Revised & Updated

The Karens



And their

Struggle for Freedom

Karen History and Culture Preservation Society

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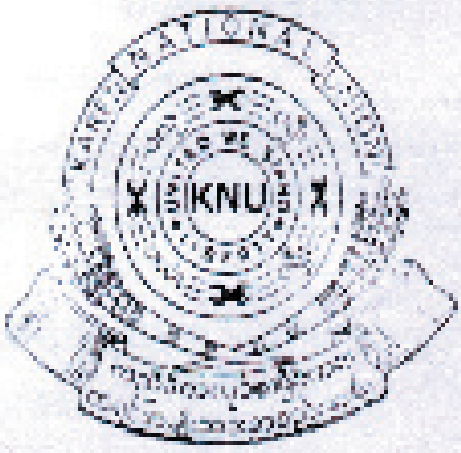
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THE KAREN NATIONAL UNION (KNU)

THE KARENS

and their

STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM

Published by the Karen National Union, July 1992



Htee Hset Met Ywa - The Land of our Forefathers

Migrated South about B.C.2615, and arrived Yunnan about B.C. 1385

Forward

Karen History and Culture Preservation Society Edition

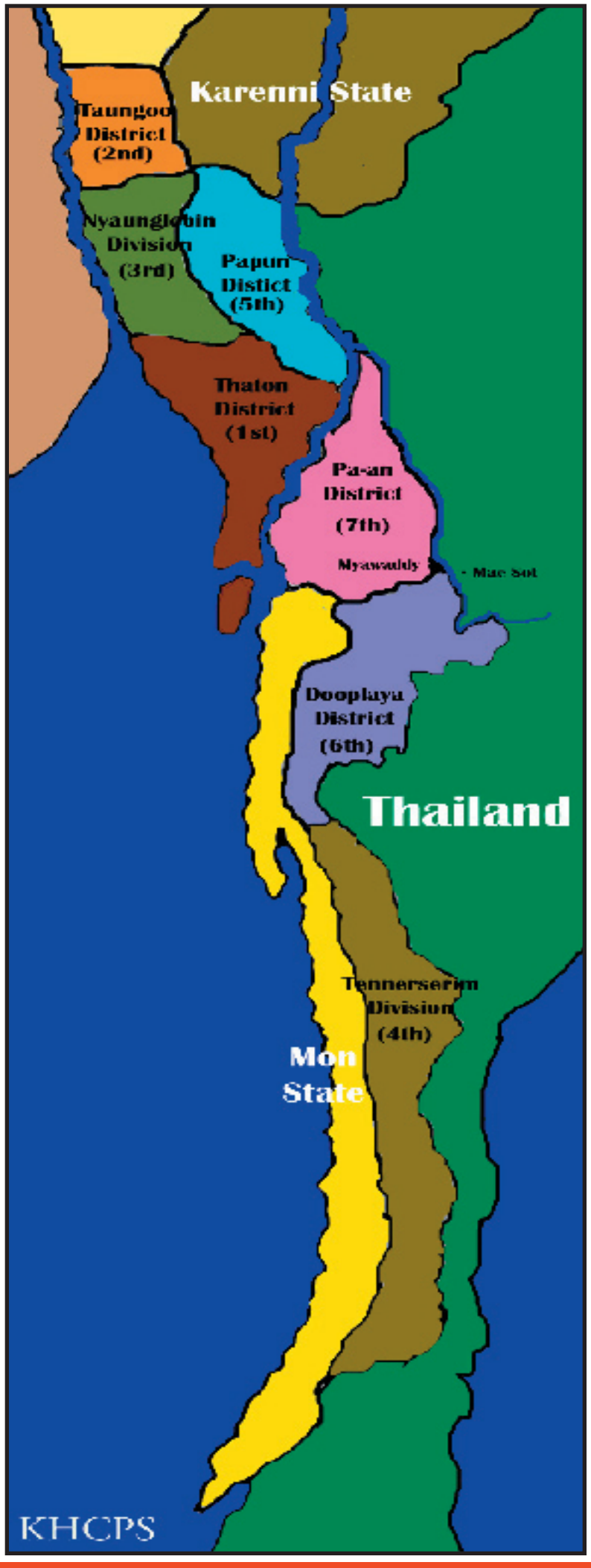
The first time I saw the 'The Karens and Their Struggle for Freedom' it was a small photocopied booklet consisting of about 18 A5 pages and contained what at the time was probably the most concise if not simplified account of the Karen struggle against the successive Burmese governments. Later President Ba Thein gave me a different version on Disk for the KNU's now defunct 'www.tawmeipa.org' website which I was building at the time. This version was not so much an account of the Karens struggle, but rather the failings of attempts to bring to an end a civil war which had been ravaging the Burmese countryside and destroying the development of the Karen populace for over forty years.

The Burmese government's intransigence in finding a solution to the 'Ethnic' question fuelled by its military mindset and its well founded fear of losing its grip on authoritarian power was shown to have merely exacerbated tensions as negotiation upon negotiation was met by an unwilling, if perhaps an indifferent, military regime whose previous attempts at quelling the racial problems facing the country was attempted genocide.

Although the original dictator, the late Ne Win, fell from grace with the military leadership, as has his prodigy and architect of the current ceasefire, Khin Nyunt, the military still continues to prevaricate as one KNU negotiating team after another is faced with blank and dazed expressions from a paranoid SPDC military administration that, unlike the Karen National Union, is unwilling to accept change.

The Karens and the Struggle for Freedom, especially in its coverage of the peace negotiations is as relevant now as it was when it was first published. This edition which has been updated to include the 2003 ceasefire and subsequent negotiations sadly shows that although the players may change – the rules, and the outcome, still seem to remain the the same. Hopefully another edition of this publication will appear in the future and end in a succesful peace agreement.

Paul Keenan
Co-founder/Editor
Karen History and Culture Preservation Society



PREFACE (To the original Edition)

We, the Karens of Burma, have been cornered into fighting against the ruling Burmese Governments for the past fifty years.

Holding the reins of all organs of the state, and in full control of the press radio, and television, the successive ruling Burmese Governments from U Nu's AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League) to the present Military Junta headed by General Than Shwe and his State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), have always painted us as black as they can. They have branded us insurgents, wa mongers, a handful of border smugglers, black-marketeers and stooges of both the communists and the imperialists.

Even so, to the extent of our ability we have always tried to refute the nefarious one-sided Burman propaganda of false accusations and make the true facts of our cause known to the world.

In fighting against the ruling Burmese Government, we are not being motivate by narrow nationalism, nor by ill-will towards the Burmese Government or the Burman people. Our struggle was not instigated neither by the capitalist world nor by the communists, as some have falsely accused us. It has an originality completely of its own. Throughout history, the Burman have been practicing annihilation, absorption and assimilation (3 A's) against the Karens and they are still doing so today. In short, they are waging a genocidal war against us. Thus we have been forced to fight for our very existence and survival.

In this document we venture to present a concise outline of the Karens' struggle for freedom; the Karen case, which we consider just, righteous and noble. We hope that through it, the world may come to know the true situation of the Karens, a forgotten people who continue to fight for our freedom intensively, single handedly and without aid of any kind from anyone.

Karen National Union (KNU)
Kawthoolei.

THE KARENS
A NATION, THEIR NATURE AND HISTORY

The Karens are much more than a national minority. We are a nation with a population of 7 million, having all essential qualities of a nation. We have our own history, our own language, our own culture, our own land of settlement and our own economic system of life. By nature the Karens are simple quite, unassuming and peace living people, who uphold the high moral qualities of honesty, purity, brotherly love, co-operative living and loyalty, and are devout in their religious beliefs.

Historically, the Karens descend from the same ancestors as the Mongolian people. The earliest Karens (or Yangs, as called by Thais), settled in Htee-Hset Met Ywa (Land of Flowing Sands), a land bordering the source of the Yang-tse-Kiang river in the Gobi Desert. Form there, we migrated southwards and gradually entered the land now known as Burma about 739 B. C.

We were, according to most historians, the first settlers in this new land. The Karens named this land Kaw-Lah, meaning the Green Land. We began to peacefully clear and till our land free from all hindrances. Our labours were fruitful and we were very happy with our lot. So we change the name of the land to Kawthoolei, a land free of all evils, famine, misery and strife: Kawthoolei, a pleasant, plentiful and peaceful country. Here we lived characteristically simple, uneventful and peaceful lives, until the advent of the Burman.

PRE-WORLD WAR II ERAS
BURMAN FEUDALISM, BRITISH IMPERIALISM AND JAPANESE FASCISM

We, the Karens could not enjoy our peaceful lives for long. The Mons were the next to enter this area, followed at their heels by the Burman. Both the Mons and the Burman brought with them feudalism, which they practiced to the full. The Burman later won the feudal war, and they subdued and subjugated all other nationalities in the land. The Karens suffered untold miseries at the hands of their Burman lords. Persecution, torture and killings, suppression, oppression and exploitation were the order of the day. To mention a few historical facts as evidence, we may refer to the Burman subjugation of the Mons and the Arakanese, and especially their past atrocities against the Thais at Ayudhaya. These events stand as firm evidence of the cruelties of Burman feudalism, so severe that those victimized peoples continue to harbor a deep-seated resentment of the Burman even today.

At that time, many Karens had to flee for their lives to the high mountains and thick jungles, where communications and means of livelihood were extremely difficult and diseases common. We were thus cut off from all progress, civilization and the rest of the world, and were gradually reduced to backward hill tribes. The rest of the Karens were made slaves. We were forced to do hard labor and were cruelly treated.

When the British occupied Burma, the conditions of the Karens gradually improved. With the introduction of law and order by the Colonial Central Authority, the Karens began to earn their living without being hindered, and we could go to school and be

educated. This infuriated the Burman, to see the despised Karens being treated equally by the British. Progress of the Karens in almost all fields was fast, and by the beginning of the 20th Century, the Karens were ahead of other peoples in many respects, especially in education, athletics and music. It could be said that the Karens had a breathing spell during the period of the British Regime. But during the Second World War in 1942, the Japanese invaded Burma with the help of the Burma Independence Army (BIA), who led them into the country. These BIA troops took full advantage of the situation by insinuation that the Karens were spies and puppets of the British, and therefore were enemies of the Japanese and the Burman. With the help of the Japanese, they began to attack the Karen villages, using a scheme to wipe out the entire Karen populace which closely resembled the genocidal scheme Hitler was enacting against the Jews in Germany. The Karens in many parts of the country were arrested, tortured and killed. Our properties were looted, our womenfolk raped and killed, and our hearths and homes burned. Conditions were so unbearable that in some areas the Karens retaliated fiercely enough to attract the attention of the Japanese Government, which mediated and somewhat controlled the situation.

The bitter experiences of the Karens throughout our history in Burma, especially during the Second World War, taught us one lesson. They taught us that as a nation, unless we control a state of our own, we will never experience a life of peace and decency, free from persecution and oppression. We will never be allowed to work hard to grow and prosper.





POST-WORLD WAR II ERAS DEMAND FOR THE KAREN STATE, TENSIONS AND ARMED CONFLICTS

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Soon after the Second World War, all nations under colonial rule were filled with national aspirations for independence. The Karens sent a Goodwill Mission to England in August 1946, to make the Karen case known



to the British Government and the British people, and to ask for a true Karen State. But the reply of the British labor Government was "to throw in our lot with the Burman". We deeply regretted this, for as it predictably has turned out today, it was a gesture grossly detrimental to our right of self-determination, only condemning us to further oppression. It is extremely difficult for the Karens and the Burman, two peoples with diametrically opposite views, outlooks, attitudes and mentalities, to yoke together.

However, differences in nature and mentality are not the main reason for our refusal to throw in our lot with the Burman. There are other more important reasons for sticking to our demand for our own state within a genuine Federal Union.

1. We are concerned that the tactics of annihilation, absorption and assimilation, which have been practiced in the past upon all other nationalities by the Burman rulers, will be continued by the Burman of the future as long as they are in power.

2. We are concerned about the postwar independence Aung San - Atlee and Nu - Atlee Agreements, as there was no Karen representative in either delegation and no Karen opinion was sought. The most that the Burman would allow us to have was a pseudo Karen State, which falls totally under Burman authority. In that type of Karen State, we must always live in fear of their cruel abuse of that authority over us.

On the January 4, 1948, Burma got its independence from the British. The Karens continued to ask for self-determination democratically and peacefully from the Burmese Government. The Karen State requested by the Karens was comprised of the Irrawaddy Division, The Tenasserim. Division, the Hanthawaddy District, Insein District and the Nyaunglebin Sub-Division, the areas where the bulk of the Karen populace could be found. But instead of compromising with the Karens by peaceful negotiations concerning the Karen case, the Burmese Government and the Burmese press said many negative things about us, especially by frequently repeating their accusations that the Karens are puppets of the British and enemies of the Burman. The Burmese Government agitated the Burman people toward communal clashes between the Karens and the Burman. Another accusation against the Karen demand was that it was not the entire

...the Burmese Government and the Burmese press said many negative things about us, especially by frequently repeating their accusations that the Karens are puppets of the British and enemies of the Burman. The Burmese Government agitated the Burman people toward communal clashes between the Karens and the Burman.

Karen people who desired a Karen state, But a handful of British lackeys who wanted the ruin of the Union of Burma.

To Counter the accusations and show the World that it was the whole Karen people's desire for a Karen state, a peaceful demonstration by the Karens all over the country was staged on February 11, 1948, in which over 400,000 Karens took part. The banners carried in the procession contained four slogans, namely:

1. Give the Karen state at once
2. Show Burman one Kyat and Karen one Kyat
3. We do not want communal strife
4. We do not want civil war

The slogans of the Karens in this mass demonstration voiced the same desire as the three slogans of the British Colonies after the Second World War: Liberty, Equality, and Peace. We followed the established democratic procedures in our request for a Karen state.

A few months after Burma got its independence, successive desertions and revolts in the AFPFL put U Nu, the then Premier, in grave trouble. The revolts of the Red Flag Communist Party in 1947, the Communist Party of Burma in March 1948, the People's Volunteer Organization in June 1948, and the mutinies of the 1st Burma Rifles stationed at Thayetmyo and the 3rd Burma Rifles stationed at Mingladon, Rangoon (August 15, 1948), prompted U Nu to approach the Karen leaders to help the Government by taking up the security of Rangoon and save it from peril. The Karens did not take advantage of the situation, but readily complied to U Nu's request and helped him out of his predicament. The KNDO (Karen National Defence Organization), Officially recognized by the Burmese Government, was posted at all the strategic positions and all the roads and routes leading to Rangoon. For months the KNDO faithfully took charge of the security of Rangoon.

The KNDO was given several tasks in forming an outer ring of defence, particularly at Hlegu and Twante. Most important of all was the reoccupation of Twante town, Rangoon's Key riverine gateway to the Delta towns and upper Burma. This little town had fallen several times to the communists. Each time

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it was retaken by regular troops only to fall back into the hands of the rebels as soon as conditions returned to normal and control was handed back to the civil authorities and the police. This time, a KNDO unit under the leadership of Bo Toe and Bo Aung Min was ordered to retake Twante, which was once more in the hands of the Red Flag Communists. They succeeded with their own resources and without any support from the regular army other than river transport. After wresting the town from the Red Flag Communists hand, they garrisoned it in accordance with their given orders.

The two mutinied Burma Rifles marched down south, unopposed along the way, until they reached kyungale bridge, near the town

of Let Pa-dan, where they were stopped by a company of Karen UMP (Union Military Police). Their truck carrying arms and ammunition received a direct hit from mortar fire of the Karen UMP and was destroyed, so they retreated after suffering heavy casualties.

But even while all this was happening, the ungrateful Burmese Government was hastily organizing a strong force of levies to make an all-out effort to smash the Karens. By December 1948, they arrested the Karen leaders in many parts of the country. Karen personnel in the armed services were disarmed and put into jail. General smith Dun, General Officer Commanding (GOC) of the Burma Army, was forced to resign. Many Karen villages were attacked and many Karen villagers were shot and killed, Women raped, properties looted and hearths and homes burnt and destroyed. On the 30th of January 1949, the Burmese Government declared the KNDO unlawful. Early the next morning on the 31st of January, the Burmese troops attacked the KNDO headquarters at Insein, a town about 10 miles north of Rangoon, where most of the top Karen leaders lived. There was no alternative left for the Karens but to fight back. An order was issued to all the Karens throughout the Country to take up whatever arms they could find and fight for their lives, their honor, and their long cherished Karen state, Kawthoolei.

When we took up arms, we attained great successes and occupied many towns and cities. We soon suffered military reverses, however, as we had not prepared for Revolution and therefore had no stockpile of arms and ammunition. We had to withdraw from many fronts, thus allowing the Burmese troops to reoccupy these areas. Compounding this, the Burmese Government called for unity with all the other uprising Burman rebel groups. These Burman rebel groups saw the Karens as the greatest obstacle to their seizing exclusive power, joined hands with the Burmese Government, and fought against the Karens. As a result, the Karens found themselves fighting against all the armed elements in the country.



Another reason for our setbacks was that all along we had to stand on our own feet and fight alone without aid of any kind from any other country. In contrast, the Burmese Government received large amounts of foreign aid, including military aid from both capitalist and socialist countries, and even from some so-called non-aligned nations. Many times then and since the situation of the Burmese Government has been precarious, but it has managed to continue mainly through aid from abroad. Many times it has been in dire financial straits, but it has not been ashamed to go begging. And as hard as it is for us to believe, its begging bowls have always come back filled.

PRESENT DAY SITUATION

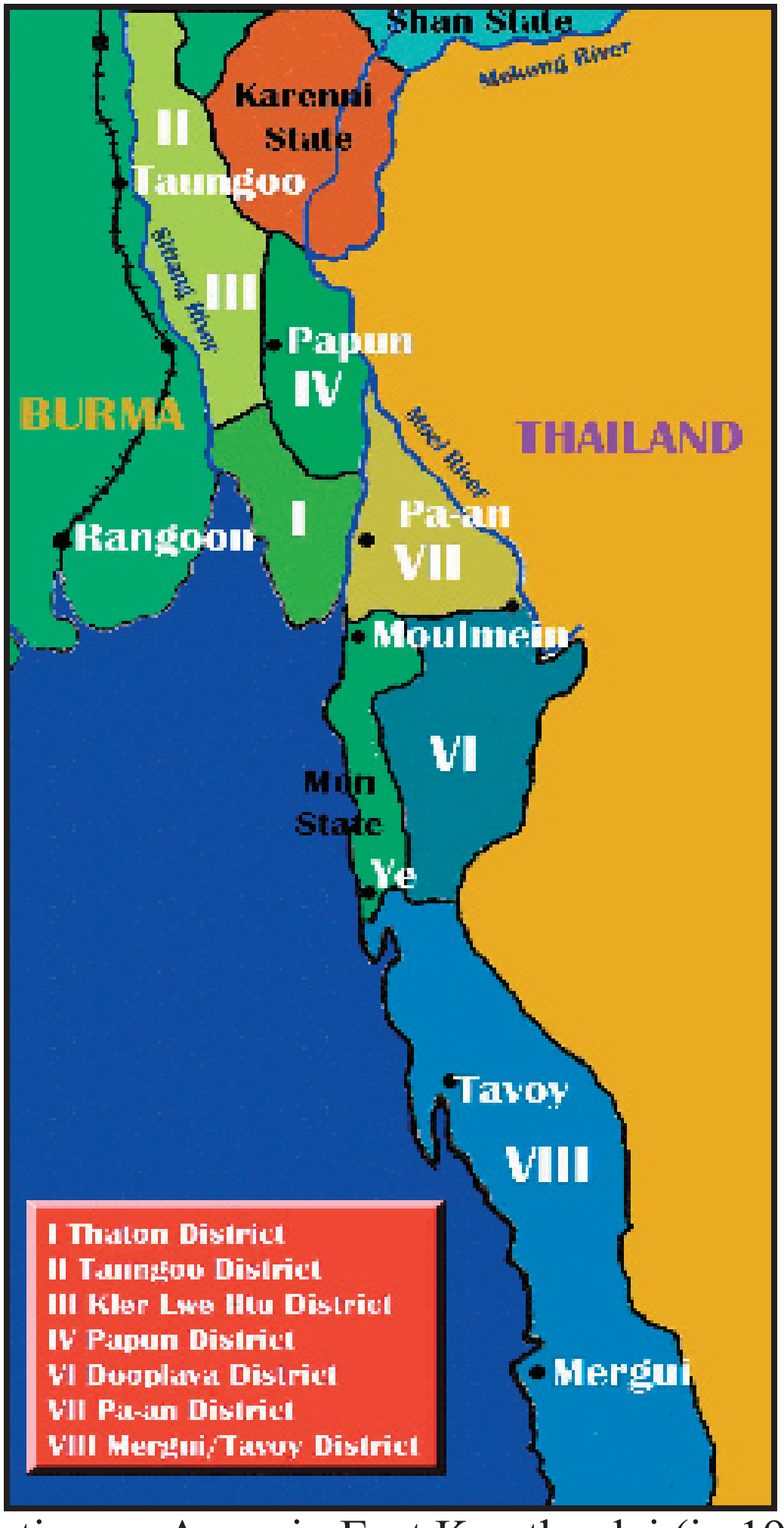
THE KARENS UNDER SUCCESSIVE BURMESE REGIMES
THE REVOLUTIONARY AREAS
THE PRESENT SITUATION

Under the rule of the Burman, the Karens have been oppressed politically, economically, and culturally. In education, the Karen schools and institutions were taken by force and many were destroyed. We are no longer allowed to study our own language in Burmese schools. Many of the Karen newspapers and literary books were banned. Economically, our fields and plots of land were nationalized and confiscated. We have to toil hard all year round and have to take all our products to the Burmese Government for sale at its controlled prices, leaving little for ourselves. Culturally, they have attempted to absorb and dissolve our language, literature, traditions, and customs. We have been denied all political rights and militarily, our people have all along been systematically exterminated as part of the annihilation, absorption, and assimilation programme of the Burman. Our educational quality and living standards have dropped considerably, falling far behind the Burman in all respects. Their efforts and actions against us are as strong, or stronger today as ever before in the past.



Captured villagers, men as well as women and adolescents are made to carry heavy loads as porters for the Burmese soldiers. Many of the villagers have been forced to work as porters for several months; they are deliberately starved, and regularly beaten, raped, or murdered.

Since the 1960's, they have been attacking us with the "Four Cuts Operation". The four cuts include cutting our lines for supplying provisions, cutting the line of contact between the masses and the revolutionaries, cutting all revolutionary financial income and resources, and cutting off the heads of all revolutionaries. To make the four cuts operation successful, the Burmese troops are using strong suppressive measures. They destroy the fields of crops planted by the villagers and eat their grains and livestock. They take away whatever they like and destroy the things they cannot carry away. Captured villagers, men as well as women and adolescents are made to carry heavy loads as porters for the Burmese soldiers. Many of the villagers have been forced to work as porters for several months; they are deliberately starved, and regularly beaten, raped, or murdered. When the Burmese soldiers enter a village, they shoot the villagers who try to escape. Some of the villagers have



Revolutionary Areas in East Kawthoolei (in 1992)

been accused of helping the revolutionaries and then have been killed. In certain areas, the villagers have been forced to leave their villages and have been moved to camps some distance away. They are not permitted to leave the camps without permission from the Burmese guards. Some villagers, who have been found in their villages after being ordered to move to the camps, have been shot and killed by the Burmese soldiers with no questions asked.

Situations such as these and sometimes worse are happening constantly throughout Kawthoolei and are causing a large number of Karens and Shans in Kawthoolei to leave their villages and take refuge along the Thai border; a difficult situation for us, as we do not have enough money to provide for these refugees. In spite of these situations we are determined to progress. Even though there is no end to the war in sight, and we are unable to obtain assistance from other countries, we are moving forward the best we can.

During this long and grueling fifty years of war, we have seen many changes take place in our revolution. The strong will and determination of our fighting forces and our masses to fight to win the war have increased. We have been able to endure hardships, both physically and mentally. Our masses have shown more cooperation by participating in the battlefields to fight against the enemy in various ways. Villagers throughout Kawthoolei are active in support roles, while the morale, discipline, and military skills of our fighting forces have increased. We have been able to inflict greater setbacks on the enemy in all our military engagements.

Burma is a multi-national country, inhabited also by the Kachin, Arakanese, Karenni, Lahu, Mon, Pa-O, Palaung, Shan and Wa, etc. After independence, these ethnic races were also denied the basic rights of freedom, self-determination, and democracy. Hence, almost all the other nationalities in Burma have also taken up arms to fight against the Burmese Government for their own self-determination, and are now united in the



National Democratic Front, (NDF). There are now altogether nine members in the National Democratic Front, namely;

1. ALP = ARAKAN LIBERATION PARTY
2. CNF = CHIN NATIONAL FRONT
3. NMSP = NEW MON STATE PARTY
4. PPLO = PA-OH PEOPLE LIBERATION ORGANIZATION
5. LDF = LAHU DEMOCRATIC FRONT
6. WNO = WA NATIONAL ORGANIZATION
7. PSLF = PALAUNG STATE LIBERATION FRONT
8. KNLP = KAYAN NATIONAL LIBERATION PARTY
9. KNU = KAREN NATIONAL UNION

The Consolidated National Democratic Front (NDF) has resolved to form a genuine Federal Union, comprised of all the states of the nationalities in Burma, including a Burman

state, on the basis of liberty, equality and social progress. The NDF is determined to fight on until victory is achieved, and requests the people of all classes and all walks of life to join hands and fight against the Ne Win - Than Shwe military dictatorship.

By 1988, the oppression of Ne Win's military regime had become so severe that even the Burman masses rose up against it. The regime's response was to gun down thousands of peaceful demonstrators, mainly young students and monks. Even so Ne Win could not subdue them: and he was forced to resign, seemingly handing over power to his chosen successors in the State Law and order Restoration Council (SLORC), but continuing to pull the strings of power from behind the scenes. The SLORC promised a multi-party election and held it in 1990, only to persecute and imprison the winners rather than hand over state power to them. Thousands of Burmese students, monks, and other dissidents fled to the areas governed by NDF member organizations. There they were accepted and sheltered by the ethnic peoples, particularly in the Karen areas, where no less than 6,000 students arrived along with other dissidents, all wanting to organize and struggle against the SLORC. In late 1988, the KNU took the initiative in proposing that the NDF form a broader political front along with the newly formed Burman groups to meet the developing political situation. The other NDF members agreed, and the Democratic. Alliance of Burma (DAB) was formed, including all the members of the NDF as well as groups such as the All-Burma Student's Democratic Front (ABSDF) and the All-Burma Young Monks' Union (ABYMU). The DAB unitedly committed itself to the following four principles:

1. The removal of the military dictators
2. The establishment of democratic government
3. The cessation of civil war and the establishment of internal peace.
4. The establishment of National Unity and a genuine federal union.

This marks the first time that the people of all races, even the Burmans, have been united in trying to throw off the yoke of an oppressive Burmese regime.

THE KAREN NATIONAL UNION (KNU)

AIMS, POLICY AND PROGRAMME

The second Karen National Union (KNU) congress was held at Maw Ko, Nyaunglebin district in June and July 1956, and was attended by KNU representative from Delta Division, Pegu Yoma Division and Eastern Division. In this congress the political aims of the KNU were laid down as follows, and they still apply today:

1. The establishment of a Karen State with the right to self-determination.

2. The establishment of National States for all the nationalities, with the right to self-determination.

3. The establishment of a genuine Federal Union with all the states having equal rights and the right to self-determination.

4. The Karen National Union will pursue the policy of National Democracy.

In spite of the internal and external situations,

OFFICE OF THE SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
KAREN NATIONAL UNION

TO,

Senior General Than Shwe
Chairman
State Law and Order Restoration Council

Dear General,

We see that it is imminently necessary to establish genuine and durable internal peace in the entire country of Burma. We also need to strive for a suitable and appropriate step by step approach, in order to secure that peace.

In this ascending step by step approach to obtain genuine peace, the first desirable stage is where mutual trust and close relationship can be established with preliminary representatives of both sides meeting face to face and planting the good seed of frank and open discussions.

To obtain mutual relationship and trust, both sides should respect each other's dignity and arrange for security in order to cultivate initial open and frank discussions. The KNU is thus ready to begin this incipient good seeding through direct conference at a mutually agreeable external (foreign) locality where the preliminary representatives could meet. For this purpose, we are sending this letter with Rev. Enos, through whom communications should be made, to formally find out the Senior General's opinion.

Sd/ (General Saw Bo Mya)
President
Karen National Union - KNU

we continue to maintain our state, Kawthoolei, administered by our own Kawthoolei Government since 1950, under the banner of the Karen National Union (KNU), and the well trained and disciplined Karen National liberation Army, which were formed in the same year. We desire Kawthoolei to be a Karen State with the right to self-determination. We are therefore endeavouring to form a genuine Federal Union comprised of all the states of the nationalities in Burma, including a Burman state, on the basis of Liberty, Equality, Self-determination and Social Progress.

We desire the extent of Kawthoolei to be the areas where the Karens are in majority. It shall be governed in accordance with the wishes of the people of the State and just in the eyes of the country and the world. The policy of the Karen National Union is National Democracy. It fully recognizes and encourages private ownership and welcomes foreign investment. All the people in Kawthoolei shall be given democratic rights, politically, economically, socially and culturally. Freedom and equality of all religions is

guaranteed. Kawthoolei will maintain cordial relationships with all other states and other countries on the basis of mutual respect, peace and prosperity. Kawthoolei will never permit the growing or refining of opium or the sales and transport of illicit drugs through its territory.

To us, the independence Burma gained in 1948 is but a domination over all other nationalities in Burma by the Burman. The taking up of arms by almost all the nationalities against the ruling Burmese Government is sufficient proof that though Burma got its independence, only the Burman have really enjoyed independence and they have subjugated the other nationalities. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) headed by General Than Shwe will never and can never solve the conflicts and crises in the country.

The Karen Revolution is more than just a

We strongly believe in the Charter of the United Nations, its Declarations on Human rights, the principle of Self-Determination and the Democratic Rights of Peoples - all causes for which we are fighting.

struggle for survival against national oppression, subjugation, exploitation and domination of the Karen people by the Burmese rulers. It has the aim of a genuine Federal Union comprised of all the states of the nationalities on the basis of equality and self-determination. In our march towards our objectives we shall uphold the four principles laid down by our beloved leader, the late Saw Ba U Gyi which are;

1. For us surrender is out of the question
2. The recognition of the Karen State must be complete.
3. We shall retain our arms.
4. We shall decide our own political destiny.

We strongly believe in the Charter of the United Nations, its Declarations on Human rights, the principle of Self-Determination and the Democratic Rights of Peoples - all causes for which we are fighting.

The fighting may be long, hard, and cruel, but we are prepared for all eventualities. To die fighting is better than to live as a slave. But we firmly believe that we shall survive and be victorious, for our cause is just and righteous, and surely and tyranny so despised as the Burmese regime must one day fall.



Saw Ba U Gyi

The First Negotiations (1995-97)



Clarification Document Concerning the Fourth Negotiation BetweenKaren National Union (KNU) And State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). Published by Karen National Union in Burmese. Translated into English by Ba Saw Khin, Karen National League (KNL).

Although we, on our side, have earnestly made our written communication, The SLORC has never made any formal reply.

During 1994, there has been attempts made through the military attache Colonel Thein Hswe, at Burmese embassy in Bangkok, Thailand, and also through Anglican Bishop Andrew Mya Han, to hold peace negotiations between the KNU and SLORC.

In those attempts to hold direct meetings, during which to benefit from frank and just discussions, the following basic considerations have been suggested:
The above suggestions by the KNU and her allied opposition groups have been rejected by SLORC. After that, in order to begin negotiation from any of the lowest categories, the KNU urged the SLORC President as in the following letter.
{Repeat of Identical June 7, 1994, shown in the above.}

1. That the negotiations should not be made separately with each group or party alone; instead, to definitively represent all the opposition parties as a whole in the discussions for solutions, they should be made between the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) and SLORC.

2. That the locale (place) for the negotiations should be a foreign country acceptable to both sides.

3. That this meeting for peace negotiations be conducted under the supervision of the United Nations.

4. That this meeting for peace negotiations be accessible to people of the news media, and news conferences can be openly held with them.

Instead of a legitimate answer to the above letter, in January of 1995, SLORC began an intensive military operation against the KNU and took over the KNU Headquarters of Manerplaw.

The KNU represents the Karen people and while sincerely attempting, with full commitment, to solve their problems, and also problems relating to the unity of the indigenous people, preservation of the Union, and achieving genuine and definitive peace, through nonviolent, political process, such puissant and pugnacious operation against the KNU headquarters simply indicated that the SLORC's verbal expressions and declarations differ completely from their practical and ruthless actions.

By March of 1995, the KNU convened an emergency Central Committee meeting during which it was decided that to accomplish bi-lateral negotiations, instead of holding on the preconditions and terms that were suggested earlier, a more practical approach of initial direct contact be made by the two sides to thrash out and settle on a necessary the suitable agenda for the peace conference.

The above decision of the emergency Central Committee meeting was confirmed by the 11th Congress of the KNU held in July 1995. During that congress, decision was also made on the fundamental points or policies to be adopted for the negotiations.

Preparation for the Peace Negotiation

Conference

In December of 1995, after a group comprising peace intermediaries:

1. U Khun Myat
2. Professor Saw Tun Aung Chain
3. Thra Hanson Tah Daw
4. P'Doh Saw Richard
5. Saw A. Soe Myint
6. Rev. Mar Gay Gyi,

arrived again with their mediatory efforts, the following preliminary KNU delegation to prepare for the meeting and discussion was sent on December 13, 1997. Its representatives were:

1. P'Doh Klee Say (Silver Bow) - delegation leader
2. Mahn S'ti-la - member
3. Saw Nay Soe - member
4. Saw Victor - office staff (In-charge)
5. Saw Tee Tu - staff
6. Mahn Chit Win - "
7. Saw Min Htoo - "

This preliminary delegation was sent on December 13, 1995, and began their talks at Moulmein on December 18, 1995. The delegation and SLORC's representatives met and discussed the following terms.

For negotiations;

1. For this KNU and SLORC negotiation, the rank and number of responsible representatives should be discussed and agreed upon. (Members of the delegation of each side should comprise. First line leaders and the KNU should be represented by 7 members, plus 4 office staff members to record minutes, a total of 11 members to attend the negotiations).

2. To settle on the time and place for the delegations to meet (To discuss for agreement that the negotiations should take place no later than the first week of January, 1996, and that a suitable place in Rangoon be chosen, and only if that is not possible, than Pa-an be considered as the venue.)

3. To discuss for the arrangement of broadcasting over the radio and announcement in newspapers about commencing negotiations by the two delegations one-day ahead of time (on the eve of the meeting).

4. To discuss and settle on allowing the attendance by the peace intermediaries during the negotiation sessions.

5. To settle on the freedom of recording of all of the negotiating sessions from beginning to end by video camera, movie, still camera and audio tape.

6. To discuss and settle on the KNU holding a press conference at the end of the negotiations at a suitable place in the city where the negotiations are held. (This can be omitted if SLORC objects to it. However, each side, on its own, should always hold the right the dispense information to the news media).

7. To discuss and settle on the access to telephone/telegraph/radio communication between the KNU delegation and the KNU Central Headquarters.

8. To discuss and agree on the security arrangements for the KNU delegation by

SLORC.

9. To discuss and settle on the absence of internal or external threat or threatening gestures and actions during the negotiation sessions.

10. To discuss and agree on the right of the KNU representatives to meet freely with relevant people and to be able to attend religious/ worship services of each own faith at will without any restriction during the negotiation period.

The right to meet with relevant people means:

1. Leaders of Karen people organizations
2. Educated elites and Persons trusted and revered by the Karens.
3. Buddhist Monks/ Abbots and Christian Clergy leaders
4. Relative and Close Friends
5. Members of Ethnic Political Parties and Political Leaders supported by the people or mass.

11. At the end of the negotiations, to make known to the country through radio and TV broadcasting, and also through newspapers and periodicals all the minutes taken during the entire sessions.

The negotiations

Of the 11 terms for negotiation submitted by the preliminary KNU delegation, 2, 3, 6, and 10 were rejected by SLORC. In fact, the very first term where First lines Leaders should be represented by both sides were not honored. Even though the KNU was represented by top of First Line Leaders, first or highest power level SLORC leaders did not attend the meeting, and thus rendering this a rather unofficial and empty gesture.

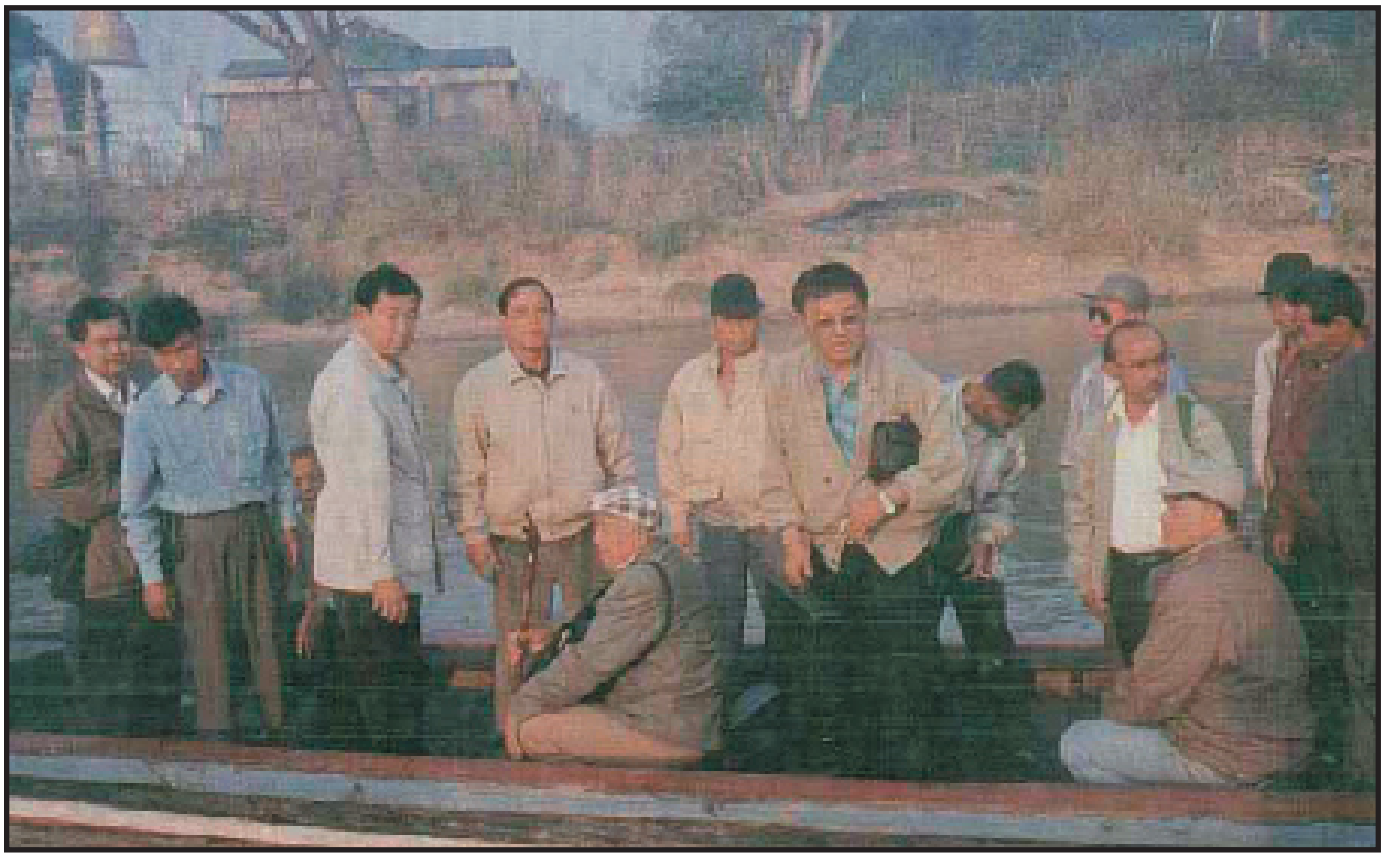
Among the 11 terms that the KNU submitted, the one that was inexorably repudiated was #10. SLORC was adamant and unyielding against letting the KNU representatives meet with Karen elders and educated elites, and other national political leaders, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

The results of negotiations obtained by the initial delegation are far from adequate for the KNU. From another perspective, SLORC has rejected a situation for free and fair negotiations, the hope, aspiration and trust of ethnic minorities, and a good and desirable beginning of what are needed to establish genuine peace in the country.

However, instead of continuing the mediation for the terms that have been rejected by SLORC, the KNU decided to make preparations so as to commence firm negotiation by both sides, focussing on the separate and appropriate terms that it could be independently discussed.
Note: This meeting between the KNU preliminary delegation and SLORC is recognized by both sides as the First Negotiation, and later negotiation sessions are documented as Second, Third, etc.

Second Negotiation

The second Negotiation took place on February 15-16, 1996, at the Southeast Command Headquarters in Moulmein. The following people attended that meeting.



KNU Delegation

1.	Mahn Shar Lanpan	Leader
2.	P'Doh Aung San	D e p u t y
	Leader	
3.	P'Doh Ta-Eh	Member
4.	Saw Roger	Member
5.	Saw Nay Soe	Member
6.	Mahn Aung Tin Myint	Member
7.	Saw Tee TuTu	Office Staff
	(In-charge)	
8.	Saw Tannay	Staff

SLORC Delegation

1. Colonel Kyaw Thein
2. Colonel Thein Hswe
3. Brigadier General Aung Thein
4. Lt. Colonel Maung Toe
5. Lt. Colonel Myo Myint
6. Major Khin Maung Kyi
7. Major Myo Myint
8. Major Thet Tin Sein

Peace Intermediaries

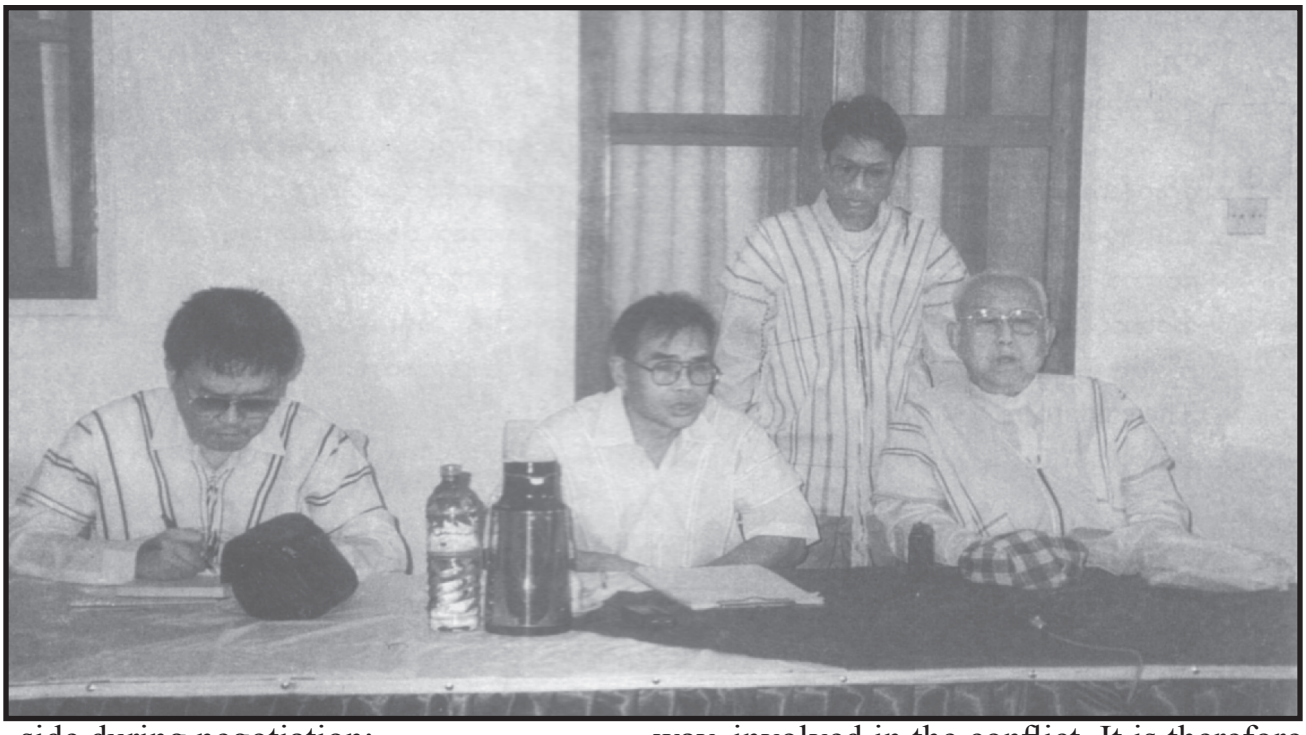
1. U Khun Myat
2. U A. Soe Myint
3. Professor Saw Tun Aung Chain
4. Saw Hanson Tah Daw
5. P'Doh Saw Richard

At this Second Negotiation, the KNU submitted and discussed the cease-fire arrangement to be observed during the negotiating sessions. The complete text of this is as follows:

Memo on the KNU viewpoint concerning Cease-fire During the Negotiation Sessions

It is necessary to observe cease-fire during negotiations between SLORC and KNU. The necessity derives from:

- the desirability of cultivating trust by each



side during negotiation;

- the need to avoid military matters during the negotiation;
- the essentiality of conducting the talks under secure conditions;
- both sides to obtain the trust, reliance and confidence of relevant parties, organizations, ethnic peoples, and the entire mass (people) of Burma.
- in continuation, along with the cease-fire, the following items are deemed necessary and proposed for mediation by the KNU; they are:

1. The need for SLORC to let the entire country know about the cease-fire.

This need to declare the cease-fire to the whole country rests on the following reasons:

(a) Without the declaration of cease-fire to the entire country, (troops of) KNU allies in the basic KUN territories and the contiguous areas, and within as well as outside the KNU regions, would continue fighting with SLORC, and, inevitably, the KNU troops in the basic KNU territories would be, in some way, involved in the conflict. It is therefore highly desirable that SLORC officially announce the cease-fire to the whole country to avoid these complications.

(b) Everyone is aware that the fighting and battles between SLORC and KNU have been the fiercest. In view of this, to alleviate the obduracy and antagonistic sentiment between both sides, and, concurrently, mitigating the hardened animosity and hostile emotions between all other armed resistant powers in the country and SLORC, it is desirable to cultivate a good seedling in starting this negotiation by the two sides.

(c) The countrywide declaration of cease-fire can provide encouragement to the people of the whole country. They will have faith on this negotiation, and support and cooperation can be forthcoming from them. And these are extremely desirable to be attained.

(There has been precedence when in 1963, during negotiations with the then ruling Revolutionary Council, the Rev. Council government made an official declaration of country-wide cease-fire.)

2. It is desirable that reinforcement for the offensive forces and movement of heavy weapons to frontline areas be suspended.

   If reinforcement for the offensive SLORC forces in the KNU territorial grounds were not suspended during the negotiation sessions of the two sides, there will be no doubt that the KNU as well as the Karen people cannot put any faith in this negotiation. Thus, it is imperative that this extremely important point should be seriously taken into account.

3. It is necessary that construction and maintenance activities of roads used in the military offensive operations should be suspended.

   The front line roads used by SLORC offensive operations are threatening gestures to the KNU and the Karen People living in the KNU territories. Therefore, if construction, improvements and maintenance work on these roads are not suspended during the talks, there would be troop movements and confusion will undoubtedly arise between army units on both sides as well as among the people in these areas. Thus, to prevent these problems road construction and maintenance activities must be suspended.

4. Recruiting new army personnel, engaging porters for the troops, enlisting locals for watchmen or security duties, and raising corvee should be suspended.
   During the cease-fire period, rounding up new recruits for the army, drafting porters, getting watchmen from the locals, and calling for volunteer workers or corvee are activities directly related to the public which can cause complications, bad feeling and confrontations, and thus should be suspended. Only then the negotiation can earnestly proceed without these concerns and anxieties.

5. It is necessary to suspend all the levying of money on the people in lieu of porters, watchmen or people for security duties, corvee or 'volunteer' workers, and demanding provisions from the people.

   SLORC's various demands on the people, things that are seriously detrimental to the people must be absolutely stopped. Should instances like these arise, the most appropriate actions should be taken. If



not the negotiation between KNU and SLORC and cease-fire would not be beneficial to the people, and the negotiation, undoubtedly, in some way would be harmed or impeded. Therefore these things should cease, and in case they still happen, actions should be immediately taken against them.

6. To refrain from forcibly relocating people; and those that have been reestablished elsewhere by coercion, those who have to run away and hide to avoid forced relocation, should be allowed, arrangement and security given them, to return to live in their own villages.

   Not to forcibly resettle people elsewhere, and allowing for return, with guarantee of full security, those who have been relocated by force as well as those who managed to escape and hid to avoid relocation, would be highly required and demand immediate action. If this is not done, it would not be easy for the cease-fire and negotiations to be successfully conducted. Additionally, permission should be given for necessary help that can be rendered to the suffering people by various NGO's.

7. Information and messages should be promptly available to both sides concerning necessary personnel and troop movements.

   During the cease-fire and negotiation period, prior notification and messages on necessary troop movements on both sides should be sent to each other. In only this way would accidental encounter and firing on each other be avoided. Since this can create messy and complicated situations, each side's troop positions should be precisely demarcated.

8. During the cease-fire period, KNU must be able to freely communicate with their own ethnic people.

   Since the negotiation between SLORC and KNU is the political destiny for all the Karen people during the cease-fire and negotiation period, the KNU should be able to personally meet and discuss with, and obtain the suggestion and counsel of the Karen people, revered Karen Buddhist and Christian clergy members, educated elite and respected Karen leaders. Therefore, it is desirable that these contacts and communication should be guaranteed with freedom and security. Only then the negotiations can be carried out honorably.

9. To mediate and solve problems that may arise during the cease-fire period, negotiating committees represented by delegates of both sides should be formed.

   Since there could be problems between the two sides, many questionable and difficult situations concerning the people and mass, necessitating promptly mediated solutions, it is desirable to organize negotiation committees within both the upper echelon leaders and lower member of the delegation.

10. The cease-fire should be observed by an observer delegation from the United Nations Headquarters, acceptable to both sides.

    Monitoring should be available to ascertain whether or not the cease-fire terms

are strictly observed. For this, impartial and fair observer groups, acceptable to both sides, should be maintained. In as much as the most suitable people for this are available from the UN, both sides should request for help from the United Nations.

11. During the cease-fire period, the KNU Central Committee member P'Doh Mahn Yin Sein and KNU members and Karen people arrested by SLORC should be released.

    In order to implement the cease-fire with positive results, it is desirable to free the arrested and detained KNU members and other Karens. In releasing the KNU members who were arrested in 1995, including P'Doh Mahn Yin Sein, the Karens should be unconditionally freed. If this were not carried out, the KNU soldiers and the Karen people cannot look forward to any hope on this cease-fire and negotiation. Thus, this situation must be implemented with practical results.

12. Within 30 days of mutual declaration of the cease-fire agreement obtained during the negotiation by both sides, negotiation should be started on fundamental problems related to internal peace for the country.

    The cease-fire being particularly for discussion and mediation of basic problems of the country, both sides should begin serious negotiation, aspiring for and lasting peace in the country. Only then progress (the ascension) toward genuine unity of people in the country and an authentic federation system can be achieved.

The above 12 items of KNU viewpoints concerning the cease-fire being closely related characteristics, as a first stage of discussion based upon these points, it was hope that both sides, with mutual fairness and benefit, could conduct the negotiating process.

> After the meeting and discussion of the above 12 items, the SLORC delegation indicated their view by rejecting 5 of them -#1,3,8,10 and 12; and accepting 7, - #2,4,5,6,7,9 and 11, for mediation after the cease-fire. However, before considering these 7 items for negotiation, it would be necessary for the KNU to relinquish their armed resistance course of action and return to the 'legal fold,' a prerequisite stipulated by them.

The SLORC, in explaining their view of "relinquishing the armed resistance course of action and returning to the 'legal fold' is the same scheme used in the cease-fire arrangements made with and accepted by all the 15 other ethnic groups; and it is clear that this very model (or scheme) had been carried out with the KIO (Kachin Independence Organization).

Close review and scrutiny were made on this Second Negotiation where the KNU delegation has submitted their 12 proposals and SLORC on their part have indicated where they stood on these points. The KNU discussed among themselves the basic standpoints of both sides and how the gap between them could be brought closer, and decided on another meeting (Third Negotiation). After this the Second Negotiation was brought to an end.

{*Note*: Quotation marks used for 'legal fold' should be obvious to anyone familiar with

merely the rudiments of democracy; the fact that the SLORC government took power by military force, disregarding poll results obtained through an unexpected and almost unbelievably honest election (thanks to the military regime itself that had superciliously underestimated the sentiment of the populace), and completely ignoring the whish of the people, could not make it any more legal than the armed resistance groups that it is trying to subjugate and annihilate.}

Third Negotiation

After careful scrutiny of the basic views and standpoints of the two sides of the Second Negotiation, it can be seen that the differences are quite enormous.

The basic standpoint of the KNU is that political problems should be solved by seeking peaceful and diplomatic solutions through free and fair negotiations, and the cease-fire period is required for the purpose of such negotiation.

The basic standpoint of the SLORC is for the KNU to reject the military or armed resistance course of action and return to the 'legal fold', and under the banner (and sign board) of improvement and advancement of the people and the border areas, cooperate with SLORC; and, eventually, following the completing of drawing up the country's 'constitution', relinquish all arms and weapons, and as an organized political party of the KNU, can then enter politics.

Instead of carrying out much reciprocal discussions with SLORC during the Second Negotiation, the KNU have considered that only after the re-examination of differing standpoints of the two sides at their headquarters, would they conduct mutual mediation at the Third Negotiation.

At the Third Negotiation, it was decided that the 5 items rejected by SLORC and the new motion submitted by SLORC about the relinquishing of armed resistance course of actions and returning to the 'legal fold' would be reciprocally discussed again at length.

Later, a delegation of KNU representatives was sent to Moulmein for the Third Negotiation. It comprises the following:

1.	General Tamla Baw	Leader
2.	Mahn Shah La Pan	Deputy Leader
3.	P'Doh David Taw	Member
4.	Saw Th'mane Tun	Member
5.	Mahn Aung Tin Myint	Member
6.	P'Doh Zaw Naung (In-charge)	Office Staff
7.	Mahn Chit Sein	Staff
8.	Saw Min Htoo	Staff
9.	Saw Nyi Nyi	Staff
10.	Saw Shepherd	Staff

The following were SLORC representatives to the Third Negotiation:

1. Colonel Kyaw Win
2. Colonel Kyaw Thein
3. Brigdier General Aung Thein
4. Lt. Colonel Sann Pwint
5. Lt. Colonel Myo Myint
6. Major Myo Myint
7. Major Khin Maung Kyi
8. Captain Kyaw Thura

The following Peace Intermediaries attended the Third Negotiation:

1. U Khun Myat
2. U A. Soe Myint
3. Professor Saw Tun Aung Chain
4. Saw Hanson Tah Daw
5. P'Doh Saw Richard
6. Rev. Mar Gay Gyi

The Third Negotiation was held from June 29 to July 2, 1996 at the SE Command Headquarters in Moulmein as was held in the previous occasion.

At that meeting, the 5 items of KNU that had been rejected by SLORC during the Second Negotiation were resubmitted for negotiation.

Of the 5 proposals, germane to the first which was about discussions on the declaration of country-wide cease-fire, it was pointed out that the various resistance organizations happened to be allies; having cease-fire with one organization while fighting with another could create complications rendering control of the cease-fire difficult; for example, even though cease-fire was observed with the KNU, if fighting continued with the KNPP, or if continued battles occurred with other resistance organizations such as ABSDF, ABMU, etc., problems and complication could arise, and only if SLORC made a declaration of country-wide cease-fire, then these problems would be surmounted;- but SLORC maintained that the negotiation was only between KNU and SLORC, thereby rejecting again this motion.

SLORC's rejection of KNU's proposal item #12 which was about starting negotiations on fundamental problems to obtain peace in the whole country after cease-fire was achieved and mutually declared, the KNU delegation re-submitted clarifications, and for further mediation, thus;
If this were the case, to the further query of, "When and where will the basic political problems be considered; and whether the political questions are being discussed and solutions sought at the National Convention?"; SLORC's Explanation was, "Political problems will have to be solved by the future government (that would takeover); and the current National Convention is not meant for solving political problems, but only to set the foundation for a basic political structure."

> "The current civil war that has gone on for more than 40 years has nothing to do with personal problems, neither has it been because of personal animosity; it was basically political problems that brought about the civil war. For that reason, it would be inevitable to negotiate on these basic problems, and only then genuine peace, firm and real unity of the peoples in the country could be created."
>
> But the SLORC's reply was, "SLORC is only a military government and cannot negotiate on things concerning politics.

In addition to rejecting the above two very important proposal by the KNU, item #3 which concerns suspending further construction and maintenance of roads used for offensive operations; #6 that people should not be forcibly relocated and those who were subjected to relocation should be allowed with full security for them to return to their own former villages and permission granted to NGOs to render help; proposal item #10 that the cease-fire by both sides by monitored by a UN observer delegation; - SLORC's answer was that these 3 points were also

unacceptable and could not be carried out.

Continuing, the KNU gave the following explanation on the impossibility to accede to SLORC's proposal for the KNU to relinquish armed resistance and return to the 'legal fold.'

To follow the military course of action is to solve problems through the use of arms and weapons. For that very reason, repudiation the use of arms between the SLORC and the KNU should be mutually beneficial. If only one side is to do so (and relinquish the use of arms), it will be unreasonable and quite ridiculous. To return to the 'legal fold' is the euphemism employed since 1948 by those in power for 'surrendering', 'coming back into the light' and 'exchanging weapons for democracy'. In essence, it is identical to conceding defeat. This returning to the 'legal fold' is similar to concession of defeat and submission to SLORC's administration. Therefore the KNU cannot accept the process of returning to the 'legal fold'. Particularly, the cease-fire between SLORC and the KNU, predicated upon relinquishing the military course of action and returning to the 'legal fold' is an unnecessary prerequisite. This has never been a traditional procedure (for cease-fire and peace negotiations).

The SLORC delegation further suggested that for the phrase of "relinquishing the armed resistance course of action and returning to the 'legal fold' other words and phraseology could be sought, should be looked

To:

Senior General Than Shwe
President
State Law and Order Restoration Council
(SLORC)

Dear, General

The following reply is given for the counterproposals by SLORC at the Fourth Negotiation between the SLORC and KNU.

1. At the Fourth Negotiation held at Moulmein from November 21 to 23, 1996, the SLORC presented the following 6 points of counterproposal and wanted a reply on what the KNU thought about these 6 points. The 6 items of SLORC's viewpoints are:

(1) To relinquish the armed resistance course of action and enter the 'legal fold', and make legal declaration;
(2) Observation of cease-fire;
(3) Mediation on the demarcation of troop positions;
(4) Cooperation on projects for regional development;
(5) To attend the National Convention, relation to politics;

(6) When the Constitution has been drawn up (at the National Convention), to finally reject all arms and weapons, and form a lawful/legal political party.

Of these 6 points, point #1 is , in essence, the concession of inferiority, with the same meaning of coming under SLORC's rule, and thus the KNU cannot accept this point. The KNU is unable to recognize this point as a precondition for cease-fire negotiations of both sides.

Concerning point #5, for reasons that: - one of the 6 political directives set up at SLORC's National Convention stating that in future national politics, the army will assume the leading role with SLORC itself promising the people to implement this, being opposite and against democracy's fundamental principles of all the parties; the drawing up of the Constitution to be fundamentally based on principle #104 at that National Convention in no way whatsoever be acceptable by all the ethnic peoples in the country; the winners of the 1990 national election, the main party of the National league for Democracy (NLD) being opposed and boycotted this National Convention; the currently remaining convention representatives and the mass of people in the entire country no longer having faith and interest in this Convention, it is impossible for the KNU, on its part, to attend this Convention. To abide by the results of this Convention will be more difficult to do so.

On item #6 where arms and weapons are to be rejected once the Constitution has come into being, even before knowing whether or not the forthcoming Constitution would be accepted by all the ethnic peoples and all the citizens of the country, whether or not it would be acceptable to the KNU organization and the Karen people, - to promise ahead of time that arms and weapons must be rejected when the Constitution has been obtained, is unreasonably lacking in credibility, thus the KNU cannot accept this.

2. On the proposal of 12 items by the KNU during the Second negotiation, the SLORC delegation had indicated that, "the main necessary point was for the two sides to first stop fighting. Therefore, at the Fourth Negotiation, the KNU on its part looked for more practical ways, thus,
   (1) The problems between the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and the Karen National Union (KNU) should not be solved by military means and to maintain cease-fire;
   (2) Once the cease-fire goes into effect, the SLORC and KNU should continue negotiation on matters concerning the Union, unity among the people of the country, and the achievement of firm and durable peace in the country;
   (3) In order to maintain the cease-fire mediation and demarcation to be made on the positions of troops of the two sides, and the regulations and rules to be followed by both sides;

Comprising three points that had been solemnly proposed. If agreement could first be based on these three items and negotiations continued on, the KNU believed that not

only the wishes of the Karens but those of all the rest of ethnic peoples and of the citizens in the country would be represented. Therefore, the KNU requests that the above 3 points be reconsidered again, and should they be rejected, explanations be given for the reasons of their rejection.

3. Peace in the country, unity among the peoples, and the development of the country depend upon the cessation of the civil war. In carrying out the great responsibility of ending the civil war, the part where problems can be peacefully mediated and solved after cease-fire has been obtained between the SLORC and KNU is very important indeed. Therefore it is the responsibility of the two sides to carry out the present negotiation with reason and certitude. This responsibility has to be taken.

After having gone through the longest and most fierce war, the two sides have managed to overcome a plethora of difficulties to meet and discuss quite frankly in these last four occasions. Be that as it may, the KNU is deeply convinced that it is not appropriate to return to the former stage of savage fighting but rather to continue the negotiations. Along with this viewpoint, it is necessary that both sides should try to hold a Fifth negotiation, and the KNU on it part will make and effort to the end.

In closing, may the General and SLORC leaders enjoy good health in the New Year, and may efforts be made toward peace in the country, would be our sincere regards and prayers.

Sd/ (General Saw Bo Mya)
The Karen National Union (KNU)
December 31, 1996

Copies to
1. General Maung Aye - Deputy Chairman (SLORC)
2. Lt. General Khin Nyunt - Secretary (1) (SLORC)
3. Lt. General Tin Oo - Secretary (2) (SLORC)
4. Peace Initiators

for, or might be substituted; however, it was necessary that the essence of "rejecting the military course of action and returning to the "legal fold" must not be destroyed.

Regarding this, the KNU countered that since changing the words and usage without altering the intrinsic properties of the phrase would, in effect, still mean conceding defeat; coming under SLORC's governing, there was no point in looking for new phrasing. The KNU replied that it could not accept this position; and it was unnecessary to set this as a condition.

Having held the negotiation sessions between the KNU and SLORC delegations with sincerity and openness, the SLORC representatives emphasized the following two points. They are:

1. The SLORC delegation represented by

Col. Kyaw Win and Col. Kyaw Thein, on their part pointed out that they had been able to accomplish cease-fire agreements with 15 other ethnic armed resistance organizations without failure; and that they would try hard until achieving agreement on this current KNU cease-fire negotiation; otherwise the historical record would look farcical.

2. They had anticipated that the KNU would, in no way, accept the concept of relinquishing the armed resistance course of action and returning to the 'legal fold'. In submitting this point, it was simply because the SLORC did not wish to be attacked on both sides. If the KNU could not accept "the relinquishing of military course of action and return to the 'legal fold', it was possible to substitute any phrase of assurance; and thus the SLORC delegation indicated that they would report to their SLORC leaders and further discuss the rephrasing of this point.

The Third Negotiation was brought to an end after both sides decided to look for answers to bring their positions closer at the Forth Negotiation.

Fourth Negotiation

On almost every occasion of negotiations with SLORC, the SLORC delegation pointed out that they represented a new generation, operating under a new system with new concepts, always maintaining that there was no dogmatism on their part.

After the Third Negotiation of the KNU and SLORC, and careful study made on the proceedings of that negotiation, instead of following strictly the agenda of the 12 items that the KNU submitted for mediation, it was considered that a practical approach to further negotiation would be more appropriate, with the possibility of coming closer, and thus a new proposal was decided to be submitted at the Fourth Negotiation.

For the Fourth Negotiation, the following KNU delegation was sent on November 20, 1996, to Moulmein. It comprised:

1.	General Tamla Baw	Delegation Leader
2.	Mahn Shalapan	Deputy Leader
3.	Major General Maung Maung	Member
4.	Saw Nay Soe	Member
5.	Mahn Aung Tin Myint	Member
6.	Saw Aung Maw Aye	Office In-charge
7.	Mahn Tha Htoo	Staff
8.	Saw Kuu Thay	"
9.	Saw Gyee Gyi	Medic In-charge
10.	Saw Minn Htoo	Recording (video)
11.	Saw Nyi Nyi	Recording (still camera)
12.	Saw Shepherd	Staff
13.	Saw Maung Ga Lay	Staff

The Fourth Negotiation was held from November 21 to November 23, 1996, at the Southeast Command Headquarters in Moulmein.

Those attending the meeting were:

KNU Representatives:

1.	General Tamla Baw	Leader
2.	Mahn Shalapan	Dy. Leader
3.	Maj. Gen. Maung Maung	Member
4.	Saw Nay Soe	Member
5.	Mahn Aung Tin Myint	Member
6.	Saw Aung Maw Aye	Office (In-charge)
7.	Mahn Tha Htoo	Staff
8.	Saw Kuu Thay	"

SLORC Representatives:

1.	Colonel Kyaw Win	Leader
2.	Colonel Kyaw Thein	"
3.	Brig. Gen. Aung Thein	"
4.	Lt. Col. Sann Pwint	"
5.	Lt. Col. Hpone Hswe	"
6.	Major Khin Maung Kyi	"
7.	Major Thet Tin Sein	"
8.	Major Myo Myint	"

Peace Intermediaries:

1. U Khun Myat
2. U A. Soe Myint
3. Professor Tun Aung Chain
4. Saw Hanson Tah Daw
5. P'Doh Saw Richard

At the meeting, the KNU submitted a new proposal concerning the cease-fire arrangement consisting of the following 3 items. They are:

1. The problems between the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) and the Karen National Union (KNU) should not be solved by military means or armed struggle, and to maintain cease-fire;
2. Once the cease-fire goes into effect, the SLORC and KNU should continue negotiating on matters concerning the Union (of the country), unity among the peoples, and the achievement of a firm and durable peace in the country;
3. In order to maintain the cease-fire, mediation and demarcation to be made on the positions of the troops of the two sides, and regulations and rulings to be followed by troops of both sides.

The 3 items of proposal was submitted by the SLORC delegation leader, Colonel Kyaw Win, to his SLORC superiors who countered with the following points. They were:

1. To relinquish the armed resistance course of action and enter the 'legal fold', and make legal declaration (on these).
2. observation of cease-fire.
3. Mediation on the demarcation of troop positions.
4. Cooperation on projects for the regional development.
5. To attend the National Convention, relation to politics.
6. When the Constitution has been drawn up (at the National Convention), to finally reject all arms and weapons, and form a lawful/legal political party.

When the SLORC delegation sought the impression on their 6 items of counterproposal, the KNU responded that they would furnish their reply on these by the end of December 1996, and the Fourth Negotiation was brought to a close.

The basic course of action to be taken at the KNU and SLORC negotiation had been

drawn up and confirmed during the 11th KNU Congress held in 1995 and the KNU Central Executive Committee was authorized to be responsible for carrying out the various functions and duties.

Inasmuch as the 6 items of counterproposal by SLORC were in too much disparity with the KNU's basic course of action, it was impossible for the KNU to accept them. In any case, after discussions of these points by the Central Executive Committee, the KNU had settled on a reply by the end of December 1996.

On December 30th , 1996, the KNU Central Executive Committee held a meeting and a following KNU reply, dated December 31st , 1996 was sent to SLORC (see p30-32).

A month after this reply was sent, on January 31, 1997, the following Peace Intermediaries arrived at the KNU Headquarters. They were:

1. U Khun Myat
2. U A. Soe Myit
3. Professor Saw Tun Aung Chain
4. Saw Hanson Tah Daw
5. P'Doh Saw Richard

Accompanying the Peace Intermediaries were the following former Karen (military and civil) officers. They comprised:

1. Saw Barny
2. Saw Po Ni
3. Saw Nay Way Htoo
4. Rev. James
5. Rev. Calvin
6. Saw True Blood
7. Saw K'Thwee

After the arrival of Peace Intermediaries, one of them, Professor Saw Tun Aung Chain, disclosed what the SLORC leaders had to say. The message from the SLORC leader were:

1. If the KNU does not relinquish the armed resistance course of action and return to the 'legal fold', the Army's Intelligence, the DDSI (the Directorate of Defense Services Intelligence), will no longer be able to negotiate with the KNU;
2. Although the two sides cannot resume the negotiation, communications between the two sides will be continuously maintained as before;
3. If the DDSI cannot resume negotiation with the KNU, it does not know how the DS-A (Defense Service-Army)[read-Army], can continue to carry it out.

Following the KNU's perspective and explanation, that it would abide by the make efforts according to the viewpoint contained in the December 31, 1996 letter of the KNU President to the SLORC chairman, the Peace Intermediaries left the KNU Headquarters.

While the KNU profoundly and very seriously was endeavoring to solve the political problems through peaceful, political means of negotiations, as stated in the above, on February 11th, the SLORC initiated very strong and concerted military offensive operations against the KNU basic strongholds. Actually, the SLORC had already begun preparations for war (offensive military actions) since the beginning of January of 1997.

Addendum
(to the Negotiations)

1. The altruistic endeavor by the KNU to solve political problems by political means involving peaceful negotiations

The KNU had strived hard, adhering to the principle of solving political problems by political means of peaceful negotiations. In such endeavors as these, both sides need to work toward trying to obtain mutual concessions; it was taken for granted that such attempts to obtain mutual concessions would be made by both sides. Therefor, the KNU on its part had tried its utmost to make concessions. In having done so, the following points had been the KNU's endeavors of making concessions, banking on much hope at the expense of lowered dignity.

Initially, although the KNU had proposed that the negotiations be made with combine opposition parties as a whole; that the locale for the negotiations be one of the foreign countries acceptable to both sides; that the peace negotiations be conducted under the supervision of the United Nations: and that the meetings be accessible to the news media and news conferences be openly made with them; and yet in later stages, these proposals were not retained any more, yielding them up in order to facilitate negotiations by the two sides.

When the preliminary delegation was sent preparatory to negotiations, the KNU proposed to meet and consult at liberty with the Karen people, Karen leaders and educated elite to discuss freely matters related to the ethnic Karen people, and even though this point was regarded as vital, it was given up as a next step of concession at the rejection of it by SLORC. Furthermore, the proposal to freely confer with political parties and leaders supported by the mass in cities was also rejected by SLORC and was given up as another KNU concession to SLORC.

At the Fourth negotiation, when, instead of repeatedly dwelling on the 12 items without yielding, the KNU resubmitted a new, more practical proposal of three items, tantamount to another concession.

To the extent that the KNU on its part trying to yield this far, could not be regarded as small concessions. It was the desire to aspire toward genuine peace in the country that these concessions have been made.

The SLORC on its part had not make any concession throughout the negotiations. Even though they themselves claimed that they were not conceptually static and were free of dogmatism, it was merely to make them sound nice and, in fact, they have not yielded an inch from their original standpoint from the beginning to the end (of the negotiations)

2. SLORC's propaganda accusing the KNU proposals as excessive demands

After the Fourth Negotiation, SLORC unilaterally ignored the KNU'' proposal for the fifth negotiation, and began offensive military operations against the KNU. Simultaneously, they generated the propaganda that the KNU made unreasonable demands, turning their back toward peace.

In fact, close examination of the last 3 items submitted by the KNU very obviously indicates that those were simply, clear and prac-

tical proposals. Thus, objectively viewed, these 3 proposals include not even an iota that symbolizes excessive demand. In reality, during the negotiations, those making excessive demands were only the SLORC. Not only was the proposal that the KNU reject the military course of action and return to the "legal fold" an excessive demand by the SLORC, but that repeated gesture was tantamount to merely making cursory contact with the KNU. Therefore, it was the SLORC that made insincere and excessive demands on the KNU and turned its back toward peace.

3. SLORC's lip service toward confidence building (to establish trust in them) and their practical actions.

From the moment negotiations began between SLORC and KNU, SLORC had talked about 'confidence building'. However, their practical actions were quite opposite to the idea of confidence building. During the negotiations by the two sides, even though the KNU managed to stop offensive attacks against the SLORC's basic and strategic positions, apart from suspending attack on the KNU's Central Headquarters, the SLORC's continued to conduct offensive military operation to gain the upper hand in other KNU territories, forced relocation of Karen villages, and used several methods of torture, coerced labor, and caused death on the Karen mass. Thus, the SLORC talked bout establishing confidence from the people while, in practice, they were actually destroying this 'confidence building'. These atrocious military offensives aimed at clearing away whole regions have been continued, particularly in the districts such as Toungoo, Pyinmana, Nyaunglebin, Thaton, Papun and Pa-an. These were very disturbing and tragic deeds of SLORC during the negotiations, glaringly







(top) Karen villagers flee SLORC shelling during karen New Year 1995 at Wah Baw Village Mon State. (middle) A woman injured in the shelling is assisted by a KNLA Soldier. (bottom) What remains of a burnt village in Taungoo. Despite claiming to seek peace SLORC forces continued their abuse of the ethnic minorities. (Photos: KHRG)

2003 Talks



Paul Keenan

The Gentleman's Agreement



After years of failed negotiations a change in the Burmese government suggested a new hope for the Karen resistance movement. On the 25th August 2003 Khin Nyunt was appointed Prime Minister of Burma. Seen by made observers as a moderate among the Generals in Rangoon it was believed that the new Burmese leader may be more flexible in his dealings with the ethnic minorities. A number of leaders in the Karen resistance believed it was time once more to seek a compromise with the military regime.

Initially, the talks seemed to have been brokered by the Karen National Liberation Army, the armed wing of the KNU, with the approval of Bo Mya who had apparantly been assured by Thai Foreign minister Surakiart Sathirathai that Thailand would help develop Karen State if peace could be obtained between the SPDC and KNU.

Although many in the Karen movement were taken by surprise at the unexpected change in the General's stance towards Rangoon the discussions, arranged by intelligence commander Lt Col. Soe Soe, soon led to a ceasefire being announced on the 11th December 2003 with the stated intention of securing further talks.

After a delay due to problems on agreeing a suitable location a 21 member delegation led by General Bo Mya and comprising of a mixed group of KNLA and KNU officials including Htoo Htoo Lay, Secretary 1 (KNU), K'Ser Doe, Vice Chief of Staff & Forestry and Mining (KNLA), Gen. Htain Maung, 7th Brigade Commander (KNLA), David Taw, Foreign Minister (KNU), Padoh Kwe Htoo (KNU), and Gen Baw Kyaw, 5th



Inages: General Bo Mya (left) and Khin Nyunt (top), The two negotiating teams begins talks (bottom)

Brigade Commander (KNLA), arrived in Rangoon on the 15th January to meet with Prime Minister Khin Nyunt to discuss formal peace talks. After 5 days of negotiations, interrupted by General Bo Mya's 77th birthday party, which was provided for and attended by host Khin Nyunt, the delegation returned with a promise of maintaining the ceasefire and further talks to be held in Moulmein that February.



KNU Press Release

26-1-04

The KNU delegation led by Vice-President Gen. Saw Bo Mya and Col. Htoo Htoo Lay set out on 13-1-2004 and arrived at Rangoon on 15-1-2004. After holding talks with leaders of the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), the delegation arrived back at the supreme headquarters on 24-1-2004.

In the talks held on 16-1-2004, Gen. Saw Bo Mya and Gen. Khin Nyunt had frank and cordial discussions, in which both sides expressed the views that effort should be made for the realization of genuine peace between the two sides. At the same time, discussions were held for establishing a cease-fire and holding political dialogues.

Representatives of the two sides continued to hold talks from 17-1-2004 to 20-1-2004 and both sides agreed to establish a cease-fire, resolve problems of the internally displaced persons, in various areas, and to contact and consult for the resolution of problems arising during the interim period.

Currently, much effort still has to be made for the establishment, in fact, of a cease-fire between the SPDC and the KNU, and the consolidation of it. We hope that in making the effort, the continuation of discussions between the two sides would lead to consolidation of the cease-fire that has been gained.

In closing, we affirm that as the current cease-fire is an initial step towards genuine unity of the nationalities, we hope for the emanation of better results through continued talks and discussions, in the future for the consolidation of the provisional cease-fire."

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Saw Htoo Htoo Lay and Padoh Kwe Htoo were given responsibility for further discussions aimed at securing a written ceasefire. The next round of talks which took place between the 22nd and 25th February were complicated by an apparantly unauthorised KNLA action which saw Karen troops ambush a Burmese unit in Duyinseik Village, Pegu, about 60 kilometres north-west of where the talks were being held in Moulmein. A number of radios and weapons were captured and General Bo Mya immediately ordered an investigation into the incident. The captured equipment was eventually sent to GHQ after which it was delivered to the Burmese in Myawaddy by the General himself who was driven across the Thai-Myanmar Friendship bridge in a move designed to:

'Show our goodwill and sincerity in carrying out the reconciliation plan in Burma. The KNU is ready for a new round of talks.'

Further negotiations were set to focus on the establishment of weapon free zones, release of the approximately one thousand Karen political prisoners languishing in Burma's jails, the release of Aung Sa Suu Kyi from house arrest, repatriation of refugees, territorial recognition and a signed ceasefire agreement.

However, even with the ceasefire in place life for the local population remained the same with abuses and forced portering still a regular occurrence, as one village headman remarked:

'Villagers are hoping so badly for peace…But now, even with the ceasefire the villagers still face fighting and human rights abuses like forced labour by the SPDC.'

Despite the continuation of abuses KNU Foreign Minister David Taw maintained that there had been significant indications of improvement for the local populace and that people should be happy that the talks have reduced the number of clashes and casualties; stating that 'we are moving slowly [on the talks] now because we are looking out for the benefit of both sides.'



Top: Padoh Kwe Htoo and Saw Htoo Htoo Lay. Above: David Taw

One of the main sticking points had been the recognition of the 526,000 internally displaced people in Karen state who are either forced to live in the jungles or at SPDC relocation sites. The SPDC have flatly refused to recognise that there are IDPs in Burma, and despite the KNUs conciliatory adoption of the term 'Refugees from inside Burma' the SPDC's belligerence continued.

On the 18th October 2004 yet another negotiating team, led by Col. Htoo Htoo Lay travelled to Rangoon to conduct further talks with the OCMI. On their arrival they were detained in a government guest house and informed that Prime Minister Khin Nyunt had been arrested in Mandalay. Although the team was able to meet with Brig-Gen Kyaw Thein, Col San Pwint and Lt-Col Thein Han from the OCMI where they were able to agree to reduce the number of battles the planned seven day discussions were immediately suspended and the KNU team returned to Mae Sot within two days of their initial departure. The OCMI itself was abolished on the 22PndP of October only a day after the delegation's return to Thailand casting a further shadow over the future.

Not long after the agreement was made the Free Burma Rangers, a Christian NGO providing medical and relief

aid, reported that during its December 2004 mission into Karen State, while peace negotiations were ongoing, Burmese army offensives had continued resulting in thousands of displaced Karen villagers.

Further evidence of Burmese army attacks emerged with the release of a documentary on the ceasefire made by a Karen filmmaker, Saw Edward , and filmed in Taungoo. It showed a Karen teenager being killed and a girl stepping on a landmine further underlining the point that although Karen military units had reduced their actions - the SPDC had maintained it normal presence - without the KNLA as a threat the Tatmadaw it had even more opportunity to exert its influence in previously Karen operated areas.



Despite the Burmese façade of respecting the agreements on the 10th January 2005, Karen New Year, fighting once again broke out at over six KNU bases with the heaviest at a small village, Kaw Law Ghaw, seeing over 300 SPDC soldiers engage troops from the KNLA's 201 Battalion. Over 1000 villagers were forced to flee across the border into Thailand where they were allowed to remain for a couple of days before being sent back into the area where fighting was continuing unabated.

Although such large scale assaults soon decreased, sporadic fighting continued despite calls on 31st January, Karen Revolution Day, for the SPDC to put forward a timeframe for further peace negotiations with KNLA GOC Mutu further stating that '…if they [SPDC] don't want to carry on negotiating and want to fight, we are ready.' The SPDC reply was a curt response from the information minister Brig-Gen. Kyaw San whose official reply was 'We have not lost contact with the KNU.'

Further talks were held in Moulmein on the 13th March between SPDC representatives led by Reginal Commander Thura Myint Aung and a KNU delegation led by Htoo Htoo Lay, Maj. Gen. Oliver and David Htaw who had optimistically commented prior to the group's departure that:



'We expect to lay good foundations for a cease-fire. Once we have made the rank and file understand the cease-fire agreement then we need to expand that understanding to a wider and broader populace.'

Not unsurprisingly the outcome proved inconclusive with the SPDC side stating they had not been given any authority to negotiate on any matters put forward by the KNU thus resulting once more in the Karen team returning empty handed and issuing the following statement:

'The KNU 13-member delegation set out on March 13 for informal ceasefire talks with SPDC II in Moulmein (Mawlamyaing). The SPDC side was headed by the commander of the SPDC Army South-East Command.

Talks started in the morning of March 14 and lasted for half a day. Talks on March 15 were brief. The SPDC offered 3 areas, for the KNU and KNLA to stay and do business and development work in accordance with SPDC laws. It was noted regarding these talks that:

The SPDC side carefully avoided to discuss about the verbal ceasefire agreement reached in December 2003 between the KNU and SPDC I and about human rights violations being perpetrated by the SPDC troops against Karen civilian population in KNU areas.

The SPDC offer is far from position of the KNU to get a signed ceasefire agreement prior to dialogue for settling

political problems politically. However, the KNU decided to continue to observe the verbal ceasefire agreement, within reason, and to hold talks again with the SPDC, when circumstances are favorable, in the not distant future.'

Yet another failed attempt took place at the end of May. Saw Htoo Htoo Lay and David Taw met with a Rangoon based delegation headed by Lt-Col Myat Htun Oo in Myawaddy. Once again the discussions resulted in no positive change to the stalemate and with heightened political bickering in the regime's ranks talks were suspended despite the KNU's desire to reach some form of settlement. Commenting in October 2005 the KNU negotiator and Foreign Secretary David Taw highlighted the problem:

'There are no contacts between the two sides now. I do not know what to say because there are no signs of starting the talks or for one side to visit the other…We have kept our door open but this is a matter for two sides and if one side does not have the desire, I must say the talks are almost over.'

Perceived as being a result of the political confusion in the country fire-fights between the two sides became more regular as David Taw continued

'I went along with the delegation led by Gen Mya in January 2004. We did discuss advancing to the next phase of talks based on the two sides halting hostilities. As agreed, we were given to understand that the army units in the field had been ordered to cease fighting when Gen Khin Nyunt was around. But, if the units are now being given orders contrary to the earlier order following the departure of Gen Khin Nyunt, it will be difficult for the two sides to resolve the problems. If the units in the field follow such orders and the senior officials keep on issuing such directives, they are bound to become obstacles to the talks.'

Military engagements continued until they developed, in late 2005 and early 2006, into a major offensive throughout the 2nd and 3rd Brigade areas. Burmese troops rampaged through Taungoo and Nyaunglebin resulting in a number of deaths, re-locations and thousands displaced. The SPDC, despite a new influx of refugees into Thailand, were quick to deny an offensive, while the Gentleman's Agreement was still in place, was underway with a SPDC spokesman commenting:

'There is no offensive against the Karen National Union but security measures have been taken and cleaning-up operations are being conducted in some areas where (KNU) terrorists are believed to be hiding.'

At the time of writing, August 2006, the offensive continues and sadly there are no immediate indications of any cessation of hostilities. Once again the Karen National Union's attempts at securing a peace for its people has been met by further Burmese Army offensives.



Images courtesy of BBC, KNU, KIC, KHCPS, KHRG, Saw Tennyson. Front Image: Paul Keenan, Back: Lorenzo De Gregorio.

Thanks to Saw Htoo Htoo Lay, Padoh Mahn Sha and all others who have supported KHCPS in its work.

CHRONOLOGY OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT



First Negotiation: KNU-AFPFL (Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League) government under Prime Minister U Nu. April 1949.

President of the Karen National Union (KNU) Saw Ba U Kyi warmly welcome a cease-fire at Insein organized through the intercession of the British and common wealth ambassador in Rangoon. President Saw Ba U Kyi traveled down to Rangoon accompanied by Mahn James Tun Aung and Sgaw Say Htoo. While negotiation between leaders of KNU and AFPFL is in process AFPFL troops took the advantage of the negotiation and moved its troops closer to the KNU front line position. Sgaw Say Htoo accompanying the AFPFL troops requested the KNU troops not to open fire through loudspeaker. Prime Minister U Nu and General Ne win insist on the KNU to surrender but ignore to solve the Karen National question and the fighting resumed on April 9, 1949. The intermediary was Bishop West.



Second Negotiation: Secret Peace talk with the Care Taker government under Gen. Ne Win February. 1960. Rangoon.



Brigadier Aung Gyi, the army vice chief of staff contacted Bo Kyin Pe (aka Koe Doh) and Mahn Mya Maung. KAF's Delta command, by letter. After a brief exchange of messages, in early February, Gen. Kaw Htoo and Sgaw Ler Taw flew by helicopter from Papun to join Bo Kyin Pe in Rangoon for a series of four meetings spread over ten days. The main speaker from the Care Taker government was Brigadier Aung Gyi, Aung Shwe and Col. Maung Maung. The Care Taker government stated that they could only agreed to consider about the Karen national questions only when the KNU enter the legal fold. So the negotiation broke down again.

Third Negotiation: Between KNU, KNPP, NMSP and the Revolutionary Council under General Ne Win -August 1963 Rangoon.

Three parties peace mission or Tripartite peace mission team Karenni National Progressive Party, New Mon State party (NMSP) and Karen National Union (KNU) went together for peace talk with the Revolutionary Council under General Ne Win -August 1963.



1. Saw Maw Reh -KNPP
2. Saw San Lin -KNPP
3. Nai Shwe Kyin -NMSP
4. Nai Htin -NMSP
5. Nai Tet Tun -NMSP
6. Mahn Ba Zan -KNU
7. Saw Than Aung -KNU
8. Sgaw Ler Taw -KNU
9. Bo Kyin Pe -KNU
10. Bo Wah Sein (Gen. Tarmlar Baw) -KNU
11. Saw Mya Maung -Staff
12. Saw Tun Kyin -Staff

Images -Top L: Saw Ba U Gyi, R: U Nu, Middle R: Ne Win, Bottom L: Than Aungs

After arriving at Rangoon the three parties leaders decided to meet the Revolution Council together with the National Democratic United Front (NDUF) as one team. All parties agreed that they wanted to present a strong united front. Member of the NDUF includes CPB and the Chin National Vanguard Party. The Revolutionary Council had seven official meeting with the NDUF between October 8 and November14. As the Revolutionary Council keep on demanding for unconditional surrender the Three Parties Peace Mission cannot accept it and the negotiation broke down on November 14, 1963. The Karen National Union (KNU) met and conferred with the consecutive people in power on three different occasions. During those meeting, the KNU tried to establish the mutual cease-fire agreements and directed its efforts to free, peaceful and just solutions for political problems. However, those successive powers, instead of free and lawful political solutions to the political problems, have demanded only complete surrender and total submission, thus the peace negotiation attempts have ended in failure on several occasions.
Fourth Negotiation: Between KNU and SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council)
December, 1995.

April 23, 1993— Gen Bo Mya, Chairman of the Karen National Union (KNU), sends an open letter to Sr-Gen Than Shwe, chairman of the ruling Burmese junta, demanding that a countrywide ceasefire be declared and all political prisoners be released as conditions for the holding of peace talks.

December 14 to 19, 1995—The first meeting between KNU representatives, led by Central Committee Member Maha Stila, and Burma Army representatives, led by Deputy Director of Defence Services Intelligence Col Kyaw Win and Deputy Commander of the Southeast Command Col Aung Thein, is held in Moulmein, Mon State.

December 21, 1995—KNU delegates led by Maha Stila meet with Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt, Secretary One of the ruling junta, at the First Peace Conference in Rangoon.
February 15 to 16, 1996—The second meeting between KNU representatives, led by Gen-Sec Padoh Mahn Sha, and Burma Army representatives, led by Col Thein Swe, a department head of the Ministry of Defense's Office of Strategic Studies, is held in Moulmein, Mon State.

February 22, 1996—KNU delegates, again led by Padoh Mahn Sha, meet with Sec-1 Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt at the Second Peace Conference held in Rangoon.
June 6 to 7, 1996—The third meeting between KNU delegates, led by Chief-of-Staff Gen Tarmalar Baw, and Burma Army representatives, led by Deputy Commander of the Southeast Command Brig-Gen Aung Thein and Deputy Director of Defence Services Intelligence Col Kyaw Win, is held in Moulmein, Mon State.

July 4, 1996— KNU delegates led by Gen Tamalar Baw meet with Sec-1 Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt at the Third Peace Conference held in Rangoon.
November 22 to 23, 1996—The fourth meeting between KNU delegates, led by Gen Tarmalar Baw, and Burma Army representatives, led by Brig-Gen Aung Thein and Col Kyaw Win, is held in Moulmein, Mon State.

Fifth Negotiation: Between KNU and SPDC (State Peace and Development Council)
December 2003
November 22, 2003—KNU leaders meet with Col San Pwint, a spokesman for Burma's Ministry of Defense, in Mae Sot, Thailand, near the Burmese border. Col San Pwint says the Burmese military government is open to dialogue with the KNU without conditions.

December 3 to 8, 2003—A five-member KNU delegation, including Lt-Col Soe Soe, a KNU liaison officer, flies to Rangoon to meet now Prime Minister Gen Khin Nyunt and Karen community leaders. Upon their

return, Gen Bo Mya comments that the KNU has verbally agreed to a ceasefire with the government.

January 15, 2004—A KNU delegation of 20 Karen officials, led by Gen Bo Mya, arrive in Rangoon for talks with top junta leaders, including Khin Nyunt, to discuss an official ceasefire agreement.

January 20, 2004—Khin Nyunt meets with Bo Mya and hosts a dinner party for the Karen delegation at the Kandawgyi Palace Hotel, which marks Bo Mya's 77th birthday.
January 22, 2004—The Karen delegation concludes the trip by reaching an informal ceasefire agreement with the junta but sign no documents.

February 22 to 25, 2004—A 12-member Karen delegation, led by KNU joint secretary Lt-Col Htoo Htoo Lay and foreign affairs chief David Taw, leave for another round of peace talks with the junta in Moulmein, the Mon State capital.

The Karen delegation meets Maj-Gen Kyaw Win, Brig-Gen Kyaw Thein and Col San Pwint of the Office of the Chief of Military Intelligence on Feb 23.The same day, soldiers from the KNU's Third Brigade attack a Burma Army outpost in Donzayit village in Pegu Division, about 85 miles from Rangoon, just hours before the start of the peace talks in Moulmein.

On Feb 25, the Karen delegation wraps up its three-day trip which results in no formal ceasefire agreement.

On October 18, the KNU's delegation was headed by Padoh Htoo Htoo Lay, KNU first joint general secretary. Gen Muu Tuu, commander of the KNLA's Sixth Brigade, and David Taw, head of foreign affairs department traveled to Rangoon. The talk was canceled after General Khin Nyunt was ousted and put under house arrest on October 19, 2004.

In April 2005, Further inclonclusive talks were held in Moulmein.



On March 13 to 15, 2006 - Further talks were held in Moulmein on the 13th March between SPDC representatives led by Reginal Commander Thura Myint Aung and a KNU delegation led by Htoo Htoo Lay, Maj. Gen. Oliver and David Htaw. The SPDC offered 3 areas, for the KNU and KNLA to stay and do business and development work in accordance with SPDC laws.

End of May, 2006 - Saw Htoo Htoo Lay and David Taw met with a Rangoon based delegation headed by Lt-Col Myat Htun Oo in Myawaddy.

Sources: KNU, Kwekalu, Irrawaddy, Bangkok Post, KHCPS



‘The bitter experiences of the Karens throughout our history in Burma, especially during the Second World War, taught us one lesson. They taught us that as a nation, unless we control a state of our own, we will never experience a life of peace and decency, free from persecution and oppression. We will never be allowed to work hard to grow and prosper.’