

B. U. R. M. A.

BURMA RIGHTS MOVEMENT FOR ACTION

January 1992

Vol. 2 Number 1

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A pregnant Karen woman wounded from artillery shrapnel.

As the civil war drags on, more and more innocent people are forced to suffer. War cancels most of the basic human rights of people including the right to food, security, happiness, home, and good health care.

As long as the war continues to rage throughout Burma, the people, especially those living in the rural areas, will not be guaranteed their rights as human beings. Ending the civil war must be the top priority.

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CIVIL WAR

DPNS Closure

During December, due mainly to the tightening grip of Slorc over the officially registered political parties throughout the country, the militancy of the people has increased. Burma's second strongest party, the Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS) was de-registered on the 6th of December, 1991 and numerous key candidates from the winning National League for Democracy (NLD) have been expelled from their party by Slorc under suspicion of being in contact with unlawful armed dissidents. Obviously, Slorc's onerous action against the opposition is creating desperation among the citizens, and raising the question in their minds as to whether a peaceful way to end militarization and the undemocratic system of the past 43 years can actually be found. Consequently, the taking up of arms as the hope for bringing about change is intensifying the civil war in Burma.

Recently, more than 100 members of the expelled DPNS have arrived in Manerplaw, the headquarters of the ethnic Karen on the Thai Burma border. The DPNS grew out of the All Burma Students' Federation Union (ABSFU) which was actively involved in the nationwide uprising in 1988. After Gen. Saw Maung led the 1988 military coup, the ABSFU was recognized as an unlawful organization by the military. However the students and youths of the ABSFU had the opportunity to form a legal organization, the DPNS, in order to organize the strength and energy of the students and youth under a political banner. By that time, hundreds of the students of ABSFU had already joined the armed struggle alongside the ethnic minority groups in the countryside.

Slorc then started a campaign against the DPNS, arresting most of the key leaders. Most all these leaders were imprisoned and former chairman, Moe Thee Zun left to join with the armed dissidents of the All Burma Student Democratic Front. In the middle of 1990, the next elected chairman, Aung Ze Ya was sentenced to eight years imprisonment accused of

anti-Slorc activities. Subsequently, hundreds of youths and students went to the border areas and took up arms while others went underground in the urban areas. Following the last suppression against DPNS on 6 December, there is no doubt that more people will join to the armed struggle. (Source: present chairman of DPNS, Myint Zaw in Manerplaw)

Slorc's Dry Season Offensive

On 1st October, clashes between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Burmese military broke out in the delta near Rangoon which is also one of Burma's most productive rice areas. Since then the Burmese army seems to have taken a more aggressive stance against the KNU. Gen Than Shwe, Deputy Chief of Staff of the Burmese Army, in a speech to the masses in Nga Pu Taw township in the delta, said, "We have hundreds of battalions to crush any of the insurgents and we have some advanced weapons which have not been used in any of the battles up to now." Gen Than Shwe added that the military has many helicopters to chase the insurgents as well. He also called for cooperation from the residents to rid the country of the insurgents.

Last year, China exported its sophisticated weapons to Slorc. According to Karen guerrillas, major clashes are still happening in the west of the delta and about 4,000 civilian have been killed. Most of these were killed by air-raids of the Burmese air-force. (Source. Capt. Soe Min, KNU.)

In December there has been an abrupt increase of more than 2,000 ethnic Karen civilian refugees the Thai-Burma border due to the Burmese army's offensives in the Karen State. Relief agencies trying to help the refugees are having a hard time keeping up with these increases.

On 17 December, Burmese troops started shelling one of the Karen National Union's (KNU) outposts called Nat Ain-Daung. After three days of shelling, Burmese troops suddenly approached from the back of the outpost by using Thai territory. Hours later,

about 700 Burmese troops occupied the outpost. Dissidents in the area said the people were caught by surprise as they did not expect that the Burmese troops would cross from the Thai military's observation post.

Apparently, Slorc has also been building motor-roads leading into the ethnic areas. Civilians are forced to contribute the expenses for the road construction and the poor people who are not able to contribute the money must contribute hard labor such as carrying heavy loads. (Source. Margue/Tavoy district of KNU)

Moreover Slorc has asked the Thai logging firms to take on the road construction in many areas in exchange for lucrative teak logging concessions.

As a counter plan, President Bo Mya of the KNU instructed commanders to attack all road construction teams, conduct sabotage operations and arrest company workers in order to stop the Burmese army's advance.

One of the KNU's strategic strongholds, Kawmoorah, which is located opposite the Thai border town of Mae Sod, has been heavily shelled since the 23rd of December. According to the Bangkok Post (December 24, 1991) 17 porters fled on December 23 to Mae Sod in the morning, and were arrested by Thai soldiers who then handed them over again to the Burmese soldiers that afternoon. It is sure that they would be either tortured or executed.

Currently, Slorc is forcibly relocating people into concentration camps in the ethnic areas while still carrying out heavy fighting with the ethnic armed dissidents. The Burmese army has sent an ultimatum to the villages on the front line stating that if "we hear of any guerrillas in your village, we will totally wipe it out". Ethnic people in the Kachin and Karen areas have especially been forced to relocate into camps in the government controlled areas.

SOME SOURCES IN THIS ISSUE

II = INSIGHT INDOCHINA
WPD = WORKING PEOPLE'S DAILY

ECONOMICS

Background

Following General Ne Win's military coup on March 2, 1962, the economic sector of the country was nationalized step by step. At the present time any military leader who has a close relationship with General Ne Win can be appointed to the directorship level of the key positions in all of the economic sectors. The military leaders practiced the "Burmese Way to Socialism" as a closed-door policy which finally resulted in poverty and starvation throughout the country.

Following the nationwide unarmed democratic movement in 1988, which was crushed brutally by the military, the "new" military regime led by General Saw Maung abruptly created an "open door economic policy" which they claimed was a "market oriented economic system". This attempt to practice capitalism, however, is also producing poverty and starvation for at least 80% of the people who are farmers, farm workers and urban-poor. Only 5% of the upper class, including the top military officials, are able to exploit this new state economic system. The military is obviously manipulating the entire state economics for the main purpose of prolonging their power.

In reality, due to corruption within the military regime, poor economic planning, tremendous expenses of the civil war and an unstable political situation, none of the economic systems the military has designed have ever been effective in building up the country. Each economic system over the past forty three years has simply been developed to provide any net profits gained from Burma's economy to the military regime for the civil war.

According to "Insight Indochina", the defence services will use up at least kyats 6.7 billion (US\$ 1.09 billion) out of the total 1991/92 national budget of 16.5 billion (US\$ 2.7 billion). The education budget, which gets the second highest percent of the total budget is only kyats 2.4 billion, or about 14.5% of total spending. The vast majority of the budget goes to the military for the purchase of military

hardware for carrying on the civil war.
Foreign Investments

According to Trade Minister Brig-Gen David Abel and Agriculture and Forestry Minister Lt. Gen Chit Swe, many foreign investment proposals, including those calling for 80 to 90 year implementation, have been received. He also claimed that foreign investments have totaled kyats 1.5 billion (about US\$245 million) since Slorc promulgated the foreign investment law in November 1988. Of this total, about 800 million kyats have been invested in the petroleum sector. (II-20/12/91)

American Express

On 17 December 1992, Brig-Gen David Abel revealed that the "Visa Credit Card" which is going to be used now is one of the biggest credit card businesses in the world.

The Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank signed a contract for credit card business with American Express Company Ltd in October 1974. American express is one of eight American companies investing in Burma. (WPD-18/12/92)

Asia Development Bank

On 18 December 1992, Brig-Gen David Abel received the executive director of the Asian Development Bank, Mr. Tan Son Chun and discussed economic corporation between Burma and ADB. (WPD-18/12/91)

China Loan

Chian's Huaxia Hainan Development Construction and Business Company loaned US\$20 million without interest to the Burmese military regime. The loan will be used to purchase rails, engines, coaches, and linkage rail equipment from "HHDCBC". (WPD-17/12/91)

Myanmar Airways to Jakarta

Myanmar Airways will extend its flights to Jakarta with effect from 9 January 1992. The current flight No. UB 231/232 from Rangoon to Singapore will be extended to Sunday and Thursday and flight No. UB 243/244 will fly Rangoon-Singapore-Jakarta-Singapore-Rangoon. (WPD-14/12/91)

International Monetary Fund

On 12 December 1991, a visiting mission of the IMF led by Mr. J. R. Dodsworth, met with Brig-Gen David Abel, Minister for Planning & Finance and Trade. The mission submitted its findings and assessments of the economic and financial situation of Burma. (WPD-13/12/91.)

Bell Helicopter

The US based Bell Helicopter company has approached Slorc to supply spare parts for their bell helicopters and also to set up the joint venture with Myanmar Airways to carry out repairs on Burma's existing fleet of 20 Bell helicopters which were supplied by the US government for the purpose of narcotic suppression in Burma. Managing director Don Pantle of Bell Helicopter Ltd. (Singapore) visited Burma recently for talks with the transport and communication ministry of Slorc. (II 20/10/91.)

Years ago, according to the "Karen Bulletin" which also carried a photo as evidence, ethnic Karen guerrillas shot down one of these Bell helicopters in the battle field. It was learnt that the Burmese military has been using the Bell choppers in their civil war rather than for narcotics suppression.

Teak Export to Thailand

The most important Burmese exports to Thailand are logs and processed wood. In 1990/91, the two export items were worth 1.2 billion baht of Thailand's total wood imports of 1.3 billion baht. The value of the wood products imported from Burma to Thailand in the third quarter of 1991 alone was already 1.6 billion baht.

It is expected that Burmese exports of these items will increase to 2 billion baht in 1992 (1US\$ is equal to about 25 Thai baht).

In Mid 1991, the military regime announced that a timber concession would cost 30 percent more. Price adjustments include teak grade 1 from US\$2,000/ton to US\$3,000/ton, lower grade 1 from US\$200/ton to US\$300/ton, hard wood from US\$180 to US\$270/ton and soft wood from US\$80/ton to US\$120/ton.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Report from the Shan Human Rights Foundation

During the present dry season ofensive, the Burmese military has been moving through many of the ethnic areas. For survival, they freely take from the villagers what they need in food and other goods including money and gold.

Bang Matt, Si Sang Township, Southern Shan State.

An example of this abuse of power comes from villagers of Bang Matt, Si Sang Township, Southern Shan State. The villagers who made the complaint are:

1. Mr. Lung Kyaung, age 62
2. Mr. Htau Tay Saw, age 54
3. Buddhist Monk, Oo Tumana
4. Mr. Lung Kyaung Waung, aged 58

Villagers of Ho Nang, Phat Suim and Omun village also faced similar oppression.

From August 20 to September 6, 1991, Burmese military Company 1, 2 and 3 of the 44th Light Infantry Regiment (LIR) entered the area and began harassing the villagers. In Bang Matt village, 10 of the best oxen were taken. Pigs, chickens and vegetables were taken from Lung Kyaung along with his gold savings.

Htau Tay Saw was relieved of some of his clothing, a wristwatch and at least 30,000 kyats.

On August 30, the soldiers entered the monastery and took gold from Oo Tumana who is a senior monk in the monastery.

Many other villagers reported having their animals, food stocks, money, gold and jewelry taken by the soldiers under threat by guns.

Mong Toan Township, Eastern Shan State

In the month of October, starting from 9-10-91, the commanding officer, together with his junior officers of the 65th LIR, gave the following order to the people of Mong Toan Township.

- 1) Clean up your residence compound, and if any single grass blade is found within the compound, the owner of the compound must pay a fine of 150 kyats.

2) If any dung from any livestock is found within the compound, the owner must pay a fine of 150 kyats.

3) If any kitchen utensils such as rice and curry cooking pots, or frying pans is found dirty and blackened, the owner must pay a fine of 150 kyats.

4) Everything in the bedroom must be absolutely clean and tidy. All clothing must also be clean. If any uncleanness is found, a fine of 150 kyats will be made.

Villagers reported that, since it was impossible to carry out this order totally, the soldiers collected over 30,000 kyats from the villagers. They also complained that this kind of order is never given to villages which are ethnic Burman.

The Burmese military has also used the Red Wa insurgent group to help carry out harassment of the local people. The Red Wa has signed a cease fire with Slorc.

On October 29, 7 members of the Red Wa group met some Shan merchants from Lai Kha Township and stole more than one million kyats from them after threatening to shoot them.

Keng Tang Township, Eastern Shan State

On October 18, Brigadier Kyaw Win, Slorc commander of the Eastern

"Every citizen has the right to protect his home and land. Every indigenous people have the right to protect their culture and custom. The ancient residences of the Shan princes is a part of our Shan Culture."

Khun Kyaa Oo

Command, left Taunggyi the capital of the Shan State, with his troops and arrived in Keng Tung. The commander and his party visited the ancient Haw (residence of the Shan prince) of Sao Hpa Keng Tun in the heart of the town near the lake. The Burman commander said that the building, the private estate of the Shan prince, would be demolished and replaced with a new 14-storey hotel.

Two Burman colonels, Kak Sein and Kyaw Win said that the demolition would take place in December. However, the ancient building was demolished on the 9th of November, 1991.

Many people in the town, including local Buddhist monks, wrote letters of protest to the authorities stating that the building should be left as it is a special building for the Shan people and important to keep it for future generations. It is a very important building to Shan culture and history. These pleas were totally ignored.

Many Shan people fear that all ancient buildings of the Shan princes will be destroyed by Slorc in an attempt to wipe out the Shan people, their heritage and their culture.

On November 11, four people were arrested in relation to this case. They are:

- 1) Mr. Sai Sarm Tip Sho, aged 36
- 2) Mr. Sai Sarm Tip, aged 45
- 3) Mr. Sai Muong Pee, aged 55
- 4) Mr. Sai Win Myint, aged 45

The four, along with many other people in the area, had written letters protesting the demolition of the ancient residents of the Shan prince. They were accused of political offence, and are now in jail in Keng Tung.

Par Sar Ti Sauc Village, Mong Nai Township, Southern Shan State

On December 4, 1991, members of the 147th LIR, Company 2 under the command of Ye Myint arrived in Par Sar Ti Sauc Village and ordered all the villagers to desert their village, homes and land and move to Mong Nai Township. The people could only take what they were able to carry with them.

For many generations, these village people have earned their living as farmers and livestock breeders. Now, if they are forced to live in towns, how will they survive without land, rice fields and grasslands? Their lives will only become more miserable.

POLITICS

Burma vs Bangladesh

While the unstable political situation inside Burma has been intensifying, tensions between Burma and its neighbor, Bangladesh, have also broken out. On December 21, action abruptly broke out on the 237 kilometer-long Burma/Bangladesh border, following a Burmese Army (BA) raid on a Bangladesh outpost.

Subsequently, Bangladesh officials announced that the attack was against a Bangladesh border guards' out post and one soldier of the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) as well as three civilians were killed.

Nonetheless, Col. Than Tun, Deputy Chief of the Burmese Military Intelligence stated that the out post was actually only an out post of Muslim guerrillas who have recently become more active against the Burmese military. Later, foreign media reports claimed that the Burmese military admitted that "there could have been a mistake or error" on the part of BA. This admission was made during talks between Maj. Abdul Khaleque of the BDR and Yun Yie of the BA.

Following the December 6 incident, both sides immediately began reinforcing their troops in the area. As many as 25,000 Burmese troops and 40,000 forces of the Bangladesh military were brought into the tense area during the first week of January 1992.

The relations between Bangladesh and Burma have been steadily worsening following the influx into Bangladesh of the Bangali refugees since last year. Various Muslim resistant groups including the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Araken Rohingya Islamic Front and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), have been fighting in Burma for their basic ethnic rights for some time already. The RSO said since last April and July, more than 16,000 Muslim refugees arrived in Bangladesh. Currently, the Muslim sources say that an estimated 55,000 Muslims have fled into Bangladesh.

The situation between the Burmese military, the Muslim guerrillas and the Bangladesh military will probably

continue to worsen. According to journalist Salamat All in Peshawar Bangladesh, one of the Afagan groups, comprised mainly of Egyptians and Algerians, and the Moros from the Philippines, have been involved in training the Arakanese (Muslims in the Arakan State). However, there will be more talks between Bangladesh and Burma while both side are involved in their preparations for war.

Some observers speculate that the Bangladesh/Burmatensions are a ploy of the Burmese military to divert attention away from their internal oppressive policies. Since the 1962 military coup, Ne Win has constantly created ethnic conflicts in order to try to unify the ethnic Burmans behind him. If the military can convince people inside Burma that the issues on the Burma/Bangladesh border are a threat to the unity of the nation, perhaps the anger presently growing against the military and its hardhanded rule over the people can be diverted against the Muslims instead. This is the "divide and rule" policy which Ne Win has used so effectively over the past decades.

Universities Closed

On December 10 and 11, 1991, demonstrations broke out in Rangoon University campus. Students gathered to call for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on that day, and to call for the return of the country to democracy.

The demonstrations were quickly broken up by the military who arrest and beat some of the demonstrating students. Following these demonstrations, all universities around the country were once again closed.

On December 24, the Working People's Daily printed a speech by State Law and Order Restoration Council Secretary-1, Maj-Gen Khin Nyunt in which, among many other things, he explains the Slorc viewpoint on these demonstrations.

Khin Nyunt claimed, in his speech that not more than 500 students took part in the demonstrations which con-

sisted mostly of speeches and the shouting of slogans.

In response, Slorc ordered the temporarily closing of universities and colleges "to prevent further spread of disturbances begun by unscrupulous persons."

He went on to say that this has brought much suffering upon over 40,000 students.

"Whether universities and colleges are to reopen or not is up to the teachers, the students and the parents. It depends upon their desires and assurances and the systematic drawing up of projects. As for the government it will solve the tasks according to law."

Some observers feel that Slorc will use this incident to clean out many professors from the universities and colleges. There are already reports that before the universities are to open, the professors must sign statements of allegiance to the military "government". If they sign, it would also mean that they would guarantee that their students would never take part in any demonstrations. Many professors may feel it is safer for them in the long run to rather resign. This would be another serious blow to the educational system which is already extremely short of qualified professors.

More NLD Representatives Canceled

On December 18, 1991, Slorc issued an announcement of the cessation of five persons' right to continue to remain as Pyithu Hluttaw representatives-elect. The five persons are:

- 1) U Kyaw Thwin of Kayan-1, Yangon Division
- 2) U Khin Maung Swe of Sanyoung, Yangon Division
- 3) U Khin Maung Thein of Khin-U-1, Sagaing Division
- 4) Daw Khin San Hlaing of Wetlet-2, Sagaing Division
- 5) U Chit Tin of Minhla Magway Division

WHAT LIES AHEAD

In this fourth article looking at the future of Burma by reflecting on the past, a perspective is given to the education problems facing Burma. Since the 1962 coup of Ne Win, students have been the guinea pigs of the military who have experimented with various educational policies based on their guesses rather than on experience and analysis. What does this suggest about the educational needs in the future?

Education

Seventy years ago, the first organized anti-British movement broke out in Burma. Burmese students and politicians boycotted the new educational plan adopted by the British government. This new plan was designed to transform Rangoon University into a high institution preserved only for the elite who would become the bureaucrats needed to strengthen the existing colonial machinery. The students wanted a university which would produce people who could respond to the needs of the grassroots people.

The boycott of the university was initiated by the students of Rangoon college, but it spread to all parts of Burma. Although the boycott could not achieve any significant response from the British government, it gave birth to hundreds of national schools that sprang up in various parts of Burma.

Following that uprising, the demand for the establishment of a national educational system became one of the most highly emphasized slogans of all student organizations and political parties of Burma.

Following independence in 1948 the Burmese leaders in power were predominantly occupied with the struggle to maintain their own political power. This struggle was carried out between the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) and the opposition National United Front (NUF), between the different factions within the AFPFL itself, and between the AFPFL government and the various communist and ethnic organizations engaged in armed conflict.

This confusion deprived the country of the possibility of organizing a national seminar on education. Only a handful of people appointed by the AFPFL government were given responsibility to adopt the education policy for the country. Thus the education policy created was unable to reflect the real life, aspirations and needs of the common people and students.

Yet, at the same time the government led by U Nu allowed the university council to enjoy academic freedom to a certain degree. The university council was the administrative body of Rangoon University with all the other colleges affiliated under it. The Rangoon University Students' Union (RUSU) was entitled to appoint two representatives to the council. Thus the students were given a voice in adopting the regulations to be observed by the students.

The escalation of the civil war caused uneven budget divisions which had a serious adverse effect on education in the country.

In 1951 the sharp and sudden increase in the price of rice on the world market brought a bright future for the rice exporting potential of Burma. The government adopted a Pyidawtha (Peaceful and Prosperous Country) development plan upon the completion of which "each family will have a two story house, a family car and a monthly income of 800 kyats (approximately equivalent to the price of 2.5 ounces of gold). Under that plan, the government decided to grant stipends to thousands of poor students and to make education free for students at all levels including universities.

But the further escalation of the civil war and the sudden decline in the export prices of rice created a multiple of problems for the government. Most of the goals of this Pyidawtha plan were left untouched.

One of the significant accomplishments of the government during this time was the mass education program. The program intended to eradicate illiteracy of the people in the remote areas and rural areas, and to disseminate knowledge of modern civilization

to all the people. Hundreds of young students with the minimum qualification of a matriculation certificate were recruited and given a year's training in teaching, hygiene, physical exercise, cooking etc. After the training they were formed into small teams and were sent to remote areas. The program brought about many positive results in the rural areas.

After the ruling AFPFL party split in 1957, the victorious faction led by U Nu tried to re-approach the students. RUSU delegations were allowed to visit foreign countries and the government and the students began to cooperate on some occasions. As a result the first "All Burma Students' Education Seminar" was held in September 1958 at the RUSU building. U Nu's government paid all the expenses.

The fact finding committee of the seminar was assisted by a score of the most brilliant young academicians in the country at that time. Thus the seminar successfully adopted many useful resolutions relating to education. But before U Nu's government had time to study the resolutions of the Students' Education Seminar, Ne Win stepped in to take over the so-called "interim government".

Meanwhile, the rector of Rangoon University, Dr. Htin Aung, retired and a new rector was appointed. Ne Win's interim government appointed Dr. Hla Myint, a Burman who had been working as a professor of economics at the London University for many years. Dr. Hla Myint was a man of strict discipline who did not like to encourage the students' unions and their activities.

After the February-March elections in 1960, when U Nu's Union Party won a landslide victory, the students' political activities came into life again making the new rector feel uncomfortable. The rector resigned in disgust and left Burma to continue his professorship in the West.

The new rector was Dr. Tha Hla, a professor of geology in Rangoon University. Being a former chairman of the Rangoon University Students' Union in pre-war days, he was determined to make some significant con-

tribution in the coordinated effort of politicians, academicians and students to accomplish much needed educational reforms. Before he could do anything, Ne Win staged the military coup in March 1962, and Dr. Tha Hla was forced to retire on May 31, 1962.

Since the start of the military regime, out of a succession of four education ministers appointed by Ne Win, only one has been a true academic, while the remaining three have been military men. The first was Brigadier General Than Pe (Navy), succeeded by Colonel Hla Han. Both were members of the ruling Revolutionary Council. The third was Dr. Nyi Nyi, a professor of Geology. He was followed by Colonel Kyaw Nyein.

Within a period of less than two years, the regime had to close the universities two times because of students' displeasure with the state of the country. The first time was in 1962, following the July 7 massacre, and the second was on November 16, 1963. Following the second forced vacation, the regime decided to introduce a new educational system which would be in line with their new "Burmese Way to Socialism". The task of drafting the new education system was given to Dr. Nyi Nyi, the deputy minister under Colonel Hla Han.

Dr. Nyi Nyi recruited some of the former student leaders who supported Burmese Socialism. (Most students leaders protested the coup and opposed Burmese Socialism. Many were arrested and many fled to take refuge in the communist controlled areas.) They selected some portions of the resolutions adopted by the Students' Education Seminar held in 1958, added some new portions and adapted some political terms from the "Correlation of Man and His Environment" which is the theoretical guide of the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP). Thus the new "system of socialist education" was proposed which was approved by the military dictators.

Some significant elements of the new system were:

1. Basic Education

1.a The middle school was extended to 8th standard. Formerly it ended with the 7th standard.

1.b After passing 8th standard, students were divided into two classes:

a) Those students who obtained higher marks were entitled to learn science in high school.

b) Those who obtained lower marks could only learn subjects in the arts.

2. Higher Education

2.a The academic terms of the universities were changed to mesh with the international institutes. The actual intention of this change was to avoid the 7th of July.

2.b The majoring system was introduced to change the existing system in which students were "jacks of all trades, but masters of none", according to the words of Hla Han.

2.c Admission into a major field would be decided according to the marks obtained on the final examination. This was called the ILA system (Intelligence Level and Aggregate marks system).

2.d The universities were decentralized, promoting many faculties to university status. Thus the faculty of engineering became the Institute of Technology, the faculty of medicine became the Institute of Medicine, etc.

But instead of producing more qualified students, the educational level of the country dwindled.

Bi-lingualism, practiced previously, was abolished. Thus Burmese became the medium of study. But due to a lack of enthusiasm among the staff assigned to facilitate this, the translation of publications and text books was never carried out seriously.

Teachers had to translate and print the required chapters and resources themselves. Thus the university students were left with no full textbooks, not to mention reference books. The necessity to purchase each chapter separately made the cost of education much higher. University education, without text books and references, became purely a rote learning experience.

With production in the country declining, and factory after factory closing, jobs became scarce. Competition became more intense, and first priority for job openings was given to relatives of the VIPs (The term VIP referred to higher party and council authorities.) Second priority went to relatives of the party and council members from lower levels. The majority of the students, therefore, had little prospect for a job or for a secure future.

Professors, and those responsible for giving exams, were forced to slip the exam questions to the children of VIPs a few days early. For example, in 1972, out of nearly 100,000 students who appeared for the university entrance examination, only two students gained distinction in all the six subjects. One was Kyemon Win, the youngest daughter of strong man Ne Win, and the other was Maung Htoo Han, son of Colonel Hla Han who was then minister of education.

After quelling four successive student movements from 1974 to 1976, the regime decided to hoodwink the people and the international community into thinking positive changes were coming about.

A second new educational system was put forth. More than forty regional colleges were opened. The Director of Higher Education, U San Tha Aung, a former professor of physics, was charged with the duty of advertising the new system to the public which he reluctantly did.

This new system dispersed students throughout the country, depriving them of any possibility to group together or to initiate any kind of movement. The new system created thousands of new teaching jobs, most of which were immediately filled by relatives of the army and party officials, the majority of who were totally unqualified.

These unqualified teachers proved to be a great help to the military regime in that they provided the authorities with every detail about everything happening in the respective colleges, and they also helped by giving the children of army and party officials the maximum marks, making them eligible for admission to the most highly regarded universities such as the Institute of Medicine, Dental College, Institute of Technology, etc. As a result, within a few years the educational standards of the country plunged to become the lowest in Southeast Asia.

However, the failure of the system was noticed by Ne Win only when his own daughter, Sanda Win, failed to qualify for a special entrance exam held in London in the late 1970s. Only then did Ne Win realize that the educational standards of Burma had plunged to such a hopeless level. Consequently, Ne Win ordered Kyaw

Nyein to work out a new educational system with English as the main language of instruction. This third new system began to function in 1980.

The new system was so hastily introduced that there was not enough time to give the teachers adequate English training. Students had to look for qualified tutors to help them, creating additional financial burdens for their parents. The private tuition business boomed. Many brilliant government teachers, even though they did not have adequate training, became caught up with the new system and began to give private tutoring to students. Through this, they could earn much needed additional income.

The regime was quick to respond to this new development. In October 1984, they promulgated a new law limiting the total number of students to 160 for each private teacher, with a monthly tuition fee of 10 kyats per student. The law completely prohibited government teachers from teaching for private income. For any teacher who broke this law, the punishment was 3 years imprisonment with a 30,000 kyat fine.

The students going to the secret tutorial classes had to secretly carry their books as though they were contraband. This situation created immediate anger among the students and teachers towards the military regime.

After the 1988 coup, the military dictators have shown even deeper distrust towards the intelligentsia. More than ten thousand educated people have faced the vengeance of SLORC. More than 200 professors and lecturers have been sacked. Many others have already left the country in search of new jobs, and many more are trying to follow suit.

With the loss of most of the qualified and experienced professors and teachers, the already inadequate and outdated educational system in the country can only get worse.

There is little hope that the military regime now ruling Burma can bring any positive change to the chaos they have already created within the educational system of the country. With little or no knowledge in administering educational institutes, or developing appropriate educational models, the military leaders will certainly continue to flounder along, providing their own kin with benefits for a better future at the expense of the vast majority of the people who could perhaps make a positive difference for the country if given a good chance.

It therefore rests on the shoulders of the opposition groups to bring a new educational vision to Burma. For them to do this, they must first do a very detailed and comprehensive reflection on the past experiences of

the education sector in the country. The problems of the past must be avoided such as developing an education system which simply trains elite bureaucrats to create top-down development for the country, education curriculums which do not respond to the village needs, and constant changing plans which confuse not only the students but the teachers as well.

Secondly they must do very careful action\research into the specific needs at the village level. The Peasantry must be involved in this action\research as deeply as possible. Only an educational system which responds directly to their experiences and needs can be sustainable for the longrun.

This process will take time and a lot of effort, but without a commitment to this process it is possible that, even in the opposition areas, an educational system which uses the people as experimental guinea pigs might develop. People, especially the poorest in the country, must be the subjects of education, not the objects, as if that is to happen, those poorest of the poor must have direct and significant involvement in determining what kind of education system is finally put into practice in the country.

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

AIR MAIL