IN HIS OWN WORDS: U Ohn Gyaw

AN INSIDER'S VIEW

SLORC'S "INTEL-NET"
Burma's independence in 1948 gave birth not only to a nation, but to what would become a complex web of security and intelligence agencies. So powerful did this network become that by 1962 the Military Intelligence Service (MIS) paved the way for the coup d'etat by General Ne Win and was used throughout his reign to crush political dissent and perpetuate military rule. Since the State Law and Order Restoration Council was created in 1988 it increasingly has relied on its intelligence apparatus to retain power, including closer surveillance of the armed forces and the civilian population. Despite the commitment of significant resources to intelligence agencies and a effort by the regime to improve its military capabilities over the last decade, there have been a number of major intelligence failures, which raises questions about the effectiveness of Burma's security network.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

One of the few career diplomats in a cabinet made up primarily of military men, U Ohn Gyaw has served as the Foreign Minister of Burma's State Peace and Development Council and the former State Law and Order Restoration Council. Often filling the role of the regime's spokesperson to the international community, he is currently in the United States to attend the annual meeting of the United Nations General Assembly. In a question and answer session following his address to the New York-based Asia Society, U Ohn Gyaw discusses the status of political dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy, Khun Sa's current whereabouts, and Burma's relations with its neighbors.

AN INSIDER'S VIEW

Thet Hmu was a member of the underground movement of the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF) disseminating information and doing grassroots organizing when he was arrested in 1990 and sentenced to prison for his political beliefs. Currently living in exile, his autobiographical essay gives a personal account of life inside one of Burma's most infamous jails, revealing his thoughts and feelings on the day of his release.
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It was perhaps inevitable that, after the armed forces formally took back the reins of government in September 1988, Burma's intelligence apparatus would once again be reviewed. Yet, in many respects, its structure appears to have remained the same. The greatest change has been in the size and scope of its operations, and the means by which they are conducted.
Under the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) [Editor's note: As of November 15, 1997 the regime has changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC)], the Special Investigation Department (SID), and Bureau of Special Investigations (BSI) all seem to have been retained by the SLORC and, generally speaking, still appear to exercise their earlier functions. These three agencies are now formally under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The other intelligence functions exercised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development do not seem to have changed significantly. The Ministry of Immigration and National Registration was abolished in 1974, but was recreated as the Ministry of Immigration and Population in 1992. It continues to have certain intelligence functions. All these agencies maintain their headquarters in Rangoon.

A new addition to the country's intelligence apparatus is the Office of Strategic Studies (OSS). A small body directly answerable to Khin Nyunt, the OSS was
initially believed to be a semi-academic institution similar to the strategic studies institutes and think tanks found elsewhere in the region (and further afield). Some commentators speculated that the OSS had been created in part to give Burma a seat at various 'one and a half track' (a mixture of both academics and officials) and a 'second track' (academic only) talks on security issues that were then becoming common throughout the Asia-Pacific region. This seems to reflect confusion, however, between the OSS and the Foreign Ministry's 'Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies' (MISIS), which was formed around the same time. A more likely explanation for the creation of the OSS was that a new 'Strategic Command' was required within the defense hierarchy, to justify Khin Nyunt's elevation in 1994 to lieutenant general rank. If this is true, then the OSS would be formally higher than the DDSI in the Defense Ministry structure, equating roughly to a Bureau of Special Operations in the General Staff Department. Even so, Khin Nyunt seems to have retained the titles of both Chief of the OSS and Director of Defense Services Intelligence (as well as being Director General of the NIB and Secretary (1) of the SLORC). On this basis, it would be logical for the OSS also to be member of the NIB.

The OSS is divided into five departments. These cover international affairs, narcotics, security, ethnic affairs, and science and the environment. Not all positions of departmental head are currently filled, although some senior officers have responsibility for more than one department. All OSS officers are members of the armed forces and are drawn from the ranks of the DDSI. Some retain their DDSI roles, even as members of the OSS. Since its creation in the early 1990s, the OSS has demonstrated a close interest in the activities of dissidents and opposition politicians, notably Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy (NLD). Why Khin Nyunt does not feel able to use the existing military intelligence apparatus to do this, however, is not clear, (see Figure 1)

Although the DDSI was already the largest and most powerful intelligence agency in Burma before 1988, it has greatly expanded in numbers and is now even more influential than before. It not only runs the MIS apparatus and is a coordinating secretariat for the intelligence staffs of the three armed services, but it also controls the NIB, and thus the activities of all other Burmese intelligence agencies. A measure of the DDSI’s increased power under the SLORC is that, since 1992, DDSI/MIS branches and companies outside the capital have once again been permitted to report directly to Rangoon, without going through the regional military commands. Inevitably, this has caused considerable friction with some Regional Commanders.

Under Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, DDSI is reportedly managed by a committee of about 25 loyal, but not particularly senior military officers, ranging from captain to lieutenant colonel in rank. At the War Office level, the DDSI is divided into about five or six Bureaus, each of which has responsibility for the oversight of a broad area of interest. For example, Bureau MI-1 oversees combat intelligence, MI-3 covers foreign liaison, and MI-4 covers the 'communist front' organizations. Although there is a Directorate of Public Relations and Psychological Warfare in the Ministry of Defense, the DDSI is believed to have its own 'psychological warfare and propaganda department,' possibly organized as another MI Bureau.

DDSI also has branches at regional command level. These branches (also designated numerically) control smaller MIS companies scattered around their command areas of responsibility. Confusingly, for people who do not speak Burmese, these companies too are designated by number, such as MI-14, MI-20 etc. In 1989 there were some 14 regional branches and 17 intelligence companies spread throughout the country. There were also separate branches for each of the three armed services. By 1992 the number of branches had almost doubled to 23. According to Bertil Lintner:

**The new intelligence units cover some urban centers hit by demonstrations [in 1988]... together with border areas fronting on Bangladesh, China and India.**

Some of these MIS companies are special units responsible for the surveillance of armed forces personnel. A special MIS company has been created to operate in the southern Tenasserim area. The DDSI also continues to rely on thousands of agents and informers who spy on insurgents, dissident groups, students and members of the public. As
Amnesty International has stated, "Surveillance by Military Intelligence officers of critics or people connected with critics of the government is pervasive in Myanmar." 16

As a Directorate in the Ministry of Defense, the DDSI is formally based at the ministry compound in central Rangoon, but its headquarters appears to be located in Kone Myint Thaya, Mayangon Township, in north Rangoon. 17 It also has a depot on Boundary Road in the center of the capital. The DDSI also administers a number of detention and interrogation centers across Burma, including the infamous Ye Kyi Aing (aka: Yai Kyi Aung) complex north of Rangoon. This facility was reportedly opened following the 1962 military coup and has, according to former detainees, "been used continuously since then for the interrogation and confinement of political prisoners." 18 Amnesty International has stated that many of the people arrested in Rangoon since the September 1988 pro-democracy demonstrations, and particularly those arrested since July 1989 in connection with the so-called 'communist and 'right-wing' plots, are thought to have been interrogated in this center."
The instruction provided to Burma's intelligence operatives in recent years has been reported by some observers as 'elementary.' Yet, a greater effort has clearly been made by the SLORC to increase the quality and scope of the training provided. There have also been reports that several countries have provided training and other assistance to Burma's intelligence services since 1988. China in particular has reportedly provided technical equipment and training to the SLORC's intelligence agencies. Singapore has developed a close relationship with the SLORC in recent years and is thought to be training large members of Burmese 'secret police' at an institution in central Singapore. There have also been persistent rumors that Israel's Central Institute for Intelligence and Security (otherwise known as Mossad) has provided training for Burma's intelligence agencies. Israel is also believed to have trained Burma's new anti-terrorist squad and the SLORC's personal bodyguards.

RUMORS Persist that Israel's Central Institute for Intelligence and Security (otherwise known as Mossad) has provided training for Burma's intelligence agencies. Israel is also believed to have trained Burma's new anti-terrorist squad and the SLORC's personal bodyguards.

Similarly, The Conspiracy of Treasonous Minions Within the Myanmar Naing-Ngan and Traitorous Cohorts Abroad, another book, published by the SLORC in 1989, also demonstrated the breadth of DDSI's interests. To support the SLORC's claim that it was the target of a 'rightist plot,' this book showed the results of what was described as a 'meticulous and careful investigative operation' by Burma's intelligence agencies. The book reproduced numerous surveillance photographs, organizational charts, dissident literature and intercepted correspondence. There were also numerous illustrated biographies of insurgents, political dissidents and critics of the regime. The people named in this publication covered a wide range of positions and political opinions. They included US Senator Patrick Moynihan, Rutgers University Professor Josef Silverstein, Burma scholar and Far Eastern Economic Review correspondent Bertil Lintner, Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) leader Brang Seng, Karen National Union (KNU) organizations. These range from the Communist Party of Burma, insurgent armies and illegal opposition groups, to dissident student movements and openly declared political parties. Enormous resources have been put into building up personal dossiers on known and suspected dissidents in Burma, members of the diplomatic community and even foreign critics of the regime who live abroad. For example, a book entitled Burma Communist Party's Conspiracy to take over State Power, published by the SLORC in 1989, reproduces dozens of biographies of 'subversives,' together with illustrations of confiscated documents, book and photographs. 'Leftist' literature seized from the homes of arrested dissidents and shown to journalists ranged from the official biography of North Korean leader Kim-Il-sung to Armies of the Night by American novelist Norman Mailer. Other materials displayed at a press conference about the 'plot' included surveillance photographs of particular suspects, as well as pamphlets, leaflets and other campaign literature distributed during the 1988 pro-democracy demonstrations. All had been collected and filed by the DDSI to build up a comprehensive picture of an alleged 'plot' by the CPB to infiltrate political parties and student groups, and to cause civil unrest throughout the country, all with the aim of seizing power.

The public statements made by Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt, and the publications issued in connection with the 'communist' and 'right-wing' plots, give a good indication of the DDSI's current interests and capabilities. It is clear, for example, that a major effort is put into gathering information about the structure, membership, policies and methods of various 'underground' and 'above ground'
leader Bo Mya, and Dr. Raymond Tint Wai, Chairman of the Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma (CRDB), who is based in Australia. All this material was presented to invited journalists, to support the SLORC’s claim that there was a conspiracy to ‘do great harm to the country’ by anti-government elements within Burma and abroad, including certain foreign powers, by manipulating ‘simple and honest people.’

From the material illustrated in these two publications, and described at related press conferences by Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt (in his capacity as Director General of the NIB), a number of conclusions can be drawn. It would appear, for example, that the Burmese intelligence agencies (primarily the DDSI) have a considerable capacity to monitor organizations and individuals believed to constitute a threat to the regime. They are also able to collect large amounts of information, both within Burma and abroad. Much of this material is photographic and documentary, including reports lodged under a range of regulations and martial law decrees. The intelligence agencies still seem heavily dependent on HUMINT, however, resulting from state and mobile surveillance, agents provocateurs, and the use of informers and infiltrators to report from within suspect groups. It would also appear that the DDSI employs the full range of counter-intelligence techniques, including the installation of secret listening devices, telephone taps, mail interception and unauthorized access to bank accounts. It is possible that the DDSI even interferes with diplomatic bags. Outside Burma, the DDSI maintains a close watch over the many ‘politicized Burmese exiles’ living in places like the United Kingdom, West Germany, Thailand, Australia and the United States. It is commonly assumed, for example, that such groups are infiltrated by SLORC agents, a belief that is probably welcomed by the regime. As Bertil Lintner has written, "Among the Burmese community abroad, no one was ever sure who was an informer or not; mutual suspicion neutralized them as a political force."

In addition to the evidence offered by these official publications, it is apparent to any informed visitor to Burma that the DDSI continues to mount a major counter-intelligence effort against foreigners, including local diplomatic missions and their staff. Diplomatic personnel posted to Rangoon still complain of being watched, and assume as a matter of course that their phones are tapped. Even now, they must obtain permission to travel more than 25 kilometers from the Rangoon General Post Office, although fewer areas than before are prohibited to them. Burmese officials still face restrictions on their contacts with foreigners. Domestic servants are still subject to interrogation about the activities and personal beliefs of particular diplomats they know. Burmese nationals who enjoy close relations with foreign diplomats are sometimes questioned about the beliefs and the activities of their friends.

This surveillance effort is still extended to other foreign residents and visitors to the country, although the much larger number of people now in this category probably means that the DDSI has to be more selective. (A major effort is being made to attract tourists to Burma, and visas are now valid for two months. Temporary residence permits for business purposes are also much easier to obtain.) Official attention is paid mostly to those foreigners who are known to be critical of the military regime, or who are in a position to influence wider perceptions of events in Burma, such as journalists and academics. Evidence of the old xenophobia remains, however, as clearly demonstrated by Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt in a public address in May 1997, during which he said:

> It has become especially necessary to contain the undisciplined import of foreign beliefs under the pretext of democracy and human rights, unfettered freedom, and Western-style behavior, such as individualism, which determines the family or Union spirit which the Myanmar people cherish. He said it was necessary to contain efforts to promote the spread of Western behavior and culture in the country.

Outside Rangoon, some regional airports still require visitors to register their arrival and departure, and hotel owners are still required to report foreign guests to the authorities within 24 hours of their arrival.

Particular attention is paid by the DDSI to influential opposition figures like Aung San Suu Kyi, (former) General Tin U and other senior members of
the NLD. For example, Aung San Suu Kyi's house on University Avenue in Rangoon is kept under constant (and obvious) surveillance, both by uniformed and plain-clothes officials. The crowd which [used to] gather outside her gate on the weekends to hear her speak [were] usually photographed by DDSI officers and, presumably, later identified for the DDSI's records. Anyone actually paying a call on Aung San Suu Kyi is required to register their name, occupation, national identity and passport details in a register maintained by the DDSI at a small office just inside her compound. Anyone speaking to her on the telephone can expect to have their conversation monitored by the DDSI and, if the conversation is not to the regime's liking, even disconnected. This occurred in May 1996, for example, when the authorities cut Aung San Suu Kyi's phone line in the middle of a live telephone conversation interview with the BBC World Service in London. The opposition leader had just finished commenting on the Tatmadaw's role in Burmese politics.33

Under the SLORC, the DDSI appears to be responsible for most reported arrests and investigations of political suspects in Burma. It is also most often accused of brutality and atrocities.34 Organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch/Asia, for example, have documented numerous cases of torture by different DDSI units. Those most often named have been MI-6, MI-7 and MI-14, all based in Rangoon, and MI-16 in Mandalay, but their reputation may derive simply from the fact that most public reports have come from political activists and other dissidents captured and interrogated in these population centers. For example, accusations of human rights violations have also been levelled at MI-5, based in Hpa-an and MI-4 in Basssein.35 Amnesty International has stated that prisoners have been ill-treated not only by the DDSI and its MIS units, but also by the SID, and BSI.36 Sometimes people have been taken in and beaten by military intelligence officers before being handed over to the PPF, and formally arrested.37 Amnesty International has identified 20 detention centers across Burma where brutal interrogations have taken place. These include prisons, the main DDSI interrogation center at Ye Kyi Aing camp and over a dozen other military intelligence centers located in Rangoon and seven other divisions and states.38 There are probably others which have not yet come to the notice of international observers.

Although the DDSI/MIS has been described as 'one of Asia's most efficient secret police forces,' and has clearly amassed enormous amounts of information on particular Burmese organizations and personalities, its coverage seems to be wider than it is deep.39 Even with all the personnel it has at its command (including those of its sister agencies), it clearly cannot cover everything it would like. It has in effect set itself the target of monitoring the entire Burmese population, as well as everyone outside the country who may conceivably constitute a threat to the regime. This is an enormous task which would tax agencies much larger and better equipped than DDSI. It also appears that the influence of the DDSI is resented by other members of the SLORC, who draw parallels between Khin Nyunt and ambitious chiefs of intelligence in the past. Should a power struggle occur, then Khin Nyunt is unlikely to find any great support among other parts of the Tatmadaw, which reportedly fears the DDSI's power and resents its surveillance of their own activities.40

The ability of the DDSI staff accurately to analyze all the information it manages to obtain, is unclear. Over the years, the military regime has repeatedly demonstrated its deep-seated insecurity and its ability to manage criticism (both from within Burma and overseas) in a considered and rational fashion. Sometimes, the regime's fears seem to border on paranoia, as occurred in 1989 when the SLORC imagined that it was about to face a sea- and airborne invasion by the United States.41 In such a climate, balance and self-critical assessments are likely to be difficult. The intelligence agencies have been able to choose the best recruits, but political reliability has often been judged more important than intellectual qualities or a knowledge of the world outside of Burma. There will also be the problem, in such a closed society, of intelligence officers being reluctant to give honest views, for fear of themselves falling under suspicion. In addition, the power and privileges enjoyed by the Tatmadaw, and the members of the country's intelligence agencies in particular, set them apart from the rest of the population. They clearly do not share the hardships, fears and
aspirations of most Burmese. Even with their vast networks of informers, it seems difficult for the intelligence agencies accurately to gauge the popular mood and predict the behavior of the average Burmese citizen in certain circumstances.

As a consequence of all these factors, the DDSI has been guilty of some remarkable lapses since 1988, requiring major reorganizations from time to time. Following the massive internal unrest that year, for example, surveillance of both the armed forces and civil population greatly increased. The regime was badly shaken by the size and extent of the pro-democracy demonstrations, and was particularly concerned that members of all three armed services marched with the demonstrators. Even some members of the BSI reportedly joined the protests against continuing military rule. The potential for dissident elements within the armed forces to provoke a mutiny, or cause a major split, is something that has attracted the closest attention from the DDSI. This concern grew even further after the 1990 general elections. The poll demonstrated among other things that a large proportion of Burma's population, including many in the Tatmadaw itself, supported a return to democratic rule. The fact that the regime permitted free and fair elections to be held at all, suggests that it had intelligence advice predicting either that the pro-SLORC National Unity Party would win outright, or that it could form a governing coalition with one or two smaller parties which were sympathetic to military rule. Instead, the elections resulted in a landslide victory for the opposition NLD, forcing the SLORC to renege on its promise to hand over power to an elected civilian government.

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**MILITARY INTELLIGENCE UNDER THE SLORC**

The Ne Win regime's preoccupation with its own survival has long consumed precious resources and distracted the DDSI/MIS from pursuing its purely military intelligence functions. This situation remains under the SLORC, but it would appear that some effort has been made in recent years to rectify the situation. The regime seems to have accepted, for example, that unless the Tatmadaw can command better strategic and operational intelligence capabilities, then it will remain vulnerable to both external and internal military threats. While the SLORC has managed to negotiate ceasefire agreements with almost all major insurgent groups (the Karens being the notable exception), tensions are still high and the potential remains for widespread fighting to break out again. There have already been serious clashes, for example, with Wa and Karenni insurgent groups. Also, the SLORC is still nervous about possible foreign military intervention in Burma's affairs, and there are tensions with Burma's western and eastern neighbors. Perhaps more importantly, unless the Tatmadaw's operational intelligence capabilities are improved, all the new arms and equipment it has acquired since 1988 will lack proper direction and coordination, and thus fail to realize their full potential.

Under the SLORC, Burma's SIGINT effort is still managed by the Directorate of Signals which, like the DDSI, is part of the Defense Ministry's General Staff Department. International interceptors are reportedly the responsibility of specialist units based in the Defense Ministry compound in Rangoon, and are derived from larger Tatmadaw communications facilities at Mingaladon and Hmawbi, and possibly the large military communications station in Taunggyi. Once again, it is difficult to obtain reliable information, but there is evidence to suggest that the scope of Burma's strategic SIGINT operations has been widened in recent years. In addition to foreign radio traffic, Burma now seems able more easily to monitor radar and other electronic emissions emanating from outside the country. There have been persistent reports, for example, that China has provided Burma with a range of sophisticated...
electronic warfare equipment as part of a broader plan to upgrade its own SIGINT capabilities in the region.\textsuperscript{47} Most attention has focused on China's apparent role in establishing or upgrading a signals intercept station on Great Coco Island in the Andaman Sea. There have been several reports that, since, 1992, this base has boasted a 50-metre-high antenna and sensitive equipment capable of picking up not only radio and radar transmissions from ships in the vicinity, but also electronic emissions (ELINT) from missile tests at the Indian Defense Research and Development Laboratory in Hyderabad.\textsuperscript{48}

A number of other sites for new SIGINT stations have apparently been mooted. For example, there have been numerous reports over the past few years that Burma has been approached by China to install (or at least upgrade) signals intelligence equipment at several places around the Burmese coast.\textsuperscript{49} Once
operational, this equipment would provide China (and presumably Burma as well) with a comprehensive electronic surveillance coverage of the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal. One well-informed Burma-watcher has stated that the Burmese have come under pressure from the Chinese to permit the PRC’s intelligence services access not only to Hainggyi and Great Coco islands (which are the places most often mentioned), but also to Ramree Island and Zadetkyi Island along the southern coast. The latter is considered particularly sensitive as it is located off Kawthaung, Burma’s southernmost point, and therefore close to the strategically important Malacca Straits. Other possible sites of interest to the Chinese include Kadan Island, off the Burmese coast near Mergui, and Heinze Island north of Tavoy. It has been suggested that China wishes to build new facilities or improve old Burmese facilities on all these islands, with a view to conducting SIGINT operations against other regional countries.

To support these claims, observers have cited reports of bilateral military agreements between the two countries. The most recent appear to have been negotiated in October 1996, and finalized in early 1997. According to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, it specifically covers the exchange of intelligence on ‘threats to their respective countries’ and Chinese training for Burmese personnel in ‘signals intelligence in coastal areas’. Other possible sites of interest to the Chinese include Kadan Island, off the Burmese coast near Mergui, and Heinze Island north of Tavoy. It has been suggested that China wishes to build new facilities or improve old Burmese facilities on all these islands, with a view to conducting SIGINT operations against other regional countries.

The full extent of China’s involvement in Burma’s intelligence improvement program, however, is very difficult to determine. Even greater uncertainty surrounds China’s efforts to establish or use signals intelligence facilities around Burma’s coastline to spy on other regional countries. While some of the reports on this subject are quite convincing, others are much less so, and most have yet to be confirmed by independent sources. There would appear to be certain benefits to Burma in permitting China at least some of the access it desires, particularly if both countries share the product from SIGINT operations conducted from Burmese territory. Yet some caution needs to be exercised over the extent to which Burma can be seen as an agent of the Chinese in this field. Given Burma’s fierce independence and lingering suspicions of China’s longer term strategic intentions, it is unlikely that the SLORC would permit China all the access that it wants. Nor can any Chinese military presence be considered permanent, whatever the apparent benefits of current intelligence-sharing arrangements.

In addition to possible Chinese assistance, there have been reports of the SLORC purchasing considerable quantities of electronic and communications equipment from several other suppliers, including Singapore, Russia and possibly Israel. It would be remarkable if none of it was related to intelligence collection or dissemination in some way. In particular, Singapore and Israel are suspected of providing signals interception and encryption equipment to DDSI, with training packages. Also there is good reason to believe that the SLORC has acquired some equipment, possibly from Singapore’s Defense Technology Group, to protect Burmese communications from interception by hostile agencies. China, Thailand and India, for example, are all reported to monitor official Burmese radio traffic on a regular basis. The international interest in Burma generated by developments since the 1988 pro-democracy demonstrations could have also prompted greater attention from the signals intelligence services of other countries. There are persistent rumors in Rangoon, for example, that at least one other member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been conducting SIGINT operations against Burma since the SLORC developed closer military relations with China. If this is the case, then it would probably be known to the Burmese, who would have a strong interest in keeping their communications secret.

Under the SLORC, the military regime has clearly retained a capability to monitor, record and transcribe open-source short-wave radio transmissions to Burma. The SLORC’s interest in these broadcasts was graphically demonstrated in 1990, when the regime published *Skyful of Lies: B.B.C., V.O.A.: Their Broadcasts and Rebuttals to Disinformation*. This 285-page book reproduced the texts of almost all the news broadcasts made by the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation] and VOA [Voice of America] in August 1988 about the political unrest then sweeping Burma. The SLORC not only complained bitterly about what it saw as ‘interference in Burma’s internal affairs’ by these radio stations (and by implication their host countries) but the regime also lodged protests with the Indian government.
over broadcasts made by All India Radio. These too were highly critical of the Tatmadaw’s brutal response to the widespread pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988. As part of its wider intelligence effort, the DDSI keeps comprehensive dossiers on all staff working for the BBC, VOA and AIR Burmese-language programs. These dossiers contain details about their past employment, family backgrounds and assumed political sympathies.

Despite several attempts over the past 50 years, the Burmese government does not appear to have been able to develop a capability regularly or effectively to jam offending radio broadcasts. For example, there have been several clandestine broadcasting ventures since 1948, including the Karen insurgents’ ‘Radio Kawthulay,’ the Parliamentary Democracy Party’s ‘Patriotic Youth Front Radio,’ and the CPB’s clandestine ‘Voice of the People of Burma.’ Yet few of these stations appear to have been subject to consistent or successful jamming operations. In late 1995, however, the SLORC attempted to jam Burmese-language programs produced by the BBC and the Voice of America, probably using the one-kilowatt transmitter at Taunggyi operated by the Defense Forces Broadcasting Unit. It is also possible that at the same time jamming was directed against the opposition ‘Democratic Voice of Burma,’ from which 1995 has been broadcast by Radio Norway. These attempts were only partly successful, however, and did not last very long, possibly because of the negative publicity these actions generated. It is possible that the Tatmadaw has only recently acquired the technical capability to jam multiple radio broadcasts and has not yet mastered it, or been able to generate sufficient power to implement it effectively.

In addition to these at the strategic level, there has also been an effort to improve the Tatmadaw’s SIGINT capabilities in the field. Each Regional Command has its own smaller receivers and direction finders, under the supervision of signals specialists outposted from Rangoon. Such officers are also posted to each of the country’s 11 mobile Light Infantry Divisions, and every Infantry battalion has a signals section able to conduct basic intercepts. In recent years it appears that the equipment and technical advice available to these officers has been significantly upgraded. In April 1997, for example, the Far Eastern Economic Review reported the presence of a ‘six-wheeled truck with wireless antennae, evidently a mobile signals intelligence facility near Loa Htwe, near the Thai border. The truck was apparently monitoring traffic between United Wa State Army insurgent units.’ The report went on to say that ‘the intelligence it picks up is shared with the Chinese’ and speculated that Chinese experts were present at the site to train Burmese operators. The SLORC’s ability to intercept and record insurgent radio traffic was graphically revealed in 1995. In a 28-part story entitled ‘Whither KNU,’ published in the state-controlled newspaper New Light of Myanmar, the SLORC quoted numerous radio conversations between Karen insurgents, many of them verbatim. Some details of these conversations could have been fabricated, but the series gave several other important clues to the Tatmadaw’s substantial SIGINT capabilities.

It would be expected that, if the Burma Army was making such an effort to improve its SIGINT capabilities in order to intercept insurgent radio traffic, then it would also try harder to protect its own tactical communications. Indeed, this is likely to have occurred, possibly with the help of China or other friendly countries. It would appear, however, that Burmese COMSEC is still poor. Certain military codes and ciphers seem to have remained unchanged for long periods, and others can clearly still be broken. Reporting on a visit to the Karen front line in 1990, for example, the journalist Peter Mitchell stated that:

Radio intercepts were a valuable source of intelligence to the Karen, as they had broken the Burmese code some years earlier.

Other observers too have remarked on the continuing capacity of various insurgent groups to intercept and read Burma Army communications, including those transmitted in code.

Since 1988 the Burma Air Force has taken delivery of a wide range of new communications equipment (mainly radars and radios from China) and it is likely that some at least are being used for intelligence-gathering purposes. The BAF reportedly operates both ‘Radar Regiments’ and ‘Electronic Battalions,’ both of which probably have a SIGINT role. BAF personnel from these units are posted not only to major airfields, such as Mingaladon,
Hmaub and Myitkyina, but also to strategic sites around the country’s periphery, like Namhsan, Kutkai and Loi Mwe.” These facilities seem to be devoted largely to air traffic control and early warning, but probably also serve as electronic listening posts for the intelligence services.

The Burma Navy has always had a rudimentary SIGINT capability, based on its larger ships and shore stations (including Great Coco Island). Since 1988, however, the navy has taken delivery of a number of new vessels (mainly Hainan and Houaun class patrol boats from China) which carry much more sophisticated electronic equipment than the Burma Navy has had in the past. It is also likely that, if the funds become available, the Burma Navy will take delivery of two or three Chinese frigates. All these vessels will permit the navy to make a much greater contribution to the SLORC’s increased intelligence-collection efforts.

Since 1988 the Burma Air Force has taken delivery of a wide range of new communications equipment (mainly radars and radios from China) and it is likely that some at least are being used for intelligence-gathering purposes.

Burma has long possessed a modest capability to produce and intercept overhead imagery (IMINT). After independence, for example, the Burma Air Force could take aerial photographs from cameras fixed under its converted fighter and transport aircraft, and later the BAF acquired more stable platforms like the Beechcraft Queen Air. The Cessna 550 Citation purchased by Ne Win as a VIP transport in 1982 has also been used for aerial survey work and could be used for military purposes if required. There is some evidence too that the BAF has employed its Fairchild Hiller FH-227 and F-27 Fokker Friendships for surveillance, and it is likely that these aircraft have been used to collect imagery of insurgent-held areas. The SLORC also seems to have used overhead imagery to monitor the activities of Thai logging firms granted concessions to exploit Burmese teak reserves. While no information on the subject is publicly available, the SLORC has probably taken steps in recent years to improve this capacity, possibly with the assistance of friendly and technologically more advanced countries like China and Singapore. There has also been speculation that the SLORC’s intelligence-sharing arrangements with the Chinese may include the provision of satellite imagery, but this cannot be confirmed. For counter-insurgent operations in jungle or heavily wooded areas, the imagery provided by aircraft may be more suitable. In any case, if it is required, good satellite imagery is now available from commercial sources, and it is possible that the Tatmadaw has taken advantage of this development to build up its photographic coverage of the country. The cost of such material would be a factor, but intelligence is likely to be given a high priority for Burma’s scarce foreign exchange.

Burma’s intelligence apparatus has always been an integral part of the country’s government and society. After independence the Nu administration looked to the BSI to enforce standards of behavior among government officials and to regulate official transactions. The CID, SID and Detective Department not only helped the Police Force maintain law and order but also exercised certain intelligence functions. The armed forces needed to develop military intelligence capabilities in order to fight the numerous insurgent groups which challenged the authority of the central government and, at one stage, even threatened to cause the collapse of the Union. All these intelligence capabilities were significantly strengthened during the period of the military ‘caretaker’ government, as Ne Win and the Tatmadaw sought to impose greater control over what they saw as a dangerously undisciplined society which threatened to squander the results of their sacrifices. After the 1962 coup, the military regime was given free rein to develop an intelligence apparatus which not only supported military operations but ensured that any challenge to continuing military rule would not go unnoticed.

While the elements of this apparatus were in many cases technically civilian, military intelligence was always dominant. As Robert Taylor has point-
ed out, 'Military intelligence [has] served as a means of social control throughout the existence of independent Burma.' Under U Nu's democratic government, the Tatmadaw's critical security role and close involvement in pacification programs gave it considerable influence over people and events throughout the country. Even from this early period, Burma Army officers held most senior positions in the Police Force (and thus controlled the police intelligence agencies). After 1958, and to an even greater extent after the 1962 coup, members of the armed forces, were appointed to senior positions in the government and the bureaucracy. This ensured, among other things, that all the country's intelligence and specialized security agencies were effectively placed under military control. After the establishment of the Military Intelligence Service in 1958 (which later became the Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence), Ne Win and the military hierarchy had a powerful instrument through which to exert almost total control over the country and its citizens. Bertil Lintner has described the MIS around this time as 'a secret police that served to preserve the power of Ne Win, his family and the ruling elite.'

Throughout the Revolutionary Council and BSPP [Burma Socialist Programme Party] periods, Burma's intelligence apparatus was synonymous with military intelligence. The MIS not only expanded in size, but also in the scope of its operations. It first duplicated, then dominated all the country's other intelligence agencies. Under the control of the NIB, the DDSI/MIS became the means by which the regime attempted to detect and stamp out any opposition to continued military rule. It acquired almost unlimited powers, which it exercised with ruthless determination. Its officers tended to be a breed apart. As Rodney Tasker wrote in 1983, they were often:

\[\text{men of the world compared with other more short-sighted, dogmatic figures in the Burmese leadership. They were able to travel abroad, talk freely to foreigners and generally look beyond the confines of the current regime.}^8\]

Indeed, so powerful did the DDSI/MIS become, that on several occasions it was seen to constitute a threat to the regime itself. Repeated purges of the military intelligence leadership may have helped to reduce this threat, but they also contributed to a number of serious intelligence failures. The most obvious was the inability of the regime to foresee the widespread pro-democracy demonstrations which occurred in 1988, or to predict the outcome of the 1990 general elections.

Under the SLORC, even greater reliance has been placed on the country's military intelligence apparatus. Despite the fact that the CPB insurgency collapsed in 1989, and ceasefire arrangements have been negotiated with most other major insurgent groups, the resources devoted to the DDSI/MIS have greatly increased. This effort seems aimed at stamping out any challenge to continued military rule, through an overwhelming monopoly of information about military, political, economic and social developments in the country. This all-encompassing surveillance includes the armed forces, and even extend to those expatriates and foreigners abroad who maintain an active interest in Burmese affairs. Attention has also been given to the purely military aspects of Burma's intelligence apparatus. At the strategic level, the SLORC seems to have benefited from agreements with the Chinese (and perhaps others) for the provision of modern equipment and the exchange of intelligence product. At the operational level too, the armed forces have benefited from new equipment, training and advice. It remains to be seen, however, how effectively these new assets are employed. Unless they can be translated into real intelligence capabilities, then the SLORC will be unable to reap full value from all the new weapons systems which it has acquired over the past nine years.

The costs to Burma of this massive intelligence effort are impossible to calculate, but they must be considerable. Every country has legitimate intelligence requirements, but the SLORC's allocation of scarce resources (including precious foreign exchange) to the blanket surveillance of the entire population inevitably means that other critical areas of Burmese society, like education and health services, suffer the consequences. Human rights issues aside, serious questions must also be raised about the stability and ultimate survival of a system which depends to such an extent on its security services. This is particularly the case, given the regime's obvi-
ous intelligence failures since the massive popular unrest in 1988, and the extent to which it feels obliged to monitor dissent within the armed forces themselves. It would be a grim irony if the Tatmadaw was able successfully to improve its purely military intelligence capabilities, only to lose power through its inability to predict internal unrest or even to prevent the establishment of a democratic civilian administration, of the kind clearly preferred by most Burmese.

NOTES
2. The precise functions of the SLORC's National Security and Management Committee are not clear.
3. Khin Nyunt was promoted to Brigadier on 18 September 1988, the day that the SLORC took over the government.
4. The headquarters of the BSI was in Anawrahta Street, but is now in Lewis Street, behind the Strand Hotel. The SID headquarters was in the Secretariat on Mahabandoola Street, but is now believed to be on 47th Street near the YMCA Building. The CID had its headquarters at Ywama, Insein, but may have moved. The Detectives Department probably has its main office at PPF headquarters in the Secretariat. The Customs Department is on Strand Road, the Foreigners Section of the Immigration Department is on Pansodan Street and the Foreign Ministry is on Prome Road. See Amnesty International, Myanmar: 'In the National Interest,' p.28-9; and Rangoon Guide Book, pp.186-99.
5. Interview, Sydney, October 1996
6. Interview, Rangoon, April 1995
7. MISIS was formed in 1992, but does not seem to have been very active since then. While it draws on the resources of several official agencies, including the Ministry of Defense, it is essentially a Foreign Ministry creation.
8. Interview, Sydney, October 1996.
10. Personal communication, 2 January 1996.
11. Apparently, the distinction between various levels in the DDSI structure, and the designation of particular units at each level, is readily apparent to Burmese language speakers. Most reports in English, however, tend simply to cite MI units by number, without specifying whether they are bureaus, branches or companies.
15. Interview, Sydney, October 1996.
18. ibid. See also Amnesty International, 'Myanmar: No law at all,' p.13.
20. Interview, Canberra, April 1997. Ironically, the suburb where this training is reportedly being given abounds with Burmese place names.
22. ibid., p.1.
24. ibid., p.20.
25. ibid., p.1.
26. For example, Order 1/90, promulgated in 1990, required that all households in the 42 townships of Rangoon Division register any visitors with the authorities. Amnesty International, Myanmar: Renewed repression, p.4.
27. Although several new telecommunications systems are being installed in Burma, the nature of the equipment would still appear to make telephone interception relatively easy. See, 'Myanmar,' The APT Yearbook 1997 (Asia-Pacific Telecommunity, Bangkok, 1997), pp.436-42.
32. Personal observation, Rangoon, November 1996.
33. See 'Suu Kyi interview pulled from air,' Bangkok Post, 30 May 1996; and 'Slorc adamant it will never give up powers,' The Nation, 30 May 1996.
35. ibid., p.29. See also Amnesty International, Myanmar: Renewed repression; and note 111 regarding the difficulty of identifying specific MIS units.
36. See, for example, Amnesty International, Myanmar: 'In The National Interest,' p.28.
37. ibid., p.19.
41. Selth, Transforming the Tatmadaw, p.138.
42. Lintner, 'Myanmar's military intelligence,' p.39.
43. Personal communication from London, January 1996. See also Bertil Lintner, 'Backdown or bloodbath,' Far Eastern Economic

61. 'BBC Burma Jammed,' *International Herald Tribune*, 22 August 1995; and personal communication from Bangkok, 1 September 1995; See also *World Radio TV Handbook 1997* (Billboard Books, Amsterdam, 1997), pp.215-16. The Taunggyi transmitter is also used for Radio Myawaddy, the Tatmadaw's own radio station.


63. Interview, Sydney, October 1996.


65. Ibid. It appears that this vehicle is part of a wider Burma Army effort to monitor the communications of Wa insurgents, who are currently competing with the Tatmadaw for control over the opium-growing areas along the Thai and Chinese borders.

66. *New Light of Myanmar*, 29 January-5 March 1995. The series was purportedly written by 'A Resident of Kayin State.' These (and some additional) articles were subsequently edited and published as *Whither KNU?* (News and Periodicals Enterprise, Rangoon, 1995). See also Ball, *Signals Intelligence in the Post-Cold War Era,* p.88; and Kurt Hanson, *Calamity at Kawmura,* *Soldier of Fortune*, Vol.20, No.9, September 1995, p.72.


71. Ibid.

72. An aerial photograph is included, for example, in *Kuomintang Aggression Against Burma*, p.161.

73. Selth, *Transforming the Tatmadaw*, pp.72-3.

74. See, for example, Falla, *True Love and Bartholomew*, p.357.


76. See, for example, 'Spy satellites: the next leap forward: Exploiting commercial satellite technology,' *Jane's International Defence Review*, January 1997, pp.26-32.


On September 30, 1997, U Ohn Gyaw, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burma's State Law and Order Restoration Council (since renamed) addressed a meeting of the Asia Society in New York City. U Ohn Gyaw was in New York to attend the United Nations General Assembly.

The following is a transcript of a question and answer session that followed the Foreign Minister's address. It was recorded, transcribed and edited by Burma Debate.
QUESTION: Mr. Foreign Minister. If you were to offer some thoughts to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, on how to better shape United States-Myanmar relations, how would you suggest that journey ought to begin?

OHN GYAW: Initially, I believe the embassy of the United States in Yangon would be highly responsible to make reports that will translate into what Myanmar as a country is doing domestically. As far as international relations are concerned, whatever we are now trying to present to the United Nations General Assembly as well as in the regional fora, whatever we are trying to contribute towards peace and stability in the region by our participation in ASEAN, these are the factors for the United States government or Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to take into consideration.... We are on our own; we are looking after the welfare of our people, we do not infringe or interfere in the affairs of the United States. What we are doing is to ensure a future for our people. We wish that she would understand.

Q: My question to you Sir, Your Excellency, is that you were once quoted as saying that, “with or without Aung San Suu Kyi we will get democracy and with or without Aung San Suu Kyi, we will have dialogue.” What is your vision and your plan for achieving this democracy and dialogue, which I think is in all our aspirations?

OG: In your own question the answer is there. I don't need to repeat it. Democracy is a system that we will have to build as a country, or as persons. In our country the process of democracy is going on. That is the reason why I answered to CNN, with or without anybody, the process is going on. It is not an event. It is a process.

Q: Is China the largest commercial investor at this moment in Burma? Could you comment on the extent of Chinese businesses in Burma?

OG: Since September 1988 we have had the border trade with China. In fact, the previous government had signed the border trade agreement with China... China, as you know... would like to have a gate out to the sea. So they would like to promote Yunnan [Province] as an engine for development, because if the products of Yunnan are transported to other parts of China it will be too costly. So what we enjoy... what we benefit from is a very prosperous border trade with China particularly Yunnan, to the tune of 600 to 700 million dollars per year. When we opened up the market-oriented economy as well as the multi-party system, and we encouraged foreign investment, of course the nearest and most interested people were the Chinese people. Basically China and Myanmar, on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, do not have any problem at all. So the investments are coming. Then of course they are interested in many areas of trade and development. This is what we are doing. But China is not the highest investor in our country. At one time it was the United Kingdom and right now I believe it’s Singapore and Malaysia.

Q: I have two questions for you. Number one, do you ever see your government allowing Aung San Suu Kyi to fully participate in any form of talks or to fully participate in the government? Question number two, given what happened over the weekend [Editor’s note: SLORC allowed the holding of a conference of the National League for Democracy], do you think that SLORC will allow further political party, or opposition party gatherings, if Aung San Suu Kyi wants to have that?

OG: A few days ago there was the so-called conference of the nine-year [anniversary] of the establishment of the NLD and permission was asked and granted to hold it in the compound of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. And initially 300 persons would be attending but later on it was extended to nearly 500 people. So the two-day
meeting went on very well. This is what the government is trying to provide; the means of the early signs of democracy, because we do not think that we have complete democracy. If you look at our country, compared with other fully democratic countries, then of course you'll have a very bad impression. But what we can do, we are doing. And the second question is that... what is the second question?

Q: Do you think that Aung San Suu Kyi will ever be allowed to fully participate in the current government given that the opposition did win the elections in 1990?

OG: To participate in the government, there are various ways. For example, in this country Presidential elections take place and then the President will appoint somebody who is not elected. And in many countries also, those people will be appointed even though they did not win in an election. But as far as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is concerned, I think you will have to do your homework. From the very beginning she was not eligible to become an elected representative because of the Election Law. Her father, our national hero General Aung San, before we became independent... hastily had to draft a constitution because we wanted to be independent... as you see that... we were under colonial rule for a hundred years. General Aung San, being a nationalist, did not want to see the Chinese and Indians and the Europeans dominating the economic life of our country, even though we politically had become independent. That was the reason why he asked that people in his defense ministry who had European blood, who had Anglo-European, Anglo-Indian... these people to leave. And at the same time, to be eligible as a representative, one had to contest in the elections. So the Election Law says those people who are getting assistance and cooperation from outside, those people who married foreigners, will not be eligible. Forty years later, when the 1990 elections took place, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was not eligible to become a representative, to even be in the contest. And how in a society of democracy, can you take part in a government without being a member of the Parliament, or a member of the Assembly?

If you look at our country, compared with other fully democratic countries, then of course you'll have a very bad impression.

But what we can do, we are doing.

Q: I have visited Myanmar, I've gone along the borders, I've seen work that your government has done to help the people change their policies, poppies [replaced with] breeding farms, schools... they tried every way to help the people. I personally witnessed the burning of 2 million dollars worth of drugs... How do you account for the fact that the Western press has never said one good thing about Myanmar, will only say bad things whether it's true or not?

OG: The essence of my little talk today is to bring the information that what we do in our country is not only for the good of our people, particularly in this drug business, what we do here is on the basis of supply and demand. If one country is trying to accuse a country... "You are supplying something"...but as long as there is demand, the supplies will go on. So in as much as the yardstick of human rights or regulation that each country would be practicing, we do our duty. We are trying to burn nearly 5 million dollars, street price, of the apprehended illicit drugs. And we are also
destroying the heroin refineries in the border areas. As I said, this is the national responsibility of Myanmar. We are doing as much as possible and we wish other countries... understand.

Khun Sa surrendered unconditionally.

Yes... he is staying where he should be,

and there is no extradition agreement with

the United States. We do not extradite

anybody to any country.

Q • My question is about Khun Sa. I read an interview in an Austrian newspaper where he was asked, "Are you a drug lord or are you not?" Khun Sa, who is still indicted in New York City but not in Rangoon, said, "I am not a drug trader or drug lord. I am a real estate agent, that's all I am." Is that true?

OG • I'm not Khun Sa. Khun Sa has answered the question already.

Q • He's not under detention though...?

OG • No, he's not.

Q • So was he rehabilitated?

OG • There's no question of rehabilitation. We have been fighting against the Khun Sa establishment. In my statement in the United Nations I reflected that nowhere in the world will a country be sacrificing so many soldiers in the interdiction [process], about 700 soldiers from 1988 until now. They sacrificed their lives, including when we fought against the Khun Sa establishment. Khun Sa surrendered unconditionally. Yes... he is staying where he should be, and there is no extradition agreement with the United States. We do not extradite anybody to any country.

Q • I am just curious about what he is doing right now.

OG • He has already answered. The interview was conducted by the Austrian journalist. You read it. I am not Khun Sa and I cannot answer for his...

Q • Could you again clarify your answer... are there any government restrictions on Khun Sa's activities now? Is he in Rangoon? Are there any restrictions on his activities or does the government care at all about what he does?

OG • I said he's staying where he should be!

Q • Which is?

OG • Which is, he's staying where he should be!

Q • I guess I don't understand where he should be.

OG • He has already given the press interview. So the movements are not restricted. As far as his livelihood is concerned, then he will have his people trying to provide for him.

Q • Regarding the economic relationship between China and Myanmar, I was wondering if you could touch a little bit on the political and security aspects of that relationship. There have been reports that Myanmar has made available to the Chinese certain landing and base rights. I wonder what is the status of that.

OG • It's a long story. The relationship between China and Myanmar dates back a long, long time. In the contemporary history of Myanmar's independence, what we did was personal diplomacy... In Asia, this means an exchange of visits between the countries. And during liberation movements, they support each other.
are created — mutual non-aggression, non-interference... these sort of values. Because we became victims of war, we do not want to see war again in our land, on any other places. So that is the reason why our relationship with China started with the exchange of delegations, visits.

And then later on in the '50s we established the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. This Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is now becoming the New World Order. Since the Soviet Union fell, there is no international order as of yet. Now other countries are practicing non-interference and non-aggression and these are the 'norms' [by which] each country should be [operating]. With China, through this close and cordial friendship, we have an exchange of visits, we have an exchange of trade delegations, we have an exchange of cultural delegations. This is where we conduct the bilateral relations. As far as the investment and trade volume is concerned, it is because we are neighboring countries... For the United States, the close neighbor would have the highest exchange of trade. That is the reason why in Myanmar we are quite at home with dealing with China, but people from outside looking at the strategic position of Myanmar, they would like to indicate that China would like to make use of Myanmar's island or land or whatever it is. The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence is that in our country we will not allow anybody, anybody, to station [himself] in order to attack a third country. Meaning that we will not sign a defense pact, we will not be entering into a security pact. We are independent. We will show that we are independent. So whatever information you have is wrong.

Q • Mr. Ambassador, you've given us a discussion of Myanmar's relationship in the Southeast Asia region... ASEAN. But Myanmar also belongs to two other regions, the East Asia region and the South Asia region. So could you elaborate on your discussion of the long history of Myanmar's relations with China in terms of Myanmar's relations with India?

OG • We have good relations with India also because you'll recall that before the Bandung conference... before the emergence of the non-aligned movement... General Aung San, Nehru and Nassar, the leaders of the developing world, leaders of the third world... they met even before Bandung was convened... The Asian powers, at that time Ceylon, Pakistan, India, Myanmar, the leaders [of these countries] used to discuss and exchange views on how to fashion their economic and political stance in the future. So this had become the idea of the Bandung conference. Because when we became independent in 1948, most of the countries in Asia and Africa were not yet independent. In the United Nations in the Fourth Committee, Myanmar had been at the forefront of taking responsibility for this anti-colonialism... now that no country is left to be independent. So this is what we did with India. So as much as the question is concerned, the question is vis-a-vis China... If the question is about India, I would have to explain this particular point.

U Ohn Gyaw was born on March 3, 1932 in Nattalin, Burma and received his Bachelor's degree at Rangoon University. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956, serving in various Missions throughout the world including Yugoslavia, the United States, Singapore, Australia, and the former Soviet Union. From 1985-1990 he held a number of posts within the Ministry: Director of the South and Southeast Asia Division of the Ministry; Director-General of the Political Department and Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. In September, 1991 U Ohn Gyaw was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs.
AN INSIDER’S VIEW

FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT

BY THET HMU

TRANSLATION BY MAUNG MYINT THEIN

ILLUSTRATION BY YE MIN HTUT
A blurred and hazy backdrop could be seen behind the brick wall, which was twice the height of a man and enclosed the prison barracks I called home. The main wall, a second boundary around the prison barracks, arrogantly stood on high, looking down upon us. One section was studded with a stockade and main office, as well as an arsenal. Heavy locks and steel chains dangled on the iron doors. For more than an hour we stared at one another, each with his own smile — the jail's main gate and me.

A sentry in the tower lookout booth over the main gate sounded 5:30 am. This was followed by calls from other sentry booths along the wall. Then a dark silhouette came out of the morning mist and entered our special barrack. All of a sudden, the quiet of the morning was broken by the booming command: 'poun-zan.'

It was the prison employee in charge of our section. He flitted along the corridor of the special hall. I saw him moving around the east wing of the prison and then heading toward the west wing where we lived.

The west wing was still silent. The prison guard, or "hall-in-charge," was only about twenty steps away and the silence in our barracks was unbearable. I was upset and later would regret my decision, but I shouted the word 'poun-zan' at the top of my voice to wake my fellow inmates.

The word 'poun-zan' is prison terminology, which literally means to assume the squatting position with fisted hands on one's knees. It is an order to be followed strictly by each and every inmate at the designated time everyday, whenever a prison official walks in, similar to the military command 'attention.' But I find it extremely degrading to hear a loud mechanical voice shout 'poun-zan.'

If any inmate refuses to follow the sitting ritual, all inmates of that barrack must do 'poun-zan' for sometimes up to 240 hours, sometimes from ten days to one year, depending on the seriousness of the act of disobedience. According to our prison regulations we must perform the sitting ritual twice a day. In the morning, we must do 'poun-zan htaing' (sitting prison style) from 5:00 am to 6:30 or 7:00 am when the sentry would signal for the opening of the prison hall doors. This exercise is repeated in the evening from 5:00 to 6:30 p.m. when all prison doors are closed. If a prison officer walks along the hallway, we have to do the sitting. If an inmate has done something that breaks prison regulations, he must do 'poun-zan htaing' most of the day, stopping only when he sleeps.

A prison warden or someone in charge of the prison hall usually comes to inspect us performing our regular sitting duties. He counts the number of inmates in our barracks. If he makes a mistake in counting or finds somebody missing, we are doomed to do the sitting ritual through the night.

If SLORC officials or human rights committee members make a visit to our prison, we are not allowed to speak all day. We have to sit quietly, and our daily meals and showers would also be late. Now I have volunteered to take up early morning sentry duties before 5 o'clock so that my fellow inmates could sleep longer. I wake them up when the prison wardens approach our barrack. If a warden or an employee is seen approaching, I shout 'poun-zan.' Although my loud warning benefits my fellow inmates in some way, my heart sinks every time I speak the words 'poun-zan,' the command that has always trampled our pride.

Today was an unforgettable day in my life because I was released from prison. On this day I decided not to shout 'poun-zan,' the word I hated most. Last night, in bidding me farewell, my friends and other inmates sang many songs, prayed for me and asked that I convey messages to their loved ones. I could not sleep at all; neither could my fellow inmates. In the morning, they must have fallen into deep sleep, confident that I would wake them as usual. Knowing this, my earlier decision was dissolved by my tears and I was nearly ready to shout 'poun-zan' again.
This morning I had the opportunity to pay my respects to the elders in other cells. I also managed to send some clothes to the east-wing of the main jail. The clothes, which were meant to be worn upon my release, were smuggled into the prison. I had kept them in a safe place because U Tin Aung Aung, the people's representative from Mandalay, U Paik Ko of Pakokku and Gangaw representative threatened that they would pour water on me on the day I was freed as it was Thingyan time, the water festival of the Burmese people. While I was paying respects to the elders, someone from the prison office came to our barracks and told me that the prison officials wanted to see me at the office. First I went to change my clothes and then walked slowly out of the east wing towards the main jail compound.

I gave a final look at the prison barrack I had made home for many years. It was called 'Tharrawaddy Special Cells' and was surrounded by an iron fence. There were three barracks in the compound, each made up of 12 cells. The barrack in the front is well-known because Saya San lived there in his final days. Saya San was a revolutionary hero among the farmers who organized a revolt against the British rulers. Nobody occupies that cell now and it has been maintained as a small museum. Inside the cell is a picture of Saya San and a brief biography. Only prisoners of the Tharrawaddy jail are allowed to visit there and pay tribute to Saya San. On the wall hangs a sign: "Maximum Security Prison Cells." It is in these cells where we made our home.

Walking through a small door of the brick wall that surrounded the east wing, I arrived at the main jail compound. In front of me lay a long stretch of ground covered with beautiful multi-colored flowers and a green carpet of vegetable fields. Prisoners in dirty, shabby uniforms, which were originally, but no longer, white, were busy digging, carrying earth and moving broken bricks. Some were weeding the fields. The scene of prisoners working in the jail compound looked very much like a foreign movie depicting medieval slaves toiling in the fields owned by their landlords. I felt like a patient whose head has been bandaged for many weeks and has had the bandages removed for the first time. For years I had been shut off from the outside world and suddenly, I found myself a free man, ready to start a new life.

After going through a series of interrogations, I got a chance to see the chief jailer. It is a prison tradition that the chief jailer meets every inmate who receives a release order. I thought that he would most probably tell me that I should behave well when I got out of prison, however, when I sat at his desk he did not give me such advice. Rather, he said that prison authorities had made every effort to enable prisoners to fully enjoy their rights. He also explained that in some cases, though they had sympathy towards prisoners because they were government service personnel, the prison officials were not able to allow prisoners to do certain things — they could get fired or they might be given jail terms for not strictly following the orders from their superiors.

I told him that I understood very well the peculiar situation they were in. I went on to say that he should not go beyond the legal limits, and should always hold the view that prisoners are also human beings. The officer seemed to agree with what I had said.

The jailer, U Hla Tun, was new, recently transferred to Tharrawaddy. He and I went on to have a friendly conversation. He began asking me about my plans for the future. He said he would like to know what type of business I would take up; he also wanted to know whether I would leave the country. With a smile, I replied that I would probably be back in jail and that I did not like the government. Hla Tun was astonished and speechless. He was shocked and scared to hear such a rebuttal.
My heart was pounding when I walked through the main jail gate and as soon as I stepped through the gate my preconceived notion of life on the outside disappeared. I was greeted by a very distressful scene — women in shabby, dirty, patched clothes, carrying entirely naked children. From the look of those women it was obvious that they have been exposed to the sun, rain and cold weather. I thought that their sun-burnt hair must never have been touched by any type of oil. These women, in fact, were there to visit their husbands who remained in the prison.

The women were tussling with one another to get entry to the guest hall. A child cried out in a desperate mother's arms. Prison wardens were yelling at the women. My friends now inside the prison were used to beatings and being yelled at by wardens. It was our lifestyle. It was a kind of hell, far removed from human society. However, I was able to endure this ill-treatment in the prison because I always thought that I was in there to serve the interests of the people. I believed that it was the highest form of struggle for a man of honor. Sometimes, I was angry and vindictive because of the physical and mental torture inflicted on inmates; sometimes, we would all make fun of it.

Now I was out of prison for just a couple of minutes and I could not bear the painful feelings in my heart when I saw those women and children who endured the severe blows of a political system they would never comprehend. For six years I did not have a chance to witness the ills of society. In fact, I was totally unprepared to be greeted by the realities of the outside world.

I caught my breath and was actually relieved when a police lock-up van appeared on the road. Ahead was the desolate and dreary road between the main jail and Tharrawaddy town. I gave a final look at the old fortress as I thought about what the others would be doing inside the prison. This was the first time I ever had to ride in a blue police lock-up van. I have spent six solid years in prison but I never had a ride in the lock-up van before. I have never been to a police station. I have never been to a court.

Many a time I had been to secret interrogation camps run by Military Intelligence. Several times I had been at secret military tribunals. So it was hard to believe that I could be in prison for six years without knowing anything about a police lock-up, police station, judge, attorney or be aware of the provisions of the law.

When I was thrown into jail the judicial machinery seemed to be afraid of me. It was strange. I did not have the opportunity to go through the normal judicial channels. Even the colonels from the military tribunal looked nervous when they read out the order handing down my prison term. They did it and then they abruptly left.

After I was arrested I was taken to a small building enclosed by several walls of wire mesh with only one door. It was a military tribunal office, which looked more like a big birdcage. The office compound was guarded by soldiers armed with all sorts of weapons. Inside the building there also were soldiers carrying G-3 automatic rifles studded with bayonets. They were surrounded by police officers armed with M-16 rifles. My friend, who was arrested with me, and I were closely watched by officers of a special branch of Military Intelligence and the NIB (National Intelligence Bureau). We were handcuffed together. Through all this, I could never get an answer to my question: "Why military officials, surrounded and protected by armed soldiers in the heavily guarded office, could not solemnly hand down jail terms to us?"

While we were in prison we went through all kinds of hardships and troubles, and we survived. Now I realized why the military officials were so nervous in giving us jail sentences, despite the fact that we were heavily guarded by armed soldiers. Those who have integrity are feared by those who do not. Military officials tried to hide their fear by reasserting their military strength again and again. Justice, however, can never be destroyed by force. Being powerful and strong, they were in a position to handle judicial matters, but, they were morally defeated.

Not long after I got into the blue police van it stopped in front of a township police station among a cluster of 'kokko' trees, but I was informed that I could not get out of the van. I saw a white car parked in front of the police station. The car was a Japanese model and I thought perhaps it came from Rangoon. Just as I wondered if it could be my family, I saw my mother and my nephew coming out of the car and walking toward us. I was hiding in a corner, as I thought they would feel ashamed to find
me in a lock-up van. When my nephew recognized me, he broke into a big smile, nodding his head. But he did not make a sound. He was about 11 years old when I was arrested, now he was as tall as me.

We got into the white car and I told my nephew to drive back to the jail. There I managed to get some of the employees to give money and necessities to my friends still in prison. We then drove back to Tharrawaddy town and I came across an old friend, a fellow activist. Together we headed for Rangoon. It turned out that my friend’s father was a Pyithu Hluttaw representative who is still inside the prison. It had been reported that his health was deteriorating.

On our way back to Rangoon, I did not speak to my mother or to my nephew and I forgot to talk about my family. I was asking my friend many questions about the changes and latest developments within the political parties. My friend said that there were plans to stage demonstrations when tourists poured into the country, as that year had been designated "Visit Myanmar Year" by the government. He also talked about the Student Unions’ movement, activities of the National League for Democracy, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s public meetings and about her popular speeches. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has repeatedly said that we must have perseverance and courage. I believe she will attain power if she really means what she has said. Moreover, I like her ‘soft but firm strategy’ to fight against dictators. I remembered a magazine article by Dagon Taryar, a well-known Burmese poet and writer.

At the time I found his article in the magazine I was in barrack 4 of Tharrawaddy jail. The article was...
also read and much appreciated by those from barracks 5. The title was "Softness & Strength" and "it stated that if negotiations were possible between the whites and blacks, why not between Burmese people?" But I think Burma's politics are more subtle and more complicated. In South Africa, everyone can easily see what is white and what is black. In our case, we are the same color, but, we have been trying to define who is politically "white" and who is not. It is because the differences cannot easily be seen. To know the truth, perhaps hundreds more people need to go to jail. Then they could clearly see.

All this time, driving in the car, I had forgotten to talk to my mother who was sitting in the front seat. She must have thought of me as a crazy because, less than an hour after I had been released I was talking about how more and more people should go into jail. When I looked at my mother's face she was fast asleep — she must have not slept at all the night before.

I told my nephew to slow down. There had been an increase in the number of car accidents on the highways during the past month. In fact, I met a dozen motorists who landed in jail because of reckless driving.

Motorists are not those of loose moral character or who are lacking responsibility, but they are usually not in harmony with prison authorities. Long-distance drivers have a lot of general knowledge because they constantly are moving from place to place in the country. As they travel they meet people from all walks of life and they have their own philosophy on the nature of human society. Therefore, we inmates would seek out these motorists, especially long-distance drivers, who have the most colorful lives.

In prison, there are two strong forces that form groups — the first group is made up of political prisoners who always oppose prison authorities and the second group is comprised of thieves and robbers. Prison officials such as the chief jailer, wardens and other employees prefer to collaborate with thieves and robbers who come to the prison.

I also had to explain the meaning and seriousness of 'si-mann-chet' to my nephew. You can call it a project or operation, sometimes similar to a military operation. These so-called "projects" are often launched in our country when a governmental organization is no longer able to handle or solve problems. If someone violates one of the traffic rules during a 'project period,' that person would surely receive penalties involving both a jail term and a fine. During a project period, the authorities would not think twice about the seriousness of an offense; neither would they care about the law. Basically, it is a repressive measure taken against unsuspecting and unfortunate people for minor offenses. I told my nephew that even if a car brushes the side of another car, police will grab the motorist and send him before a judge who would hand down at least a one year imprisonment with hard labor if the accident should take place during a project period.

I heard a story of an unfortunate man who was driving his car on a road that stretched along the fields. He pulled his car over to the side of the road to check his engine. Unfortunately it happened to be on soft ground which suddenly gave way to the pressure of the car. The car slid into a roadside field. Legal action was taken against him under the "road safety project regulations" and the court handed down two years imprisonment to him.

It is difficult for a judge who might be in such a situation, because he or any other judge, could not accept a bribe and acquit the motorist during a project time. If you have a relative working closely for the SLORC authorities, your case may often be dismissed, but if you get involved in a car accident during 'si-mann-chet' period, it is likely that you would be given at least one year hard labor even though you are willing to bribe the judges at the township or divisional levels. Besides, it takes a long time to file appeals for reducing your sentence — you have to wait for at least six months. Therefore, when you get the release order, you would have spent nearly 300,000 Kyat and already been in prison for about a year.

Being in prison is quite costly too. When a new prisoner enters a jail he is greeted by the yelling, cursing and beating of warders or other prison employees. The new inmate soon becomes aware that some inmates have to be hospitalized because of these cruel beatings.

It is compulsory for a new inmate who is there on criminal charges to pay an entrance fee, placement fee, cleaning fee, warder fee and many others.
though you do not exactly know for what the 'fee' goes. In addition, if an inmate is unable to work or does not want to work at yebet camps (prison labor camps) he has to pay 3,000 Kyat monthly and another 3,000 Kyat for light duties. Prices vary depending on the nature of the favor. To take daily showers you have to pay 1,000 Kyat per month and another 1,000 Kyat monthly for sufficient amounts of food. There are many other things inmates have to pay, in fact, you have to spend as much money as staying at an expensive hotel. Do not be shocked if you are continually approached for "donations." If a prison employee gets married or his sister-in-law dies, you are supposed to make some contribution. If toilets need repair or a prison barrack needs painting or some showers have to be fixed, inmates there for political reasons should be ready to make donations in cash.

If you are unable to pay or make donations, your entire prison life would be filled with reprisals and eventually you would end up in the hospital. If you decide to work at the yebet camps, one should be aware of the fact that the survival rate at those camps is twenty percent.

There is a saying in prison circles among the chief jailers, jailers, wardens, prison employees and inmates; so many prisoners have died while working on the new Rangoon-Mandalay highway that if their bodies were laid down on the new highway, the line would stretch twice or three times the distance of that highway. It is surprising that no one seems to know that the present military government has broken, many times over, the record set by the Japanese government during World War II, which constructed the notorious 'death railroad' where thousands of people died while working on its construction.

I needed to explain these matters to my nephew. We had spent so much time together while growing up, we were very attached to each other. He is still very young and full of life. He could not understand the prison system. Again, I remembered my mother sitting beside my nephew in the front seat. I realized that she had suffered acutely painful feelings when I was arrested after the '88 crisis. I could not think of how many mothers have shed tears for their sons and daughters who lost their lives during these anti-government demonstrations.

We stopped at Hmawbi, about one-hour drive from Rangoon. We had tea and snacks at a tea-shop named "Joy," but the owner of that shop did not appear to be happy. I knew that the tea-shop owner was U Soe, a Pyithu Hluttaw representative from Hmawbi township. After having been elected by the people, he had been in and out of prison very often and was interrogated many times. When he began his business, he invited me to attend the ceremony that marked the opening of his tea-shop. But that was in 1989 and I was not able to attend.

Before leaving the tea-shop, I asked the owner whether or not "Joy" was the name originally given to the shop when it was opened, as I remembered it as having a different name. "When I first opened the shop the name was 'Hero Zon,'" the owner told me. "However, the colonel of the township-level Law and Order Restoration Council told me to change it as it was too similar to Moe Thee Zun, the name of a leading student activist."

Thet Hmu was a member of the Students' Union in 1988 and later, a member of the Democratic Party for a New Society. He participated in the political opposition movement inside Burma and was arrested on October 22, 1990. He was released from Tharrawaddy prison in April, 1996. After participating in the student demonstrations in December 1996, he fled the country and currently lives in exile.
WASHINGTON, DC — A Washington Roundtable was held on September 8, featuring Kent Wiedemann, charge d'affaires of the United States Embassy in Rangoon. Mr. Wiedemann discussed recent developments in Burma and U.S. policy.


NEW YORK — The New York Roundtable of September 17 featured journalist Jeanne Hallacy. Ms. Hallacy discussed her recent visit to Burma and showed a videotaped interview she conducted with Aung San Suu Kyi, which was smuggled out of the country.

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.

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

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.

NOTABLES & QUOTABLES

"In this country, only the SLORC owns communication rights. There are no (NLD) bulletins, we can't use our machines to print, we don't own fax machines, we don't own mobile phones, our telephones have been cut continuously over the past 30 months."

U Kyi Maung, Vice Chairman of the National League for Democracy (NLD), on how the NLD communicates with the outside world. From an interview by PDBurma, appearing on Burma Net November 21, 1997

NOTICE

The Burma Project of the Open Society Institute has moved. The new address is:

Burma Project
The Open Society Institute
400 West 59th Street
New York, NY 10019
Tel: (212) 548-0632 Fax: (212) 548-4655
1. At about 16:15 hours on 15-9-97, a military intelligence officer came to the house of the Chairman of the National League for Democracy (NLD), U Aung Shwe. The officer started by saying that Secretary (1) of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) wished to meet the Chairman at 09:30 hours the next morning (16-9-97). He then said that U Soe Myint and U Lun Tin, two members of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the NLD, would also be included. He added nothing more about the proposed meeting.

2. Chairman U Aung Shwe, Deputy Chairman U Tin U and General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met at about 16:45 hours to discuss the matter. It was decided that in accordance with the principles laid down by the NLD elected Members of Parliament and by the organizational committees of the NLD at various levels, party matters must be handled jointly by the Chairman and the General Secretary. Therefore it would not be possible for the Chairman U Aung Shwe to attend the meeting alone (without the General Secretary). This decision was conveyed to Deputy-Chairman U Kyi Maung and to Secretary U Lwin and their consent was obtained.

3. In order to convey the decision (1) of the SLORC, the MI [Military Intelligence] officer who had issued the invitation was asked, through the MI unit in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's compound to come to see the Chairman. It was indicated that the matter concerned was of great importance and that if the MI officer was unable to come that evening he should come to the house of the Chairman not later than 06:00 hours the next morning.

4. At about 07:30 hours on 16-9-97, a member of the MI came to the Chairman's house to find out who had arrived. The Chairman called him back (as he was leaving) to remind him that the MI officer who had come the previous day should come by 08:00 hours that morning. However the officer did not arrive. He only came at about 08:45 hours, after CEC members U Soe Myint and U Lun Tin had arrived, to convey them (and the Chairman) to the proposed meeting with Secretary (1).

5. The Chairman told the MI officer that he could not come. As there were commands and regulations within the army, so also a political party had rules and principles to which the Chairman himself must adhere. It was a policy decision of the NLD that party matters had to be handled jointly by the Chairman and the General Secretary. In this instance, as the Chairman had been invited only with two stipulated members of the CEC, he would not be able to come. However, in accordance with the principle of keeping open the road to negotiation, it had been agreed that U Soe Myint and U Lun Tin should go to the meeting.

6. U Soe Myint then told the MI officer that he and U Lun Tin would be attending the meeting to explain to Secretary (1) the reasons why the Chairman was unable to attend the meeting to listen to what Secretary (1) had to say and to convey his works to the CEC.

7. After reporting back to those concerned the MI officer tried to persuade U Aung Shwe to attend the meeting. When the Chairman firmly refused, the MI officer said that plans for the meeting had been canceled and left.

8. One of the salient comments made by the MI officer was that in the statement issued (by the NLD) after the Chairman, U Hla Pe and U Than Tun (two members of the CEC of the NLD) met Secretary (1) of the SLORC on 17-7-97, the Chairman had guaranteed that negotiations carried out with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would meet with success, but by now refusing to take the opportunity offered on the present day, the Chairman was acting in a destructive manner.

9. In the statement issued after the meeting on 17-7-97, not only had Chairman U Aung Shwe guaranteed that negotiations with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would meet...
TEXACO LEAVES BURMA

The U.S. oil company, Texaco, announced on September 23 that it had sold its assets in the natural gas project in Yetagun, Burma to Premier Oil of Britain. The sale now awaits government and partnership approval, which is anticipated to be completed sometime in November. Texaco, along with other oil companies such as UNOCAL and Atlantic Richfield of the United States and TOTAL of France, have come under heavy pressure from activists for their investment with the military regime.

THAI COMPANY DIVESTS JOINT-VENTURE

The Krong Sombat Co. Ltd of Thailand announced the August 27 sale of its 49 percent share in Yangon Airways to the Myanmar May Flower Group, one of Burma’s largest private conglomerates. The airline, established in October 1996 with 49 percent ownership by the Thai company and 51 percent by the state-run Myanmar Airways, flies between the capital city of Rangoon to seven domestic destinations with two aircraft leased from France. Krong Sombat said it sold its stake because Yangon Airways was losing money.

FIVE MORE U.S. CITIES BAN BUSINESS WITH BURMA

The cities of Palo Alto and West Hollywood, California, and Quincy, Newton and Brookline, Massachusetts, have passed measures restricting city purchases from companies doing business in Burma. This brings the total of cities in the United States enacting "selective purchasing" laws to seventeen including the major commercial centers of New York City and San Francisco. Alameda County in California and the state of Massachusetts have also passed this type of legislation. The city of Seattle is also reviewing a proposal to block city contracts with companies engaged in Burma.

INDIA OFFERS LINE OF CREDIT TO BURMA

The Indian government will extend a $10 million line of credit to Burma in an effort to promote bilateral trade and economic cooperation. In a November 7 announcement, Mr. Saleem I. Shervani, India’s Minister of State for External Affairs who was visiting Burma for the inauguration of the second Indian Trade Exhibition in Rangoon, said that it would be a government-to-government credit which would help to foster closer cooperation between the two countries. During his visit, Mr. Shervani met with Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt and Foreign Minister U Ohn Gyaw to discuss prospects for increasing trade and economic relations.

AUSTRALIAN OIL COMPANY TO BEGIN OPERATIONS

Pacrim Energy NL, based in Brisbane, has signed production sharing contracts with the Myanmar Oil & Gas Enterprise and will begin drilling by April 1998. One of its sites will be the Chindwin Basin in an area operated by the British owned Indo-Burman Oil Co. before World War II.
with success, it had also been made clear that party matters must be handled jointly by the Chairman and the General Secretary, in accordance with mandate given by the elected Members of Parliament of the NLD and the organizational committees of the party at various levels.

10. Therefore Chairman U Aung Shwe was acting correctly in accordance with party policy. In future also, in seeking genuine negotiations, the NLD will stand firmly by its principles with the support and encouragement of the people.

11. It was decided that a statement on the matter of the proposed meeting with Secretary (1) would be issued so that members of the NLD, the people of Burma and the international community could make a correct assessment of the situation. However, in the interest of achieving harmonious relations, it was also decided that the contents of the statement should be discussed in advance with the authorities. With this end in view. Deputy Chairman U Tin U conveyed the following message to a member of the MI unit in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi compound at about 11:00 hours on 16-9-97.

"Tomorrow the NLD will be issuing a statement in connection with the matter which occurred this morning, 19-9-97. Before issuing the statement, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would like colonel Than Tun to come to see her in the interests of achieving harmonious relations between the two sides. Could we be informed as soon as possible of the time when the colonel would be able to come?"

12. Not only did the authorities fail to send Col. Than Tun, they unilaterally issued a statement entitled "Meeting Called Off" to foreign news agencies abroad. The claim made in the statement that Chairman U Aung Shwe and the two members of the CEC had been "extremely delighted" with the invitation to the meeting is quite untrue.

13. As the NLD understands very well the nature of genuine negotiations, we will continue to strive for such negotiations with the support of the people.

The above statement was issued by the Central Executive Committee of the National League for Democracy in Rangoon, September, 1997.

S L O R C SPEAKS (CONTINUED)

The political slogan calling for a dialogue, national conciliation and national reconciliation of the National League for Democracy, which is confronted with such conditions and root causes, carry no weight... A logical reference of this is that when Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt invited to a meeting, Chairman of the National League for Democracy accepted it and pledged to attend but on the appointed date the personal matter was raised because General Secretary Daw Suu Kyi was not included and then the principle was destroyed by cancelling the attendance. This is the source of the problem and the true situation...

...After a study and assessment of all the developments, conditions, stand and causes, it can be concluded that the one who disrupted the meeting is the National League for Democracy with dishonest attitudes and the personality cult, the serious disease, relying solely on a person instead of relying on organizational strength that has been pestering it since its formation.


VOICES OF BURMA (CONTINUED)

FAREWELL SLORC... HAIL SPDC

On November 15, the military regime in Burma announced the dissolution of the country’s ruling body the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), to be replaced by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). According to a government notification, the change was made "with a view to ensure the emergence of an orderly and democratic system and to establish a peaceful and modern state...." Analysts feel that the change of name is an attempt by the regime to distance itself from the 1990 elections and to make it more appealing to the international community. The real significance of the reshuffling and how it plays into the internal divisions within the hierarchy may not yet be obvious. While the change allows the top four leaders of the now-defunct SLORC to retain their hold on the government, some new and younger blood has been moved in as several older members slid over to a newly established 14-member Advisory group. There is no civilian participation on the nineteen-member State Peace and Development Council which is made up by the following military men:

Leadership Posts:
Senior General Than Shwe - Chairman and Prime Minister (former SLORC Chairman)
General Maung Aye - Vice Chairman (former SLORC vice-chairman)
Lieutenant General Khin Nyunt — Secretary 1 (former SLORC Secretary 1)
Lieutenant General Tin Oo - Secretary 2 (former SLORC Secretary 2)
Lieutenant General Win Myint — Secretary 3 (an ally of Khin Nyunt and former commander of the influential 11th Battalion)

Members:
Rear Admiral Nyunt Thein - also Commander-in-Chief of the Navy
Brigadier General Kyaw Than - also Commander-in-Chief of the Air Force
Major General Aung Htwe
Major General Ye Myint
Major General Khin Maung Than
Major General Kyaw Win
Major General Thein Sein
Major General Thura, Thida Thura Sitt Maung
Brigadier General Thura Shwe Mann
Brigadier General Mying Aung
Brigadier General Maung Bo
Brigadier General Thida Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo
Brigadier General Soe Win
Brigadier General Tin Aye

FORMER SLORC MINISTERS DEMOTED

Three ministers of the former State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) who were ousted during the recent reorganization are reportedly under investigation for graft and corruption. Former trade and commerce minister, Tun Kyi, was placed under house arrest on November 22 and the ex-hotels and tourism minister, Kyaw Ba and ex-agricultural minister Myint Aung, are facing charges. Others who were part of the cabinet under SLORC but not in the military are also being investigated. Two of Tun Kyi's daughters have been arrested for their roles in the corruption case and weapons have been removed from his compound. It appears that this crackdown is an attempt to improve the regime's public image and to reinforce the power base of the top generals in the newly-established State Peace and Development Council.
GOVERNORS URGE CLINTON TO UPHOLD SELECTIVE PURCHASING LAW

In an October 31 letter to President Clinton, members of the Western Governors' Association expressed their concern over the recent challenge at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to the law passed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that prohibits procurement from companies doing business in Burma. The challenge is being brought by the European Union, which claims that such "selective purchasing" laws enacted by individual states are illegal under the terms of the WTO. The governors conveyed their appreciation that Ambassador Barshefsy, the United States Trade Representative has stated her intention to "defend Massachusetts sovereignty" in what could set a precedent for how the WTO addresses the issue of federalism in the context of global trade rules.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TO THE EDITOR:

Attention of the Government of Bangladesh has been drawn to an article entitled "Chin National Front (CNF) and Chin Nationhood" by Rollin Van Bik of the Chin National Front/ USA published in Vol. III, No.6 November/ December 1996 issued by your esteemed magazine, Burma Debate. In the article the writer projected a photograph under the caption "Chin National Front (CNF) troops at CNF headquarters in Bangladesh" which has drawn particular attention of the Government. The photograph printed in the said issue using the name of Bangladesh is totally false. To remove any misconception that might have been caused by the article in the minds of readers, the Government of Bangladesh would like to state the following:

A. Bangladesh maintains excellent bilateral relations with its neighbors including Myanmar.

B. Bangladesh does not harbor or permit use of its territory by any insurgency groups operating against any of its neighbors. It is the policy of the Government of Bangladesh not to interfere in the internal affairs of Myanmar or to express any support to any insurgent group waging struggle against Myanmar Government including that of "Chin National Front."

C. Bangladesh Government, as before, denies the existence of insurgents of third country within the territory of Bangladesh. The Government of Bangladesh would like to state that the photograph under reference is false, malicious and of an extremely prejudicial nature. The Government of Bangladesh strongly feels that it is the moral obligation of the publisher of Burma Debate to publish this statement as being Bangladesh Government's position on the matter to remove any misgivings from the minds of the readers of your esteemed magazine.

Nasim Firdaus
Deputy Chief of Mission
Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Washington, D.C.

[Editor's note: The photograph and the caption referred to in the above letter were provided by the author of the article.]

RE: BURMA DEBATE (JUL/AUG '97), IN HIS OWN WORDS

Col. Chit Myaing is prone to the same kind of convenient memory lapses as Kurt Waldheim, former UN Secretary General from Austria. Both men, in self-serving accounts, would have us believe their behavior was beyond reproach during times of trouble. Not so! Colonel played a destructive role in the Northern Shan States while stationed in Lashio.

Col. Chit Myaing cites the arrival of the KMT as the reason why the central government sent more military units to the Shan States. There wasn't a single KMT in Hsipaw State. This is an old and tired excuse used by the government to move in and take over. The military soon began to mistreat the Shan people, with the encouragement of the Colonel and other military leaders.

The Colonel says the Shan Sawbwas began to "lose authority in their respective states" due to the military presence. In fact, the Shan Sawbwas had, at their own initiative, formally relinquished their powers to the Shan State Government beforehand.

The Colonel's statement that the army took over in 1962 because of the Shan Sawbwas is preposterous. Not only were the Sawbwas not in a position to take the Shan States out of the Union (having given up their power); the majority of the Sawbwas, including my first husband Sao Kya Seng, the Sawbwa of Hsipaw, believed that secession was unworkable. Although the Shans' grievances against the central government were very real, most of the Sawbwas were not in favor of exercising the right of secession established in the 1947 Constitution.

Colonel Chit Myaing contributed to the mistrust and misunderstanding between the Shan States and the Union government by accusing my first husband of collecting arms and organizing Shan fighters to take the Shan States out of the Union, and by passing these falsehoods to General Ne Win. Col. Chit Myaing was not the 'democrat' and peacemaker he paints himself — he was busy all the time in Lashio poisoning the water and sowing discord.

I was present, on one occasion, when the Colonel insisted that Sao Kya Seng not be allowed on the same UBA airplane with him. The Colonel was well-armed and accompanied by his military men and claimed he felt 'endangered' flying on the same plane with an unarmed Shan Sawbwa who was traveling to Rangoon to attend the House of Nationalities, accompanied by one unarmed secretary.

Col. Chit Myaing bears considerable responsibility for the murder of my first husband, Sao Kya Seng, in 1962, while in custody of the Burmese military. As a Buddhist he knows that his Karma will catch up with him eventually.

Inge Sargent
former Mahadevi of Hsipaw
author of Twilight Over Burma

FORMER U.S. AMBASSADORS VISIT BURMA

Two former U.S. ambassadors and a former high-ranking U.S. official visited Burma as guests of the Washington-based Burma/Myanmar Forum. The now-retired Michael Armacost, former ambassador to the Philippines and Japan; Richard Armitage, ex-senior assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs; and Morton Abramowitz, former ambassador to Thailand traveled to Singapore, Burma and Thailand, October 12-18, to examine the effectiveness of U.S./Burma policy, including the imposition of economic sanctions. A November 5 debriefing was hosted by Senators John McCain (R-AR) and Charles Robb (D-VA). Conclusions reached by the group focused on the fact that there should be no move by the U.S. at this time to amend or eliminate economic sanctions. Certain incentives should be considered, however, to enhance the possibility for dialogue between the military and the democratic opposition.

INSIDE WASHINGTON

WESTERN GOVERNORS URGE CLINTON TO UPHOLD SELECTIVE PURCHASING LAW

In an October 31 letter to President Clinton, members of the Western Governors' Association expressed their concern over the recent challenge at the World Trade Organization (WTO) to the law passed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that prohibits procurement from companies doing business in Burma. The challenge is being brought by the European Union, which claims that such "selective purchasing" laws enacted by individual states are illegal under the terms of the WTO. The governors conveyed their appreciation that Ambassador Barshefsy, the United States Trade Representative has stated her intention to "defend Massachusetts sovereignty" in what could set a precedent for how the WTO addresses the issue of federalism in the context of global trade rules.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TO THE EDITOR:

Attention of the Government of Bangladesh has been drawn to an article entitled "Chin National Front (CNF) and Chin Nationhood" by Rollin Van Bik of the Chin National Front/ USA published in Vol. III, No.6 November/ December 1996 issued by your esteemed magazine, Burma Debate. In the article the writer projected a photograph under the caption "Chin National Front (CNF) troops at CNF headquarters in Bangladesh" which has drawn particular attention of the Government. The photograph printed in the said issue using the name of Bangladesh is totally false. To remove any misconception that might have been caused by the article in the minds of readers, the Government of Bangladesh strongly feels that it is the moral obligation of the publisher of Burma Debate to publish this statement as being Bangladesh Government's position on the matter to remove any misgivings from the minds of the readers of your esteemed magazine.

Nasim Firdaus
Deputy Chief of Mission
Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Washington, D.C.

[Editor's note: The photograph and the caption referred to in the above letter were provided by the author of the article.]

RE: BURMA DEBATE (JUL/AUG '97), IN HIS OWN WORDS

Col. Chit Myaing is prone to the same kind of convenient memory lapses as Kurt Waldheim, former UN Secretary General from Austria. Both men, in self-serving accounts, would have us believe their behavior was beyond reproach during times of trouble. Not so! Colonel played a destructive role in the Northern Shan States while stationed in Lashio.

Col. Chit Myaing cites the arrival of the KMT as the reason why the central government sent more military units to the Shan States. There wasn't a single KMT in Hsipaw State. This is an old and tired excuse used by the government to move in and take over. The military soon began to mistreat the Shan people, with the encouragement of the Colonel and other military leaders.

The Colonel says the Shan Sawbwas began to "lose authority in their respective states" due to the military presence. In fact, the Shan Sawbwas had, at their own initiative, formally relinquished their powers to the Shan State Government beforehand.

The Colonel's statement that the army took over in 1962 because of the Shan Sawbwas is preposterous. Not only were the Sawbwas not in a position to take the Shan States out of the Union (having given up their power); the majority of the Sawbwas, including my first husband Sao Kya Seng, the Sawbwa of Hsipaw, believed that secession was unworkable. Although the Shans' grievances against the central government were very real, most of the Sawbwas were not in favor of exercising the right of secession established in the 1947 Constitution.

Colonel Chit Myaing contributed to the mistrust and misunderstanding between the Shan States and the Union government by accusing my first husband of collecting arms and organizing Shan fighters to take the Shan States out of the Union, and by passing these falsehoods to General Ne Win. Col. Chit Myaing was not the 'democrat' and peacemaker he paints himself — he was busy all the time in Lashio poisoning the water and sowing discord.

I was present, on one occasion, when the Colonel insisted that Sao Kya Seng not be allowed on the same UBA airplane with him. The Colonel was well-armed and accompanied by his military men and claimed he felt 'endangered' flying on the same plane with an unarmed Shan Sawbwa who was traveling to Rangoon to attend the House of Nationalities, accompanied by one unarmed secretary.

Col. Chit Myaing bears considerable responsibility for the murder of my first husband, Sao Kya Seng, in 1962, while in custody of the Burmese military. As a Buddhist he knows that his Karma will catch up with him eventually.

Inge Sargent
former Mahadevi of Hsipaw
author of Twilight Over Burma

FORMER U.S. AMBASSADORS VISIT BURMA

Two former U.S. ambassadors and a former high-ranking U.S. official visited Burma as guests of the Washington-based Burma/Myanmar Forum. The now-retired Michael Armacost, former ambassador to the Philippines and Japan; Richard Armitage, ex-senior assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs; and Morton Abramowitz, former ambassador to Thailand traveled to Singapore, Burma and Thailand, October 12-18, to examine the effectiveness of U.S./Burma policy, including the imposition of economic sanctions. A November 5 debriefing was hosted by Senators John McCain (R-AR) and Charles Robb (D-VA). Conclusions reached by the group focused on the fact that there should be no move by the U.S. at this time to amend or eliminate economic sanctions. Certain incentives should be considered, however, to enhance the possibility for dialogue between the military and the democratic opposition.
Burma Debate is a publication of The Burma Project of the Open Society Institute.

Mary Pack, Editor

THE OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE (OSI) was established in December of 1993 to promote the development of open societies around the world. Toward this goal, the institute engages in a number of regional and country-specific projects relating to education, media, legal reform and human rights. In addition, OSI undertakes advocacy projects aimed at encouraging debate and disseminating information on a range of issues which are insufficiently explored in the public realm. OSI funds projects that promote the exploration of novel approaches to domestic and international problems.

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

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