B. U. R. M. A.

BURMA RIGHTS MOVEMENT FOR ACTION

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A Pepsi advertisement in Burma. Is it really nonpolitical?

Large corporations like to make money. Although they want to give the impression that they are not much interested in politics, their investments are very much a part of the political and military games which are played out in the country where they are investing and making profits. Foreign investments in Burma can not be separated from the Burmese military's present dry season offensive.

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CIVIL WAR

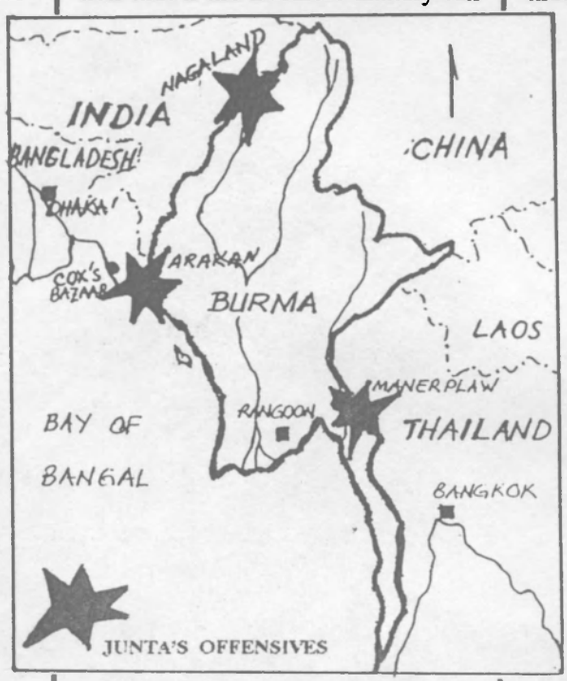
Karen State

The Burmese military's dry season offensive against the Democratic Forces based in Mannerplaw of the Karen State seems to be failing in its objective to completely eradicate the anti-military insurgency before the heavy rains begin in a short time. Even though backed by jet bombers and heavy artillery recently purchased from China, the Burmese military is being defeated not only by the guerrilla tactics of the Karen and other anti-military forces, but also by the extremely difficult terrain which surrounds Mannerplaw. They have been unable to capture several high mountain positions from which their big artillery guns could fire down into Mannerplaw, and sources at the scene also say that the planes flying bombing raids usually fly very high to avoid being shot down. Still, at least two planes have been report to have been destroyed by the Karen in recent weeks.

The Burmese military also seems to be struggling to find the men needed to keep up its pressure on Mannerplaw. On February 25, 1992, the Bangkok Post reported that Burmese prisoners of war, some as young as 15, have been captured, or have simply given themselves up. They report that they have not been trained properly to fight, and that they are short of all supplies including water, food and medicines. One of the prisoners, 15 year-old Win Hle told a reporter that he had been in the jungle for two weeks and had almost no sleep. "I am exhausted," he said. "I don't want to die. I want to live."

Porters, so important to the Burmese military are also becoming more difficult to find. People living near areas where fighting is going on are running away from their villages out of fear of being forced to serve as porters and mine sweepers in the front line areas. Consequently the military is pulling prisoners out of their jail cells in Mandalay, Moulmein and Rangoon to carry food and military equipment to the front lines.

The Burmese military's offensive in the Karen State is concentrating on the two remaining Karen camps along the Thai/Burma border - Manerplaw and Kaw Moo Ra. Sources say the price has been high for the Burmese army with between 700 to 1000 of their often young and inexperienced soldiers killed since January. Morale within their ranks is low, and captured soldiers indicate that even their commanders are angry with their superiors back in Rangoon. There is speculation that if the Burmese military can not take Manerplaw and Kaw Moo Raw this dry season, there could be a revolt within the Burmese military out of frustration and anger at being called to sacrifice so much for an impossible task while their superiors make vast fortunes in Rangoon off of drug deals and connections with foreign investments.



Nagaland

The little known Naga ethnic group occupies an area on the western edge of Burma's Sagaing division where it borders India. In recent months, the Burmese military has intensified their fight against these people, driving over 1,500 Naga tribes people into India during the month of January. Indian diplomats confirm that military operations by the Burmese army in the area have been stepped up in the last year with a six-fold increase in the number of Burmese soldiers deployed in the region. (Bangkok Post, March 1, 1992)

Arakan State

On February 17, Tin Oo, Secretary 2 of Slorc stated in a speech to teachers of Bassin Degree College that, "There never has been a single frontier problem created by us. There are no refugees in the border areas, but insurgents in the disguise of refugees."

Hewas, of course, referring to the situation along the Burma/Bangladesh where thousands of Burmese Muslims are fleeing atrocities committed by the Burmese military to seek refuge in Bangladesh. Bangladesh officials estimate that as many as 100,000 Muslims, many of them women and small children, have fled into simple camps hastily erected inside Bangladesh. These are the people Tin Oo calls "insurgents in the disguise of refugees."

The refugees tell all too familiar stories of rapes, killings, torture, burned villages and desecrated mosques. In March, Muslim refugees reported that at least 200 of their people were killed in one week, including women and children. Over 3,000 homes were burned they said.

Martin Smith, a British expert on Burma, believes the Burmese army is trying to deliberately spread racial hatred in the country. (Time, February 17, 1992) The purpose of this would be to keep their various military commanders busy to avert any revolt on their part as well as to try to divert the general population's attention from desperate economic woes which plague the country.

ECONOMICS

The Dana (Fortune) Magazine in Burma, interviewed Mr. Barry J.Shea, a Canadian and Deputy President of the Southeast Asia branch of the Pepsi Cola Company during his stay in Burma on 10 July 1991. The interview was made at the head office of Pepsi-Cola Product Myanmar Ltd. which is situated at No.336 Prome Rd., Rangoon, Burma. Following is a translation of part of the interview which appeared in Dana Magazine, Vol 2, Number 4 of August 1991. Pepsi began production of their drink in Rangoon in November of the same year.

Dana: How did you get contact with Thein Tun (Burmese), the Chairman of the Pepsi Myanmar Co. in order to set up the Pepsi factory in Burma?

Shea: I got the contact through one of the Thai Companies which is working with Thein Tun.

Dana: How much investment did you put into Pepsi Myanmar?

Shea: About US$ one million.

Dana: How did you agree to divide the contribution of capital?

Shea: Sixty per cent comes from Myanmar Golden Star Co. and 40% from Pepsi-Cola International.

Dana: How did you arrange to take your net profits back to America?

Shea: We agreed not to take back our net profits for three or four years.

Dana: Do you adjust the taste of Pepsi to meet the preferences of people in various countries and also do you produce a different Pepsi flavor for Burmese citizens?

Shea: We never change the formula of Pepsi but Coke has often changed its formula.

Dana: We have heard that the bottles for Pepsi Myanmar were imported from abroad. Do you have a plan to build your own bottle factory in Burma?

Shea: Only some amount of bottles were imported from Malaysia. After importing fifty thousand boxes of bottles, we plan to buy our bottles from a Burmese factory.

Dana: Did you say that now your factory can produce only Pepsi? Can't you produce 7-UP?

Shea: At the present, we produce only Pepsi. Production of 7-Up depends on time and the situation.

Dana: We heard that Pepsi also owns Kentucky Fried Chicken and Pizza Hut. Does the Pepsi Myanmar have an idea to sell these products in Burma as well?

Shea: Yes, I have talked with U Thein Tun about that. If it can be done, I have an idea to first sell Kentucky Fried Chicken which is more suitable for Burmese.

Dana: Will you continue to use Pepsi's advertisement, "The Choice of the New Generation" in Burma?

Shea: We discussed yesterday that the advertisement is to be translated into proper Burmese and we are also looking for a new advertisement. At present, we are introducing Pepsi to the Burmese by hanging Pepsi sign boards at football matches where we also sell Pepsi. The most important thing is to familiarize Asians to Pepsi before starting the factory production.

Dana: We saw in the concert video of Burmese actress Khin Thi Da Tun that many scenes included drinking Pepsi. Was that your advertisement?

Shea: No, that was only coincidence. But, however, that is good because well known persons shown drinking Pepsi is a good promotion for Pepsi as if they are acting as spokespersons for Pepsi.

Dana: Will you use "Fido-Dido" for the advertisement when you produce the 7-UP in Burma?

Shea: Of course! "Fido-Dido" is only for 7-UP. The advertisement motto is "It's Cool to be Clear". I Think that we also need to translate it into proper Burmese. In Thailand we have already translated it into Thai.

Dana: Will you use Burmese stars and models for your advertisements?

Shea Yes, Burmese stars and models will be used but first, we will use the international advertisements as we want people to know that Pepsi is an international beverage. Then later we'll use Burmese stars and models. Advertisements are very important. So, we also sponsor youth sport games such as football. People began to see that Pepsi is for youth.

Dana: Let us know the management structure of Pepsi.

Shea: Pepsi has three branches of which the beverage branch makes up 40% of the total income. The other two branches are the snack branch and restaurant branch. Pepsi-Cola America is concerned with the markets in America and Canada and Pepsi International is concerned with markets throughout the world. The Pepsi Asia Pacific branch office is under the administration of Pepsi International which is based in Bangkok. Seventy per cent of Pepsi International is franchised and 30% is based on joint ventures or private owned business.

Our approach is to go to a country and find a strong foundation and a powerful partner. We train quality control and other key things for business. Basically, our power is in a professional resident partner.

Dana: Are there other countries in Asia where Pepsi has not been sold?

Shea: Yes, Cambodia and Vietnam. We have not sold in these countries because of trade sanctions. About 1970-71 Pepsi was number one in Cambodia. We hope to try to be number one there again.

Dana: At the present, you can not sell there because of political problems, is that right?

Shea: No. Because of trade sanctions. We absolutely do not want to be involved in politics.

Dana: Are you satisfied with Pepsi advertisements in Burma up to now?

Shea: Yes, Thein Tun did very excellent work. When I arrived here I thought Rangoon seems like a Pepsi city. Everywhere there are Pepsi advertisements.

Dana: After Burma, in which Asian country will you build your next factory?

Shea: I hope in Vietnam and Cambodia. Since I am also responsible for South East Asia, I hope to produce Pepsi in the markets of these two countries but we have to wait until trade sanctions have been withdrawn.

Dana: Burmese like tea very much. So, how will you attract them to drink Pepsi instead of tea?

Shea: I think we can persuade especially more youth to drink Pepsi.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The Mon State

The Mon, one of Burma's various ethnic groups, have been fighting for more than forty years against the successive governments of Burma for their ethnic rights. As a result of the fighting, thousands of Mon people have had to leave their homes and take refuge in Thai-Burma border areas. According to a statement issued by the Mon National Relief Committee in December last year there are now more than 12,000 Mon refugees in seven camps sprawling along border area: (1) Baleh Nhook, (2) Panung Htaw, (3) Krone Kung, (4) Hla Brad, (5) Pa Yaw, (6) Pa Mark, and (7) Prachaup. The first six camps are in Kanchanaburi Province of Thailand and the last camp is situated to the west of Prachaup Khiri Khan in southern Thailand.

Until 1990 when the New Mon State Party (NMSP) stronghold was overrun by the troops of the Rangoon junta, the relationship between the Mons and local Thai authorities was smooth. It started to become strained when a Thai logging co. named Pathon Thani tried to extract timber from an area prohibited to logging by the Mons for security and environmental reasons. The owner of Pathon Thani co. is Sia Hauk who secretly helped the Burmese junta to pass through Thai territory to launch a surprise and decisive attack against the NMSP headquarters last year. As tension heightened, Sia Hauk manipulated Thai authorities to help him. As planed by him, the Township Officer of Sangkhla Buri invited Mon leaders to attend a meeting sponsored by him at a resort in Sangkhla Buri in order to settle the dispute. When Mon leaders arrived at the resort on the appointed date, (Dec.3) they were diverted to the police station. As soon as they arrived at the station, police arrested three of the top Mon leaders. The arrested leaders were: 1. Nai Rot Sa, Secretary General of NMSP, 2. Nai Hong Sa, Joint Secretary, and 3. Gen. Htaw Mon, Commander in Chief of the Mon National Liberation Army. Thai authorities tried them at a provincial court in Kanchanaburi on Dec.23 and they were sentenced to three months rigorous imprisonment. The prison term ended on March 2, and they were released shortly after that.

Meanwhile, Thai authorities issued an ultimatum ordering the Mon refugees staying in Thai territory to return to Burma not later than April this year. Thus the most urgent issue for Mon Nationals taking refuge in Thailand is the serious possibility of forced repatriation back to Burma where they would live under the threat of persecution by the Burmese military. (Source, the Mon National Relief Committee)

Kachin State

The Kachin Independence Organization reported on February 26 that a platoon strength group of Burmese soldiers from Burma Army Regiment 15 entered the town of Mohnyin on February 2 and burned down 25 Kachin homes without allowing the occupants to retrieve any of their possessions. None of the Shan homes in the area were damaged. One of the villagers, a man named Myin Ting, age 37, was shot to death by the Burmese soldiers.

Tavoy-Mergui of Karen State

Numerous reports have been coming in about forced relocation of Karen villages by the Burmese military. In some cases the reports talk of the villagers being placed in a concentration camp (see B.U.R.M.A. Vol 1 Number 11). In some other cases, reports indicate that some of the Karen villagers are being used for forced labor tasks such as building roads. Observers speculate that, since the military regime is so low on money, they are forcing villagers, especially those from ethnic minority groups, to carry out the military's "development" projects.

On February 26, a 32 year old Karen man was interviewed who claimed to be from one of these work camps. He said that the people of his village were forced to leave their homes and move to an area along the Tavoy-Mergui road. A total of about 430 people, including women and children, were involved in the forced relocation, and they were not allowed to bring any possessions with them. During their labor on the road, they were not given any food or medicines by the military. Once a month they were allowed to leave the camp to go look for food. Malnutrition became a serious issue, especially among the children.

Although the people interviewed did not know the exact number of soldiers guarding them, they estimated that about 40 soldiers with guns were around their camp or at the work site. After five months, some of the people managed to escape the camp when they were allowed to go look for food. They arrived at a refugee camp with only the clothes on their backs. They claimed that the soldiers had killed and eaten all the animals which they had in their village, leaving them with absolutely nothing.

The interview also gave evidence that villages between the Tavoy-Mergui road and the Karen controlled region of Po Klo is systematically being cleared of all Karen villagers in an attempt to deprive the Karen National Union of their base of support.

Shan State

The Shan Human Rights Foundation reports that 70 household living in Wan Loi village were order by the Burmese army 33rd LIR's authorities to shift to a new resettlement site. Nearly 300 people had to abandon their small tea plantations, bamboo forests, farmlands, vegetable farms and orchards.

The Burmese army personnel told them, "You must not say the government confiscated your land, but rather say the government had not place to live so you gave them your land. "On December 25, Burmese military columns entered Nar Naung village of Shan State and ordered the villagers to abandon their farm work and build a new road. No wages were given to the villagers for this work. Fifteen women from the village were taken away by the soldiers, and brutally raped in the nearby jungle.

DRUGS

Although Burma's military regime has held an occasional "opium burning" attended by international observers, has signed various anti-drug accords, and has received both financial and equipment assistance in the past, a recent Agence France-Presse report states that "Burma's multi-million-dollar heroin crop is expected to reach record levels this season." (The Nation, March 3, 1992) While opium production in Burma was estimated to be from 450 to 600 metric tons in 1985, it had increased to 1470-2000 metric tons in 1989. The 1991 production is thought to be even much higher.

Two different possibilities for this rapid increase have been suggested. The first is that the assistance given to the Burmese military officials to eradicate drugs in their areas is insufficient and therefore they can not effectively carry out their stated policy to stop the flow of heroin from Burma. Since the Burmese military brutally crushed the pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988, most foreign aid to the regime was cut off. Before 1988, the US alone provided at least $US86.6 million worth of drug-suppression assistance to Burma. This included helicopters for use in locating and destroying opium fields, mostly located in the notorious Golden Triangle where Burma, Thailand and Laos meet. However, many reports from various ethnic minority controlled areas indicate that these helicopters and other aircraft intended for use in the anti-opium program have been used in air raids against ethnic camps rather than in finding and eradicating opium fields.

The second possibility is that the Burmese military officials are simply not serious about getting rid of opium as it provides much needed income for their military ventures against the restless population of the country. Speculation is rife that at least part of the US1.4 billion purchase of military hardware from China by the Burmese military in 1991 was paid off in cash, and that cash might have come from the opium trade.

This possible suggestion for Burma's failure to curb the production of opium is also strengthened by the fact that many of the biggest opium producing areas of the country are under the control of the Wa, Kokang and Shan ethnic groups, and these groups have recently signed cease fires with the Burmese military. In fact, Pheung Kyashin, one of the top drug barons of Burma was recently appointed by the military junta as police chief of his region, and some sources report that two year ago Major-General Khin Nyunt, head of Burma's military intelligence, went so far as to actively encourage Pheung Kyashin to increase his opium crop. (The Nation, March 5, 1992)

Reports from Rangoon suggest that the military regime may also be turning a blind eye to heroin use within the city in an attempt to weaken the anti-military movement which continues to erupt every time universities and colleges are opened. A 23 year-old university student who recently fled Rangoon to take refuge in Thailand reports that heroin is quite freely available on Rangoon University campus. Using the nickname Arnold, he claims that heroin is now one of the cheapest drugs in Rangoon with a penicillin bottle full of heroin costing only 600 kyats (about US$6 on the illegal market). This is much cheaper than before the 1988 uprising.

Arnold goes on to report, "The intelligents (military intelligence agents) are scattered thickly throughout Rangoon University campus and quickly capture anyone who even whispers anti-Slorc comments, or sticks up an anti-military leaflet anywhere on the campus. Therefore, it is quite a wonder that these intelligence officers are ignoring the buying and selling of heroin on the campus as though they are unaware of it. Heroin can be purchased openly in Rangoon Institute of Technology, Medical College and in every township in Rangoon. The drug users can use it independently and fashionably without fear."

Such reports raise serious questions about Slorc's true commitment to eradicating drugs from Burma. At the moment they have too much to gain by increasing their production of opium such as much needed cash income to continue to upgrade their military, and cheaper heroin on the streets to weaken any anti-military movements among the youth.

The economics of the drug trade are staggering. A kilo of number 4 heroin costs a minimum of US$1,500 in the Shan State border towns, and five times that a few kilometers away in China. If Burma produces 200 tons of heroin, at least US$2 billion would be generated before it crosses the border and up to US$10 billion more in the border crossing. (from Narcotics and the Slorc, an NCGUB dossier)

In March Burma will probably sign anti-narcotics cooperation agreements with China and Thailand. The United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) will participate in the cooperation agreements. (Bangkok Post, February 5, 1992) The contradictions in this are alarming and raises the question as to whether the UNDCP is truly serious about their work or not.

On February 22, 1992, the Democratic Forces of the Union of Burma decided to take their own action to curb the spread of drug addiction, and the production of opium in their areas. An agreement of these democratic forces signed an agreement which said in part, "We, the leaders of the Democratic Forces of Burma have convened this conference and unanimously decided to form the Narcotic Eradication Commission of Burma (NECB) which will join hands with all international organizations and agencies interested in totally eradicating the narcotics problem in Burma."

On March 5 of this year, the Kachin Independence Organization, one of the signatories of the Democratic Forces agreement, reported that since 1991 they have outlawed the cultivation of poppies and introduced severe penalties for violators and drug traffickers. They went on to say that the ban has resulted in the clearing of the plant from the Kachin mountainous terrain and highlands under their control. Next year they want to enforce this anti-drug policy throughout Kachin State, including areas now controlled by Slorc. (The Nation, March 5, 1992)

FOREIGN INVESTMENTS

In February 1992, the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise of Burma prepared a paper called Prospect, Trend, Opportunities and Type of PSCs (Production Sharing Contract) for Oil and Gas Exploration (Onshore - Myanmar). The paper was presented to provide more incentives for foreign oil and gas companies to invest in Burma. It gives us a clearer view of how these PSCs operate, and what the Burmese military is expecting to get out of these investments. Following are some excerpts from this paper.

Geological prospectivity alone will not attract foreign participation in the petroleum industry. **The two main conditions which are prerequisite to attract foreign investment are that there must be a stable government and a fair and equitable investment policy. Myanmar today meets both these conditions.** In the oil sector, the government now welcomes the multinational oil company investment. Red tape is cut to a minimum to help materialize a joint venture proposal.

To attract foreign investment in Myanmar, the government has enacted the Foreign Investment Law and Related Procedures on 30 November, 1988. A new economic policy was adopted whereby market economy system will be followed.

The foreign investment can be made in any of the following forms:

(a) investment made by a foreigner to the extent of one hundred percent foreign capital

(b) joint-venture made between a foreigner and a citizen

(c) in the oil sector, it is in the form of Production Sharing Contract whereby the investor undertook the exploration risk and the product is shared after cost recovery.

The Foreign Investment Commission (FIC) for the purpose of promoting foreign investments, usually grants the investor exemption of relief from income tax in connection with the production of goods or services for a period extending to 3 consecutive years. Exemption or relief of customs duty or other internal taxes or both are also granted on machinery equipment for use during the period of construction and on raw materials imported for the first 3 years' commercial production following the completion of construction.

Presently, MOGE has already entered into PSCs with 9 international oil companies for onshore exploration and production in 90 blocks with a total acreage of 41.93 million acres. In addition 5 more blocks with a total acreage of 11.57 million acres is being opened for exploration and production. **Emphasis is being given to explore for hydrocarbons in the frontier areas.**

Amoco Myanmar Petroleum Co. (AMPC), the operator of Block B, have successfully carried out the drilling of the 1st exploratory well at one of the remote areas in Upper Chindwin Basin. This river is only navigable between May and November. AMPC have contracted a newly built and largest heli-rig from Parker Drilling Co. All weather airstrip of 2000 feet runway was built and foreshore and barge handling facilities were prepared for year-round operation. AMPC had managed to ship a total of 14,000 tons of materials, equipment and drilling rig from Yangon to the base camps by using 30 different cargo vessels in 57 trips.

Two Twin Otters, two Kamov-32 cargo helicopters and one bell-212 helicopter were hired and transported 5,200 tons of equipment and materials from the base camp to the well site.

The concept of the Myanmar PSC is that the ownership of petroleum in the ground is vested with Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and as such control the management of petroleum operation. The operating foreign oil companies are contractors to the Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise.

(Three of) the major objectives of the Myanmar PSC contracts are as follows:-

1. To explore and develop the petroleum resources in the shortest possible time.

2. To provide the government with a fair share of income from the operations.

3. To ensure that in case of unexpected favorable circumstances the government automatically earns a large share of the benefits.

The future potential, based on analysis of seven proven and two indicated generic hydrocarbon plays in the five basins, i.e. Hukawny, Chindwin, Eastern platform, Central Burma and Irradwaddy Delta/Offshore Basins, comprising the Central Burma Tertiary Trough, yields a mean expectation of about 1,930 MM bbl oil equivalent, comprised of 820 MM bbl oil and 6,660 Bcf gas (42 per cent oil and 58 per cent gas). This means expectation for future discovery lies within a range of a reasonably certain 425 MM bbl oil equivalent and the outside possibility of 2,850 MM bbl oil equivalent or more.

To support the oil companies, the following service companies have set up their office in Yangon. (only some listed here)

Geophysical Services

a) Compagnie Generale de Geophysique
b) Halliburton Geophysical Services
c) GECO Geophysical Company Ltd.
d) Grant Norpac Inc.
e) Seismograph Services Ltd.
f) Carson Services

Some of the companies have equipment in the country and any geophysical work can be undertaken at short notice.

Aviation Services

a) Asia Pacific Helicopters
b) Canadian Helicopter Services Myanmar
c) Columbia Helicopter
d) Hevi-lift
e) Helicopter New Zealand Ltd.
f) Heli-Union
g) Lloyd Helicopter Myanmar Ptd. Ltd.
h) Seoul Air International Ltd.
i) Zimex Aviation

Water Transportation Services

a) New Nissei Corporation
b) Asian Logistic Services
c) Inland Water Transportation

Drilling Services

a) Deutag Friesland Drilling B.V.
b) Parker Drilling Company International Ltd.
c) Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise

Cementing Services

a) Dowell Schlumberger
b) BJ Services International Inc.
c) Halliburton Co.

Mud Engineering (Drilling Fluids Services

a) Baroid Drilling Fluids Co.
b) MI Drilling Fluids Co.
c) Milpark Drilling Fluid

POLITICS

Political Parties and Elected Representatives

On March 11, 1992 the Multi-Party General Election Committee (MPGEC) issued Announcement 12/92 concerning the dismissal of some elected representatives from their parties. The speech was play over the military radio station. Announcement 12/92 states:

This Announcement confirms:

1) The resignation of National Unity Party Central Executive Committee member U Ohn Kyi

2) The expulsion from the National League for Democracy party of the following elected representatives

2.1) U Ohn Naing of Paung De constituency Pegu Division

2.2) U Aye Than of Paung De constituency Pegu Division

3) The resignation of U Wun from the National League for Democracy party, Kamayut constituency, Rangoon.

On the same day, the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC) issued Order 20/92 concerning the abolition of nine more political parties. The order states:

1) Because of Slorc's and MPGEC's past abolition of political parties, only 29 presently remain legal.

2) The MPGEC has reviewed these 29 political parties.

3) It was found that:

2.1) Some parties have not yet submitted a list of all their party members and their branch locations.

2.2) Some parties are not able to submit their ideological policy.

2.3) Some leaders of parties are not abiding by the existing laws.

2.4) Some parties which won seats in the election seem to think that their organization depends on such a victory and they ignore the organizational tasks of their party. In order to establish a stable multiparty system, the MPGEC considers that such parties should not exist.

4) Therefore, Slorc has decided to abolish the following political parties:

4.1) Kaman National League for Democracy

4.2) Democratic Organization for Kayan National Unity (DOKNU)

4.3) Zomi National Congress

4.4) Democracy Party

4.5) Graduates and Old Students' Democratic Association

4.6) United Nationalities League for Democracy

4.7) Maya People's Party (MPP)

4.8) Patriotic Old Comrades League

4.9) Democratic Front for National Reconstruction

As a result of this order, only 20 political parties still remain out of a total of 229 which originally registered to contest in the 1990 elections. Out of the total of 485 representatives elected by the people, now only 374 remain while a total of 111 have either been dismissed, placed in detention, deceased or gone into exile.

Legal Realities

On January 20, 1992, Secretary 1 of Slorc, Major General Khin Nyunt gave a speech to justices and officials of the Supreme Court and the Attorney-General's office. Attending the meeting were also judges and law officers from the States and Divisions. Following are some of the major points Khin Nyunt made.

1) The law only protects those who live according to the law.

2) Slorc is the military government and so there is martial law. (In a previous speech, Khin Nyunt once defined martial law as no law at all.)

3) No one should humiliate others because of ones prejudices.

4) The time has come to accept the correct leadership of the Slorc (the army) that is giving priority to long term interests of the state.

5) It is clear that there should never be a woman leader in Burma.

(Source - Working People's Daily, January 29, 1992)

KNU and Khun Sa

Recently Khun Sa, one of the most famous drug lords of the Shan State in Burma, formed a new group called the Shan State United Patriotic Congress (SSUPC). The group is apparently a coalition of the Shan Nationalities Liberation Organization (SSNLO), Shan State Progress Party (SSPP), Shan United Revolution Army (SURA) and Khun Sa's own Mong Tai Army (MTA).

In early February, a report by an AFP correspondent claimed that Khun Sa had also made a deal with General Bo Mya, leader of the Karen National Union (KNU) which has been fighting against the Burmese military for over 40 years. The report shocked Burma watchers since the KNU has always strictly forbidden use of narcotics or even alcohol in their area.

General Bo Mya's deputy, Saw Than Aung wasted no time in denying the report. Thai intelligence working along the border also admitted that there was no evidence that such an agreement had been made, or that General Bo Mya had even had any recent contact with Khun Sa.

So where did the AFP report come from? The Nation newspaper of March 13, 1992 suggests the following:

"The Karen vice president (Saw Than Aung) said he believed the French report was fabricated by either Khun Sa, State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), or their joint effort in order to tarnish KNU's image."

There is a strong possibility that this is true. Recently Khun Sa and Slorc signed a cease fire giving Khun Sa more freedom in dealing in the opium trade, something he has become very expert at. At the same time, Slorc has faced more and more charges from the international community of making large sums of money off of drug dealing in order to get the money needed to purchase more up-dated military equipment for their growing army. Since the KNU are able to put up very stiff resistance against Slorc's dry season offensive, and since more and more international attention is focusing on their struggle, Slorc is looking for ways to discredit them and try to drive off any potential support the KNU might get from the outside.

Perhaps this is an indication that Slorc is not as confident as they would like to appear, that they can actually take the KNU headquarters of Manerplaw this dry season

NEWS IN BRIEF

Generals in Power

Another general has been appointed the new minister for social welfare and resettlement. According to the Working People's Daily of February 20, Brigadier General Thaung Myint will be responsible for refugees as well as for the military's plan to resettle 500,000 people into satellite towns around the country. Diplomats see this as growing evidence that the junta has no plan to hand power over to the opposition group which won the May 1990 general elections.

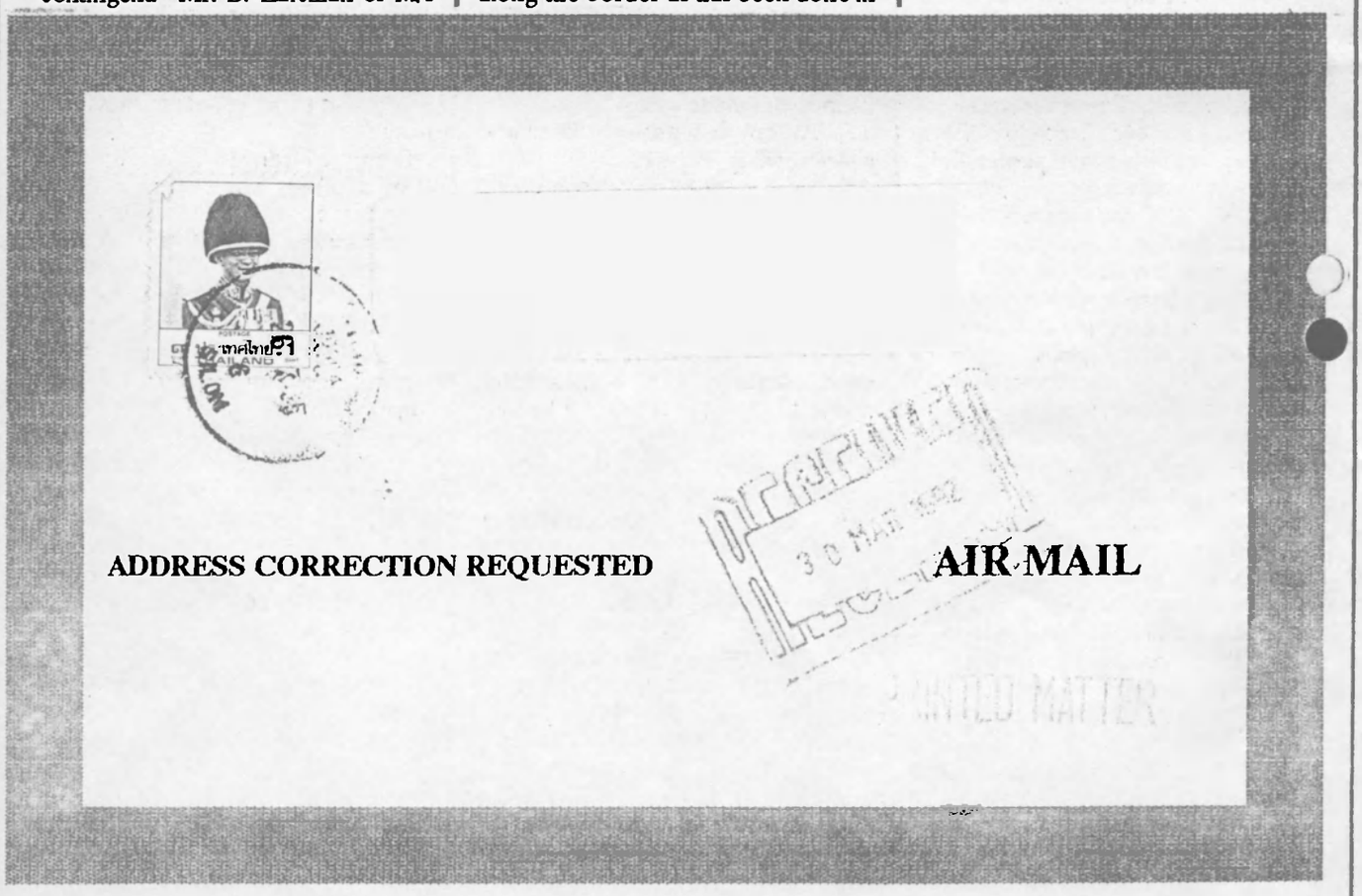
Gems Auction

In late February, Burma held its 29th Gems Emporium. Precious stones worth more than US$22 million, including a US$1.4 million ruby, were put up for competitive bidding. Gem traders from 17 countries attended, with Hong Kong having the biggest contingent. Mr. B. Zalcman of M/s Samourai SA, Switzerland was given a special gift by Minister Vice-Admiral Maung Khin for having attended all 29 emporiums.

ASEAN's Policy Failing

ASEAN's policy of "constructive engagement" (B.U.R.M.A. Vol 1 Number 7) is now being seriously questioned by the Anand Panyarachun government in Thailand. One Thai senior official is quoted as saying, "Frankly speaking, we don't expect any concrete results from the constructive engagement policy in the near future." He further admitted that the Anand administration feels that this policy to influence positive change in Burma is "the only area that we cannot say we (the Anand government) have accomplished anything."

Apparently the Anand government has also been watching closely to make certain Burmese troops do not use Thai territory to attack Karen position along the border as has been done in the past. On March 22 of this year, elections will be held in Thailand, and with the certainty that the military will gain control over the government, the Thai policy towards Burma may not continue in this positive direction.

Singapore and Burma

After purchasing jet aircraft from China, Burma sought help from the Singapore Air Force to prepare its pilots in making the transition to supersonic flight, as well as for primary flight training on Singapore's SF-260W trainers since its own Warriors are frequently used for counter-insurgency operations and are therefore unavailable for flight training missions. (Aerospace Yearbook, 1991)