



# DAWN NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BY THE  
ALL BURMA STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC FRONT

VOL. (1) NO. (2)

FEBRUARY

1989

## A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE ABSDF

This is the second issue of "Dawn", the newsletter of the All Burma Student's Democratic Front or ABSDF. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce you briefly to our organization and our goals.

The ABSDF was formed during a meeting on November 1-5, 1988 at Wán-kha near the Thai/Burma border. The meeting was attended by 39 delegates representing students from various camps both inside and outside Burma who fled the bloody military coup led by General Saw Maung on September 18, 1988.

The ABSDF was organized to help unite all students all over Burma who are committed to building genuine democracy in our motherland. Our office is situated near the Thai/Burma border.

Our aims are:

1. To achieve genuine democracy in Burma.
2. To bring an end to internal war, restore internal peace and help build national unity in Burma.
3. To rapidly develop our country both economically and socially.

Our objectives are:

1. To elect a government which uses its authority for the benefit of the people of Burma.
2. To achieve equality, justice and unity among the nationalities of the Union of Burma.
3. To rebuild our country based on the models used in other developed countries of the free world.

On the cover of our newsletter, you will see our symbol, the fighting peacock. The peacock has long been a precious symbol in Burma as it not only represents the shape of our country, but is also a beautiful bird with a melodious song, and is proud and determined.

The peacock is partially standing inside a circle which represents the oppression our country is now living under. The head of the peacock has already thrust itself through the circle, and its left leg is pushing against the back of the circle to further break the oppressive military government apart.

To the members of ABSDF, this fighting peacock represents our unwillingness to blindly accept the corruption and greed with which our country has been governed these past 26 years. Now we have stood up and thrust our heads and our hearts out of this oppression, and we are determined to unite together to build a new Burma based on justice and democracy.



## WHAT STUDENTS SAY

### BORDER SITUATION

January 26, 1989

During the past month, the Burmese government has mounted a large offensive against Karen camps and villages near the Thai border. So far two camps have fallen. Mae Tha Wa was a major Karen village and market, and also home for some Burmese students. The second camp to fall was Klerday where the ABSDF head office was situated. The Burmese military used large artillery pieces to pound the camp so that nothing remained. The students had to flee to other camps, or across the border into Thailand.

The Burmese military is now poised to attack Pho Lu, another major market place for the Karen people. This camp is only about 10 miles from Thay Bow Boe camp, one of the largest student camps. Over 1000 students presently live here, some as young as 16.

If the camp is attacked, the students must run for their lives with the hope that they will be able to reach the Thai border, and be allowed by the Thai Border Police to enter Thailand for safety. If they are not allowed to enter, they face certain death.

Last month the Thai government gave permission to the Burmese military to fly over Thai airspace in order to photograph the entire area. Thus, the Burmese army now knows every possible escape route for the students, and can try to block them off, preventing the students from escaping.

The Burmese military has always made use of civilian porters to carry their weapons and supplies into war areas. Some Burmese estimate that only about 10% of these porters actually survive the ordeal. In preparation for this offensive against Pha Lu and Thay Bow Boe, the Burmese military has begun rounding up able young men in Myawady village situated directly on the Thai/Burma border. Between 500 to 1000 Burmese have subsequently

fled into Thailand to escape this round-up. Those who have fled to safety estimate that 200 porters have already been rounded up, indicating that the attack is eminent.

General Saw Maung, and Thai Supreme Commander General Chavalit have repeatedly told the Burmese students that they can return home safely without fear of reprisal. If this is really true, why is the military now launching a major offensive against our students who are defenseless? Does this not rather prove that the goal of the Burmese military government is to eliminate all forms of opposition, and all those who are seen as a threat to their dictatorial powers? We feel that the present situation further proves to us and to the world that it is not safe for us to return to our families and schools.

If Saw Maung really want to rebuild national unity, he must immediately pull his troops back, and begin to seriously prepare for multi-party elections which allow for foreign observers to watch.

### REPATRIATION

Of the students who have been sent back to Burma against their will through the Tak repatriation center, one young man was a student leader from Taunggyi province. When foreign journalists interview him during their visit in the middle of January, he did not indicate that he was under pressure or danger. However, several weeks later his close friend who is still living along the Thai/Burma border received a letter from him. Following is a part of that letter.

To my beloved friend in the jungle, Kyaw:

I still remember the day we left Taunggyi to go to the border jungle to take up the armed revolution against the military regime.

Because of the lack of food, clothing and medicine,

my group decided to leave the jungle camp and go to find help outside the camp. You tried to stop me because you said that as a student leader, if I were arrested and returned to my home, I would be killed by the military. I thought that a government must govern a country with love, and therefore they would show sympathy and compassion on the young students. As you feared, I was arrested by the Thai police and sent back to Burma.

When we arrived in Rangoon, the military welcomed us warmly and sent us to our homes in the countryside. After three days, however, the military intelligence came and took us away for questioning. I was taken to the prison where I was shown many other student prisoners. Some of these students were forced to stand in water up to their necks with a large fan blowing air over their heads. Others were naked and strapped to a table by their arms and legs.

The officers then took me to a table and told me that in a few days many foreign journalists would be coming to Taunggyi, and that I must tell them what the military intelligence instructed. If I failed to do as ordered, the students being held in the prison would possibly face death.

When the journalists came, I met one journalist whom I know very well. However, I could not tell him what I really wanted to say. I could only grasp his hand and squeeze it, hoping that he would understand my message.

Now I know that coming back to Rangoon was a big mistake. I would like to tell the students still in the jungle that it is better to stay in the jungle to fight for democracy and freedom, than to come back to Rangoon to be tortured and killed.

Your friend who now repents of returning to Rangoon,

Sai

However, I could not tell him what I really wanted to say. I could only grasp his hand and squeeze it, hoping that he would understand my message.

## DEATH OF A STUDENT FRIEND

In early January, a young Burmese student at the Thai/Burma border happened to come across a copy of the "Working People's Daily" dated December 12, 1988. In the paper he saw the announcement of the death of the brother of one of his friends. He contacted his friend who is also a political refugee in Thailand. The friend called to her parents in Rangoon and learned the sad facts behind her brother's death. We offer this as tangible proof of the Saw Maung military regime's government of terror and crime.

The inset news-item in Burmese is an announcement of a funeral service which appeared in a Burmese newspaper "Working People's Daily" (30-12-88).

The funeral is for a youth of 21 years who died, not from natural illness, but from torture and harassment while in the custody of the military. Nothing can be done for him now but to put his name in the list of the victims of the 1988 Democratic movement.

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During the turmoil and disturbances in 1988, Rangooners throughout the city themselves took responsibility for security, protecting themselves from all kinds of possible dangers. They formed voluntary security-groups which watched the quarters, streets and blocks around the clock. This was also done because the BSPP-Ne Win-Sein Lwin-Maung Maung-Saw Maung group and its followers had launched dirty operations to break down the nationwide pro-democratic demonstrations. These government operations were known as "Anti-strike Schemes" which came alive step by step by releasing all the prisoners from all jails to make the public panic, sending money-sacking criminals to disturb the processions and even to massacre demonstrators by using poisons and explosives, and making attempts to assassinate student leaders and politicians of the opposition. But these schemes leaked to the public and so Rangooners put themselves on alert and took their own defence measures.

On 25.8.88 at 3:00 am, while voluntary security-men of the 29th street were on patrol, they encountered a car

making suspicious moves. So they checked it and tried to arrest the occupants but five strangers in the car resisted with pistols that they had to use force, capturing four alive and one dead. After many hours of interrogation, they could reveal that these men were from Military Intelligence, operating at the command of Major General Khin Nyunt, Director-General of the Military Intelligence, and Major San Dar Win, Ne Win's daughter, who were heading the "Anti-strike schemes". The captives were Maj. Nyan Lin, Capt. Si Thu, Capt. Thet Tin Sein and two other sergeants. Out of them, Maj. Nyan Lin died on the spot. (The incident had been known throughout the country)

The captives were then interrogated at the Bar-Council Building in Bar street, with a video team that recorded the whole scene on tape. The voluntary security men could put forward pistols, writings to insult Daw Aung San Su Kyi's reputation, poisons and Identity Cards which were seized with them as evidence.

After proper proceedings, they were released by the people out of goodwill. Unfortunately, Capt. Si Thu was executed for failing in the assignment by Major General Khin Nyunt and San Dar Win. After the military take-over, Saw Maung, Khin Nyunt and San Dar Win retaliated on the 29th street by arresting all the youths at random. The young student whose name appeared on this inset was Zaw Win Tun who, together with his father and other boys, was driven into jail by force and "investigated". After many days of harassment, the boy died of serious injuries on 30.12.88.

Later an acknowledgement letter arrived at the parents stating the death of the boy. The family could do nothing but put an announcement of the funeral service in the "Working People's Daily" of 31.12.88. Though there had been cruel events like this before, because solid evidences were not available, we could not make a case. We will expose similar crimes perpetrated by the BSPP military Regime as soon as we get the evidence.

"Even one sparrow, senselessly killed, creates a silence in the forest which the entire world can hear."

Nyein Chan

## ABSDF RESPONSE

When the students who were repatriated to Bangoon through the Tak Repatriation Center in Thailand returned home, they were met in Bangoon by Major General Myo Nyunt, Bangoon Division Commander. In his speech to welcome the students back, he stressed that the Burmese military had to take over power on September 18, 1988 because the public was involved in robbing, beheadings, breaking into warehouses etc. He claimed that the military only wanted to restore law and order in the country, and that if the students all would return home, they would quickly understand this.

In response, the ABSDF offers the following statement:

Some of our student representatives were sent together with those students who chose to return to Bunnaw on 6.1.89 to help carry out discussions with authorities on behalf of the students still in the border areas. They put forward their demands to "Bangoon" upon their arrival. Out of these demands, the chief points are:

- (1) that the Saw Maung government hold genuine multi-party general elections as soon as possible
- (2) that they guarantee human rights in Bunnaw
- (3) that they not label students, youths and people of all walks of life taking shelter in the border areas as "rebels" and
- (4) that they immediately bring about internal peace.

Students who are now in the border areas for the legitimate cause of building democracy should by no means be labelled as rebels. They are, in reality, not revolting against their nation but making endeavors to overturn an evil political system. We shall submit the following facts to support this statement.

Throughout the Pro-Democratic movement in 1988, students and demonstration-leaders have made "Democracy Ballies" where they delivered addresses to explain everything about Democracy, including the essence and meaning of Democracy. Therefore, not only students but also, probably, the whole public have absorbed what democracy is and how it should be practiced. Moreover, every possible way of propagandizing has been used to give the public full knowledge of democracy. These endeavors sometimes even cost the lives of the pro-democratic propagandists as, "out of fear of democracy", militarists ruthlessly oppressed the spreading of democratic ideas. Moreover, accusations by the military that the public committed crimes such as robbing, beheadings, breaking into warehouses etc., have nothing to do with the general public which they also accuse of having no

knowledge of democracy. These turmoils and disturbances were caused, on the most part, by agents of the Military Intelligence and, partially, by those whose tolerance was burst by age-long suppression and economic crises. The 1988 March affair that broke out at the Rangoon Institute of Technology was not so serious, politically, that it could not be settled peacefully according to law and justice if those in power then were wise enough. But the authorities misused their power and suppressed the students by force of the armed Riot Police. Because of the police shooting at random, RIT students Ko Phone Maw and Ko Soe Naing were killed. This aroused the anger of all students throughout the country. So, those who initiated the violence in 1988 are the authorities themselves.

Again in May and June of 1988, students rallied to protest and demanded only that detained students be released, expelled students be reinstated in school, and that the Student Union once again be allowed to organize. However the authorities broke down the peaceful processions near "Lake Inya", staining the retaining wall of "Lake Inya" with the blood of the students. Riot police, reinforced by the army, used clubs that smashed uncountable heads of the students. The fact that an unknown number of students shed their blood and sacrificed their lives for democracy is still fresh in the memory of every Burmese. The encounter of High School and Middle School students led by University Students with the army-backed riot police in front of Mye-Ni-Gon Police Station proved the ultimate cruelty of the authorities. (Army bosses now in power had a hand in these suppressions.) The scene of riot police clubbing the kids, dragging the wounded kids and removing the scattered bodies of kids pushed the on-lookers beyond their tolerance level so that they interfered by attacking the riot police with everything available such as iron-sticks catapults etc. Therefore the fierce violence originated not from the students' demonstrations but from the ruthless suppression of the authorities. These events took place at the very time when the government had just demonetized the 25 kyats, 35 kyats and 75 kyats notes, creating an economic crises which was pressing the public into looking forward to a new political situation which might change the nation to a better future.

At that, the Chairman of the BSPP, U Ne Win, delivered an address at the third emergency "Party Congress" which reminded his followers to review their policies. He observed that all the events that had happened were very sorrowful, and he pointed out eloquently that the party should place the interests of the people above the benefit of the party. He also stressed the need to hold a nationwide referendum for the public to choose a one party system or a multi-party system.

Moreover, he announced, to the amazement of the whole populace, that he and his followers, General Secretary U Aye Ko, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence General Kyaw Htin, Joint-General Secretary U Sein Lwin and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Planning and Finance, U Tun Tin, were going to retire. No matter at what the old man's address was aimed, it certainly escalated the thirst of the public for democracy. Until that time, there was no anarchism, which the military accused the public of, and no crimes which they would later secretly create for justification of an intended coup. The public showed discipline in demonstrations under the guidance of student unions and such opposition leaders as U NU, DAW AUNG SAN SU KYI AND U AUNG GYI.

Again the great demonstration of 8.8.88 grew out of the popular grievance against Sein Lwin who is most responsible for the blood-stained suppression of protesters by commanding the riot police and army units. He rose to power in place of Ne Win rather than retiring as promised. The Pyithuhloktaw (Burmese Parliament) meeting which conferred on him the title of President of Burma aroused the anger of every Burmese.

After 9.8.88, army bosses spread spies throughout the country to put down demonstration by such dirty schemes as poisoning drinking water, assassinations, massacres etc. which can be seen nowhere in the world but in Burma. So, the angry public arrested the spies, confirmed their crimes and retaliated by executing some of them. Among the criminals were agents of the Military Intelligence, Riot Police and soldiers. Therefore, initiators of the violence were not the public but the authorities themselves and their followers. (These facts have been well-explained in the statements of Retired General Aung Gyi)

Because of international pressure and demonstrations, Sein Lwin "the Butcher" was forced to resign. Until then, the authorities neglected the interests and inspiration of the public. Dr. Maung Maung who was another puppet in place of Sein Lwin tried to compromise by saying that the government could accept some demands of the students but, in return, processions and strikes must stop. He also pointed out that the immediate problem is to keep general prices down and to restore law and order. Moreover he insisted that all demands of the students and public could not materialize in a short time.

In the meantime, Military Intelligence Units and the army took advantage of the shortage of food and other necessities in the country by inciting ignorant poor people to break into warehouses, public stores, and factories. Army agents first broke the doors to

the buildings and naturally starving people followed their example to immediately solve the problem of scarcity. But the organizations of students, workers, peasant etc., objected to the military for initiating these crimes and driving the country into anarchy. But because the disturbances were precalculated and manipulated by the government and the army, nobody was able to stop them.

At that time, the whole country, every town and village, had been at the height of the fight for democracy with might and main. As time dragged on, the confrontation between the public and a group of people who could not give up power at any rate reached to the highest degree. Everything was out of control. In such a time, authorities could have maintain peace by negotiating with opposition leaders. But they were foolish enough to cling to power and announced the "coup" in the deceptive name of "Law and Order Restoration Committee." After the coup, the army massacred peaceful demonstrators and hunger-strikers in front of the Capitol and the U.S Embassy. By releasing many kinds of orders and laws, they banned all political movements. So students and the whole public were deprived of all their peaceful means so they had to leave Burma and continue their struggle for democracy and human rights through the following means:

- (1) to stage boycotts against Rangoon
- (2) to get support of pressure on Rangoon from Democratic countries and
- (3) if necessary, to choose armed revolution for Democracy.

Therefore, it is contrary to Saw Maung's accusation that students fled after the coup for fear of being arrested but rather it is due to their firm resolution. So it is not right to label students and other youths now in the border areas as "rebels" but rather they should be called "Pro-Democratic Revolutionists"

Presently, the Burmese Government is examining students and youths to see if they are guilty or not (that is whether they were leaders in demonstrations or violators or murderers), forcing the public to give up their demands for Democracy and human rights, and prohibiting political movements. It is clear that students do not wish to return to Burma but as they are in the middle of a critical period due to lack of aid, attacks of malaria and pressure from the Thai Government, some students had to choose to return. Many of those students are now withstanding all kinds of hardships, even the possibility of death. So we make the following requests to all nations that love democracy and human rights and to the United Nations:

- (1) Call on the Thai government not to arrest students in the border areas and to grant temporary stay in suitable towns in Thailand
- (2) Stand on the side of the students and resort to pressure on the Military Regime of Saw Maung
- (3) Try to hold a conference, supervised by the UN, The Commission for Human Rights or the Security Council, to call for negotiations between the Burmese Government and the opposition including student representatives in the border areas
- (4) Call for a definite guarantee of safety for student returnees by Thai-Burmese Governments in all aspects of Human Rights and
- (5) Call on the Burmese government to fix the exact date for holding Multi-party General Elections.

#### OUR APPEAL

We sincerely appeal to those people, organizations and nations that love and put great value on democracy and human rights to understand that we Burmese students are not those who are keen on war, terrorism and violence. We are those who place great value on peace and democracy. Therefore we ardently ask for help and support from the people of the world in the aspect of humanitarian sympathy.

#### DETAINÉES

Following is a report which the ABSDF received from the Pao National Organization. The Pao are one of the ethnic groups situated in Northern Burma near the Chinese border. It reaffirms our fears concerning the safety of our fellow-students who have returned, freely or forcibly, to Burma. If you write letters to your own political representatives concerning the situation in Burma, or to the Saw Maung government directly, you might mention these students, and ask that confirmation be made of their safety and whereabouts.

From: The Pao National Organization  
To : The National Democratic Front

The following seven students returned to Rangoon via the Tak repatriation center because of bad health. After arriving in Burma, they were taken by the Burmese Intelligence Affairs Division, and their whereabouts is still unknown. We are much concerned about their safety.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Father's name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Address</u>
1. Thaw Zin	U Than Tun	18	No. 194 Aung-nyay Yet East Side Chauk
2. Wunna Min	U Myint Tun	16	No. 37 Shar Street Nyaung Shwe Bo Kone Taunggyi
3. Zaw Moe Khine	U Zaw Han	19	Wa Fya Myaunt Village Tuanggyi
4. Kway Myint She	U Maung	18	No. 300 Shwe Ta Khu Taunggyi
5. Win Kyaw Tun	U Tun Yin	19	Oke-Pho Yet Chauk
6. Zarni Aung	U Tun Aung Kyaw	18	No. 8 Chauk
7. Sein Myint	U Sei-Maung	20	No. 200 Strod Street Oke-Pho Yet Chauk

## INSIDE BURMA

We have received the following news reports from friends in Rangoon.

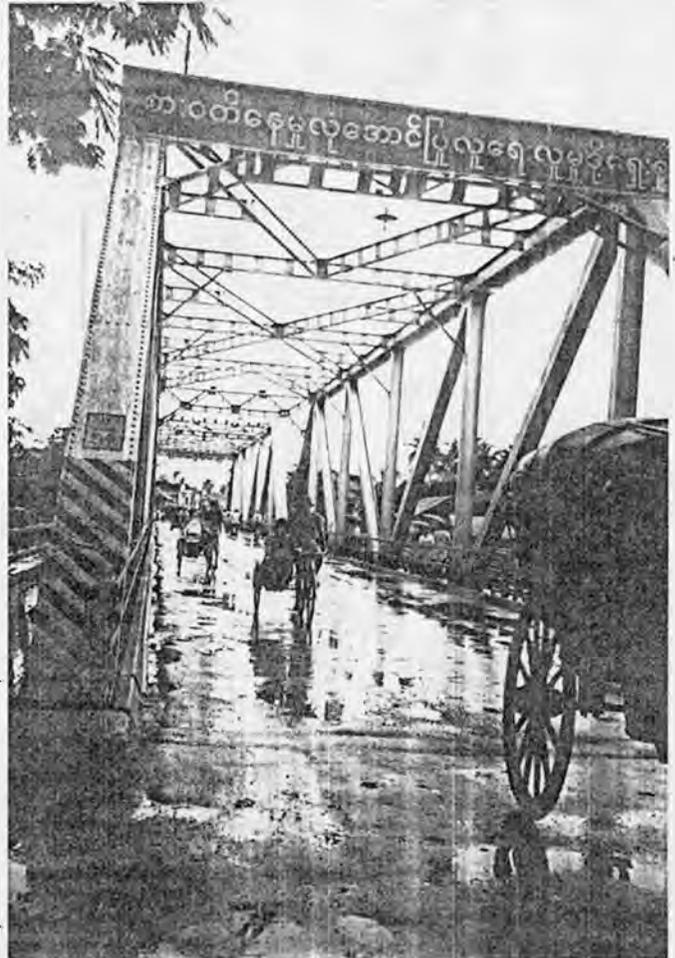
On January 30, 1989, the Military Intelligence arrested some students. We do not know what has happened to them yet.

Students in various parts of Rangoon continue to organize spontaneous strikes. As soon as the military arrives at the scene, the students disperse and run to safety. Then they regroup in another area of the city to carry on their protests. In this way, the students are able to continue their protests against the government, and keep alive the hope of a new future for the people.

February 12 is Union Day in Burma. On this day, students inside Burma are planning a general strike. Any outside support or simultaneous actions on this day would encourage the students in their struggle for democracy.

The slogan on the Bogy bridge talks about a sufficient living standard and the well-being of the people. But...

Our thanks to the photographer for his kind contribution.



## APPEAL

Your continued support is needed. We appeal to you to continue writing letters to your governments urging them to boycott Burma economically and politically. This can help pressure the Saw Maung Military government to step back and begin to negotiate with the people.

The United Nations can also play an important role in helping bring about an end to this madness. Write letters to the UN, urging them to look seriously at the Burma situation, and call for a guarantee of human rights for the people. We students can not return home to our schools and families as long as our lives are threatened by arrest, torture and execution.

## WHAT NEWSPAPERS SAY

### 3 BURMESE STUDENTS TORTURED TO DEATH

"Nation", January 25, 1989

Three Burmese students were tortured to death at Rangoon's Insein Jail while seven returnees from the Tak reception center have gone missing, according to a student who arrived in Mae Sot yesterday.

Kyaw Thein, 22, from Thuwanna Township in Rangoon, said a doctor working at the penitentiary told him that Nay Win Aung, 22, a student, had his lower legs, from knee to foot, set in cement by officials, who then extracted a confession from him. The student was killed soon afterwards.

Har Nink, 21 a Muslim student who fled from Kler Day, a Karen camp opposite Tak's Tha Song Yang district, was killed when authorities poured boiling lard into his mouth until blood oozed from his eyes and ears.

Aung Moe, 23, died after his spine was broken while being tortured during questioning. The bodies of the three students were cremated at the jail, the doctor was quoted as saying. Kyaw Thein said the three were killed 15 days before he left Rangoon.

### RANGOON WARNS AGAINST TRAPPING SCHOOL CLOSURE

"Bangkok Post" January 27, 1989

The military government of Burma warned political parties to stop criticizing the continued

closure of all the nation's schools, said an official Rangoon radio announcement monitored in Bangkok by UPI.

"It is hereby announced that effective action would be taken according to law against any person or organization who opposes the government's action of closing the schools in the interests of the security of the majority of the people," the radio quoted an official government notification dated Wednesday.

All Burmese schools, including primary schools, high schools, colleges and universities, were ordered closed last year following anti-government demonstrations calling for democracy, the notification said.

### SOLDIERS HARASS AUNG SAN SU KYI DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGN TRAIL

"The Nation" January 27, 1989

Army officials in Burma's "rice bowl" have served up a steady diet of harassment for the country's main opposition leader during a defiant two-week campaign there to promote democracy, her party says.

Aung San Su Kyi was threatened by gun-toting soldiers, often blocked from traveling by car or boat and drowned out by loudspeakers during her tour of the Irrawaddy delta, the National League for Democracy (NLD) said.

About 40 party organizers were arrested after her tour passed through their villages, a party official added.