Mobilizing the Masses

Mass organizations — in the form of political parties, unions or associations — have played an important role throughout Burma’s history. Although their purpose and structure varied significantly under civilian and military rule, they have been an effective method of mobilizing the populous. Under the military such organizations have been vehicles for propagating the view of the regime and asserting its control. The Union Solidarity Development Association (USDA), which was founded in 1993, appears to serve that function for the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Meanwhile, SLORC continues to see the Burma Communist Party (BCP) as an ever-pervasive movement responsible for instigating social unrest and bent upon destabilizing the country.

The Weekend Forum

Following her release from house arrest in July 1995, Aung San Suu Kyi, along with fellow executive committee members of the National League for Democracy, U Tin Oo and U Kyi Maung, began to hold public forums outside her compound each weekend. For nearly eighteen months, these energetic exchanges between the leaders of a political party and the citizens of Burma routinely attracted thousands of people. In October 1996, perhaps uneasy about the growing popularity of this forum and its ability to “mobilize the masses”, SLORC put an end to the weekend talks by blocking access to the compound and denying the NLD leadership the opportunity to reach its audience.

The Rights of the Child

Burma, a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, is expected to uphold the Convention’s tenants. In January, a twelve-member delegation from Burma appeared before the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child to respond to the Committee’s on-going concerns with regard to the current status of children in that country. Such issues as citizenship, education, abuses by the military, the use of child labor and the recruitment of child soldiers were examined during the two days of questioning.
THE UNION SOLIDARITY AND DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION
By David Steinberg

MOVEMENTS OF THE UNLAWFUL BOGUS STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS
By Lt.-Gen. Khin Nyunt

THE WEEKEND FORUM
Aung San Suu Kyi

CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
The Fourteenth Session of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
Mass mobilization organizations have been major elements in the structure of all Burmese regimes for political and economic reasons. From independence in 1948, and the decade-long rule of the civilian coalition Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) that followed, the formation of such controlled and ubiquitous groups has been regarded as an important means of political power. Under military rule, they have mandated ideological orthodoxy as well.

During the civilian period, these mass groups were formed under the aegis of the AFPFL, but were semi-autonomous. They were led by individuals who both used the organizations to achieve status within the AFPFL, and to enhance their own party positions at the center. Such groups were important means of encouraging mass support for the policies of the party or group in power. Through the broad base supplied by the organization, the leadership could influence government both to enhance their own positions in the central hierarchy and to advocate policies they favored toward their constituencies. They, in turn, could attempt to deliver their constituents' votes. In a society in which power was highly personalized, this use of "machine politics" was evident.

BY DAVID I. STEINBERG

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USDA Headquarters, Rangoon
This period was also characterized by high social mobility. One of the major avenues of such mobility for both local and national status for even the relatively uneducated from any social class, was leadership of and through these mass organizations. As important channels for the poor and the rural population, they helped to create an egalitarian society. The other avenues were through free higher education, the military, and the sangha (Buddhist clergy).

The uses of mass organizations have grown under military auspices. The regimes, each in its own separate but related manner, have formulated such organizations and employed them to propagate the military's view.

A further important mass organization that pre-dates independence but flowered thereafter has been the cooperative movement, an organization controlled by a cabinet-level appointment, and which had important, if localized, political implications. Although its direct political impact was limited because of its primary economic focus and because there were alternative means to achieve political ends, it was an effort to instill political ideals as well as provide goods to the populace.

Civilian mass movements varied significantly from those under military command. In the latter case, leadership and policies were predetermined by and controlled from the center, and no deviation from the policy framework was allowed, while civilian organizations responded to the interests of its superiors as well as that of the party.

The uses of mass organizations have grown under military auspices. The regimes, each in its own separate but related manner, have formulated such organizations and employed them to propagate the military's view of the issues in which they were most engrossed at that time. In each case, however, the organizations were primarily political in nature, used to further the military line, and also served to preempt the formation of alternative, autonomous organizations that might question the military's view of reality.

Under the regime of the tatmadaw (armed forces) in its Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) phase from 1962 to 1988, the party structure itself became the primary venue for mass support and political indoctrination. The slow build up of the party from a cadre organization of a few military led by General Ne Win in 1962, to its expansion as a mass-based group with its first party congress in June-July 1971, probably reflected the military's perception of the need to have an effective, totally subservient means to mobilize the population for the leadership's perceived ends.

It is significant that the new constitution finally put into place by the military leaders in 1974, after having ruled by decrees since 1962, was only promulgated and approved by referendum after the BSPP had expanded to become a mass organization. The party could then be used to support and legitimate the passage and acceptance of this constitution, which stipulated a unitary state composed of seven Burman divisions and seven minority states. It may have also been conceived as a means to provide mass support for candidates for the Pyithu Hluttaw (People's Assembly, or legislature), even though the system of elections legally involved only one party, the BSPP. Opposition candidates were not tolerated. The BSPP also had various youth organizations associated with it, and stress was given to inculcating youth with the ideals of the BSPP, such as the 'Burmese Way to Socialism.'

Before the formation of the BSPP as a mass organization, however, the Revolutionary Council (Ne Win's military cabinet) engaged in a series of mass mobilization efforts on which the BSPP could eventually draw, and which were coordinated at the apex of power. These were people's worker councils, and peasant councils, called asiayone. The former, started in 1967, had a membership of 1.5 million by 1970, while the peasant's councils, formed in 1967, had a membership of 7.6 million by 1980.

All of these organizations, both military and civilian, reflected the needs of those at the top of the hierarchy to convey down through an effective command structure the policies of a central government, although the military introduced ideological rigidity that the civilian governments avoided. None of
January 3, 1997
USDA membership applications submitted in Papun

**Yangon, 2 Jan**—Chairman of Mon State Law and Order Restoration Council Commander of South-East Command Maj-Gen Ket Sein, together with Commander of Forward No 11 LID Brig-Gen Thura Shwe Mann, Chairman of Kayin State Law and Order Restoration Council Col Saw Khin Soe and Staff Officers, paid obeisance to Atula Marazein Pagoda in Welwun Kyaungtaik in Papun at noon on 31 December.

The commander attended a ceremony to submit USDA membership applications by the entire township of Papun at Township Basic Education High School at 1 pm. Following a speech by the commander, he accepted 1,214 membership applications.

Commander Maj-Gen Ket Sein met officers, other ranks, Tatmadawmen and their family members of Papun Station in Zwe Aung Lin Hall of regional battalion at 2 pm and gave advice. — M N A

January 7, 1997
14,000 USDA membership applications submitted in Thaton, Kyauktaw and Bilin

**Yangon, 6 Jan**—Union Solidarity and Development Association membership applications were submitted in Thaton Township Law and Order Restoration Council office on 31 December.

Thaton District Law and Order Restoration Council Lt- Col Kyaw Gyi made a speech. Secretary of Mon State USDA U Tin Soe Moe Naing and Township Secretaries accepted 14,000 membership applications.

A total of 10,515 membership applications of nine villages, Bilin Sugar Mill and Distillery were handed to U Tin Soe Moe Naing, Thaton District Secretary U Zaw Myint and Bilin Township Secretary U Myint Oo.

A similar ceremony was held in Kyauktaw Township Law and Order Restoration Council office on 31 December. Altogether 5,100 USDA membership applications were handed to EC member of Kyauktaw Township USDA U Soe Win Aung and U Khin Myint. — M N A

January 11, 1997
USDA membership applications submitted in Singaing Township

**Yangon, 10 Jan**—A ceremony to submit membership applications of the Union Solidarity and Development Association of Paleik Village-tracts at Singaing Township in Kyaukse District, Mandalay Division was held at the sports ground of Paleik Village on 8 January.

Present were Patron of Mandalay Division USDA Comander of Central Command Maj-Gen Ye Myint, Secretary-General of USDA U Than Aung, Secretary of Mandalay Division Law and Order Restoration Council Lt-Col Tin Ohn, Secretary of Mandalay Division USDA U Tin Maung Oo and executive members, Chairman of Mandalay District Law and Order Restoration Council Lt-Col Tin Tun, Secretary of Kyaukse District Law and Order Restoration Council Maj Kyaw Swa, Secretary of Kyaukse District USDA Daw Than Than and executive members, students, factory employees, local people totalling over 10,000. Commander Maj-Gen Ye Myint made a speech. Secretary-General U Than Aung also delivered an address.

Secretary of Mandalay Division USDA U Tin Maung Oo accepted a total of 5,000 USDA membership applications submitted by representatives of factory employees, farmers, students and local people. — M N A

Minister for Science and Technology, Commander of Western Command accept USDA membership applications

**Yangon, 10 Jan—Member of the Central Executive Committee of the Union Solidarity and Development Association Minister for Science and Technology U Thaung and Chairman of Rakhine State Law and Order Restoration Council Commander of Western Command Maj-Gen Aung Htwe, together with departmental officials, met family members of Kyauktaw Station and members of Kyauktaw Township USDA at No 1 Basic Education High School in Kyauktaw at 1:30 pm on 7 January.

The minister accepted 1,950 USDA membership applications of Kyauktaw Station and Township. Then the minister and the commander explained oath and aims and objectives of the association, the prevailing political situation in the country and public cooperation and condition of increase in number of USDA members. — M N A

January 13, 1997
USDA membership applications submitted in Kyaukse

**Yangon, 12 Jan**—A ceremony to collectively submit membership applications of the Union Solidarity and Development Association of Thanywa Village-tract, Kyaukse Township, Kyaukse District, Mandalay Division was held at Thanywa Village Basic Education High School yesterday morning.

It was attended by Patron of Mandalay Division Union Solidarity and Development Association Commander of Central Command Maj-Gen Ye Myint, Secretary-General of USDA U Than Aung, Secretary of Mandalay Division USDA U Tin Maung Oo, executive U Kyaw, Secretary of Kyaukse District Law and Order Restoration Council Maj Kyaw Swa, Deputy Commissioner U Aung Lwin, District Police Commander Police Major Myint Soe, Secretary of Kyaukse District USDA Daw Than Than and executives, members of Maternal and Child Welfare Association, employees of Lunkyaw Agricultural Farm and local people totalling over 10,000.

The commander made a speech at the meeting. Secretary-General U Than Aung also delivered an address. U Tin Maung Oo accepted USDA membership applications submitted by U Kyaw Myint on behalf of the local people and Ma Lin Lin of Thanywa Village BEHS on behalf of students. — M N A
the mass organizations sponsored by the military seem to have been viewed as means to express to the top of the political (military) hierarchy the needs and opinions of those at the bottom. This myopic approach was a major cause of the failure of the BSPP regime, as the leadership became increasingly unaware of actual conditions in the state.\(^2\)

Since 1962, the military has destroyed civil society in Burma. There has been an obvious systematic, and successful effort to control, co-opt, or eliminate any organization that had potential for societal influence beyond those at the most local level — village or ward Buddhist temples. Those few private organizations that were allowed to exist in the BSPP era became essentially parastatal in nature. Although under the current regime, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), there is a far wider range of ostensibly private organizations and private political parties are titularly allowed to exist, there are none that escape government surveillance and control.

In a sense, the SLORC has attempted to recreate civil society in its own manner while suppressing alternative possibilities. Through the formation of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), it has formulated a mass, civil movement that it can control, that will do its bidding, that is ideologically orthodox, and that its leaders hope is building on the future by its concentration on the relatively young.

The USDA was founded on September 15, 1993, following the disastrous, but unadmitted, defeat of the military in the May 1990 elections where the reincarnation of the BSPP, the Union Party, won only ten seats in a series of elections swept by the National League for Democracy. It followed within two weeks as well, SLORC's decision to hold a carefully controlled and scripted National Convention tasked with drafting a new constitution. This juxtaposition of events is not without significance. It may be that as a result of experiences from the 1990 elections and the BSPP period, SLORC felt that direct military involvement was less effective than an indirect tie.

The build-up of a mass organization may have seemed necessary to the SLORC, as it lacked an effective, nation-wide means to spread the official word, even though the military held power at all local levels of administration through its Law and Order Restoration Councils (LORCs). Since the SLORC had promised that there would be a multi-party political system in place at some indefinite date in the future, and since the experience of the military involved in, and tarred with, the ignominious defeat of the political and economic programs of the BSPP, it may have considered that such a mass organization should be kept out of the direct military process and divorced from formal politics. The SLORC may also have considered the need for some mass organization that could propagate the views of the
military when the time came, as eventually it will, for the promulgation of the new constitution that the National Convention seems endlessly drafting.

The decision was, therefore, not to register this new group as a political party, but rather as a social organization under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Military and civil servants are not allowed to become members of political parties, but both may join the USDA because of its ostensibly non-partisan nature.

The expansion of the organization has been rapid. In late 1996, the USDA had over five million members, according to Senior General Than Shwe, SLORC Chairman and Patron of the USDA. With membership beginning at age 10, the total population is potentially mobilized. This would mean that perhaps 15-20 percent of the adult population may now be members. Together with the cooperative movement, and significantly the Secretary-General of the USDA is also Minister of Cooperatives (as was the head of the BSPP youth organizations in that period), there is virtually no family in state controlled areas that has not been touched by the central government through one of these two organizations.

The organization of the USDA parallels the administrative structure of the state. There is a hierarchy of offices; under the center there are 16 offices at the state and division level, 57 at the district, 318 at the township, and 14,356 at the ward or village levels. By June 1996, there were 111 USDA offices attached to the Ministry of Information's Information and Public Relations Department's district and township offices. Perhaps only one-quarter of the villages have yet been directly involved by having some branch membership office of the USDA, but at each higher administrative level the structure seems complete.

At the third annual meeting on September 12-15, 1996, the Secretary-General and Minister of Cooperatives, U Than Aung, indicated that the membership at that time was 4,635,777, of whom 1,456,000 were from Yangon. There were also at least 1.23 million trainee youths associated with the group who attended 'Buddhist Culture Courses' at some 18,692 locations. The USDA also ran other courses, such as English Proficiency, Computer Training, Marine Courses, and General Aviation Courses. At what level these courses operated is unknown, but education seems to play an important role in the youth activities of the organization, and this may be an attraction of membership. These courses are free, and may provide both useful as well as ideological training, and some are open to non-members who are then encouraged to join the USDA on course completion.

A review of the objectives, code of conduct, and duties and responsibilities of the USDA on the surface portray it as a virtual counterpart to a type of scout movement with one exception: explicit support to the military. The five objectives of the USDA are: the non-disintegration of the Union; non-disintegration of national solidarity; perpetuation of sovereignty; promotion of national pride; and the emergence of a prosperous and peaceful nation. The eleven-article code of conduct stresses loyalty, good character, patriotism, and duty, while the fourteen duties and responsibilities are generally concerned with normal civic obligations. There is evidently a supplementary community development focus to the USDA, as well as the predominantly political one.

The USDA is ostensibly financed by a 5 kyat (less than one US dollar at the official rate of exchange) membership fee for those over 18 years old, but in fact, the support for the organization in services, such as office space, and probably in personnel as well, has come from the government. When asked how the USDA planned to finance future activities, Secretary-General Than Aung said that they intended to build buildings and rent them out.

Since its formation, the USDA has expanded at the national and local levels into a variety of economic activities that serve to support the activities of the groups nation-wide. The funds raised from these activities cannot be accurately measured from the outside, but they evidently amount to a state-authorized subsidy and means to achieve economic independence, and their total access to funds amounts to billions of kyat. At the national level, they control the Myan Gone Myint company, the gems market, part of the Theingyi market, Myenigone market (which was later transferred to the military controlled Myanmar Economic Holdings Co. Ltd.), and land in Hlaing township. In each division and state, the USDA has extensive businesses that range from bus and train transportation monopolies to fish ponds, plantations, taxes on local businesses and activities, real estate, import businesses, rice milling, housing and real estate. They
now operate some bus lines, and the USDA "is undertaking commodity production services... as well as holding coordinations and signing contracts for joint venture services with foreign economic organizations." Although some of these ventures are rather small they are sufficient to support local USDA mobilization activities.

The USDA involvement in the economy is now significant, and is one further means, beyond the massive Myanmar Economic Holdings Company, Ltd — a completely military owned venture — for the military to control economic forces even if it civilianizes the government and continues to move toward a more market-oriented society. Support from the state is likely to continue to be significant.

The more overt activities of the USDA of interest to the state are the mass rallies, in which, according to General Than Shwe, "nearly two million people unanimously [sic] attended." Schools and other institutions are said to be forced to provide massive attendance at rallies that are designed to focus on both support for the military and opposition to the National League for Democracy and other 'destructive' elements.

Some of these rallies are said to have mobilized 100,000 people, and they have become a potentially violent means to intimidate the population. Much of their activities are directed against the National League for Democracy, and against forces the SLORC has characterized as destabilizing.

The patriotic youth, who are members of the USDA, are self-reliant; they have their own initiative. They have conviction and are full of confidence in themselves. Their strength, which is growing year by year, is used for the state; it is for our nationals. By using their strength, they will oppose anyone who will infringe and disturb the stability of the state. They will also isolate these elements in society. The youth mass will join hands with the public to totally remove these destructive elements if they try to disturb, damage, or destroy the state."

The USDA is a significant effort by the military to mobilize society toward its own ends. Although many of the goals are those to which most civic-minded individuals might subscribe in theory, in fact, the USDA is clearly a means to extend and perpetuate the influence of the tatmadaw. It is likely to remain important as long as it is perceived to serve the interests of the administration and as long as the military provides sponsorship. From all reports it is neither a spontaneously generated organization, nor one that can undertake autonomous activities. Its potential for destructive mobilization is evident if, as reports seem to indicate, the mobs associated with it were responsible for the attack on Aung San Suu Kyi's cavalcade in late 1996.

It is also evident that there is considerable ideological training given to the USDA leadership, and such training also includes military subjects. The USDA is viewed as a kind of civilian guard supplementing military control mechanisms. As General Than Shwe said to the USDA Executive Advanced Management Course:

"The trainees constitute not only the hard core force of the USDA, but also the sole [emphasis added] national force which will always join hands with the tatmadaw to serve national and public interests. Hence, he said, they should be both morally and physically strong with sharp national defense qualities. Therefore, he said, the trainees will be taught military parade, military tactics, and the use of weapons...." 

There are both positive and negative reasons for joining. There is said to be some coercion in schools and in other organizations, such as factories. To obtain appointments to positions, membership is said to be very helpful, as was membership in the BSPP in the earlier period. It is also said that membership avoids continual harassment to join, or to be involved in other activities. In a sense, membership in the USDA is a kind of tax or corvee labor charge on someone's time and energies.

Even as the perceived need for a USDA-type mass mobilization organization may have evolved both from the Burmese tradition and the military's previous experience in two different administrations, the model may also be traced to Indonesia, where the 'stability' (to use General Khin Nyunt's phrase) of the Indonesian military regime is regarded in Rangoon as a pattern that might be emulated. As Rangoon is copying Jakarta in placing active-duty military in the legislature, in making the operations of the tatmadaw a state within a state, and in giving the military a direct role in the economy, so too the Burmese may have explored the early Indonesian
attempts under the Suharto regime to engage in mass mobilization. Indonesia tried this with GOLKAR, which was the military's effort to form, in the first instance, mass support for the military through an ostensibly non-political organization in its dwifungsi (dual functions, both civil and military roles). GOLKAR later became the military's political party.

Now, the USDA is the only mass organization founded by the SLORC. Functional groups have been formed under their command, such as a veteran's organization, and others may be expected. The importance of the USDA as the only national means available to SLORC for both civil improvement and support is important. The emphasis given to the youth is an indication that the SLORC is building on what it may regard as a long-term approach to ensuring its continuing role into the next generation. Reality may intrude, however, and the USDA is likely to remain important only insofar as the military have an active role in governance. After all, the youth movements of the Lanzin (BSPP) party were ephemeral as well.

The USDA, to the SLORC, may have several advantages. It is a convenient mobilization organization that can be used when a referendum, or some equivalent, is deemed necessary for the formal approval of a new constitution that the military have drafted and that will give them what they regard as perpetual control. It has some nationalistic elements of general appeal. It can be used against the National League for Democracy and Aung San Suu Kyi, as it seems already has been attempted. It may be considered by the SLORC as a potential counterpart to foreign non-government organizations that wish to operate in Myanmar to alleviate suffering. It is of the military, but not part of it, which may be viewed as an advantage if the military is intentionally conveying the fiction that it is not in direct control. In a sense, it is a convenient community facade for the military that may also have peripheral (in SLORC's view) social and developmental impact under the military's tutelage.

As long as the SLORC is in command, the USDA may remain an organization that can be used to perpetuate its influence in the society and carry out its policies. It is therefore quite useful. But for the outside world to regard the USDA as divorced from state authority and autonomous would be a major error.

ENDNOTES
1. The use of the term Myanmar or Burma now reflects political polarization in writings on that country. Since 1989, when the military changed the name of the state to accord with its formal written form, as well as changing many other names, all references to that country at any period have been altered. The opposition does not accept these changes. The terms used here are without political connotation. Myanmar is used for the period since 1989, but Burma for previous periods, and Burmese for citizens of that country, for the language spoken by the Burman ethnic group, and as an adjective.
2. Personal communication, BSPP Central Executive Committee member, 1988.
4. It is important to note that the economic significance of the cooperatives has declined as the availability of consumer goods has increased through cross-border trade and the openings to the indigenous and external private sectors.
8. FBIS, May 16, 1996.
Thousands of students demonstrated in the streets of Rangoon in December, 1996.
UNLAWFUL BOGUS STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

An excerpt from the December 31, 1996 press conference by Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, Secretary-1 of Burma’s State Law and Order Restoration Council, in Rangoon. Transcription by the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS).

The repercussions of the 1988 countrywide unrest led to the formation of a large number of unlawful organizations and associations. Unlawful organizations, under camouflage as student organizations of many forms, proliferated. They were formed secretly under a variety of names such as the All Burma Students Union (Ba-Ka-Tha), the All Myanmar Students Union (Ma-Ka-Tha), the University Students Union (Ta-Ka-Tha), the Rangoon University Students Union (Ya-Ka-Tha), the Committee to Reorganize the Burma Revolutionary Student Youth (Ba-Ta-La-Sai), the Democratic Association of Young Students (DAYS), and the all Burma Patriotic Youth Organization (ABPYO) and so forth. Just a glance at the names of these organizations will clearly show that student youths are being used as tools. It can also be seen that the people active in these organizations are not bona-fide students. Members of these organizations establish contacts in the educational institutes and colleges, infiltrate the student body to incite them, and frequently distribute anti-government literature.
Profiles from the SLORC "Red Book"

The Burma Communist Party's Conspiracy to Take Over State Power
May 8, 1989

BIO-DATA OF
HTAY NYUNT
Son of U Tha Nyunt

NAME: Htay Nyunt
ALIAS: None
AGE: 32
BIRTHDATE: 6-10-57
RACE/RELIGION: Bamar/Buddhist
BIRTH PLACE: Yangon
NRC No: K/RGN 007854
EDUCATION: B.Sc. (Botany)
OCCUPATION: Sub-Inspector of Police, Office of PPF Director
Parents: U Tha Nyunt (Legal Advisor, Office of the Attorney General), Daw Soe Myint (deceased)
ADDRESS: 56/92 Street, Kandawgalay, Yangon
MARITAL STATUS: wife, Daw Pyone Pyone Aung, Clerk (Grade 2), Housing Department
ADDRESS: Bogyoke Street, Yangon

In 1950, he served as a member of the four-division committee and deputy political commissar of BCP four divisions in Shan State.

When the BCP central committee was reconstituted in 1975, he became a CC member as well as a politburo member.

He also became a member in the 29-member central committee elected by the BCP third congress held in February 1985. Kyin Maung controlled the BCP's underground movements.

After the restraining order on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was withdrawn, some youths from these organizations were seen to have held many meetings and discussions with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in her compound. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, on her part, readily met with representatives of these unlawful organizations, and encouraged and supported them in their subversive activities against the Government. Similarly, she met, held discussions and organized those youths who had been sentenced to prison for various misdemeanors, but who had obtained their release under amnesty granted by the government.

Soon after their meetings with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, these organizations began their activities and distributed anti-government literature, penetrated the student body to entice and incite them and reactivated their political movements. The culprits who sowed the seeds of the present student protest and inflamed it, are none other than the youths of these unlawful organizations. Not only are these illegitimate organizations connected with the NLD [National League for Democracy], there is solid evidence that they are under the organizational control and guidance of the Burma Communist Party [BCP], underground (UG) organizations.

Youths from these organizations on terms of intimacy with some of the students, use the latter to infiltrate the student mass, and to incite, goad and spread misinformation. This, we have found was the method used to mobilize other students, and trigger unrest.

In the protest movements which took place on the campus of the Yangon Institute of Technology on 3 and 6 December, the students made many demands and also made many speeches. Some of the points in the demands and speeches included assertions that the education system in the country was below standard and that because they had been obliged to pursue their education within short semesters, their education was not up to international standards. To rectify all this, they demanded the formation of a students' union.

A study of the speeches and demands made will clearly show that the demand for the formation of student unions is a demand that has been consistently made by the BCP underground throughout the years. The BCP, since the days of yesteryear, has always, under the cover of the need for a students'
union, launched attacks on its political opposition. Hence the reason why, in the present case also, they have again brought to the fore the same issue of the necessity of a students union, while holding out as bait the rights of the students. Moreover if you take a look at the demands made by the students, you will immediately realize that they are identical with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's negative and pessimistic views on education expressed in her roadside harangues.

In airing her opinions concerning the education system in these roadside harangues, she charged that the standard of education in our country was very low; and that as a result those who had earned degrees from such a poor educational system lacked any guarantee of security in life and that although there were a large number of graduates, if the country could not provide job opportunities, then that country was, she said, in a sad state. She also said, not only were jobs unavailable for graduates, but that the degrees they had earned were valueless. She had further stated that the educational standards of students who had obtained degrees after a four-month period of academic study could not hope to achieve international standards. The fact that the assertions made in these speeches and the provocative propaganda directed at the students are identical makes it quite obvious that the NLD was involved in the conspiracy to incite the students. What makes this more foolproof is that NLD youths were caught red-handed among the crowd of demonstrating students, taking the lead in shouting slogans and in instigating the students.

The Involvement of the Burma Communist Party and its Underground Members in the Student Movement

I would now like to further explain how the members of the Burma Communist Party Underground contrived and precipitated the student demonstrations that I have just recounted. Although it is said that the Burma Communist Party collapsed in 1989, it cannot be said that it has been totally eliminated. There are still some members who lead a nomadic life in the border areas, lying in wait for a chance to again meddle in Myanmar politics. Only a few of their armed groups now remain in the Tenasserim Division and on the border with Bangladesh in Rakhine State, but they are still active.

...The Central Committee of the BCP decided at its Third Party Congress in 1985 to retrieve and raise its deteriorating political and military situation by setting up an underground movement. To initiate this UG movement, it established the BCP 4828 Regional Committee with Maung Ko, Thet Khaing, Kyaw Mya and Tin Aung as members. The first step they took was to exploit the fact that 1988 was the golden anniversary commemorative year of the year 1300 (Myanmar Era) rebellion to oppose the Burma Socialist Program Party Government by plotting to stir up unrest.

When this unrest had gained momentum, they then had plans to use General Aung San's wife, Daw Khin Kyi, as a national figurehead by persuading her to join their movement.... However, Daw Khin Kyi... was not in good health, so they chose her daughter, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, as an alternative. But their plot to seize State power was preempted by the Defense Services which had been obliged to assume state responsibilities. The BCP had succeeded so far as to cause the downfall of the then government in the 1988 uprising, but had not succeeded in seizing State power.

...On the other hand, the members of the BCP underground used every tactic to bring about a confrontation between the government and the masses. So, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi... was approached and maneuvered on all sides so that she would be brought into the public eye and chosen as the sole representative of the many political parties. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was manipulated in such a way that she had unwittingly placed herself on the path of defying State authority and thus landing on a collision course with the government. They thus agitated on every side to begin the State defiance movement and spark off another mass uprising.

...It was in 1989 that the national races within the BCP revolted and broke away from the party and UG cadre Thet Khaing, regarded as a stalwart by the BCP Central Committee, and other members were arrested. Therefore Central Committee member as well as head of the UG movement, Bo Kyin Maung, also known as Yebaw Tun, expressed the view that, to further maintain the party and prevent its demise, the only viable course was to pursue underground tactics. He said that the party which began as an underground force should return to its UG origins,
but the Central Committee was to entrench itself deeper underground. He accordingly issued instructions that henceforth all members were to regard themselves as underground forces.

...When political governments [sic] began in preparation for the elections of 1990, they again took advantage of this opportunity to distribute anti-government, and agitative leaflets among the masses under various names such as the All Burma Students Union and so forth. It can be seen that they had made another attempt to incite a mass uprising in tandem with the elections. The BCP underground exhorted the people to transform the elections to a form of silent protest, not to let opposition votes disperse and scatter and to vote for the NLD. After the elections, the BCP underground began fresh agitation for the transfer of state power. This was followed by further attempts to engineer another mass uprising....

...I hope you will recall that at the news briefing I gave at the time, I stated categorically that the BCP had not yet been annihilated totally, that we should not overlook the fact that unseen dangers were still lurking around and that we should always expect and be on the lookout for these dangers which posed a threat to the state.

Although many of the BCP agents were uncovered and arrests made, the BCP Central Committee residing in a neighboring country, to sustain the existence of the party, had been recruiting new members and expanding its underground, which was now regarded as its principal movement. Its armed movement was undertaken by a small military force operating in the Tenasserim Division but this was augmented by the UG movement. This underground movement is still under the control and direction of Bo Kyin Maung (a) Yebaw Tun. Due to the fact that communist ideology and the Communist Party are no longer acceptable to the people, they have even changed the name of their armed group to more popular nomenclature such as The Democratic Patriotic Army and the Mergui/Tavoy United Front. Their political slogans have also adopted usages that represent objectives directed towards democracy, internal peace and a call for negotiations, while carrying out organizational activities to keep their underground movement alive, in accordance with their motto, that if one leader falls there is another ever ready to replace him.

On receiving information that the BCP underground were involved in the student demonstrations which began at the Yangon Institute of Technology in December, we immediately followed up and made inquiries. ...altogether 34 youths involved in underground activities were apprehended including some young students who had been duped and persuaded to join under what could be called a False Flag Recruitment.

The documents and pamphlets confiscated... are displayed on the boards. Among these documents is a letter from Yebaw Tun to Nyein Myint, which mentions that an NCUB [National Coalition of the Union of Burma] delegation consisting of representatives from the NLD (LA) [Liberated Area], the NCGUB and the KNU [Karen National Union] had come to see him with the purpose of establishing relations with the PDF [Patriotic Democratic Front], BCP, to exchange views and hold consultations on future programs of action. They had come also on a mission to explain and assure the Republic of China that they were not stooges of colonialists and that they also wished to request China not to sell defense equipment to The State Law and Order Restoration Council.

In the discussions held between the unlawful insurgent and underground groups and Yebaw Tun, they agreed that, under the prevailing conditions in Myanmar, it would not be easy to employ cold war tactics, and that it would be necessary to launch simultaneous political attacks while instigating unrest both from within the country as well as from outside and that the prime target should be the National Convention. They also approved of the NLD standpoint to link the causes for democracy with the call for federal status for the national races. The BCP on its part said it was agreeable to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's call for holding talks, and that in their opinion it was necessary to provide all-round support for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The BCP went on to say that the State Law and Order Restoration Council military bureaucracy had grown larger, that the State Law and Order Restoration Council showed no signs of backing down from the National Convention nor would they heed any kind of foreign pressure. They were of the view that the only thing the State Law and Order Restoration Council feared was
another conflict with the masses. That was why preparations for fomenting a mass uprising should be given precedence.

In implementing this, the BCP said that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi should take charge of the different organizations with legal standing within the country, and that the insurgent and underground groups should also ally themselves with Daw San Suu Kyi's NLD and act in unity. Thus it was necessary for the BCP to form an alliance of the various forces, and the other organizations, including the NLD were to make every endeavor for success in establishing such an umbrella front.

In addition, in separate discussions with the BCP, the NLD (LA) had agreed to the formation of an alliance of the various organizations. The latter was told that the ABSDF and the Democratic Party for New Society had also agreed to discuss this proposal for an alliance (and that there was a good prospect of these organizations entering into the alliance). It was said in these discussions that the current situation in the country was such that the State Law and Order Restoration Council was pointing to Bosnia as an example and reiterating the need to prevent the collapse of the union, to intimidate and control the people. It was said that there was no way in which they could cause disunity in the Armed Forces to bring about its collapse at the moment, but that the only way their revolution could succeed was to give priority to seeking ways and means to destroy the unity of the Tatmadaw at some time in the future.

...In the letter which Yebaw Tun sent to his underground members with instructions on the tactics to be employed in the Yangon University Diamond Jubilee Commemorative ceremonies, he said that the BCP 4828 Central Committee wanted them to send an open letter to the students. They were to mention in the letter that although the students wished to celebrate the occasion in a revolutionary manner, the State Law and Order Restoration Council was obstructing their program. They also stated that the ceremonies should focus on the role of the Student Union and that the students should be allowed to freely conduct the celebrations in their own way. Thus it can be seen that Yebaw Tun had given instructions to incite the student mass....
who had incited and led the students to proceed from the Sawbawmagon Terminus to the Hledan crossroads. Expressing their dissatisfaction in the manner in which this affair had been reported in the Radio and TV Myanmar broadcasts, a group of students led by the same Aung Moe Win and Kyaw Kyaw Soe hold a meeting at the Aung Zeya Hall of the Yangon Institute of Technology on 22 October. That very night some students of the Institute of Technology headed again by Aung Moe Win and Kyaw Kyaw Soe proceeded to the Hledan junction to stage a protest and make various demands.

At the commencement of the unrest of the students of the Yangon Institute of Technology, Underground Leader Nyein Myint was away in Shweli in the country next door and was with Yebaw Tun alias Bo Kyin Maung. On hearing the news of the Institute of Technology student unrest, Yebaw Tun was convinced that the government was facing a crisis and was caught in an extremely tight spot. He also believed that due to the high cost of living, the situation in the country was therefore explosive and that the time was just ripe for the outbreak of an uprising. The student trouble, he thought, was a situation which could be exploited by seeming to take a stand on student grievances and student rights. So he instructed Nyein Myint to take the fullest advantage of this explosive situation. Nyein Myint, therefore, returned to Yangon towards the end of November. Nyein Myint, after his arrival in Yangon, in turn gave orders to step up subversive acts to disrupt the peace and cause widespread unrest.

...On 3 December Nyein Myint met Toe Toe Tun and after making inquiries regarding the student demonstrations, the two held discussions. Nyein Myint also gave instructions and laid down guidelines for making four principal demands consisting of, the formation of a students union, the release of detained students, the readmission of expelled students and the withdrawal of repressive rules and regulations.

...At 12 noon on 5 December, Toe Toe Tun and medical student Thar Nyunt Oo of the Institute of Medicine-1, Ye Kyaw Swa Thet Hmu of the Institute of Technology and Ngwe Lin were said to have met at the Theingi Nadi Rice Shop in Hlaing Township to discuss the student demonstrations. Toe Toe Tun, at this meeting expressed his views, stating that the demands made for democracy and for face-to-face talks at the protest rally held at the Kamayut junction, had political overtones of which he did not approve since it could confuse the issue and said that the government could very well decide to take drastic action to break up the demonstration. He said he was of the opinion that they should abide by the instructions given by Nyein Myint, and as a first step, ought to make demands concerning student affairs only. He said that it would be better if they could meet with foreign correspondents to hold a press conference later on and tell them the real cause behind the demonstrations. He also believed it most likely that the government would give in to their demand for a students union if the situation should further deteriorate and that it was most important to be able to organize the majority of students and added that preparations should also be made to try and obtain funds.

...Although underground-in-charge Nyein Myint and Toe Toe Tun have been apprehended, the prime movers of the UG group Min Naing alias Kyaw Kyaw, Htay Aung, Aye Kyu alias Tint Wai, Thar Nyunt Oo and Aung Moe Win have so far managed to evade arrest and are still at large. From confessions made by some of those arrested and evidence obtained from the captured documents, it is evident that the UG committee has assiduously continued to carry out its subversive activities and that whenever an opportunity arose they were always ready to seize it, making use of young students to stir up unrest. The group of simple students who were used as tools, however, participated in the movement unwittingly and were unaware of who had manipulated them. Some others on their part became part of the subversive underground movement because they were deceived and were therefore victims of a form of False Flag Recruitment. Due to the instigation of the saboteurs of the underground, the peaceful pursuit of education has been obstructed and this has caused grievous hurt to the majority of students and their parents. It can also be said that in a way, it has slowed down the process towards the realization of a modern and developed nation which is one of the principal objectives of the state.
Following her release from house arrest in July, 1995, Aung San Sun Kyi and other leaders of the National League for Democracy began to hold public forums outside her compound in Rangoon each weekend. Thousands crowded the streets to hear her, U Kyi Maung and U Tin Oo respond to questions that had been submitted to them by ordinary citizens. These sessions were often taped by those attending and distributed throughout the country. As the popularity of this forum grew, however, the government eventually felt the need to bring it to a halt. Since October 1996, the roads to her compound have been blocked and Suu Kyi and the other party leaders have been prevented from speaking. This forum took place in February, 1996.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI • Since tomorrow is our Union Day the first question for today is from a person who is an ethnic minority. It's also a very appropriate question.

QUESTION • "What kind of spirit is the Union Spirit (Pyidaungzu spirit)? Just because we bow to the Union flag does it mean that the Union has become strong? Has it become perfect? Will you please explain?"

ASSK • The important thing is what you have in mind when you bow to the Union flag. There's no meaning if we bow to the flag just because we're told to do so, but our minds are straying. The Union Spirit (Pyidaungzu Spirit) comes from within. The flag and other outward symbols are important to a certain extent. We believe that Pyidaungzu Spirit is Pinion Spirit. Pinion Spirit is for the members (ethnic minorities) of the Union to feel equal. The Union is based on the equality of the members, [crowd cheers]

To explain again, Pyidaungzu Spirit. Pinion Spirit is for members of the Union to be equal. The unity is based on the equality of the members. If there is no equality, there cannot be unity. You won't be satisfied if someone else gets two kyats, but you get only one kyat. There can be no unity. For our country to have unity, everyone must be satisfied. Only when all the ethnic groups have a strong feeling that we all have the right of equality can our country have unity. However many times you may bow to the Union flag, if you feel that we do not have equal rights, but are second class citizens in this country, our country will not be unified.

I would like to warn you of one thing here. The Burmese are the majority. As we are the majority, we cannot deny that we have a special duty. However, we would like to request our ethnic brothers and sisters not to forget that we have our worries and hopes. We all have our own worries and hopes. We should understand each other. We should be kind to each other. Unity can only be achieved through kindness and trust in each other. Only that kind of unity will bring stability to the country. Another question is from one Pwakanyaw (Karen), [crowd laughs]

QUESTION • "In Karen State, we have to pay two to three thousand kyats for the bus fare from Kawkareik to Myawaddi, forty to fifty miles distance. Besides, we have to pay for voluntary labor, for porter fees [Editor's note: If you are "recruited" to carry ammunition for the Burmese army and you don't want to do so, you can buy off the obligation.], fees for wood and bamboo walls to build new army units. Someone who is proficient in statistics has estimated that in 1995, 500,000,000 kyats were acquired from people from the Karen State. Will these actions be continued in the era of the democratic government?"

ASSK • If these things are continued in the period of the democratic government, that government will lose its power, of course. We don't dare to do so. We cannot deny that the public will have to make some contribution toward the development of the country and for the support of the government. That's why we have income tax. Income tax is the contribution and support from the public for the things being done for them by the country. But all these
things should be done within principles and law. They cannot be done according to one's whims and fancies. We should not ask people to support the country by asking for this fee and that fee. The citizens have the right to know clearly to what they should be contributing, according to the law. For example, you have to pay so much tax if the income is such an amount; if you're doing this business, you have to pay this much tax. These things must be done according to the law. But now it's not according to the law. Nobody knows what fee is going to be collected. Today, twenty might be collected. The next day, it may be two hundred. If you ask why they've been collected, the answer will be "It's according to the order from higher authorities." [the crowd claps]

These actions cause stress on the people of the country. They don't know how much they should give. I don't think it's because they don't want to give. I think our people are ready to support the country with the required fees. I believe this. I will also pay the required fees. However, when people have to pay unjustly, without knowing for what reasons they have to do so, it's difficult for the people to endure. So if you ask if these actions will exist in the time of the democratic government, I can tell you clearly that they won't.

**QUESTION** • The next is from a person from Kyone Ma Ngay. "Teachers from the university, doctors, and skilled workers have left the country. Please give some advice so that we can be happy in our motherland."

**ASSK** • I think everyone knows the advice. I believe there are two reasons for teachers, doctors, and skilled workers to leave the country. One is for economic reasons. It's not convenient to make money here. There are people who leave the country with the belief that they would make more money over there. Even though some can make good money here, there is no freedom. They cannot do the things they want to do freely. They are not allowed to do things which are up to standard. They are allowed to do only up to a limited extent. Therefore, there are so many who left because of their dissatisfactions, [crowd claps]

For the skilled workers to be happy in this country, we must see to it that their incomes are in accordance with their skills. Furthermore, they should have opportunities to use their skills freely. Not only that. They should be given opportunities to further their knowledge. Which educated person would want to be in a country where the education system is not good? Within these five or six years there are many teachers from the universities who left the country. Some went to a foreign country and at first did whatever job they got there. Some even wash dishes in restaurants. It's no big deal. They wash dishes and save money first. Only after that, many of them look for a job where they can apply their skills freely. There is no doubt that if our country does not value the educated, not many of them will be left here, [crowd claps]

**QUESTION** • The next is from a "democratic" person from South Okkalapa. "During the time of the British and the Japanese, roads and bridges were built. May I know if the people in those days respected and relied on those governments then?"

**ASSK** • Every government has to build roads and bridges. Both good and bad governments. It's because those who use these roads and bridges the most are government workers. Since the government big shots are in cars, roads and bridges have to be built for them, [crowd claps]

Just because they build roads and bridges, they cannot assume that they are good for the country. It's the duty of all the governments. It is nothing special, [crowd claps]

As the person from South Okkalapa said, roads and bridges were built during the Japanese period. These things were also done
during the colonial period. If we feel that a government should survive because of these actions, we will never have been free from the colonial period, [crowd claps]

The colonial government was the first to build roads and bridges. We should not be impressed by these actions, [crowd claps]

Roads should be built in order to promote the attitude of the people and to promote their education. They should be built for the people to be able to overcome the current difficulties. If only they build a "democracy" bridge, everyone will consider them a good government, [crowd claps]

QUESTION • The next letter is from a laborer in Pegu. "In Pegu porter and railway fees were collected. I don't understand why we have to pay porter fees after the ceasefire agreement with arms-bearing groups. Is it fair to ask for railway fees from those who cannot even have fully-sheltered houses?" [crowd claps]

ASSK • Of course this is not fair. Everyone knows that it is not fair. I have never heard of fees being collected during the colonial period. That's the truth. Roads and bridges were built. Of course taxes were collected according to the law. I've heard that. But I've never heard that porter fees were collected. Maybe it is because I hadn't been born. Address this matter when Ba Ba U Kyi Maung's turn comes — ask him what kind of fees were collected then, [people cheer and laugh]

Anyway, like I said earlier, building bridges is no big deal. During the colonial period, bridges, roads, school, and hospitals were built. They also gave us medical education. However, we were not satisfied. It was because we wanted to stay as a free race. We did not want to be under other people. That's why we fought against colonialism. During the war, we didn't want to be under fascism either. That's why we also fought against fascism. During the independence days also. We wanted a free and fair system. We do not want a system that oppresses people, [cheers from crowd]

It is human nature to dislike oppression from other people. It is a good nature. Everyone would like to stand on their own feet and hold his head up. Nobody wants to squat on the floor and bow their heads. Their legs get tired after awhile, [crowd cheers]

When the legs get tired, they have to stretch their legs. In order to get democratic rights we have to stretch our legs and work hard, [crowd cheers]

Since this is pre-Union day, in conclusion, before Ba Ba U Tin Oo speaks, I would like to talk about the Union Spirit. When we mention Union Spirit, we don't mean that only we have spirit. I would like everyone to have this spirit. We do not have the attitude that "We don't want this organization. We don't want that organization." We want everyone. However, we also accept that not everyone feels the same. There will be differences of view among us. There will be discussions regarding these different views. We will do this now as well as in the future. But we do not hold any personal grudges. For the benefit of the country, we will address things that need to be addressed. However, our policy will never try to convert or exclude people, [crowd cheers]

We will include all the ethnic groups based on Union Spirit. Everyone will have equal rights. The equal rights that I'm referring to here is for the ethnic groups. Before I address this, I would like to mention that we also need equal rights among those in Burma. All of us who are citizens should have special rights. It will not be possible to say that that person should have special rights, but that organization should not have special rights. I would like to remind people again and again that only when everyone has equal rights, will the country be stable.
On January 16-17, 1997, a delegation from the Government of Myanmar was called before members of the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Myanmar, as one of the 188 States signatories to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, is required to submit periodic reports to the Committee on efforts to give effect to the treaty’s provisions. The following excerpts were taken from these proceedings. [Recorded, transcribed and edited for Burma Debate.]
An exchange between members of the U.N. Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Delegation of Myanmar

THE QUESTION OF CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Hammarberg • ...You wrote in your report [that]... according to the Myanmar citizenship law, there are three types of citizens and thus, there is hardly a chance for a child to be stateless or to be deprived of his nationality. This indicates that there is a wide variety of possibilities here and it covers everyone.

I think... it's actually more a question of categorization and the risk of discrimination. It doesn't offer more possibilities, it actually reduces the possibilities for some people. It also leads to the question: Are there no stateless children now in Myanmar? Because we have information submitted from various organizations that, for instance, refugees who went once to Bangladesh, and many of them have returned, that there have been problems for them.

A Muslim group of people have had difficulties [being] recognized even as the third category of citizens. This leads to the picture that there are actually stateless children in Myanmar, even those who have been born in Myanmar and live there with parents who have been born in Myanmar.

So it seems according to that information that you have a problem here. What's your comment?

Ambassador U Aye • ...The first thing is whether they belong on this side or on the other side [of the border]. We have to establish their bona fides.

...Every household in our country, whether you are a citizen, or whether you are associate citizen and naturalized, or whether you are classified as a foreigner, has a household list. My own household..., we have a list. It doesn't matter what category you are. And it says who is on that list and it is registered with the local authorities.

Now, there are many people who went over to the other side [to Bangladesh] and then later came back. And they said, no, that they have been lost in the commotion and...
things like that so they cannot produce documentary evidence even of that household list. At first, of course, we did not accept that, but later, it could be possible. It could be possible that this has been something lost or misplaced, and so we were flexible and compromising. We assume that you have lost this card that claims your entitlement to stay on this part of the borderline between that country and this country, but you are part of our territory.

We don't need documentary evidence from you, what we need is just tell us, even if you cannot speak any of the languages: Who is your village headman? The name of the village that you had lived in. What is the name of your neighbor? Things like that. If they can verbally give that information, they have been allowed in. And, of course, these household registration cards are things they have been mailing in and given to them. But these are the people we have accepted the first time before this even has been mentioned....

In addition to that, there are others who could not prove any evidence whatsoever, even verbal, could not even identify which village they are from. Perhaps they were ignorant and cannot name the village. Even in those instances, we accepted those people on the belief that perhaps, they are ignorant of which village they are from or who their neighbors are, who the name of the headman is.

That was the first time. Now, the second time, this very same thing happened again, so we negotiated bilaterally with our neighbors and also later on, UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] came into the picture and we tried to establish the bona fides of these people.

Now, those who can identify who they are and where they reside, who their neighbor is or the name of the headman, so on and so forth, we accept. But those who cannot, we do not accept, and this is the difference between the first time and the second time.

There is an ongoing process, because, the overwhelming majority have come back and have been resettled thanks to the good work of the UNHCR...

...And so what is the status of these people? That is the second stage. The first stage is they are legally allowed to reside in the country — they are not stateless, no matter whether they hold a foreigner registration card or not, whether they hold a three categories or not.

And then I think there is some procedure whereby, some accommodation will be reached for them to enable them to enjoy the rights.

Mr. Hammarberg • Thank you. The information we have is that from the second wave, the majority have gone back to your side of the border. But there remains within that group a serious problem about being recognized as citizens of Myanmar and that is not resolved. That is the information we have.

Ambassador U Aye • ...that is not the problem. We are working on it. We cannot say that everyone is a citizen and that he enjoys full rights. No. At this point that's what we're doing. I do not know exactly to what extent these talks have progressed because I am not actively involved.

Mrs. Karp • The situation in Myanmar is that you don't only have the problem of refugees and what they can prove or cannot, but you have very many people who are displaced and displaced people, not all of them could have run with the documents and with the evidence to show that, maybe, they are full citizens.

Now I want to question this difference between the associate and full citizen because I think that the fact that someone grows up in the country where he was born, where his only problem is that he cannot prove a very technical letter of a certain year of his record or grandparents, he grows up with the feeling that he will not be able to achieve the maximum .... This means that his development is restricted, is harmed.

His identity, sense of identity, sense of potential, is damaged and I would like to raise this question about how the children in fact, their right to grow into full citizens is damaged due to the fact that they don't have the documentation to prove a certain existence in a specific year.

So I would like to propose that when you consider this question of what is the status of those people, and we talk about thousands of people, not about very few people, you take into consideration the impact on the children that they will not be able to grow, to reach their full potential which is, in my opinion, infringement on the possession of the right of the child.
Ambassador U Aye • Thank you. Now, I think there are several aspects to the question that need to be addressed separately. Perhaps I was not clear when I mentioned the example of the returnees from the other side of the border.

They do not have to prove — and I repeat, they do not have to prove — that they are in possession of a foreigner's registration card or a national registration card. They do not have to prove that they are citizens or not citizens of the country. They do not even have to show documentary evidence to the effect that, you know, they belong to a certain household.

...We have to draw the line somewhere. They must at least know something about, the locality. They must know, for instance, who their neighbor is, who the headman is and what has been happening. And if they cannot, I am sorry, but I think we are stretching the line too far and we cannot accommodate.

That is one aspect. Another aspect, why are we so anxious about the rights of citizens, the rights to reside in the country, the status of our citizens?

Now, for people [in countries like] Switzerland and in Europe, this may not be such a big problem. For us, I mentioned time and again, we have neighbors, five neighboring countries. On one side is the most populous country in the entire world. On the other side, the second most populous country in the entire world.

...Now, for this third country, I am not saying the right or wrong of it, there is a lot of justification, but a very small area compared to our area, the population many times our population. And these people are sometimes not educated. They are ignorant and sometimes the border is just a demarcation line. [There] will be families living on both sides, relatives living on both sides, and we have procedures whereby they are allowed to visit each other, visit families and things like that in other areas of the border, too.

But visiting is one thing, becoming a full citizen [is another]. Even in a country like the United States, even in a continent like America, it is a problem of whether this person should legally be working and living in this part of the world. It is very easy for them to just cross over and say this is it. This is not the case we find, in our country because of our specific geographical location, because of the population pressures.

I am not blaming the policies of our neighbors, we have very good relations with all our neighbors and I will repeat that, but then the fact remains, suppose Switzerland has the two most populous countries in the world on either sides of the border and very, very porous borders? These are not fences, electrified fences that you find in many of the developed countries. You can just walk across....

With one country, we have over 2600 kilometers of not only a land border, [but a] sea border also. So these are things that are taken into account when we drafted the citizenship law.
... At this stage, this law stands as it is and this is the reason, we are looking at not only the rights of the child but the rights of the citizens of the country for the long-term future. And it is these children who will inherit this land. For us, we have reached the end of our careers and we are not doing this for our protection, we are looking at this for the interests of our children who are living within the country and they must have some mechanism whereby the population of our country is not swelled up in any way that we can conceivably think of, if we can prevent this in time. And this is what we are doing.

I could go on and on because there is a debate on whether this is fair or not.

Mrs. Santos Pais • Well, thank you. I think it is good to conclude a little bit this discussion on the question of citizenship. We obviously do not question the conditions that may be established by a state for the nationality to be given to persons under their jurisdiction. But we have to assess the extent to which these conditions are in conformity with the Convention or not. That is our concern.

And there is one condition saying that every child under the jurisdiction of the state has the right to a nationality, so all possible risks of losing or not acquiring a nationality is a problem, is a concern.

So for the two associate and naturalized citizens where this practice may be withdrawn, there may be a risk of statelessness and that is a situation that is of concern to us.

The second question is in a country that has been affected by political instability and insurgent movements, to which you have made a reference, in fact, several times, it would be hard to accept that there is no kind of document given to those living in Myanmar to prove that they are citizens. I know that there is a system of identity cards.

These identity cards [have been] given since 1990 to every person that comes and asks for them, but they have to prove a certain number of conditions. I am not going into detail on that, but what I would like to stress is that there is two elements in that identity card which are the reference to religion and the reference to ethnic origin.

Now, when the identity card includes these elements, it may pave the way to stigmatization and to discrimination. That is my second concern.

Mr. Hammarberg • Can I just add one other concern from our side? It relates again to the returnees having been refugees.

In all respect, Mr. Ambassador, we were not talking about the risks when mass influx of refugees from the neighborhood [enter a country]. We are talking about a well-known group of refugees who everyone knew about, including, of course, the Myanmar authorities, that had left for Bangladesh and were coming back.

Of course there may have been a risk that one or two refugees could have joined them and taken the possibility to go from Bangladesh to Myanmar, though in all honesty, there hasn't been much refugee pressure from Bangladesh to Myanmar before, but that was perhaps a little bit of risk, but the result of that seems to be that a large part of that group returning has had problems to establish their right to stay in the country, to be recognized as citizens of the country and among them [is] quite a number of children. And that's the concern that we're trying to formulate.

THE QUESTION OF EDUCATION

Dr. Than Than Zin • I'll try to be brief, but the third response is the concern about the use of ethnic languages in our education system. This is important. There is an allotment of five periods out of ten periods for the co-curricular activities, for the ethnic languages in our school. And that means three and a half hours per week.

...We don't provide teaching materials in the ethnic languages, but we have one unique university for the development of national races. This is the training school for the teachers from the ethnic groups and they provide them with all different kinds of courses...

[There is a] special training process for the primary teacher who is going to serve in the border areas. These are the short courses. And we also have junior teachers for the lower secondary and upper secondary and give them a diploma, then degrees. And in that university, the teachers can use their own ethnic languages.
And I want to be clear, although we have — in the report we said that we have 135 national races, they don't all have their own ethnic languages. Some of them do and some don't — some have their common languages.

Mrs. Belembaogo • Thankyou.

Mrs. Santos Pais • On the question of religion, what was said yesterday, and I would repeat it now, is that the fact that identity cards include the religion of the person is a way of creating trends to stigmatization and stigmatization can pave the way for discrimination.

I think this is something you should reflect on, but I also would like to address in this area of religion another aspect, that is, the monastic education.

The monastic education as far as I could understand is ensured for children, I quote your report, "who are too poor to attend governmental primary education." So it's a way of protecting. But in Myanmar, there is more than one religion. Monastic education is the Buddhist education.

Now, my concern is that for Christians and Muslims in a monastic education. Their religion is not taught and so the opportunities are not the same for different religions in your country. Again, I am concerned for these differences of attitude.

And I am also concerned by the fact that monastic education may be perceived as a criteria for stigmatization. Those who are the poorest come to this kind of education. Those who are not the poorest have other opportunities. Perhaps this could also be considered in your future policies.

Another question is of the ethnic languages in school. I know that you say in your report that it is possible to learn in the ethnic language, but it's not sufficient to say it is possible, when the materials are not available because the means are lacking.

It would be very important to insist on preparing and making available teaching materials in ethnic languages, particularly when you recognize that they are not so many, there are much less than 135, which is a positive sign, so it's easier to do. It would be important also to make available the materials on the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the ethnic languages.

Mr. Hammarberg • There are more things to be said about the education system in relation to the principles. You said that the education in principle is free. At the same time, we have the information to say that in practice for parents there are some economic problems when it comes to attendance in school. For instance, when it comes to having study materials and the fact that at least in some cases it's necessary for the parents of the children themselves to buy them to be able to take part.

Also, we have reports which have caused us some concern and it would be interesting to have your comment about a certain amount of corruption within the education system.... It seems that there are problems when it comes to the matriculation and that it is possible for the more well-to-do families with some extra economic contributions to get an upper hand in relation to those who cannot pay.

Every tendency of such corruption when it comes to matriculation or support in school, of course, has to be combatted. If there is such a tendency there, I hope that you would take it very seriously.

Also, of course, the fact that universities, high schools, colleges, et cetera have been closed for certain periods and also now they recently have been closed is a problem for the attendance of students in school and it's a very serious setback when it comes to the education policy. This deals with people above eighteen but also in some cases students just below eighteen.

Mrs. Karp • I would only add with regard to ethnic languages, I would like to refer the committee to Article 13 of the Convention which says that in those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right in community with other members of his or her group to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practice his or her own religion or to use his or her own language.

I would like to stress the point because in my opinion it's not enough that there is a university which may help those ethnic languages to develop and be taught. I think it's the obligation of the state, according to the Convention, to help in supplying materials, in helping teachers and encouraging those
groups to be able to study in their own languages. Thank you.

Ambassador U Aye • Thank you, Madam Chair.
...I thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to respond and I am very glad to respond.

Now, the first thing is the comment made to the fact that because we are Buddhists — the majority, 90 percent and so on — that we have monastic education. I think there is a misconception. It is not open only to Buddhists, it is open to Christians, animists, spiritualists, you name it, even if they are atheists, they can come. And it is not for religion only...yes, Buddhism, but the three Rs. And not only boys, boys and girls also.

In fact, I began my education by learning the scriptures in Buddhism, by learning the prayers with the three Rs. But later I went from the monastery education to a Christian school. Christian schools were operating in our country. Of course, this was before the socialist era. I attended the Christian school because I wanted to get competency in the [English] language and my parents [could] afford to pay...I’ve done Hail Mary and Our Father and things like that as part of the curriculum. And whether you are Buddhist or Hindu or atheist, it’s a school rule and you follow it, whether you like it or not. If you don’t, you are out of the school. But it’s a school rule and we abide by it.

Now, the same thing for Muslims. We have Muslim people and the schools in the western area, the scriptures, Islam, is a part of the curriculum...along with the other things to be taught there in connection with Muslim religion.

So this is one thing I would like to clarify, that there are also other schools, not only Buddhist, monastic schools, but other religions also.

...Now, corruption in the educational system. Yes, when you say corruption, we need to deal with this in the sense that it is not fair to the child, but perhaps there have been complaints that people who have money can afford to send [their children] to the best education, can give them tuition to hire special teachers and things like that.

Well, it is a fact of life [that] those people who have money can send their children to better schools and they can afford tutors to teach their children, but not to the extent of paying for your degree or things like that. This is not permitted. If it is found out, then the teacher will have very, very severe disciplinary action taken because if this is a thing that will happen, then what is the fairness to the hard-working children who do not have money?

So a system of corruption in education, I can categorically deny. We do not allow it....

Universities — no, they have not been closed. Some of the universities have had classes suspended a little bit early, before the winter holidays, and they will be reopening very soon. This has been revealed by the deputy minister of Education...

Ambassador U Aye
Delegation of Myanmar

...Of course, accusations to this effect are done for political reasons, that is another thing, but please don’t do it for educational reasons. I am not addressing this specifically to members of this committee, but those allegations have come to this committee from somewhere.

Now, universities — no, they have not been closed. Some of the universities have had classes suspended a little bit early, before the winter holidays, and they will be reopening very soon. This has been revealed by the deputy minister of Education in a most recent press conference that we have had in our
country with the international press and this has come on CNN, BBC and things like that.

It is not the majority of the schools or colleges that have been closed. It is a very small minority where disturbances have taken place and in those universities, it is not the majority of the students. In fact, the overwhelming majority want to pursue one thing, and that is higher education and peace. They are [at] the mercy of the very small handful of students who are influenced by external factors and do not concentrate so much on education but agitating the other students to defy authority and to break the law. That is why, temporarily, the classes have been suspended. The universities and schools that have been closed will reopen very soon.... The vast majority of universities and students and high schools have not been affected and the classes are going on as normal.

Mrs. Santos Pais • Thank you, Madam Chairperson, and thank you for the answers, Mr. Ambassador.

Let me first of all comment on what you said on the monastic education. I would like to recall two quotations from both the report and the written replies of the government.

First, written reply 29 stresses that... monastic places are for children who are too poor to attend government primary education, in spite of the fact that it is a free education. So those who are poor have this opportunity or they do not have education at all.

But in the report, you also say that monastic education is to [learn to] lead their lives according to the teachings of the Buddha, who can maintain and flourish the future Buddha sasana as good Buddhists.

I respect very much the Buddhist religion. I am not taking a stand. My concern is that if the education is to assure that good Buddhists are formed in these places, the other citizens who have a different religion don't have equal opportunities. And I keep my concern.

THE QUESTION OF CHILD SOLDIERS

Mrs. Santos Pais • ...I would like to understand... in case a child is recruited into the armed forces below the age of 18, what is the opportunity for the child to refuse and how is the respect for the views of the child ensured?

... [Regarding] the best interests of the child, you gave important, interesting information, but, you see, best interests in the Convention is of the child, individual child, each child. It's not children generally.

And so it's important to see in specific situations how the best solution for the child is [to be] taken into consideration. For instance, when a child is forced to work as a porter for public construction, how is the best interests of the child taken into consideration? How is the right of the child defended and protected? That's what I would like to understand. Thank you.

Ambassador U Aye • [As for] recruitment of the army, it cannot be under eighteen, as I understand. No. It cannot be. If it is found that this person has lied in his age, that he is under eighteen, then he is immediately expelled and given to the custody of the parents. In fact, it is not being forced to serve, but the point is that they will lie and get into the army to get [something]. Or just because their elders have been in the army, they want to go in. Or it could be for other reasons....

Even [as a form of] livelihood in the sense that the villages have no jobs and the army is there to give them the basic training. They can go on to officers training when they get older.

So it cannot be that you can be under 18 and you join the army. The military rule specifically forbids it...

There may be instances where, unknowingly to the recruitment officers, that people who are younger come in. But this is the exception, this is not the rule. And when these are discovered, we react accordingly and dismiss and discharge this person who applies or who is already in the armed forces and serving.

Now, the same thing with the matter of the porter. A porter also cannot be a child. We have a village act, town act, the things that were from the British days. They were introduced and normally nothing is done because we need to amend them and perhaps take action. We are dealing with that in a different context, the matter of the porters. But the age of the porters is written down in these British laws, under what circumstances you can and you cannot recruit porters. If you are interested, we can
have copies of this circulated to the committee specifically on the use of porters.

Mr. Hammarberg • Thank you very much.

You said that boys are not recruited before eighteen to the army. If that happens and it's discovered, there will be strict measures taken to see to it that that boy is moved out of the armed forces.

I think it's fair to say that the information we have is rather different. There was a UN study on the impact on children in armed conflict which reported to the General Assembly in November this year. One of the [issues] was the problem of child soldiers. One of the countries on which information was gathered was Myanmar and the picture that came out in this information was that there are a number of boys much below eighteen in the armed forces in Myanmar, fourteen and fifteen was not unusual. In fact, there were even individual cases of boys recruited before the age of fourteen.

In all honesty, I think it should also be said that some of the opposition forces also had underage soldiers, it wasn't only the SLORC army, it was also other military groups there.

But it emerged as a real problem and I think frankly that the response you gave seemed to belittle the seriousness of these reports. I wasn't quite encouraged by the tone of the response and if you have something to add to it, I would be quite happy to listen because we feel it is a serious matter.

We wouldn't have raised the situation if it was as you described. In fact, the Convention, though there are moves now to raise the age limit, stops at fifteen but we raised it because we have credible information to say that there are boys below fifteen who are in the armed forces.

Mrs. Santos Pais • ...Now, on the question of child soldiers, again, as it was said by my colleague, the study has just recently included several paragraphs on the specific situation of Myanmar and young children being forcibly recruited into the armed forces. In fact, there is even one example of a situation where they have been recruited forcibly from refugee camps, but because there was international pressure, they were sent back.

...What is the safeguard provided for people to react in case anyone would not respect the law? And how many cases of punishment have taken place? I would recall that these children have been involved in very dangerous activities as child soldiers fighting in the front where there was civil strife in the country, planting mines, acting as spies or informants or military porters.

So we are not talking about just giving a small help, which in any case below a certain age is not acceptable. It's very dangerous activities which in relation to ILO standards and the Convention on the Rights of the Child would not be accepted again.

THE QUESTION OF THE MILITARY

Mr. Hammarberg • I would like to make some comments on what was said about attempts with a new ministry to see to it that remote areas of the country will be given a chance to develop. Some of these remote areas happen to coincide with areas where there has been unrest, there have been civil wars and where there are minority people living. I think that dimension has to be brought into the discussion.
Of course, even if one takes measures on the education side and the social side, one other factor is very important for the daily life of people in these areas and that's the behavior of the army. There

The problem of porters and the fact that the army has come into villages and ordered people... young people, children, to carry things.

It's a sort of enforced duty on children.

There are so many reports about this that one begins to believe it's a system and that, of course, is not acceptable.

Also, Marta Pais mentioned the problem of porters and the fact that the army has come into villages and ordered people... young people, children, to carry things.... It's a sort of enforced duty on children. There are so many reports about this that one begins to believe it's a system and that, of course, is not acceptable. That's not, of course, in line with the Convention and we wonder what steps have you taken to see to it that these kinds of behavior from the army has been remedied and punished when it happens.

Ambassador U Aye • In the army, not only in our army, in every army in the world, there is a strict military code of conduct and this code of conduct has to be adhered to very strictly by all armed forces personnel. If there is a breach in discipline of the strict army military code then there are separate courts that are operating.

In our country, we have civilian courts, courts of law, going on, in parallel there are military courts also. So when there are allegations of any misconduct on the part of the armed forces personnel, immediately there is an investigation and, whether he is an ordinary soldier or whether he is a general, if it is found that he has committed violations... action is taken against that officer or that soldier and I assure you the action that is taken is much more severe than what is taken in civilian courts.

...Just because you get allegations consistently doesn't mean that these things are happening until and unless they have been proved.

When Professor Yokota was Special Rapporteur, we had informed him no army in the world is perfect, including [those of] the most famous democracies of the world.... So transgressions, aberrations may arise. But when it is found out that this is not in compliance with the code of conduct by army personnel, then I assure you again categorically, that severe action is taken. And, in fact, we have even provided the Special Rapporteur [with] several instances where severe action has been taken, where transgressions of the law have taken place.

again, we have gotten some reports which are a matter of concern and it seems that the behavior of the troops has not always been constructive.

There are reports about rapes against girls in these areas and this is, of course, very serious. Though it may not always be possible to discipline all soldiers in all situations, it is absolutely essential that the authorities, when there are reports about such grave misbehavior, take very firm action to see to it that it is absolutely not allowed and that it goes not only against individual soldiers who behave like that, but also against commanders who are responsible for the behavior of the troops in that situation.

Mr Hammarberg U.N. Committee Vice-Chair
But those have happened in the heat of fighting the insurgency a few years ago, but now as I have explained to you, we have 15 insurgent groups who are already in the legal fold. There are no military operations. ...In fact, people who have been fighting against each other, brother against brother, father against son, on opposite sides perhaps, now they are working together to develop the communities that they inhabit in the border areas. This is what we mean by reconciliation and reconsolidation.

... Events are unfolding in my country... western congressmen, senators, have been taken to those places to see for themselves what is going on, the development activities where previously even the armed forces had difficulty going because of the armed conflict. The situation is completely reversed now, so please don't talk about a few years ago and say things have happened there and it is happening yesterday and it is continuing to happen. No, it is not the case.

*Mr. Hammarberg* • When it comes to misconduct, your response was of the same kind, that said: "it really isn't a major problem, if it happens, we would take strong actions."

In light of the number of accusations and allegations, that have been raised when it comes to rape, it would be interesting to see some examples of measures you have taken.

Can you mention cases brought to court where there has been a verdict on a case of rape?

You indirectly admitted that there are such cases, saying that armies do misbehave in all countries. So in that situation there must be — and you stating that there have been strict measures taken — there must be cases to show that there have been court decisions on such matters. Could you give us some examples there?

You said that these are "allegations." Yes. But allegations could be fairly serious and they could be substantiated... if there is a number of testimonies to this effect done by credible organizations, through credible methods, I think a serious response from the government would be, "Yes, we take this seriously, please come and investigate yourself. Please, Special Rapporteur on Human Rights within the United Nations, you are free to come and we would like you to come to investigate [this] more in depth."

That would be the response, rather than saying these are "political allegations."

*Mrs. Santos Pais* • I would like to address the other questions that were raised. You said that there are old reports about forced labor, forced conscription of young children, of prostitution, of rape by military forces. Unfortunately, they are not old. Unfortunately, it is a standing concern expressed by extremely serious reliable sources, by the United Nations itself.

We have the Special Representative systematically addressing these issues. We have the Special Rapporteurs systematically — last Commission on Human Rights was an example — referring to these issues. And if I just addressed forced labor as one illustration, the government of Myanmar is supposed to give a formal reply to ILO [International Labor Organization] by the end of this January. We are on the 16th, I believe, or 17th of January, so you have ten, twelve days to give your formal reply.

I don't think we can be more present than we are, unfortunately, for the children of Myanmar. So the question of old information, I think, is not a question.

Now, if I can address in detail what was said. The ILO has systematically advised the government to repeal existing legislation that in fact allows for forced labor, the Village Act and the Towns Act. This has not yet happened. You say that these cases do not take place, then why isn't the legislation repealed?

And if it is not the case, but it has been in the past the case, I also would like to understand, to be given examples of specific situations where those found responsible for recruiting the unlawful labor force of children as porters for public construction or in the military setting. How many cases were in fact brought to the competent authorities? And give examples of punishments imposed for those who have violated these standards.

I recall that Myanmar has ratified ILO convention 29 since '55. It has been in force for 40 years, so it's not a recent text and I'm sure there has been time to correct this situation.

**THE QUESTION OF FORCED RELOCATION**

*Mr. Hammarberg* • There are reports about relocation, forced relocation. This is not unusual in situations of civil war, that the army leadership finds that it wants to relocate people. It happens in other
Committee on Rights of Child Concludes Fourteenth Session at Geneva

January 6-24

Geneva, 24 January (UN Information Service) — The Committee on the Rights of the Child concluded today its three-week Fourteenth Session by adopting conclusions and recommendations on initial reports submitted to it by six countries.

Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Panama, Myanmar, Syria and New Zealand, in keeping with their obligations as States parties to the Convention, supplied over the course of the session lengthy written summaries to the Committee on their effort to help and protect children, and sent delegations to answer questions and hear the opinions of the Committee's 10 experts.

The report of Myanmar was described as "incomplete in its appreciation of the situation of children in the country." The Committee noted as positive the withdrawal by the Government of two reservations to the Convention and said it was encouraged by its adoption of a National Plan of Action and its establishment of a National Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The Committee recommended, among other measures, that:

- The Government undertake a comprehensive review of national legislation to ensure conformity with the Convention;
- The country's Citizenship Act, Village and Town Acts, and Whipping Act be repealed, and laws relating to non-discrimination, freedom of association, child labor and juvenile justice be adequately amended to reflect the standards of the Convention;
- A multidisciplinary monitoring system be set up for child rights, and efforts be made to ensure promotion and protection of the rights of the child in cooperation with United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, including the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar;
- The Government take all appropriate measures to the maximum extent of budgetary resources to provide social services for children, with particular attention to children belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups;
- Different categories of citizenship be abolished, as well as mention on national identity cards of religion and ethnic origin;
- An alternative choice of education be given to non-Buddhist poor children and that the State guarantee freedom of association and speech as well as the right to peaceful assembly;
- Health services be provided to all children, including those in remote areas and those who belong to minority groups;
- Efforts be made to reduce the level of school drop-outs and the school repetition rate;
- The Government prevent any occurrence of forced relocation, displacement and other types of involuntary population movement;
- All reported cases of abuse, rape and/or violence against children committed by members of the armed forces be rapidly and thoroughly investigated, with appropriate judicial sanctions applied to perpetrators;
- The Government fully refrain from recruiting under-aged children into the military; and that all involvement of children in forced labor be ended;
- Measures be taken to combat exploitation of adopted children, including through labor;
- All appropriate measures be taken to prevent child abuse, including sexual abuse, and the sale and trafficking of children, child prostitution and child pornography; and
- In the spirit of international cooperation, the State party implement all recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, and the country envisage ratifying major international human-rights treaties in addition to the Convention...
countries as well. It tends to be very serious, not the least for the younger generation.

It's also a question of how this is done. One report I read said that this was during last year in Shan province, that people were informed very soon before the move had to take place, just a couple of days, and that there was a threat that if they didn’t move within that time there will be shooting. So there was this element of terror, according to the report, involved in such a situation.

This, of course, is very traumatic for children when they are involved in such situations. Very unfortunate. And in this particular case, the report also said that some of these people found that they had to leave the country and went to the neighboring country.

The message I bring is that there are such reports. It's important that there are comments on these reports. If there are elements of facts which cannot be denied in these reports, that actions are taken to remedy the particular situation. In particular I mentioned rape, the system of forcing people to carry ammunition or other things for the army and, finally, the methods of forced relocation which seem to be done under an atmosphere of terror, not taking into consideration the reactions among the young generation. Thank you.

Ambassador U Aye • The question about relocation, forced relocation. Well, in every country, in our country included, we have illegal squatters, illegal squatters in temple grounds and on religious grounds. This is contrary to religion. You cannot do that.

They are living in graveyards because they are disadvantaged people, they are poor people, they have nowhere to go, so they live in the graveyards. Even if they have lived there for many, many years, this is in contravention of the municipal laws. You cannot do it. Not only in our time and the British times, but in ancient times also. You cannot do it. So we have to make way for these illegal squatters... many miles away, in adjacent areas where it is not a temple area or religious heritage area. They have to be moved.

The same thing in the big cities. The roads in the cities at that time were getting narrower and narrower because people are coming from the houses, then to the pavement, and then to the roads themselves on both sides.

And the fire engines cannot go there when we have the dry season, the fires break out with regularity and there is a call on the radio in the summer season and so far the count is so much and the rights, even the rights of the children suffer because the flames cannot be put out. What is the solution? To move them out to adjoining areas where there are farmers. The farmers have to be paid for their land and those areas have to be made available for their livelihood or for the building of the houses.

When we do that, though, we don’t just send them there and have them rot. First there have to be roads, there has to be infrastructure... first the road has to be there. The transport for them to come and work in the city and then the free transportation given by trucks, municipal trucks, to dismantle their house or their shack or whatever or to take them to those places, this is quite close to the city.

And this is what we do — it is not against human rights. How about the human rights of the people who are living in legitimate areas where we have squatters come and live in front of them and try to obstruct their right of way and things like that?

...I mentioned the graveyards also. They take the graveyards and they desecrate the graves and take away the bricks to build their own house. Religiously, you cannot do this. This is something we have tried to prevent. And we have been quite successful in that also.

Now the people who have been to our country in the capital city and those very satellite towns that have been rebuilt and also populated by these squatters, we have taken western media, we have taken NGOs, senators, congressmen from America, from Western Europe to those places to see what we have done. It is only then that they appreciate what has been accomplished on the part of the government in so short a time.

But we cannot say that this sort of thing is a present phenomena. It had been done quite some time ago and we are very transparent about it.... If the members of the committee would like to ask for a visa, we will give you the visa, go ahead and see for yourself.
WASHINGTON, DC — A Roundtable was held on January 30, to discuss U.S. policy options toward Burma. Featured speakers were Mr. Eric Schwarz of the U.S. National Security Council; Mr. Bob Hathaway, a staff member of the House of Representatives' International Relations Committee; and Gregg Suchan, a staff member of the office of Senator John McCain.

On February 13, Dr. Naing Aung, Chairman of the Central Committee of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) and Aung Naing Oo, ABSDF Secretary of Foreign Affairs provided a briefing on the situation along the Thai-Burma Border.


NEW YORK — A New York Roundtable was held on February 7, featuring Dr. Naing Aung and Aung Naing Oo (see above), who discussed student activism 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) 338-0049.

MASSACHUSETTS — 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: jjerome@igc.apc.org.

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

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

NETHERLANDS — A Burma Roundtable has been formed in the Netherlands. The first meeting was held on January 25 at BCN, Paulus Potterstraat 20, 1071 DA, Amsterdam. The next meeting is scheduled for March 22 at the same location.

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

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Just a note of thanks and encouragement for the work you are doing. The latest issue [Nov/Dec 96], focussing on ethnicity and Burma, is the best update I have seen in recent memory on this question. I particularly appreciate Martin Smith's piece. He has a meticulous way of presenting the big picture. My own experience in Burma and along the border has been with representatives of various groups. It is challenging, often frustrating, but real, and there will be no peace and democracy in Burma without respect for and attention to all peoples.

Thanks again,
Alan Senauke
Buddhist Peace Fellowship
BUSINESS WATCH

U.S. AMBASSADOR SLAMS SELECTIVE PURCHASING LAWS

In a February 12 cable to the Department of State, Stapleton Roy, the U.S. ambassador to Indonesia, voiced his opposition to the recent initiatives by state and local governments to sanction Burma through selective purchasing legislation. The Ambassador wrote:

"I hope and expect that the Department will display strong leadership in opposing vigorously and categorically the pernicious trend in Massachusetts, Connecticut and various municipalities around the United States to pass or contemplate local sanctions legislation that would infringe on federal prerogatives and make a mockery of our ability to conduct coherent foreign policy. ...Our advocacy of human rights as a principle of our foreign policy can only be implemented effectively if we retain the ability to conduct foreign policy coherently. However well-intentioned these local boycott/sanctions may be, their net effect will be to undermine our ability to meet our international obligations and to maintain the integrity of our foreign policy. ...There is in my view, no merit whatsoever in tolerating such actions at state and local levels. I urge in the strongest terms that we not pussyfoot around on this question but rather mount a strong and concerted effort to oppose such local initiatives with all the ammunition we can muster."

EUROPE WITHDRAWS GSP TO BURMA

The European Council of Ministers announced on March 24 that, based upon evidence of the systematic use of forced labor in Burma, it will suspend Burma's special trading use under the Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP). A result of a complaint filed by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), this is the first such decision under the social provisions that were included in the GSP in 1995. According to the ICFTU, Burma's annual exports to the European Union total $75 million, two thirds of which were eligible for reduced tariffs under the GSP. Both manufacturing and agricultural products from Burma will be effected.

MEDIA CENTERS BANNED IN RANGOON

At a January 16 meeting in Burma's capital city, the Yangon City Development Committee announced that TV, video and computer game centers will be banned. The meeting was chaired by Colonel Myint Aung, joint secretary of the committee, and attended by members of district and township Law and Order Restoration Councils and police departments. Those participating determined that the establishment of such centers could "damage the morality of the people." This move was a blow to many local businessmen who were poised to embark on the video game business.

BRIEFSINGS AND DEVELOPMENTS

RADIO FREE ASIA BEGINS BROADCASTS

On February 3, Radio Free Asia (RFA) joined the long-standing Voice of America in sending Burmese language broadcasts into the country with plans to launch daily two-hour news programs. These programs can be heard each morning from 7:00 to 8:00 am (Burma Standard Time) on 41 m 7455 KHz, 7515 KHz and 7530 KHz. Evening broadcasts are from 9:30 to 10:30 pm on 31 m 9440 KHz and 41 m 7540 KHz and 49m 6240 KHz.

CZECH REPUBLIC HONORS DEMOCRACY LEADER

An honorary doctorate degree was awarded to Aung San Suu Kyi by Prague's Charles University in a show of Czech solidarity with Burma's democracy movement. The award was accepted by Michael Aris, Suu Kyi's husband, on January 10, at an event observing the 20th anniversary of Prague's Charter 77 human rights declaration. A panel discussion followed the ceremony with participants that included Emma Bonino, Commissioner for Humanitarian Affairs at the European Commission; George Soros, chairman of the Open Society Institute; and George Fernandes, member of the Indian Parliament.

CANADIAN AMBASSADOR BARRED FROM VISIT

Manfred von Nostitz, Canada's ambassador to Rangoon, was blocked from visiting democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi on the evening of March 5 when he arrived at her home. A spokesperson for the Canadian Embassy reported that Burma security officials met the Ambassador at the gate and prevented him from entering the compound. According to the spokesperson, "It is not acceptable that he was denied access to Miss Suu Kyi and the Ambassador raised the issue with the Burmese minister of foreign affairs the next day." Canada expressed concern that the authorities are restricting access to the democracy leader.

INDONESIAN PRESIDENT VISITS BURMA

President Suharto of Indonesia arrived for a three-day official visit on February 23 where he met with Ne Win, Burma's nominally retired leader. According to government spokespersons, Suharto's trip was aimed at enhancing economic ties and trade between the two countries. The Indonesian leader has family ties to businesses operating in Burma in the areas of construction, petrochemical and logging. At a January 16 meeting in Burma's capital city, the Yangon City Development Committee announced that TV, video and computer game centers will be banned. The meeting was chaired by Colonel Myint Aung, joint secretary of the committee, and attended by members of district and township Law and Order Restoration Councils and police departments. Those participating determined that the establishment of such centers could "damage the morality of the people." This move was a blow to many local businessmen who were poised to embark on the video game business.

FRENCH STUDENTS HOLD "AUNG SAN SUU KYI WEEK"

Students and teachers from Jean Baptiste Dumas College in the town of Ales in southern France will organize a "Week for Aung San Suu Kyi" from March 18 to 25. Supported by several national and international groups, this event will include the screening of the John Boorman film, Beyond Rangoon, at the Ales Film Festival, photo exhibitions and guest lectures, as well as an interactive internet link up with students and Burma activists throughout the world.
Almost 10,000 refugees have managed to escape from fighting and SLORC's human rights abuses by fleeing to the Thai-Burma border. They took refuge in Thailand following the SLORC offensive against Karen National Union Brigade (6) area, started on February 7, 1997.

Last week, SLORC started disseminating several acknowledgment letters sealed with fake KNU official stamps in different refugee camps on the Thai side of the border in order to persuade Karen refugees to come back to their native villages, areas now controlled by SLORC troops. These letters stated that all run-away villagers will be warmly and safely welcomed to their homes without any punitive action being taken. At the same time, SLORC is threatening refugees using DKBA forces, and has sent ultimatums to burn down refugee camps if the refugees refuse to return.

In response to the false KNU letters, some refugees mistakenly went back to their native villages, where they discovered the SLORC presence which immediately put them to work. Some of these refugees later managed to sneak back to the refugee camps in Thailand. Those who returned to the refugee camps on the Thai side are villagers from Kyait Don, Mi Nar Ark, A-Zin, Chokale, Phar Klaw Nie and Mai Ka Thi Hta villages.

According to these refugees, they were provided with three tins of rice per family. All adult men were forced to work digging trenches, constructing military barracks and buildings, and cutting bamboo for fencing the entire village. Some villagers have been arrested and detained at night after being accused as KNU supporters or sympathizers. A number of villagers have disappeared since they were taken by SLORC troops for questioning.

Therefore, all refugees who return to their homes are now living under intensely threatening and unsafe conditions. SLORC is clearly unable and uninterested in guaranteeing their rights to a safe dwelling and a safe livelihood. More returns are expected soon.

The NCUB demands the SLORC to:
• stop human rights abuses against innocent villagers, including extra-judicial killing, arbitrary arrest, rape, and forced porterage and labor;
• cease using military aggression against KNU forces and the civilian population; enter into genuine tripartite dialogue for solving political problems through peaceful means;
• honor the 1990 election results.

The NCUB appeals to the international community, including Thailand, to help protect the safety of the refugees.

Information Committee
National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB)

NOTABLES & QUOTABLES

"There is no problem at all. The border problem is over, it is finished."

—Lt. Gen Khin Nyunt, Secretary-1 of the State Law and Order Restoration Council, when questioned about the SLORC military offensive against the Karen National Union, while attending a March 12 meeting with top Thai military officials along the Thai-Burma border.
MEDIA RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

together the traditional and modern methods in painting. The reprint of this 1994 illustrated edition is incorporated with the translated version as a booklet for the convenience of readers. Soft bound, 130 pp.

TWO PAPERS ON BURMA
by Josef Silverstein
1966

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Dr. Silverstein's "The 1994 United Nations Resolution: What the Secretary General Can Do" and "Federalism as a Solution to the Ethnic Problem in Burma" are part of the University's Discussion Paper Series on Regime Change and Regime Maintenance in Asia and the Pacific, which examines the important role of the UN secretary general in initiating a dialogue between SLORC and all political parties. Aust$ 4.00 plus postage for overseas mailing.

HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT
Issue papers presented to the Centre for Human Rights, United Nations Office in Geneva
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This document is a response to the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights' note verbale dated June 26, 1996, inviting nongovernmental organizations to comment on the issues raised in the final report submitted to the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities by its Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI
Fearless Voice of Burma
by Whitney Stewart

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The newest in the series Newsmakers Biographies, this book focuses on Aung San Suu Kyi, the woman who became a leader in Burma's renewed struggle for democracy. Based on personal interviews with Aung San Suu Kyi and those around her, the book can be used as an educational resource for elementary and secondary grade students. Hardcover edition, USD 23.95.

S L O R C S P E A K S

INSIDE WASHINGTON

U.S. SENATORS URGE SANCTIONS
A letter signed by seven of the Senate's most prominent members has gone to President Clinton urging him to implement the law and impose economic sanctions on Burma. Citing the State Department's own Country Report on Human Rights, which states that "severe repression of human rights has increased in 1996," the Senators concluded that conditions outlined in the legislation passed last year have been met and asked for the Administration's prompt "assessment of the law and plans to implement sanctions." The letter was signed by Senators Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-NY), lesse Helms (R-NC), Patrick J. Leahy (D-VT), Edward M. Kennedy (D-MA), Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-NY) and Carol Moseley-Braun (D-IL).

CONGRESSIONAL VISITS RAISE QUESTIONS
Amidst the fury over efforts by the Chinese to gain influence with U.S. policymakers, eyebrows are also being raised about the increasing number of visits to Burma by members of Congress and their staff. The "unofficial" trips, which are being organized by tax-exempt entities with corporate sponsors, are particularly timely as the Administration debates over whether or not to impose economic sanctions on the Asian nation. At least one of the groups organizing the Congressional junkets, the Asia-Pacific Exchange Foundation, headed by Richard Quick, receives funding from the U.S. oil company UNOCAL, which has a vested interest in ensuring that sanctions are not implemented. The funding sources of other groups hosting visits to Burma are also being questioned.

SLORC AMBASSADOR CONDUCTS GOODWILL TOUR
U Win Tin, the Burmese ambassador to the United States, has been travelling around the country meeting with expatriate Burmese. On March 8, he visited Coral Springs, Florida where nearly 40 people attended a dinner to discuss a variety of issues ranging from overdue taxes of Burmese passport holders, to the current political climate in Burma. The Ambassador then traveled to La Puente, California on March 16, to attend a meeting with Burmese from southern California held at a Buddhist monastery.

B U R M A D E B A T E
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.