent me a message of strong, unequivocal support.

Now U Win Tin is facing the serious possibility of a third sentence superimposed on the two that have already been slapped on him. Since November 1995, he and twenty seven other political prisoners have been charged with breaking prison regulations and their trials are taking place within the jail precincts. The families of the defendants have asked senior members of the government, the Chief Justice and the Attorney General to be allowed to provide the legal assistance entitled under the law. An answer is not yet forthcoming.

"EIGHT YEARS AGO"

In Burma the number eight is not generally held to be in any way special, although as Buddhists, most of the people of the country know of the noble Eightfold Path and the eight victories of the



Aung San Suu Kyi, U Tin U and U Win Htein inside No. 54 University Avenue compound following one of the NLD's "weekend talks." SLORC's Military Intelligence (gentleman standing at left) provides a 24-hour "security" presence.

Lord Buddha. But eight years ago, in 1988, the number eight unexpectedly acquired a potent political significance. On the eighth of August of that year, "8-8-88," a general strike was declared and public demonstrations that had been taking place throughout the nation for several days took on massive proportions. Participating in these peaceful demonstrations were people of all ages, from all the different strata of society: students, farmers, laborers, civil servants, including members of the armed forces, Buddhist monks, Christians, Muslims, intellectuals, professionals, businessmen, small traders, housewives and artists. Their united demand was for change: They wanted no more of the authoritarian rule, initiated by a military coup in 1962, that had impoverished Burma intellectually, politically, morally and economically.

The discontent that had been simmering in the country for years had come to a boil in March 1988

after an incident in a tea shop led to the killing of a university student by members of the security forces. Students held demonstrations demanding an open investigation into the death, and when it became evident that these demands would not be met by the authorities, more demonstrations broke out in June. The country was in ferment and in July U Ne Win, the chairman of the BSPP, U San Yu, the president, and a number of the nation's top leaders resigned. At the dramatic emergency congress where the resignations were announced the outgoing chairman declared that a decision should be made as to whether the country should continue under one-party rule or whether it should opt for a multiparty system. He also made the ominous remark that when the army shot, it shot straight.

Within a matter of days it became sufficiently clear that the new administration under President U Sein Lwin had no intention of abolishing the one party dictatorship. The frustrations that the people of Burma had been holding back for some two decades erupted and they poured out onto the streets in a great, spontaneous demonstration of their desire for a governing system that would respect their will. The movement for democracy had begun.

It is never easy to convince those who have acquired power forcibly of the wisdom of peaceful change. On the night of August 8, the army moved to crush the demonstrations, shooting down thousands of unarmed people, including children, throughout the land. The killings went on for four days but the demonstrations continued and the president, U Sein Lwin, resigned. The next president, Dr. Maung Maung, was the first head of state Burma had known in nearly three decades who had not come into government from the ranks of the military. For a while the people hoped their demands for democracy would be met speedily. However, on September 18, troops once again fired on unarmed demonstrators and the military took over the administration of the country. The new junta assumed what has often been described as an Orwellian title: The State Law and Order Restoration Council, or SLORC.

The SLORC proclaimed that it was not interested in holding on to power for long and that it would establish multiparty democracy in Burma

within a short period of time. Political parties were required to register with the Multiparty Elections Commission, which was charged with the responsibility of organizing free and fair elections. More than 200 parties registered, among them the National League for Democracy (NLD).

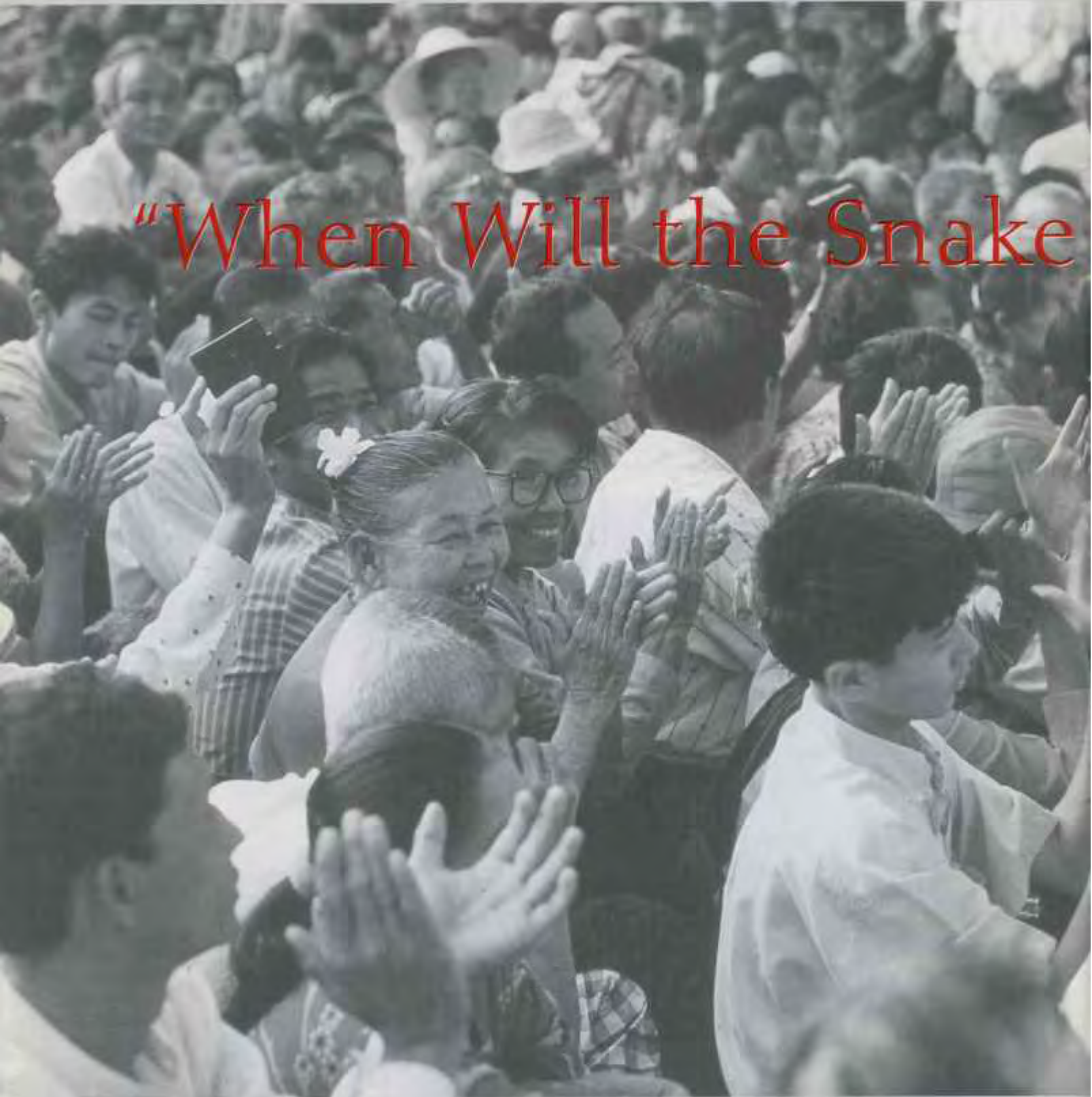
From the very beginning the path the NLD had to tread was far from smooth. The enthusiastic support of the public, which led to NLD offices springing up even in the remotest villages, brought upon the party the unfriendly attention of the authorities. The SLORC had announced that the military powers would observe a strictly neutral position but it soon became evident that the National Unity Party, as the BSPP had decided to restyle itself, was very much the favored political organization.

Harrassment and intimidation became everyday matters for members of the NLD. But we learned to cope, and amidst teething pains, our party became stronger by the day.

In building up the NLD our chief concern was to establish a close, mutually beneficial relationship with the general public. We listened to the voice of the people that our policies might be in harmony with their legitimate needs and aspirations. We discussed with them the problems of our country and explained why, in spite of its inevitable flaws, we considered democracy to be better than other political systems. Most important of all, we sought to make them understand why we believed that political change was best achieved through nonviolent means.

Aung San Suu Kyi sits with U Kyi Maung on the steps of her home at No. 54 University Avenue.





When Will the Snake

This article appeared in the government-controlled Burmese-Language newspaper KYEMON on May 19 and 20, 1996 and was translated by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).

Charming Act End?"

The "snake charming act" (with three poisonous snakes — one female Cobra, a banded Krait, and a Viper) which usually begins at about 1600 in the afternoon every Saturday and Sunday on the platform by the road in front of No 54-56, University Avenue, Yangon [Rangoon] has been going on for many months. How long will they continue the act? When will it end?

Dear leaders, who are striving steadfastly day and night for building a united, developed, prosperous and modern nation in Myanmar or in the Myanmar community:

I read an article by West German historian Michael Sturmer on page 38 in the *Newsweek* magazine of 10 September 1990. Take note of this quote: "When empires collapse, they do so with a bang not with a whimper."

To judge whether this historian's proposition is correct or not, we can consider the collapse of the Soviet Union, which thrived for over 70 years, and that of the communist countries of East Europe, the German Democratic Republic, Romania, and Yugoslavia (and how the rulers who lost power were killed or tortured).

Unexpectedly, in the post Burma Socialist Programme Party's 26-year era, there were [the] 8-8-88 democracy and political disturbances and the formation of various "unions" of universities, schools, factories and mills, offices, and governmental and private organizations (a primary school union, a pupils union, a monks union, a young monks union, a doctors union, a teachers union, a nurses union, a nuns union, a beauticians-gays-union, a housekeepers union, an aged persons union, and a trishaw peddlers union) all over the country led by leftist, centrist, and rightist political opportunists, those who were old members of the Revolutionary Council, senior and junior ministers of the Burma Socialist Programme Party [BSPP], military officers, old White-

Crowd outside home of Aung San Suu Kyi during a recent "weekend talk" by NLD leadership

LEBUE KEAN

BY U T H A N M A U N G

and Red-flag communists, and old socialists of the AFPFL [Anti-Fascists People's Freedom League]. They incited huge public riots and demonstrations and waged strikes all over the country, opened strike camps, coerced the Burma Socialist Programme Party, pulled the administrative machinery to a halt, prompted anarchic acts in both urban and rural areas, and elected Daw Suu Kyi, who, after marrying an Englishman and living in England for 28 years, was showing instant "love" for Myanmar, as "a great, great leader"; and due to political coercion and anarchism, the state power collapsed with a bang within a few days.

The opinion that "When empires collapse, they do so with a bang not with a whimper" is very well-founded.

"The collapse or annihilation of rulers and empires comes with a bang leaving no time for whining," and all collapses have happened in this manner.

Bitter and painful lessons can be learned from various communities or the socioeconomic and political situations of various countries.

The collapse of "human civilizations," including the Roman civilization, which emerged 1,600 years ago, can be studied in world history.

Karl Marx and Engels said "a race should and must take lessons from countries that developed or collapsed earlier."

Shin Maha Ratthasara [renowned Burmese laureate] exhorted us to study diligently to be able to say what we want to say without forgetting the meaning so that we will be bold and have no fear like a lion, and our resolve will be firm and strong like a pillar. What I would like to tell some SLORC [State Law and Order Restoration Council] leaders, who are striving strenuously for a new united, prosperous, and modern nation in the course of "revolution from above," is this...

...Some military leaders, descendants of old rulers who felt bitter about anarchism and had learned lessons from the 60-year political history of 1926 to 1988, rescued Myanmar communities vigilantly and conscientiously; these were on the verge of collapse from anarchic acts such as the 8-8-88 demonstrations, strikes, and strike camps, huge riots, coercions, arson, lootings, destructions, and brutal killings. The "8-8-88 heroes," "the strike corn-

Various political opportunists who were silent and had not dared to show their "heads" during the entire 26-year BSPP rule reappeared like croaking "frogs" in the rainy season and formed more than 200 political parties without having any political ideology.

mittees," and "the strike camps" or overt and underground destructionists who were becoming political anarchists were demolished.

The "enlightened top brass" of the military leaders:

- a. Disbanded the one-party system,
- b. Scrapped the socialist economy,
- c. Is sowing seeds to establish a multiparty democracy that will be suitable for the socioeconomic development of developing nations,
- d. Is slowly and gradually implementing a market economy, and
- e. Has officially permitted foreign investment and technical know-how after promulgating the necessary laws.

With the aforementioned political policies of the SLORC, the formation and movement of political parties was allowed in accord with item-c.

Because of this permission, various political opportunists who were silent and had not dared to show their "heads" during the entire 26-year BSPP rule reappeared like croaking "frogs" in the rainy season and formed more than 200 political parties without having any political ideology.

This can be correctly viewed politically and ideologically as "the political retaliation" of coercive and anarchic politicians who came out of the 8-8-88 movement and the strike camps.

It can be seen in world history that the "revolutions from below" such as the Great October Revolution, which took place in Russia in the early 20th century (1917), and the French Revolution of the 18th century (1789) collapsed and are no more in existence at the present day because they could not practically carry out the socioeconomic development of the world's communities.

The 8-8-88 groups and strikers led by Daw Suu Kyi attempted in 1988, 1989, and 1990 to copy the type of old-fashioned revolution found in the Russian and French Revolutions, which does not conform to the needs of the times, the place, or the community in Myanmar.

The formation of over 200 political parties was the outcome of this process.

Daw Suu Kyi's group attempted to replenish the faulty socioeconomic revolutionary ideals of the post-18th century and early 20th century periods.

If we objectively review the formation and organization of the Daw Suu Kyi-led National League for Democracy, which was the most amazingly popular party of the over 200 political parties, it can be seen that:

It could not stand for long as a united, consolidated party organization like the GCBA [General Council of Burmese Associations], the Doh Bamar Asiayon Thakhin Groups, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the AFPFL and the Pa-hta-sa Party, which had emerged and become very prominent 60 years before it. It drowned in the splits of political history.

Evident proof of this was that the "National League for Democracy, NLD", split into two — the Bogyoke Aung Gyi-led group and the Daw Suu Kyi-led group — less than two years after its formation.

It can be seen that even within the current female-led NLD of Daw Suu Kyi there are an old military officers group, an intellectual group, a student youth group, and an old AFPFL, communist, and socialist group.

If the more than 60-year-old Myanmar political history is studied appropriately, it can be clearly seen that there has been no political party able to effectively serve the national interest (in the political, economic, and social sectors) up to now (1996).

Regarding the political parties that can serve the national interest effectively, an East European politician once said:

"Eastern Europe, Asia, and Africa do not in fact have political parties in the Western sense. They are only groups brought together under a prominent leader, who for the most part dwarfs the entire party in importance."

Now, firm proof of this statement can be seen in the prominence of Lenin, Stalin, Mao Zedong, Chiang Kai-shek, Ho Chi Minh, Tito, Ceausescu, Bogyoke Aung San, Thakhin Soe, Thakhin Than Tun, and General Ne Win and their leadership in their respective political parties and organizations.

The prominence of Suu Kyi and the popularity of her National League for Democracy also fits in with the aforementioned statement.

Suu Kyi's prominence dwarfs her party in importance. Her party is not as prominent or important as her [sic].

Therefore, the so-called "revolutions" in the post 18th century and the early 20th century are, in fact, "revolutions from below".

The politically and theoretically enlightened top brass of the Tatmadaw [Defense Services] leaders took over the responsibilities of the State with goodwill and conviction to serve the national interest; they do not behave as Daw Suu Kyi's group does, which whispers or shouts slanders in its smear campaign against SLORC, saying that "they took over state power forcibly to protect the life and property of the Burma Socialist Programme Party top leaders and themselves."

The validity of such accusations and allegations can be checked with the following quotable quote:

"England, it is true in causing social revolution in Hindustan (in India), was actuated only by the vilest interests, and was stupid in its manner of enforcing them. But that is not the question. The question is, can mankind fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia? If not, whatever may not have been the crimes of England she was the unconscious tool of history in bringing about that revolution." ("Karl Marx On The British Rule in India," *New York Daily Tribune*, June 25, 1853.)

Karl Marx and Engels made this assessment of the social revolution in India caused by England, the colonial power, which transformed the old-fashioned Indian civilization into a modern one and dragged it into the civilized world community.

Dear England-returnee miss and your accomplices, when any ideological assessment of the SLORC's activities is made, there can be no question that it took over the duties of the state with goodwill. It is necessary only to observe that SLORC is building the nation into one that is united, prosperous, and modern in thoughts, words, and deeds. In politics, it is reasonable and realistic to find a solution to the problem not in words (oration), but with deeds (practice).

It is easy to make an outcry, just as an English saying has it: "Easier said than done."

The England-returnee miss, who, after living in England humbly for about 28 years, is showing off herself in Myanmar in a saucy manner, and her accomplices should consider and logically apply Karl Marx's aforementioned deep thought.

Desiring and willing are not important; they do not play a decisive and primary role. Only what is done practically with a theoretical concept and a clear and vigilant theoretical outlook is important and plays the primary, decisive role.

There is an English proverb: "If wishes were horses, beggars might ride". Priority must be given to what is more than what is wished to be.

Dear SLORC leaders, one of the verses of the Magadeva Treatise says if a man is wise and has a good heart, he can finish every task, big or small, like a sculptor who carves any way he wishes. I will not go into detail about the meaning of this verse, for it would amount to teaching a crocodile how to swim or preaching to a monk.

To shine in wisdom and knowledge, the state leader (government) must possess proper reasoning and a clear theoretical concept and outlook. It is also exhorted in the Lawkaniti Treatise that a ruler must constantly be diligent and vigilant. The ruler (government) usually encounters an enemy within and without as well as the lackeys of the alien. There are plenty of examples in world political history. It is therefore essential to have constant vigilance against these dangers. According to Lawkaniti, contentment will lead to the downfall of a ruler (government)...

...As a Myanmar saying puts it: "Starting from the rubbish, the fire burnt down the mansion." Beginning with a fight between some students of the Rangoon Institute of Technology and some youths of the Insein Gyogon Ward at a roadside tea shop, a series of strikes such as the Phone Maw strike, the 8-8-88 strike, and the general strike broke out all over the country, and within a short period, anarchy was rampant and the country was on the verge of collapse. It was a regrettable experience.

Now, I would like to advise the SLORC leaders, who are striving for socioeconomic restructuring, to get rid of the rubbish that can start a fire and burn down the mansion and extinguish the remnants, which can flare up at any time.

"In this process of making positive endeavors of the government, certain lackeys of the imperialists are resorting to various means to create instability in the state. To breed suspicions and divisions among the national races and to slacken or impede pace of development of the national economy" (Lt.

It may happen that
the snake charmer
can accidentally
be bitten by the
female cobra, the
banded krait, or
the viper. If the
snake charmer is
not skilled, one of
the three poisonous
snakes might
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people.

Gen.Khin Nyunt - *The New Light of Myanmar* 24/3/96, page 1, col 3).

What he means is that there are lackeys of the West who are creating instability within the country and suspicions and disunity among our national brethren and attempting to make national economic development stagnant.

The SLORC leaders must therefore have constant revolutionary vigilance. They have to act like a lion but not like a tiger. The lion king always makes the same effort to catch his prey, big or small. He never reduces his diligence and loses his vigilance.

The SLORC, which is leading a kind of revolution after demolishing the old Myanmar political, economic, and social systems, triumphed over the huge riots; the anarchic persons who threw stones, committed arson, lootings, destruction, and brutal killings in the 8-8-88 uprising; the strike camps; the strike committees; and the various unions that emerged in 1988-89.

It has won victory over the one-party system and the socialist economic system. It has made peace with 16 groups of our brethren, who resorted to armed struggle for nearly 50 year's due to political, ideological, and racial differences.

Similarly, the SLORC has to continue its endeavors with unswerving diligence and constant vigilance to win over Daw Suu Kyi, whose position is an antagonistic one.

It may happen that the snake charmer can accidentally be bitten by the female cobra, the banded krait, or the viper. If the snake charmer is not skilled, one of the three poisonous snakes might escape and bite people.

Therefore, I would like to suggest that the snake charmer's show, which has been on for months, should be ended and the three poisonous snakes be put in the snake charmer's basket.

It is necessary to escape from a state of having a viper in the pouch.

Dear SLORC leaders, "When empires collapse, they do so with a bang, not with a whimper." Let's prevent with brilliant and clear theoretical concept and outlook any reoccurrence of a revolution from below or the kind of disturbances seen in the 8-8-88 general strike.

A Conversation



with

U Win
Htein

Earlier this year, U Win Htein, personal assistant to Aung San Suu Kyi and other key leaders of the National League for Democracy, met with Leslie Kean, journalist and co-author of *Burma's Revolution of the Spirit: The Struggle for Democratic Freedom and Dignity*. In the conversation that follows, U Win Htein speaks of his time in the military, his involvement with the democracy movement and the more than five years he spent as a political prisoner.

This interview took place in Rangoon on January 9, 1996. Only four months later, U Win Htein was re-arrested and is currently being held in Insein jail.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LESLIE KEAN

Interview with

LESLIE KEAN • *U Win Htein, you are currently the personal secretary of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. I was told that you were previously with the military in Burma. How did you make the transition from the military to the democracy movement?*

WIN HTEIN • I joined the army in 1959 and attended the Defense Services Academy, which was designed after West Point in the United States. I graduated in the class of 1963 as cadet captain of the year, and was first in my class at winning military awards. Then I was posted to an infantry battalion, where I remained for five years and participated in counter-insurgency operations. Later, I was transferred to the Ministry of Defense and became close to the senior commanders. I left the military in 1977 and was a prosperous business man until 1988. When the demonstrations broke out in 1988, I joined ex-general U Tin U who was one of the leaders of the movement at that time.

LK • *Did you take part in the demonstrations?*

WH • I was not actually involved in the demonstrations, but everywhere U Tin U went to speak to the people, or to organizations such as the students' union or workers' union, I accompanied him. I was a staff officer responsible for his security, telephone calls, staff work, all his affairs.

LK • *Can you describe what happened when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi arrived in Burma and the National League for Democracy [NLD] was formed?*

WH • During the 1988 uprisings, U Tin U was one of the leaders of the movement and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was another. The SLORC, the State Law and Order Restoration Council, took over the country and announced an election law which would allow political parties to form and organize. At that time, U Tin U and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi agreed to unite and form the National League for Democracy, with U Tin U as Chairman and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as General Secretary. When the party started func-

tioning, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi asked U Tin U to find someone who was knowledgeable about military and security matters. So, I was assigned to her staff in November of 1988. Since then I have been with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi all the time, except when I was imprisoned.

LK • *Did you become her personal secretary at that time?*

WH • We regarded my position as sort of a senior staff, senior assistant to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. We didn't have any permanent names for our positions. From November 1988 to July 1989, she traveled to rural areas of Burma at least once or twice a month, and I accompanied her. Because wherever she went there were always obstructions, difficulties and restrictions placed by the local military authorities. I had to negotiate, talk to them and sometimes argue, serving as a trouble shooter.

LK • *While you were serving as this liaison between the NLD and the army, you must have encountered some difficulties.*

WH • (laughs) Yes, I especially remember the Delta area, which is still called Northwest Military Command. That area was relatively peaceful and free of insurgents. The army had solid control over the population. So whenever Daw Aung San Suu Kyi went to a town there, all the army units were stationed around her as well as along the route, preventing people from coming and meeting her in large numbers. Despite these restrictions, people always greeted her enthusiastically at her speeches, shouting "Long Live Daw Aung San Suu Kyi!" The army tried to obstruct this, sometimes shooting over the crowd, sometimes blaring amplifiers to disrupt her speeches. It was a struggle, although it was not violent. We always maintained ourselves in a peaceful way. Although the other side tried to provoke us to physical violence, we were able to avoid it.

LK • *Were there many arrests during that period? Were people arrested for coming to her talks?*

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WH • During Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's stay in a town, there were no arrests. But once she left, the authorities clamped down. That was the usual practice. The people who were actually responsible for the township NLD headquarters were arrested. Sometimes the whole group was put into the jail; sometimes only the key officers. It would depend on the mentality of the local authorities.

LK • How were these people treated during their detention?

WH • Well, at first they treated the prisoners quite decently, but later, when our organization became more effective... the arguments, the interrogations, were quite... rigorous. I must say, (laughing) very rigorous.

LK • Can you describe the circumstances leading up to Daw Suu's house arrest and your arrest as well? What happened in July of 1989?

WH • In April and May of 1989, the government began to realize that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's popularity was becoming dangerously strong, so they placed prohibitive actions on us, restricting our movement. For instance, we were told not to publish leaflets or release statements to the general public. When the SLORC took over, they had ordered a restriction against the gathering of groups of more than five people — Section 144. Wherever Daw Aung San Suu Kyi went there were a lot of soldiers and barricades, and gradually the local NLD people, one by one, were snatched away for interrogation. At first they took those who were not very close to us, to make us more angry, to provoke us.

July 19 was Martyr's Day, in recognition of the 1947 assassination of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's father. Previously, that occasion was quite an open affair. The immediate families were invited and they attended the ceremony. Following that, the general public joined Martyr's Day to pay homage by putting flowers onto the tombs of the leaders. But this year

the SLORC restricted each family to only two persons. It was a provocation and we knew it. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi announced that she would attend the ceremony anyway with her own family as well as with NLD leaders. Because of that, she was detained the next day. I was also taken from this residence the same day.

LK • So they just walked into the compound, detained her and took the other NLD leaders...

WH • To the prisons.

LK • How many did they take from here?

WH • They surrounded the place in the morning, but they didn't take action until the afternoon. We were just waiting inside the compound. At about 4 p.m. that day, the authorities came in and U Tin U, U Kyi Maung and others were requested to go outside and to leave the place. But I was to stay here. I was the eldest of the group of about forty people who were detained. Some people were released gradually after three months, eight months, two years, three years. I was the only one who stayed in the jail for five and a half years.

LK • What is it like being a political prisoner in Burma?

WH • I cannot say we were treated as political prisoners. We were treated as criminals. We underwent very rigorous interrogations. I stayed in the interrogation center for twenty-seven days, which was a separate facility from the jail, controlled by Military Intelligence. They asked me a lot of questions about Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and U Tin U, the NLD, personal habits, connections with the CIA, KGB, etcetera. Many of the questions were irrelevant, but it was their way of doing things.

LK • How did they treat you at the interrogation center?

WH • I was treated as sub-human.

LK • Are you comfortable describing what happened there?

Interview with

WH • Subhuman (laughs). If I had to go into details... I was not allowed to bathe for two weeks, I was not allowed clothing or blankets.

deprived me of even water for two or three days, which made me very weak, unable to speak. That's what they wanted in the first place. Because they thought that when I became mentally weak and defenseless... then they started questioning. I reached a point of being on the verge of a complete breakdown, but I was able to maintain myself with careful, very careful deliberation. But they tried to push me to break down.

LK • *Did they physically beat you?*

WH • Of course. Of course. Not exactly beat me... it is very difficult to understand.... If you were forced to kneel on the concrete floor, how long would you last?

LK • *Not very long.*

WH Of course. After kneeling four or five days, I had to throw myself down onto the floor, with handcuffs at my back and a cloth hood on my head. I couldn't see anyone. But I could hear voices, threats... that I would be damaged beyond repair, I would be physically damaged beyond repair, etcetera, etcetera. In very abusive language. I had to go through this for twenty-seven days. I lost a lot of weight there. When I was sent to the prison, my comrades didn't even recognize me at first, because I was some kind of skeleton, and physically very weak, with stomach problems and other ailments.

LK • *Were you given any medical attention when you got into the jail?*

WH • No, but the wardens were better... their attitude.

LK • *What gave you the strength not to break down, how you were able to maintain your sanity through it all?*

WH • Basically, I looked at things from three perspectives: the religious, political, and social.

From a religious point of view, I had done nothing wrong. I didn't commit any sinful acts towards anyone, let alone the government. We were allowed legally to stand as a party, I was one of the members of the party, that's all. I had been able to keep my precepts intact. From the political point of view, what we were trying to achieve was for the good of the people, for the prosperity of Burma. And from the social perspective, the NLD had no personal grudge with the military regime. I was formerly friendly with the current leaders of this government and I didn't have any personal grudge. So I knew deeply that I hadn't done anything wrong. These outlooks kept my faith intact, and kept me from breaking down.

But it was very difficult. Some people broke down, which I witnessed. It depends on the individual's ability to withstand hardship. I had read books about socialism and the KGB prisons — how people were interrogated... so I was knowledgeable about these matters. I was mentally prepared.

LK • *You were in Insein Jail for more than five years. What was life like there?*

WH • I was put in a special ward. It was called a special ward because politically important prisoners were housed there. NLD leaders U Tin U and U Kyi Maung were there, and so were student leaders from the communist underground. There were about thirteen people then regarded as "special prisoners." We were placed in total isolation. I was put in a cell about fourteen feet by twelve feet... a toilet was built in there, and the bath facilities were there... so I was kept in there all the time.

LK • *You weren't allowed out for exercise?*

WH • No, no, no, no. I had to exercise in my own cell. In that filthy environment with all the smells. Sometimes there was no sunshine... other times a little bit of sunshine during the morning. For two years and eight months I was not allowed to go outside my cell even

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once, because I was a "detainee," not a regular prisoner.

were the only change, fifteen minutes every two weeks.

There was a special law for the detainees, which said the government could put them into the jail for three years maximum, so after 2 years and 8 months I thought that I might be released when 3 years was up. But they changed their tune and suddenly I was sent to a military court and sentenced to an additional seven years. Only then was I allowed to see my family. I didn't even recognize my sons. They were twelve and thirteen at the time of my arrest, so in 1992 they were fifteen and sixteen. They were quite grown up lads. I didn't even remember my eldest boy (laughs).

LK • *How was your family cared for during the time you were away? Was there any assistance provided for them, or were they able to manage all right?*

WH • Well, before my arrest I was quite a successful businessman. I accumulated capital so



LK • *Were you able to communicate at all with the people in other cells?*

WH • Sometimes. Even though they prohibited us from talking to each other, we still talked. Sometimes they came and threatened us or abused us. We'd be quiet for two or three days... then we'd resume talking. But they also listened to our conversation, and took retaliatory measures if we said anything against the authorities.

LK • *Were you allowed any reading materials?*

WH • No, no, no, no. Nothing. Nothing. Nothing, at all. It was very petty. Not even religious books.

LK • *And once you shifted to your second term after the first three years, did the conditions improve? You say you were allowed visits.*

WH • The conditions were the same. The visits

my family invested some with a friend's business, but as time dragged on, these business arrangements had problems and my family had to struggle. They had to sell all the jewelry, and use up their savings. They actually faced a lot of hardship... but other families had a much harder time. Some wives who were still young, who were denied the enjoyment of a family life, came to the prison and asked for a divorce. They wanted a separate life. It's very sad.

LK • *What about the people who were in cells around yours?*

Interview with

WH • As my solitary confinement went on, I witnessed three out of ten people suffer severe mental disorders. They were broken. One tried to kill himself by cutting his wrists, but he was not successful. Another man suffered attacks of paranoia. Whenever I spoke to him, he assumed that I was insulting him or injuring him in some way. Often, we had to maintain total silence so as not to disturb him. If I sang a song, he thought it was intended to harm his life, whether I sang a sad song or joyous song. He didn't have any belief in religion; he didn't have any knowledge or experience about solitary confinement. So gradually he went crazy.

I could withstand solitary confinement due to reason, plus meditation. I always tried to occupy my mind with something... sometimes reciting the sutras, sometimes meditating, sometimes keeping my consciousness on whatever I was doing. I had to change the methods frequently to keep my mind sane. Sometimes when I went to sleep, I tried to remember vocabulary from the English language from "A to Z," assigning words to the letters in alphabetical order, keeping my mind as a dictionary. Gradually, I could fall asleep.

LK • *Otherwise, if your mind wasn't focused on something, there was the danger that...*

WH • The danger of angry feelings about the fate I was suffering, the injustice. I was basically successful in curbing my bad feelings with my meditations. Since 1982, I had visited a Buddhist monastery annually during the last two weeks of December. That helped me greatly in dealing with the solitary confinement.

LK • *While you were in prison, the NLD was able to carry on and participate in the elections. How was the organization able to sustain itself with so many leaders arrested?*

WH • When Daw Aung Suu Kyi and U Tin U were arrested, the other Executive Committee members took over as the leaders. They had to decide whether or not to go along with the

SLORC's election program. It was a great debate. Going into the election meant collaboration with the government; going against it meant taking a different path. So there were a lot of arguments which I learned about later. They finally made a decision to go along with the election campaign, and as you know they won a huge landslide victory. We were overjoyed when we heard the news through the prison staff, because even they thought we would be released soon. We all believed that the winning party of the election would soon take over the power of the country. Naturally! Of course, our hopes died when the remaining leaders were arrested and put into jail. More than 130 elected representatives were arrested. According to my recollections, about twenty-five members of parliament fled to the border and some were even arrested on their way.

LK • *And the SLORC still talks about multi-party democracy being a goal...*

WH • Of course. They promise again and again. They even dare make false statements before the United Nations. In 1989, the SLORC representative visited the UN General Assembly and made a speech, saying that the SLORC would hand over power to whichever party wins in the coming elections. You see — that's the promise they made. And then they broke it. Now they treat the matter as if they never said anything. That motivated me to remain involved with the movement.

LK • *Why do you think they released you when they did?*

WH • My sentence was seven years. Every prisoner earns some deductible days according to the law, which means that if a person is sentenced to one year, he might have 80 or 90 deductible days depending on his performance in the prison. So I expected to have my share of legally deductible days. When I asked around, I learned that a prisoner of seven years should be released before five years is up, after

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about four years nine months. But, actually I stayed five years and six months. Five and a half years. Much more than I should have stayed.

My release was not expected. They released me in February of 1995 along with about twenty other political prisoners. After releasing some other leaders in March, they waited and released Aung San Suu Kyi in July. It was some sort of staggering arrangement.

In 1992 they started releasing the prisoners who they thought were very soft, which means they were not hard liners but were those who didn't dare express their opinion against the government. They were released early in 1992 and another batch was released in 1993. During these two waves, more than 2,000 were released. We were the last batch. But still there are political prisoners remaining in the jails... well over a thousand NLD representatives are still imprisoned.

LK • *But you probably don't have very accurate records of how many prisoners are still being held.*

WH • We have pretty accurate figures of NLD people. But there are so many people from the communist insurgency underground movement, and some Karens. In 1991 there were about 3,000 that were arrested from the delta region. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi had arranged a social fund to assist the families.

LK • *Can you describe the first thing you did after you were released?*

WH • Right after I was released, I had to go for a medical check up. After the third year in the prison, I had suffered high blood pressure, migraines, and a numbness in my legs because of all my sitting meditation. When I got up, the blood didn't flow to the left leg; when I exercised, the right side of my body would sweat, but not the left. Since these were such strange symptoms, I consulted a neuro-physician. He said I also had spondylosis of the neck, which means the freezing of vital nerves that control the function of the brain. The stiffness of these

nerves caused the migraines. Even when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was released I was not feeling well. If I sit on the couch for a half an hour, my leg still acts up. When I stand up my knees don't always work correctly. I have to make a great effort to stretch them and walk properly.

LK • *If you need to stand up and stretch please let me know.*

WH • (laughs)

LK • *After you were released, was there much anticipation that Daw Suu would be freed in July? I know in the West it came as a huge surprise.*

WH • We also didn't expect it. But there were some indications. Senator McCain visited here, in February I think, and Congressman Richardson came in March. When they asked permission to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, their requests were denied. We regarded this as an indication that she would be released, because in 1994 Congressman Richardson was allowed to meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and conduct an interview. But this time it was forbidden. I think the SLORC was deliberately trying to make the world think that she wouldn't be released soon.

LK • *Why do you think they released her at that time? Was there a strategy?*

WH • The main reason was that her time was up. On 19th July, it had been six years. During the history of our country, there is no precedent of somebody being put under house arrest. She's the only one. They applied the law, Section 10B, which says that the maximum detention period is three years, and they had already extended the period for an additional three years. Also, they felt pressure from the international community to release her. And apart from that, she is a Nobel Laureate.

LK • *I'm curious... the SLORC actually has people living right here on the compound, isn't that true? Partly under the auspices of providing protection for Daw Suu?*

Interview with

WH • Yes, at the gate. It is her arrangement. Before she was released, she was asked whether she would accept their people for security reasons. She accepted with our agreement, because it is very difficult to protect her... the general



public and NLD people were always so eager to meet her, all the time. It would have been difficult for us to manage that on our own. The security people always require that someone enter only through the front gate, that they register and be photographed... this makes some people stay away from her, which makes our job of controlling the crowd easier.

LK • So they're actually helping you out in this one way.

WH • They have two purposes. They would also like to extract information.

LK • Obviously they're very aware of everything that goes on here. But Daw Aung San Suu Kyi says that she doesn't keep secrets from them anyway, that she has nothing to hide.

WH • Yes. Since her release, she and the NLD leaders have conducted things openly. There's no clandestine movement or secret planning, since we are committed to peaceful means. We're definitely not going to take subversive action.

LK • After her release, when did Daw Aung San Suu Kyi begin speaking to the public outside her compound here on University Avenue?

WH • At first she spoke to the people every day, beginning immediately. There weren't many people right away, but gradually the crowds increased when they heard the news that she was speaking. For nearly three weeks she spoke every day. She then negotiated with the people in the crowd to speak only on Saturdays and Sundays, for security reasons and also because of traffic jams. The people agreed to this, and that arrangement is still going on.

LK • Can you imagine why the SLORC allows this, now that there are thousands of people out there every weekend?

WH • That's a big question. The speeches she makes, along with those of U Tin U and U Kyi Maung, and the question and answer sessions express a lot of criticism towards the govern-

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ment. Even though you can't understand it, whenever you hear the claps, the enthusiastic applause, you can be sure it is for something against the government (laughs).

LK • *So the criticism is very direct.*

WH • *Of course. That's why it is a great puzzle to us why they allow it (laughs).*

LK • *Do you have a theory?*

WH • *Well, maybe someone is gathering information about what is wrong with this regime, the corruption within their system. Even those within the government want this information. The facts about the wrong doings of this government are compiled by one of their people, which they may use at a later date. This is my theory.*

LK • *So some of the information that the NLD is presenting against the government might actually be useful to the SLORC in analyzing their own policies?*

WH • *Yes. This is always the practice of totalitarian states.*

LK • *Do you think the people that come on weekends are in any danger? Have people been arrested at her talks?*

WH • *No... only in one instance... the first day that the barricades were put out near the gate. Since there was no way of controlling the crowds from spilling into the streets, the police started putting up barricades with barbed wire. Some in the crowd were angry and shouted against the government. Three people were arrested, put in the jail and sentenced to two years.*

LK • *For shouting?*

WH • *Yes. Not actually shouting, but for expressing loud grievances about human rights, restricting her movements, things like that. Not shouting at all.*

LK • *Many people bring tape recorders and record the talks. Is it against the law for people to have*

tapes of Daw Suu's talks?

WH • *I don't think so, but it used to be. There are some Burmese people who videotape her speeches. We knew that video tapes were being distributed through their own arrangement, without profit. And the audio tapes are going everywhere. So we allow this, pretending that we don't know, because it helps spread our message.*

LK • *But the SLORC is also allowing it?*

WH • *They're also taping (laughs).*

LK • *Of course. Do you think they make a profit off it on the side?*

WH • *Maybe (laughs).*

LK • *Somebody in Mandalay was recently arrested for distributing video tapes. It seems that for some reason they pick one person to arrest even though everybody is doing it.*

WH • *It's very strange. Everybody is doing it, but they picked this particular person because he was exceptionally active. He had previously been to prison for three years. He started visiting here after his release, and he made arrangements with somebody outside of the compound to shoot video tapes. As soon as the speech was taped, it was sent to him in Mandalay where he made hundreds of copies and distributed them all over upper Burma.*

LK • *So he's in prison right now?*

WH • *Yes. Along with the troupe who performed here on Independence Day. Two women dancers, two comedians, one manager, and two musicians. After they returned to Mandalay, all of them were picked up during the night and put in the prison. They will be tried for making derogatory remarks against the government.*

LK • *In an amazing act of courage and commitment, these performers knew this was likely to happen, but they chose to come and perform anyway. I heard they were waiting seven years to be able to have this opportunity to perform for Daw Suu and the NLD.*

Interview with

WH • Yes. Two of them had already suffered in jail for making jokes about the government. As you say, they were not afraid; they were pleased to perform here. And they expected to be arrested for it.

LK • What is likely to happen to them now?

WH • We have a committee which looks after political prisoners that consists mostly of lawyers, as well as some NLD social workers who collect funds to assist the families. The lawyers will contact the authorities about the case.

LK • Are the lawyers allowed access to the prisoners?

WH • No, their rights will probably be denied. But these lawyers went to the Mandalay police station, where they demanded that according to the law, they would like to give their clients lawful assistance.

LK • Is there an actual law that gives a prisoner a right to counsel?

WH • Of course. But so far, since the SLORC took over seven years ago, there has been no such practice. You see, they appointed their own chief justice. They then appointed their own attorney general, which means the executive branch has total control over the judiciary, as well as the legislative body. They instruct the judge what sentence to give to the accused. For instance, those people who made protests against the barriers at the weekend talks — the court proceedings were over and their sentence was reached within three or four days. We have every reason to believe that the judge was instructed by the authorities to give the maximum punishment, which is two years. Minimum punishment is just a few hundred kyats fine.

LK • So there aren't really any trials? They just go before a judge and receive their sentence which has been handed down by the SLORC?

WH • Yes. In political jargon it's called a Kangaroo Court (laughs).

LK • Then what do these lawyers expect to be able to do for these performers?

WH • Formerly, before Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release, everyone was so frightened that the lawyers didn't dare to contact the authorities when someone was arrested. For fear of their own arrest, they didn't ask to know the nature of the case. This time, the authorities didn't respond as harshly as they did before. They accepted the demand, but whether they will allow it or not is another matter.

LK • The main message that the NLD has given the SLORC since last July is the request for a dialogue. What do you think is the underlying reason that they still won't even have a conversation?

WH • They would like to marginalize the NLD. This is also illustrated by the National Convention... originally there were about 700 delegates, the majority of whom were hand picked, appointed by the authorities. The minority were elected representatives, only 15%. So what happened when decisions were made? The elected representatives were the minority. A decision laid down by the authorities would go into effect and it would be announced as a unanimous decision. Which simply was not true. So the NLD delegates had an obligation to protest from the very beginning, since the convention was not democratic.

The convention was not set up according to even the SLORC's own declaration. They passed Declaration 1/90 in 1990, saying that the National Convention would be conducted by elected representatives, while the military would merely assist their work. Now it's been turned totally upside down, in actual practice. So, we simply pointed out to them their own declaration, without making any demands because we knew demands would be futile. We were just asking them to adhere to their own declaration.

It was useless to participate in this non-sensical process. Actually, we didn't walk out

Win Htein

of the convention. We were withdrawing for the time being, because [SLORC] refused our request for consultation about the irregularities in the composition of the delegates. After two days they expelled us because, according to the regulations, anyone absent for two days is to be expelled.

Leaving the National Convention was a very decisive step which enjoyed the support of the people. Whoever you talk to on the street, they support it, whether they are NLD or not NLD. They are convinced that the National Convention is a sham... the people know that. But since they are involved with survival on a day-to-day basis, they cannot participate actively in the political process. But they support what we did. That's a great encouragement for us.

LK • *Didn't the military intelligence and police surround the NLD leaders' houses when they withdrew from the convention?*

WH • Yes, they are still at my house... I was followed, am still being followed now... (laughs). Why not?

LK • *You were detained recently for about 24 hours, a few days before the Independence Day celebration on January 4. Can you describe what happened?*

WH • Well, I honestly thought I was being arrested for another long term. I was prepared. All my necessities had been packed in one bag. When they asked me to follow, I just picked it up and went along with them. They were surprised and disturbed that I didn't have any fear of the arrest. They came into my home during the night, 9 o'clock. This is their custom, to take people during the night. My family was all home. Since we were expecting it, nobody suffered too much except my youngest daughter, who is only nine. I asked her not to cry in front of me, but she cried anyway when I left.

They took me to the intelligence unit. The interrogation session went on the whole night, non-stop... they questioned me about my

involvement with the NLD, the National Convention, the speeches, they made all sorts of arguments. They were blaming me and blaming the leaders and I was arguing back that I thought we didn't break any law. Fortunately for me this time, I was treated quite fairly. We simply had a lot of heated arguments. And of course, they read out the codes about the three-month sentence we would get if there is no license for our celebration. I thought, "Three months — nothing!" But by not selling tickets to the public, and holding the event inside the private compound, our celebration was not against the law in any way.

LK • *Could you say something about what is most inspiring for you in your work with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the democracy movement?*

WH • In 1988, I was fully dedicated to assisting someone who could lead the movement. At first I worked with U Tin U, and then later Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. I believe that with their leadership, true democracy will one day prosper for the people of our country. That's why I'm involved here, despite my personal shortcomings.

Editor's Note: While over three-quarters of the 250 people who were arrested during the government crackdown on pro-democracy activists in May have been released, U Win Htein remains in Insein jail. Reports from Rangoon indicate that he could be facing a lengthy prison sentence.

The following testimony was submitted to the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs at the May 22, 1996 hearing on Burma.

The hearing focused on The Burma Freedom and Democracy Act [S.1511], which was introduced by Senator Mitch McConnell and co-sponsored by Senators Patrick Moynihan, Alfonse D'Amato and Patrick Leahy.



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE

Submitted by George Soros, Chairman, Soros Foundations
& President, Soros Fund Management



As a general rule I am not in favor of sanctions. Their purpose is to impose certain universally recognized standards of behavior on recalcitrant governments, but their immediate effect is to isolate the countries concerned even further. Investment sanctions may be useful as a means of applying pressure, but when implemented they are liable to be counter-productive. In the darkness of an isolated closed society all kinds of atrocities can be committed and various forms of repression used that would not be tolerated in an open society.

I am all for constructive engagement — and I have practiced it in many countries. I established the Open Society Fund in 1979 and a foundation in my native country Hungary in 1984. Hungary had at that time a communist government hostile to the concept of open society.

Nevertheless, we managed to find a *modus vivendi* with the government and the foundation

was very successful. I have now a network of foundations covering 24 countries, which include most of the former Soviet Empire, South Africa and Haiti. The foundations support the essential requirements of an open society, especially the freedom of expression and association. I have also established The Burma Project and would be only too happy to set up a foundation inside Burma, or Myanmar as it was renamed by the regime, if only the generals would permit me. As an advocate of open society I would endorse any type of economic sanctions only as a last resort.

But Burma is a case where desperate measures are needed because the situation is so desperate. The people of Burma gave the National League for Democracy, the party led by Aung San Suu Kyi, 60% of the votes and 82% of the seats in the 1990 elections. This mandate is still ignored by those who lost in the polls — the military, the same people who crushed a popular movement for democracy

two years earlier, killing thousands of civilians in the process. Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest where she was kept in almost complete isolation for six years.

The whole world condemned the Burmese junta, the repressive regime known as the State Law & Order Restoration Council (SLORC), but slowly the restrictions placed on Burma were relaxed — all in the name of constructive engagement. When Aung San Suu Kyi was finally released last July, we all hoped that this was the beginning of a genuine national reconciliation similar to what happened in South Africa after the release of Nelson Mandela. But what the world considered the beginning of a necessary process, the SLORC apparently considers the end of the concessions it is willing to make.

Human rights conditions have not changed much since she was released. The UN Commission on Human Rights, in its latest resolution, cited the SLORC's continued practice of torture, summary and arbitrary executions, forced labor, including forced portering for the military, and abuse of women, among the litany of offenses against its own citizens.¹

The SLORC introduced superficial economic reforms that helped justify the relaxation of restrictions by those who wished to engage with the junta. They brought no economic freedom. According to a study just released by Freedom House, Burma still ranks at bottom, along with Iraq and North Korea. In Burma:²

- Property rights are non-existent.
- Trade unions and collective bargaining are illegal.
- There are no formal regulations governing business formation, and no guaranteed rights to operate a business.
- The government sets a cap to interest rates.
 - The nominal tariffs range from 15 to 300 percent, but a complicated system of application results in an effective tariff of about 10 percent.
- The government dominates the economy, although no accurate figures exist on the number of state-owned enterprises or on the government's share of Gross Domestic Product. Most businesses in the formal sector are owned by the government or by the military officials.

It should be noted that Freedom House's annual survey of political and civil liberties also gave Burma the lowest rating.³

Burmese economist Professor Khin Maung Kyi says: "While certain limited sections of the economy enjoy the fruits of the opening, the great majority suffer from low-productivity, inflation and high informal taxation."⁴ Burma, with a population of 45 million, has a ratio of expenditures for defense versus health and education of 155%, compared to 5.1% for Indonesia, with its population of 170 million. Professor Khin Maung Kyi views the Burmese army's insistence on dominating the government forever to be "in direct conflict, in terms of both philosophy implied and actions demanded of such an objective, with the tenets and requirements of free market institutions."⁵ One of the major impediments to genuine economic reform is a currency that is grossly overvalued by 2,000%. One dollar is worth only six *kyats*, but fetches over 120 *kyats* on the open market. This means that the favored few with access to hard currency get a huge free gift, which is subsidized by the rest of the population.

And the common person has nowhere to turn. Article 19, a well-known London-based organization dedicated to the promotion of free expression, states in a new report that "the manifest unfairness of Burmese laws and the grossly arbitrary manner in which they are applied... often compound the inaccessibility and vagueness of the statutory instruments, and the glaring inconsistencies in unofficial pronouncements concerning the status of certain laws."⁶ The law is, in effect, whatever the generals say it is from day to day.

The regime appears to have tightened its grip in recent months. It has arbitrarily extended the sentences of 21 political prisoners who dared to communicate with the outside world about the appalling conditions inside the jails.⁷ Just last month, Aung San Suu Kyi reported that the junta appeared intent on crushing Burma's beleaguered democracy movement in every way it can, employing tactics of strong-arm street thugs reminiscent of Nazi leader Hitler's brown shirts.⁸

Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy have spoken out clearly against further foreign investments: "Our policy is that any investment made now is not going to bring any long-term profits for those who are investing, and certainly it is very much against the interests of the people of

Burma because most of the investments coming in are coming in through the same privileged group which is getting richer and richer, and more and more intent upon... clinging to power."⁹

International pressure can make a big difference. Without it Aung San Suu Kyi would not have been released. Now that she has appealed to the international community for further pressure, the international community must respond. If we have any commitment to universal human rights, now is the occasion to show it. In a complex world where most political decisions involve various shades of gray, this is a black and white case:

- It will be argued that free trade promotes free societies. That is a well-sounding slogan without any basis in fact. Regimes may remain repressive even as they grow rich. After all, China and Singapore have not become havens of human rights.
- Sanctions are said to hurt the population, but in Burma, the people are already as downtrodden as they could be. Sanctions would hit almost exclusively the governing elite.
- Sanctions are said to hurt U.S. business interests, but at the moment the amount of American investment in Burma is relatively insignificant, so we can still afford to live up to our moral principles. More investment does not necessarily mean more leverage. On the contrary, special interests often take precedence over general principles.

Sanctions have been successful elsewhere. South Africa is the best known example. Sanctions have also worked in Poland and Chile, where we tied certain benefits directly to the removal of specific rights abuses. International solidarity is extremely important in making sanctions effective, but absent that, a firm stand by America would send a strong moral and political message which is likely to be heeded.

Europe is paying more attention to Burma too. The European Commission, reacting to charges of forced labor practices in Burma filed by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), has begun an investigation that threatens Burma's Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) on its exports into countries belong-

ing to the European Union.¹⁰

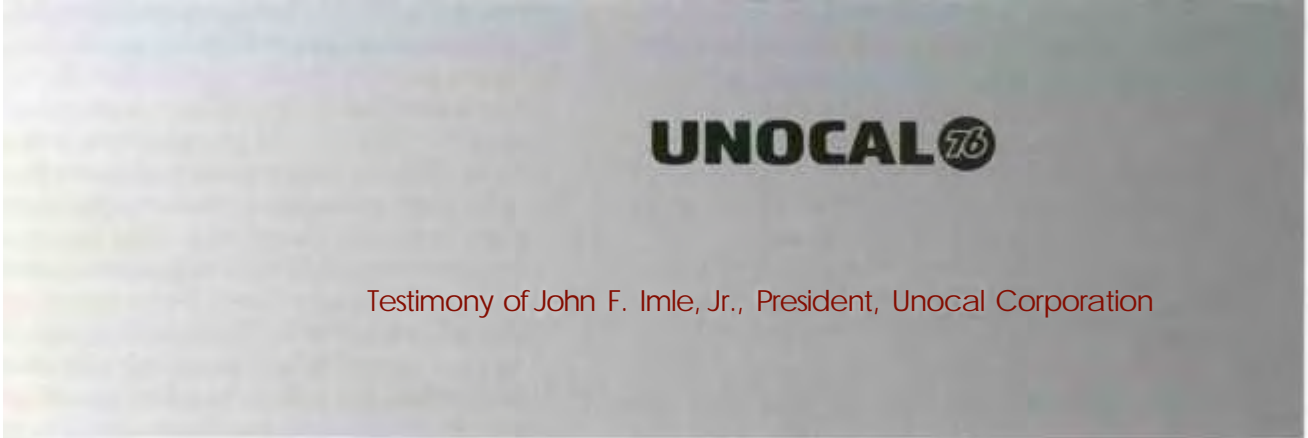
Japan and the countries of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) ought to be reminded of their role as neighbors of Burma, and this Bill will do so. Japan, in particular, has special historic links to Burma. On the one hand, Burma's independence heroes, including General Aung San, the father of Aung San Suu Kyi, were trained by Japan. On the other hand, the current Burmese army, under the rule of the SLORC, seem to be imitating some of the worst features of the Japanese in the Second World War.

Japan today is a major economic power in the world — and also a leader of constructive engagement with Burma. It must take responsibility for its actions, especially if these actions are prolonging the suffering of millions of Burmese who are denied fundamental freedoms.

Is Burma the new South Africa — as claimed by the groundswell of young activists and supporters of a democratic Burma all around the world? Morally, yes. The main difference is that the blacks of South Africa had a large constituency sympathetic to them in the United States, while Burma does not have such a local constituency. Only the principles of human rights are involved in Burma. It is all the more important, therefore, that we respond. We can start by supporting this Bill.

NOTES

1. United Nations Commission on Human Rights, "Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar," E/CN.4/1996/1.91, Geneva, 22 April, 1996
2. *World Survey of Economic Freedom*. New York, Freedom House: 1995-96, p. 138-139
3. *Freedom in the World: The Annual Survey of Political Rights & Civil Liberties*. New York: Freedom House, 1995-96, p. 163-165
4. Khin Maung Kyi, "Burmese Gleam — Will It Endure and Glow or Flicker and Die: A Prognosis of Recent Economic Changes in Burma", unpublished paper given at Open Society Institute seminar on Burma, October 5, 1995, p. 11
5. Khin Maung Kyi, p. 15
6. Forthcoming report on Burmese law by K. Venkateswaran, Article 19, London.
7. Amnesty International/USA, Urgent Action Appeal, April 2, 1996
8. UPI, via Burmanet, "Suu Kyi Compares Burmese Group to Nazis," April 21
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INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, I am John Imle, President of Unocal Corporation. Unocal is a global diversified energy corporation headquartered in Los Angeles, California.

We appreciate the opportunity to testify today. Our interest in this hearing stems from our involvement in a partnership to develop the Yadana natural gas field offshore Myanmar — formerly known by its colonial name, Burma — and from our long history in developing countries in Asia.

UNOCAL'S POSITION ON S.1511

Unocal opposes the passage of S.1511. We believe the approach outlined in S.1511 is counterproductive to its intent.

Rather than isolating Myanmar, the expanding use of unilateral steps will further isolate the United States from many of its allies in Asia and Europe — all of whom are aggressively developing closer relationships with Myanmar.

WHY IS UNOCAL IN MYANMAR?

By the very nature of our business, energy companies must go to the resource.

Unlike oil, natural gas cannot be transported over great distances. A natural gas development project must have all related production and transportation facilities located within a reasonable distance to a hard currency energy market with sufficient demand for that gas.

Thus, geology and geography — not geopolitics — are our dictates. Other industries have the luxury of locating wherever it is the most convenient, expedient or cheapest. No international energy resource company has that luxury.

These factors also play a key role in determining how we develop the Yadana field. A world-class energy resource located 43 miles offshore Myanmar, the field has reserves of more than 5 trillion cubic feet of natural gas.

Unocal joined this project in 1993 and has a 28.26 percent interest. The lead partner and project operator is Paris-based Total, which won the bid for the field in 1992 and which holds a 31.24 percent share. The other partners in the Yadana project are Thailand's PTTEP [Petroleum Authority of Thailand Exploration and Production], which holds a 25.5 percent share, and MOGE [Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise], Myanmar's oil and gas company, which holds a 15 percent interest.

Much of the gas will be transported approximately 416 miles by pipeline from the offshore Yadana field to Thailand where it will fuel an electricity generating plant to be constructed at Ratchaburi, southwest of Bangkok. Demand for electricity in Thailand is soaring and expected to double over the next 15 years. Thailand has a strong economy and sufficient resources to purchase the gas.

The Yadana project also makes feasible power and fertilizer plants to be built near the capital city of Yangon, as well as a possible second electricity generating plant in southern Myanmar.

Let me make one point very clear: this project will go forward with or without the active involvement of Unocal or any other American company. It involves the development of a known, abundant natural gas field, using off-the-shelf technology, and serving a market with rapidly expanding demand. There are no technological or economic hurdles to developing the Yadana field.

If this legislation is enacted and we are forced out, the current partnership will either purchase our share or other foreign partner will be recruited immediately. I also want to add that as a direct result of discussions about bans on U.S. private investment in Myanmar, I have been approached by a leading Asian corporation about possibly purchasing Unocal's share in this project.

Our position is that it would be irresponsible — for us, our stockholders, our employees and, for that matter, the people of Myanmar — for Unocal to divest our interest. Here's why: the project is being conducted in an ethical and responsible manner, it is a key part of our Southeast Asia business strategy, and it will bring numerous infrastructure development and socio-economic benefits to Myanmar and Thailand.

WHO BENEFITS FROM OUR PRESENCE?

The people of Myanmar will receive the main benefits of our involvement in the Yadana project.

In a very poor nation desperately short of energy supplies, the project will make feasible plants currently under evaluation for construction near Yangon.

Myanmar's agricultural sector must now import — at a significant cost — most of the fertilizers used in its agricultural production. This dependency will be lessened with the proposed con-

struction of a 1750-metric-ton-per-day fertilizer plant near the capital city.

Of importance are the socio-economic development benefits the project is bringing to the 20,000 villagers living in the vicinity of the 39-mile-long pipeline route. They will directly benefit from the project in two important ways:

- The project offers immediate employment opportunities for all ethnic communities in this region. Our employment practices ensure that the wage scales for these jobs are superior to prevailing local average wage scales and that employees are provided a safe and healthful work environment.
- The partners are underwriting a wide range of socio-economic development programs that are developing a private sector in the region and significantly improving local standards of living. We're building new or renovating existing schools, hospitals and health centers. And we've launched a major malaria research and prevention program under the direction of the Pasteur Institute.

These investments — as well as all costs — in the project are shared pro rata by the partners. Capital costs for the project — which extends only up to the Thai border — are estimated at \$1 billion. No significant income is expected to be generated until the year 2000, and it will be another three years — the year 2003 — before the partners expect to recover their original investments.

The full project as well as its socio-economic development programs are described in detail in the report and photographs attached to my testimony. I ask consent, Mr. Chairman, that these documents be made part of the hearing record.

The people of Thailand will also benefit from this project. The clean-burning natural gas transported to Ratchaburi will generate up to 2,800 megawatts of electricity. This represents almost 10 percent of Thailand's increased energy demand.

HOW CAN SUBSTANTIVE LONG-LASTING CHANGE BE ACHIEVED?

Based on Unocal's 30-year history of doing business in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, we believe that long-term and consistent engagement in Myanmar will bring about change similar to that

which occurred in those countries.

U.S. corporations can and should play a role in helping shape the economic development of Myanmar by setting a leadership example. We can achieve this by following specific business practices and codes of conduct and ensuring that our operations comply fully with those standards.

Unocal is a publicly held corporation, accountable to our Board and our stockholders. Our written code of conduct for doing business internationally expresses clearly our commitment to treating everyone working on any of our projects with fairness and respect. We have established a comprehensive system of safeguards and compliance practices to ensure that every aspect of the Yadana project complies fully with our code of conduct.

Unocal's code of conduct and Yadana project-specific codes and policies are included in the appendix of the report submitted with my written remarks.

We can promote constructive and positive change by demonstrating that strict attention to health and safety standards, environmental compliance and responsible labor practices are good for this project, good for attracting capital for future projects, and good for the long-term development of Myanmar.

Since joining the project in 1993, we have conducted six in-depth, first-hand field evaluations, most recently in January 1996. I have been there several times as well. In addition to these on-the-ground reviews, ongoing map research and aerial photography confirm that the Yadana project is complying fully with our corporate code of conduct. Our Board of Directors regularly reviews the progress of the Yadana project and annually reports on compliance issues to our shareholders.

S.1511 would eliminate any positive presence that U.S. corporations might have in Myanmar. Section 4(b)(1) would ban U.S. private investment in Myanmar, requiring U.S. companies to disengage. We strongly oppose this section, and believe it will be counter-productive to promoting substantive, long-term change and encouraging economic progress in Myanmar.

The additional unilateral steps outlined in S.1511 will render the United States irrelevant in Myanmar's development and marginal in Southeast

S. 1511 would eliminate any positive presence that U.S. corporations might have in Myanmar. Section 4(b)(1) would ban U.S. private investment in Myanmar, requiring U.S. companies to disengage. We strongly oppose this section, and believe it will be counter-productive to promoting substantive, long-term change and encouraging economic progress in Myanmar.

Asia. None of Myanmar's major trading partners in Asia or in Europe is considering a similar course of action, and none is likely to follow the U.S. lead. In fact, the seven nations of ASEAN in July, 1995

took the first formal step in forging even closer relationships with Myanmar by its signing ASEAN's Treaty of Amity and Cooperation.

A number of provisions outlined in S.1511 will put the United States in direct confrontation with our friends and allies in the region. I am not a foreign policy expert, Mr. Chairman. However, having recently visited a number of Southeast Asia countries, I've heard a constant and growing concern about the current direction of U.S. policy toward Myanmar. Our friends in these countries seriously believe that the current U.S. policy of isolation and non-engagement will be intensified, and may, in fact, weaken U.S.-ASEAN relations as ASEAN cross-border trade and engagement with Myanmar increases.

The nations of Southeast Asia adopted a policy of constructive engagement for a number of reasons. There is concern about Chinese economic dominance in the region. Division and confrontation pose serious and significant dangers, especially for neighbors sharing common borders. These nations know that the politics of confrontation have created more problems than it has solved. They are unlikely to change their policy of engagement. The ASEAN nations are keenly aware that isolating Myanmar holds a very real danger of forcing Myanmar squarely into the camp of its northern neighbor.

I, too, am concerned about official U.S. policy of isolation and non-engagement.

Since September, 1988, the United States has unilaterally suspended all economic assistance to Myanmar and withdrawn GSP privileges. The decertification of Myanmar as a narcotics cooperating country in 1989 has, by law, required the U.S. Executive Directors at all multinational financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to vote against projects in Myanmar. Neither Eximbank nor OPIC have programs in Myanmar. And, since 1991, the U.S. diplomatic presence in Myanmar has been downgraded from Ambassador to the consular level.

Mr. Chairman, I am fully aware of the challenges facing Myanmar, but none of these unilateral steps has forced the changes in Myanmar that this bill would demand.

Nor, I submit, would the further steps in S.1511.

Instead, the bill would further marginalize U.S. influence. The only people hurt by S.1511 will be the ordinary citizens of Myanmar who otherwise might benefit from the humanitarian projects and technical assistance previously carried out by U.S. bilateral assistance agencies.

Steps outlined in S.1511 cannot have any measurable positive impact because we have minimal economic and political leverage. U.S. investment in Myanmar is less than 10 percent of all foreign investment and can — and will — be easily replaced. By codifying current sanctions, Congress will leave this Administration — and any future administration — with no flexibility to respond to or encourage changes in Myanmar.

The only result of S.1511 will be to isolate ourselves, not the government of Myanmar. S.1511 will make it more difficult for the U.S. to be an active player in Asia during the next century. The United States runs the very real risk of becoming irrelevant.

A review of U.S. actions shows clearly that the U.S. has not implemented a policy that even remotely resembles constructive engagement.

If we continue traveling down the path of unilateral sanctions, we will be unable to lead by example not only in Myanmar but throughout the region. We will diminish our ability to influence constructively the future of Southeast Asia and cede the opportunity to participate in the formative stages of Myanmar's development. We also will have compromised, hypocritically in my assessment, our commitment to improving the lives of others.

We are proud of the Yadana project because it does what current government policy fails to do: improve the lives of others. It is an outstanding model of responsible economic development that can make a difference to the people of Myanmar and Thailand. For the first time in many villagers' lives, our project brings hope and the chance of a better way of life.

As Myanmar opens up its economy to the West, it is time for us to lead by example. It is not the time to slam the door shut.

To those who ask how we can we remain in Myanmar, we respond, "How can we ever justify leaving?"

Thank you.



Statement of Kent Wiedemann, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State,
Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Banking Committee on behalf of the Department of State. I am pleased to review with you today our common concerns about the situation in Burma and to describe U.S. policy toward the country.

CONDITIONS IN BURMA: POLITICAL STALEMATE AND CONTINUING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

To begin, I would like to briefly review the situation in Burma today. Burma is in a sad state. There has been no improvement in the political and human rights situation, and we continue to have the same concerns that were detailed in Assistant Secretary Lord's testimony last July and in my testimony last September. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) retains its iron grip on the country and rules by fear.

Moreover, events of the last few days suggest an ominous potential escalation in the SLORC's oppression of the democratic opposition. Press reports indicate that some 91 democracy activists have been detained in Burma by the SLORC, including U Win Htein, personal secretary to Aung

San Suu Kyi and one of her closest advisers. The group includes members of the National League for Democracy (NLD) who were elected to parliament in 1990 but not allowed to take their seats by the SLORC, as well as family members of several representatives. The representatives had planned to attend a conference of elected parliamentarians at the home of Aung San Suu Kyi [from] May 26-29. This meeting, which we understand Aung San Suu Kyi still plans to hold, is to coincide with the sixth anniversary of the 1990 elections.

The Administration condemns in the strongest terms efforts by the SLORC to prevent the citizens of Burma from exercising their basic political rights. Our Embassy is reporting on the changing situation on the ground. Within the past month, we have made strong statements to the Burmese authorities in Rangoon and Washington raising our concerns. Yesterday I protested to the Burmese Ambassador regarding the reports of the arrests and warned that a continued crackdown would lead to further deterioration in our already seriously strained relations.

These disturbing actions come against a backdrop of the SLORC's menacing actions against the democratic opposition. The SLORC has been unwilling to begin a dialogue with Aung San Suu

Kyi and leaders of the ethnic minorities about the political future of the country. The regime maintains a constant barrage of press attacks, some particularly virulent and personal, against Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD. Just yesterday, in a speech reported in state-run newspapers, military intelligence chief Khin Nyunt bluntly threatened Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters as "traitors" who are endangering the stability of the state. Simultaneously, the SLORC has put forward as its "political reform" alternative a national constitutional convention that will provide the means to perpetuate authoritarian military rule.

In response to SLORC intransigence and unwillingness to engage in dialogue, the NLD has escalated its challenge to the regime. In recent public statements, the NLD called on the SLORC to immediately implement the results of the 1990 elections and accused the junta of acting lawlessly. In response, the SLORC lashed out at Aung San Suu Kyi in newspaper articles and accused her of engaging in reckless and provocative actions. The SLORC last month issued a pointed public warning against any "misuse" of the Buddhist New Year's festivities for political purposes and then blocked off the road to Aung San Suu Kyi's house April 16, which prevented some of her supporters from visiting her for the New Year's celebrations. More recently, NLD Chairman Aung Shwe wrote to the SLORC chairman taking the SLORC to task for expelling the NLD from the National Convention last November.

For their part, Aung San Suu Kyi and her associates remain confident in the ultimate triumph of their democratic cause. But the SLORC believes it is dealing from a position of strength, and it appears unlikely to move toward political reconciliation at least in the short-term. Thus, the domestic political dynamic for dialogue is at a stalemate.

Throughout the country, egregious human rights violations continue. The SLORC arrests and sentences political opponents for the slightest infraction; in one case, an Aung San Suu Kyi supporter was sentenced to five years for a minor traffic violation. Hundreds of political prisoners remain jailed, including some twenty elected members of parliament, who won their seats in the democratic elections of 1990. The regime has imposed particularly long, harsh prison sentences on a number of

NLD activists and on Leo Nichols, an Anglo-Burman who served as honorary consul for several Nordic countries and is one of Aung San Suu Kyi's closest friends. [Editor's Note: Mr. Nichols died in prison on June 22, 1996]

Burmese citizens are routinely rounded up and forced to carry military equipment, weapons and ammunition for the Burmese Army. In addition to receiving inadequate food and water, these press-ganged porters often have been forced to work, at great risk, in areas of armed conflict. The SLORC also compels its citizens to carry out forced labor on roads, railroads and other infrastructure projects. Despite a reported internal decree by the SLORC to suspend forced labor by the army, we have not seen any diminution of this practice.

On the narcotics front, Burma remains the world's main source of heroin. Some sixty percent of the heroin on America's streets comes from the poppy fields of Burma. The SLORC has not made drug control a priority issue. The Burmese Army reached an agreement with drug trafficker Khun Sa and his Mong Tai Army in January, bringing Burma's Shan State under a greater measure of Rangoon control. Although there are signs that narcotics production and trafficking in the Shan State have been temporarily disrupted, this may be largely the result of adjusting to the new situation. The regime also has announced it will not try Khun Sa for decades of heroin trafficking activity.

U.S. Policy: Committed to Pressing for Progress on Democracy, Human Rights and Counternarcotics

We are not impartial observers of this dispute. We support the aspirations of the NLD and the people of Burma, who desire what so many others around the world now take for granted: the chance to freely express their views and to be represented by leaders of their choosing.

We support a range of tough measures designed to bring pressure to bear upon the regime in Rangoon. Our goal is simple and straightforward: to make it clear to the regime that Burma cannot fully rejoin the international community and gain the assistance it needs until fundamental changes are made. Since 1988, we have suspended our own

economic aid program and have urged other potential donors like Japan to limit strictly any development assistance to Burma. We do not provide GSP trade preferences. We have decertified Burma as a narcotics cooperating country, which requires us by law to vote against assistance to Burma from the IMF, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. We do not promote U.S. commercial investment in or trade with Burma. Neither Eximbank nor OPIC provides loans or insurance for American companies selling to or investing in Burma.

On the international level, we have strongly supported efforts in the UN General Assembly and the International Labor Organization to condemn human and worker rights violations in Burma. At the UN Human Rights Commission last month, we led the effort against attempts to water down the Burma resolution. We have urged the UN to play an active role in promoting democratic reform through a political dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi. We refrain from selling arms to Burma and have an informal agreement with our G-7 friends and allies to do the same.

Our principled stand has had an impact. While our policy has not resulted in a democratic government in Burma, our unrelenting pressure since 1988 may have helped to bring about Aung San Suu Kyi's release, has given heart to the democratic opposition, and continues to serve notice to the junta that the international community is watching and it cannot act with impunity. Our continued vigilance also has influenced some other countries from interacting as fully with Burma as they otherwise might do.

Moreover, we do not believe the kind of "constructive engagement" the ASEAN countries are practicing will result in meaningful change in Burma. Since 1988, Burma's ASEAN neighbors have increased their trade and investment with Burma, yet there has been no progress in human rights or democratization. If the U.S. let up its pressure on Burma, the SLORC would be led to believe that no one in the international community would take them to task for their continuing oppression of the Burmese people.

For this reason, we intend to maintain the U.S. measures already in place in Burma. In the absence of genuine political reforms and progress in

... Instead of being locked into a set of legislatively prescribed mandatory measures, we need to maintain our flexibility to respond to events in Burma.... We thus oppose measures, such as the mandatory provisions of S. 1511, that restrict, rather than maintain or enhance, the Administration's freedom of action. At the same time, we would be willing to explore legislative measures for discretionary sanctions that would augment our options...

narcotics control in Burma, we do not believe it is appropriate to resume development assistance, restore GSP benefits or resume Eximbank and OPIC programs. Of greatest impact, we will also continue to oppose lending from the international financial institutions and seek, with other friendly governments, to maintain our informal arms embargo. The United States also will continue to raise directly with the SLORC our strong concerns about democracy, human rights and counternarcotics. We will likewise urge other governments to do the same.

PROPOSALS FOR FURTHER SANCTIONS

The Administration is committed to maintaining in place our current tough measures. Concerning S.1511, the sanctions bill introduced by Senator McConnell, we support the intent of the bill and shares its goals, including a prompt transition to democracy and the release of all prisoners of conscience. We are proud of our efforts on these issues and of our role as the foremost international proponent of human rights, democracy and narcotics control in Burma.

This legislation would require that we immediately impose a range of additional sanctions on Burma, including visa restrictions and a prohibition on investment. Additional sanctions are an option available to us in response to ongoing and future developments in Burma. However, instead of being locked into a set of legislatively prescribed mandatory measures, we need to maintain our flexibility to respond to events in Burma and to consult with Congress on appropriate responses to ongoing and future developments. We thus oppose measures, such as the mandatory provisions of S.1511, that restrict, rather than maintain or enhance, the Administration's freedom of action. At the same time, we would be willing to explore legislative measures for discretionary sanctions that would augment our options and maintain our freedom of action. We are prepared to continue to consult with Members and their staff on this issue. As I have indicated, we are deeply concerned about the recent arrests of NLD members, have communicated that concern both publicly and privately to the SLORC, and have warned them that there would be serious consequences if the crackdown continues.

Two additional factors need to be taken into account in considering sanctions: multilateral support and the limitations of unilateral action. To be sure, the calibrated use of multilateral sanctions can be an effective tool in an overall strategy using incentives and disincentives. However, we have discussed multilateral sanctions with interested countries, and there is little international support for such sanctions — especially among Burma's key trading partners.

In reviewing the option of additional unilateral sanctions, we must weigh the value of such a political statement against its economic impact on the regime. In this respect, we note that unilateral sanctions would have limited economic impact on the regime. Burma has forged strong links to its regional neighbors. While these neighbors share some of our concerns, they see dialogue and engagement on the world scene through economic interaction as the best way to bring about changes in the SLORC's behavior.

CONCLUSION

Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that Congress and the Administration share the same goals in Burma. We all want to see a dialogue of national reconciliation that will help lead to a new democratic future for Burma. We all want an end to human rights abuses and the installation of a democratically elected government in Rangoon. Very importantly to the United States, we all want an end to heroin production and trafficking. Our hope is that Aung San Suu Kyi is justified in her dauntless optimism that eventually democracy will come to Burma. Thoughtful, reasoned measures by the U.S. Government can help make this hope a reality.

I look forward to continuing to work with the Committee and other Members of Congress on this and other issues.

Thank you.

MASSACHUSETTS SANCTIONS BURMA

On June 25, Governor William Weld signed into law the first state-wide selective purchasing bill barring the buying of goods or services of companies doing business in Burma. The law covers any company with investment in Burma or selling any goods or services to the SLORC, including companies that have franchises, licensees or distribution in Burma. Approximately 140 firms could be affected by the ban, among them: Texaco, Arco Chemical, Eastman Kodak and Apple Computers.

FROM DRUG LORD TO TRANSPORTATION MAGNATE

According to reports that have appeared in several newspapers in the region, Khun Sa, the infamous narcotics kingpin, has been given a concession to run a bus line on three lucrative routes. Service, which is scheduled to begin in June, will be provided from Rangoon to Taunggyi; Taunggyi to Lashio; and Loi Kaw to Tachilek.

Other reports claim that a group of Khun Sa's men have opened a casino in the border town of Tachilek, catering to Burmese, Shan, Wa and Thai customers.

BUSINESSMEN RALLY TO PROTEST OPPOSITION

A mass rally of over 10,000 businessmen took place in Rangoon on June 16 led by U Thein Tun, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of PEPSI Myanmar and vice-chairman of the Myanmar Chamber of Commerce. The rally was organized to support the government's opening-up of the economy and to denounce the activities of the democratic opposition. In his address to the gathering, Thein Tun stated, "All see the attempts of internal and external destructionist working in collusion to hamper the all-round national development." Recent rallies have coincided with the government crackdown by SLORC against the pro-democracy movement. Thein Tun, fast becoming one of the richest men in Burma, heads Myanmar Golden Star Co. Ltd., the country's largest privately-owned corporation, which includes five joint-venture companies and two wholly-owned firms developing a range of products from beverages and building materials, to an indoor amusement center and a motor vehicle distributor.

HEINEKEN AND CARLSBURG PULL OUT OF BURMA

Heineken of the Netherlands and Carlsburg of Denmark, two of the world's leading breweries, have decided to pull out of Burma. Following months of protest by human rights activists, Heineken announced on July 10, its decision to withdraw its \$30 million investment noting that public opinion had led them to scratch plans the company had made 18 months earlier to establish production in the country. Heineken's 25.5 percent stake in the Myanmar Brewery project will be sold to Singapore-based Fraser and Neave, producers of Singapore's Tiger beer. Heineken will also halt all exports. According to company spokesman Koos Woltjes, "Not only have we withdrawn, we will not have any interference in Burma at all. Out means out."

Carlsburg, which was facing threats of a consumer boycott, made the announcement one day earlier that it was dropping plans to invest in a new brewery in Burma.

DENMARK TO CALL FOR EU SANCTIONS ON SLORC

Under growing pressure to take action over the recent death in a Rangoon Jail of honorary consul Leo Nichols, Danish Foreign Minister Neils Helveg Petersen announced that he would ask the European Union to impose trade sanctions against Burma. The proposal will be made at

the July 15 meeting of EU foreign ministers in an attempt to initiate a multilateral campaign against Burma's military regime. Sanction legislation is currently pending with the United States Congress.

KYAT FALLS, INFLATION SOARS

According to reports from diplomats and economic analysts, the inflation rate in Burma is now running at about 40 percent, compared to the 20-30 percent cited by official sources. The black market rate for the kyat has gone from 130 kyat to the U.S. dollar seven months ago to its current 200 kyat per USD. Meanwhile, since December, the price of rice has risen from 55 kyats per pyi (the equivalent of two kilograms) to 70 kyats per pyi.

COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS DISCUSSES BURMA

The Asian Studies Program and the Corporate Program of the New York-based Council on Foreign Relations hosted a luncheon meeting, "Foreign Investment in Myanmar: Trends and Prospects, Risks and Rewards," on April 19. The speakers were Mark Mason, School of Management, Yale University; Ronald J. Colgan, Caterpillar Inc.; and Franklin P. Huddle, U.S. State Department and former Charge of the United States Embassy in Rangoon.

BURMA STRATEGY MEETING TO BE HELD

The fourth annual Burma Strategy Meeting, to coordinate grassroots activism in North America, will be held in San Francisco August 8-10. The first two days of the meeting will be by-invitation-only. Saturday, August 10, will be an educational forum open to the general public. Those interested in attending the August 10 event should contact Simon Billenness, Franklin Research & Development. Phone: (617) 482-6655, fax: (617) 482-6179, e-mail: frdc@igc.apc.org.

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.

MAY 23, 1996

Thank you for publishing my letter in your Jan/Feb issue of Burma Debate. Unfortunately the wording in the third last paragraph got scrambled, and the last sentence of that paragraph reads very oddly indeed.

If at all possible, could you correct this in your next edition? What should have appeared was two sentences, as follows:

"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 a new exotic holiday destination. Tourists will be doing Burma a big favor if they decide to wait for democracy in the country before booking their flights."

Caroline Lurie
Burma Action Group,
United Kingdom

U.S ENVOYS CONSULT ASEAN, JAPAN

Responding to the SLORC crackdown on the pro-democracy opposition and the arrests of NLD supporters, the United States government dispatched two special envoys to Japan and ASEAN nations to discuss the escalating tensions in Burma. William Brown, a career diplomat and former Ambassador to Thailand, and Stanley Roth, formerly of the U.S. National Security Council and currently with the U.S. Institute for Peace, visited the region from June 8 through 16. Meeting with senior government officials in Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand, the envoys' mission was to explore "shared concerns" and discuss steps that might be taken to prevent further deterioration of the situation.

SENATE STAFFDEL TRAVELS TO BURMA

Staff members from five Senate offices visited Burma the week of July 1 under the sponsorship of the Burma/Myanmar Forum. The entourage included the legislative assistants from the offices of Senators John McCain (R-AZ), Richard Lugar (R-IN), Arlen Specter (R-PA), Thad Cochran (R-MI) and Slade Gorton (R-WA). The goal of the Burma/Myanmar Forum, which is based in Washington D.C., is to "broaden the base for sustained and meaningful engagement with Burma" on the part of U.S. investors, U.S. policy makers and others.

BRIEFINGS AND DEVELOPMENTS

ARRESTS OF NLD SUPPORTERS

In response to plans by the National League for Democracy (NLD) to hold a meeting of elected representatives in Rangoon May 26-29, the Burmese military arrested more than 250 NLD supporters beginning around May 20 and continuing as late as June 18. Although many of those arrested have since been released some, including Aung San Suu Kyi's personal assistant U Win Htein and her press secretary U Aye Win, may face long-term prison sentences. Following their meeting, the NLD announced that the party planned to draft its own proposal for a constitution, whereby SLORC, on June 7, issued Law No. 5/96, prohibiting any individual or group from writing a constitution.

SAIS CONFERENCE

"Burma/Myanmar Today and American Policy," a conference designed to discuss the merits of "constructive engagement" versus isolation, was held in Washington D.C on May 14. Organized by the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, in cooperation with the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, the meeting featured panels that included Mr. Ernest Bower, Executive Director of the U.S.-ASEAN Council for Business and Technology; Mr. Aryeh Neier, President of the Open Society Institute; Mr. Eric Schwartz, of the U.S. National Security Council; Dr. Sein Win, Prime Minister of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma; and Thomas Vallely, Director of the Harvard Institute of International Development, Indochina Project.

BURMA MEETING IN BOULDER

Dr. U Kyaw Win, who served as advisor on the John Boorman film, "Beyond Rangoon," will present the illustrated lecture, "Burma's Struggle for Democracy: Why Should We Care?" on August 22 in

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HOSTS BURMA MEETING

The National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies and Georgetown University's Southeast Asian Studies Program hosted a private seminar, "The Future of Burma," on June 7. Featured speakers were Dr. David Dapice of the Harvard Institute for International Development; Mr. William Ichord, Senior Vice President of UNOCAL; and Dr. Marvin Ott, Professor of the National War College. The group addressed such issues as Burma's role in ASEAN's blueprint for development; the outlook for expanded economic intercourse with Burma and how neighboring countries, including China, view Burma's strategic importance.

SENATE DEBATES SANCTION LEGISLATION

The U.S. Senate will be debating whether or not to impose economic sanctions on Burma when the Foreign Operations Appropriations Bill comes to the floor in July. The language, previously part of the Burma Freedom and Democracy Act, was entered into the appropriations bill by Senator Mitch McConnell. While there is growing grassroots support for sanctions on the Burmese military regime, it is expected that the Burma portion of the bill will face opposition, particularly from Senators of states with constituents from the oil and gasoline industries.

Boulder, Colorado. Dr. Win will discuss his recent trip to Burma's Kachin highlands, which border on China's Yunnan province, and current developments in Burma. The lecture will take place at 7:00 p.m. at Mead Hall, First United Methodist Church, Boulder, CO.

INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION CONDEMNS SLORC

On June 12, at the 83rd session of the General Conference of the International Labor Organization (ILO) in Geneva, the Committee on the Application of Conventions and Standards cited Burma's military government for non-compliance of its obligations under ILO Convention 29 on forced labor and Convention 87 on freedom of assembly. Taking the most serious form of censure that can be imposed on an ILO member state, the Committee passed "special paragraphs" condemning the lack of improvement on the "serious discrepancies between law and practice" of the government with regard to both conventions. The Committee, which is made up of representatives of employers, workers and governments, also took the very unusual step of including a third paragraph on Burma under the heading, "Continued Failure to Implement," reflecting the body's ultimate form of censure.

An announcement made by the Workers Group at the June 20 plenary of the Conference advised that a complaint under Article 26 of the ILO Constitution had also been filed. This complaint will be considered by the ILO Governing Body in November and could lead to a Commission of Inquiry to investigate first hand the forced labor situation in Burma.

ROUNDTABLES



WASHINGTON, DC — A Burma Roundtable was held on June 20 with Max Ediger, who has worked for the Mennonite Central Committee and *Burma Issues* in Bangkok since 1990. Mr. Ediger discussed the political trends and the human rights situation in Burma.

The Washington Roundtable is co-sponsored by Human Rights Watch/Asia, The Jesuit Refugee Service, The US Committee for Refugees and Refugees International. For more information contact Refugees International by phone: (202) 828-0110 or fax: (202) 828-0819.

NEW YORK — On May 13, The New York Roundtable hosted a briefing by Dr. Thaug Htun, director of the Burma-U.N. Service Office, entitled, "The Situation of Children in Burma." Also shown at that time was the video message of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to the 52nd Session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights.

The Roundtable of June 26 featured Mr. Max Ediger of the Mennonite Central Committee and *Burma Issues*, who discussed political trends and developments in Burma.

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 — The Massachusetts Burma Roundtable of June 13 featured a screening of the British documentary, *Burma: Land of Fear*. The documentary by British film maker, John Pilger, was recently shown on British television and depicts the use of forced labor in Burma's tourism and infrastructure projects.

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) 482-6655 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: (408) 995-0403 or e-mail: janej@bellmicro.com

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



LONDON — A Burma Briefing was held on June 7 featuring Jack Dunford of Church World Service and the Burma Border Consortium in Bangkok and Martin Smith, journalist and researcher for Article 19 in London. Mr. Dunford and Mr. Smith discussed the current situation along the Thai/ Burma border and inside Burma.

The Burma Briefing is a periodic meeting of NGOs working on Burma. For information contact Edmond McGovern by phone: (44-392) 876-849 or fax: (44-392) 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 briefing to be held in the Development Committee of the European Parliament on July 24 will include the participation of NGOs from throughout Europe. Groups from England, France, Germany, Holland and Belgium will be represented.

For further details contact the Burma Council of the Netherlands, Paulus Potterstraat 20, 1071 DA, Amsterdam, Holland. Tel: (31-20) 671-6952; (31-20) 671-3513 or e-mail: BCN@XS4ALL.NL.

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.

ON THE DEATH OF LEO NICHOLS

An Anglo-Myanmar by the name of James Leander Nichols was found guilty under Section (61) of the Burma Wireless Act of 1933 and was sentenced to a jail term of three years.

During the period this badhat Anglo was serving his sentence the foreign broadcasting services and journals shouted out in an alarming manner. It is not without reason that this person was given the title of a badhat. This person is said to have helped over 40 good Myanmar damsels to get jobs abroad after promising them different kinds of incentives. It is said that he seduced 80 percent of these girls, and a not very famous artiste of strange name also got involved in this. Moreover, when the spouse of a Myanmar woman who was given a special privilege came to Myanmar, he was given a special treat led by this badhat and was taken to a big whore-house in Thingangyun and entertained. That is why he was given the honorable title — badhat.

In reality this badhat is no ordinary person. He is the person who had arranged a car for Maidawgyi [Aung San Suu Kyi] the founding mother of our party. The air-conditioners installed at the Maidawgyi's house are also "the good deed" of this badhat. All the expenses of Maidawgyi's house from receptions right up to the salary of the gardener was the responsibility of the badhat. He also installed the best TV and video decks at the house. This generosity is amazing.

Whether it is due to his misfortune or his ill-fate, it is not known, this badhat died suddenly while serving his sentence on 22-6-96. Regarding this matter, there were different kinds of criticisms and accusations made and there came about persons who tried to make political gain out of it. There appeared writings and broadcasts which exaggerated the death as caused by torture and to be assumed to be so.

In carrying out autopsy on deceased prisoner, the Police Surgeon remarked that he died of cardiac disease... It is seen that there was none who treated him harshly. No one can prevent death when a person meets his fate. No ambassadors of any kind can plead with his death. The *Nawata* [SLORC] Government also cannot issue an order for him to die after he is freed from prison. It is also necessary to understand that the United Nations cannot use a veto power to stop his death.

... As the West Maidawgyi is creating a scene on the death of the badhat within the country, this and that diplomats of foreign embassies are also saying this and that. The Foreign Ministry of Denmark is not satisfied with this matter and is crying out to the UN to send a human rights special envoy to carry out necessary inspection. It is said that the United States, taking this as an excuse is thinking of imposing sanctions against Myanmar Naing-Ngan.

That Anglo badhat who broke the existing laws of the country and was sentenced by the Court and as he was not fit to have been given the post of honorary consul, he was excluded from the list of diplomats recognized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar. Hence, as it has been shouted aloud, he is not an honorary consul, nor did he represent any country legally. As he was one who was carrying out his secret tasks illegally, if there are those who grieve at his loss then Byatti is at a loss to say anything.

Creating a problem out of nothing is real extraordinary. In reality, the badhat had lived with a citizen scrutiny card and household registration card and why is it that those who have no connection with him are feeling hurt? Whatever it may be, the deceased has gone to the cemetery and his life has been concluded.

As there is a saying that a person became wealthy starting with a dead rat, the person who wants to make political gain out of a corpse is really foolish.

The above is excerpted from the article, "Those Who Die Go to the Cemetery" by "Byatti," which appeared in Burma's official newspaper, The New Light of Myanmar on June 9, 1996.

IT MYANMAR**THE BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY MAGAZINE**

published bi-monthly by Newscom Pte, Ltd, Singapore

IT Myanmar

Block 105 Boon Keng Road #04-17

Singapore 339776

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Fax: (65) 293-1445

This magazine, a recent addition to other IT publications previously available in Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, claims to be a business magazine with a difference — a strong technology focus. Sporting SLORC's motto "Our Three Main National Causes" (non-disintegration of the union, non-disintegration of national solidarity and consolidation of national sovereignty) on its masthead, the publication provides the business community with information on regional technology events; briefs on international businesses exploring investment possibilities; and an economic overview. Available by subscription for US\$4.90 per issue.

MYANMAR KAYIN (KAREN) STATE: THE KILLINGS CONTINUE

Amnesty International

April 1996

International Secretariat

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Fax: (44-171) 354-3987

This report (AI Index: ASA16/10/96) focuses on human rights violations committed by the Tatmadaw and abuses committed by its de facto allies, the Democratic Kayin Buddhist Army (DKBA), against Karen civilians. Karen civilians continue to be caught in the midst of the Burmese army's counter-insurgency activities against the Karen National Union (KNU). According to Amnesty, there is also concern about unconfirmed abuses committed by the KNU.

THE NATIONAL CONVENTION IN (BURMA) MYANMAR: AN IMPEDIMENT TO THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY

by Ianelle M. Diller

April 2, 1996

International League for Human Rights

432 Park Avenue South #1103

New York, NY 10016

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E-mail: ilhr@undp.org

Prepared for the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Montreal and the International League for Human Rights in New York, this report reviews developments relating to political freedoms in Burma, with particular focus on the SLORC-convened National Convention. The report highlights restrictions on political parties and surveys the status of Members of Parliament elected in 1990. It concludes that the current National Convention and the lack of political freedoms impede the restoration of democracy and violates Burma's obligations and political commitments to promote human rights as a member of the United Nations.

TOTAL DENIAL

Southeast Asia Information Network (SAIN) and EarthRights International (ERI)
May 30, 1996

SAIN
G.P.O. Box 217
Chiang Mai University
Chiang Mai 50200
Thailand
Tel/Fax: (66-53) 278-549

This report catalogues the systematic human rights abuses and environmental degradation perpetuated by SLORC as the regime seeks to consolidate its power base in the Tenasserim region of Burma. In addition, the report documents the impact of investment by multinational oil and gas companies such as Unocal, Total and Texaco, involved in building a pipeline to transport natural gas from offshore reserves in the Andaman Sea.

**ON THE ROAD TO MANDALAY:
TALES OF ORDINARY PEOPLE**

by Mya Than Tint
(Translated from Burmese by Khin Ohmar 8(Sein Kyaw Hlaing)

White Orchid Press
487/42 Soi Wattanasilp, Pratunam
Bangkok 10400
Thailand

This collection of real life stories by Mya Than Tint, Burma's most prolific contemporary writer, first appeared in the monthly literary magazine *Kalya* in 1987-91. The author began writing profiles of his interviews with the 'man on the street' while on literary lecture tours all over the country to bring awareness to the Burmese people of contemporary life of people from every strata of Burmese society. This collection of 35 tales vividly depicts the hopes, dreams, aspirations, frustrations and successes of all ordinary people Mya Than Tint encountered in teashops, on the train and in remote areas of Burma.

**PANORAMA
Magazine of the Myanmar Chronicle Online Group**

Shwe Minn Tha
Enterprises Co., Ltd
244 Anawrahta Street
Yangon
Myanmar
Tel: (95-1) 289140

A monthly tourism magazine with a firm commitment to SLORC's objective of the "Three Main National Causes," *Panorama* serves as a source of information on transportation schedules; hotels and restaurants countrywide; places to visit; phone listings of government ministries; banks; short articles on Burma's festivals and a monthly cultural calendar. Complimentary copies of this publication are issued to hotels and certain businesses.

The following is a translation of a discussion that took place during a meeting on June 3, 1996 at a school in Karenni state. Over 100 villagers from several Karenni villages were in attendance.

"For generations we have been living here. We since long, long ago we have survived independently and freely. We have always stood on our own two feet. Now the army of SLORC has ordered us to move our villages. How can we? We are sons and daughters of the hills. They ordered us to move to Shar Daw Town but we do not know how to survive there. How can we move our cows and buffaloes? The Burmans have come to our area to drive us to devastation and ruin. Must we beg for mercy? Village leaders, how do you view it? Let us discuss it," said the head of Village No. 1.

"Because of the notice sent by the SLORC, we worry and are unhappy. If we go and stay there, we will starve and die. It has never happened, even under British rule, that villagers were forced to move," said the head of Village No. 2.

"Should we keep living in the hills or should we move; can they feed us if we move there? We don't know. If our children are sick, can they treat us? Think about it. We will live in the hills; we will live or die together in the hills. This is ours: our homes, our villages, our fields. We will not move. Please submit your ideas on what is the best thing for us to do," said the head of Village No. 3.

"We are of one flesh and blood, one womb, one nest. We will live together; we are of one mind, we cannot be divided," said the head of Village No. 4.

"We cannot let our rice barns burn. Our Karenni army, please give us guns. Our rice must go to our Karenni soldiers, not become food for Burmans," said someone from Village No. 5.

"From whichever village we are, whoever we are, we must have one voice. We should not be disunified. We live on the same land; we drink the same water, therefore think about it. Only if we are not disunified, shall we win," said the village head of Village No. 6.

"The enemy tortures, so we have to look out for our children. We will decide in one voice. It's impossible to move. If we must die, we will die in our own hearth and home. We need to speak together, in one voice," said the head of Village No. 7.

"In the Eastern [Thai] border there are already refugees. The SLORC want to come in, torture and annihilate the whole of Karenni state. They [SLORC] want our land because it is rich in natural resources. Many people have already sacrificed their lives for our land. Once elephants' tusks grow out, they cannot be pulled back in. It is impossible for us to lay down our arms. We can never surrender. We should go on with our tasks. We need to be of the same mind. Without people, there can be no army. Without an army there is no security for the people. We want the Karenni, whoever we are, undivided, to go forward," said the head of Village No. 8.

"The reason we are calling this meeting is to arrive at a unanimous decision. I asked our school mistress to write a petition to SLORC. I will read it out loud to see whether you agree or not. Most of the young men feel that if our homes and properties are destroyed and if we don't get any mercy, then finally they will resort to arms. As soon as the SLORC soldiers enter the villages, the old people will have to ask for mercy. Let us all, young and old, courageously face death or life together."

"Whether we get it or not, let us try and ask SLORC: We all want to stay in our villages. Let's face it together. If we are not united, our buffaloes and cows will be eaten by them [SLORC]. If someone dies and blood spills, don't be afraid. Don't retreat. If we die, we all die together; if we live we will all live. Only then can we win. Tomorrow [4 June], three persons from each village will go and ask for mercy. We have to be united so that our villages are not destroyed," said the head of Village No. 1.

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*