

B. U. R. M. A.

BURMA RIGHTS MOVEMENT FOR ACTION

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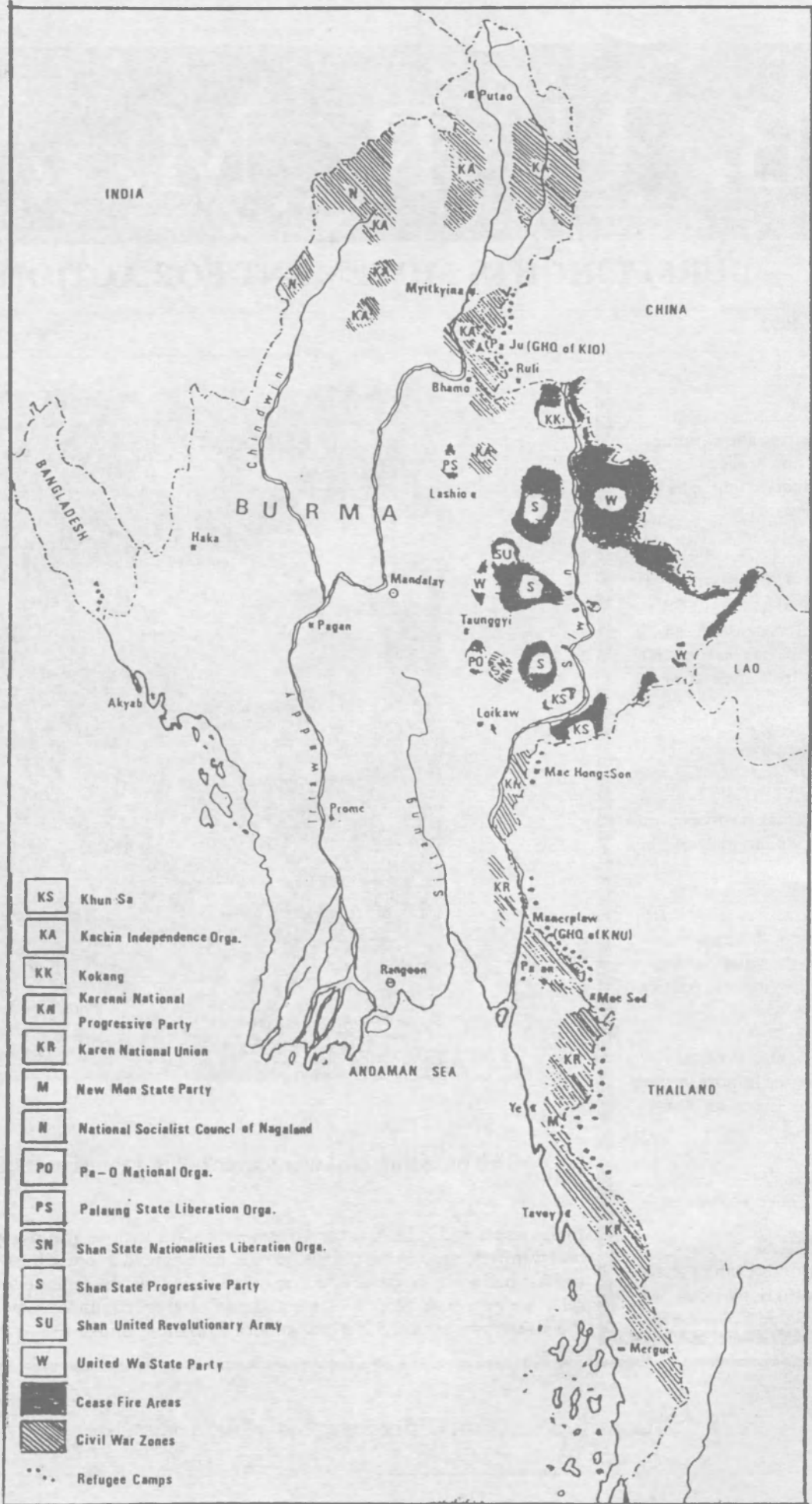


The on-going civil war leaves behind thousands of victims.

In this issue, B.U.R.M.A. takes a closer look at the various groups involved in the civil war in Burma. Some of these groups have agreed to cease fires with Slorc, and this has had a very negative effect on other groups which continue their struggle for self-determination. Slorc's "divide and rule" strategy continues to be a major part of their offensives against the ethnic minorities in the country.

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MAP OF CIVIL WAR IN BURMA



CIVIL WAR

Current Status of Major Armed Groups

ABSDF (All Burma Students' Democratic Front)

The ABSDF was formed on November 5, 1988 to fight against the Rangoon junta for the rights of democracy following the 1988 massacre of the unarmed pro democracy demonstrators in Burma. The Central Committee is the leading political body and it has an estimated 2,000 people in its armed forces. The ABSDF is affiliated with the ethnic minorities and its bases are in minorities areas in the eastern part of Burma.

CPB (Communist Party of Burma)

The CPB was formed on 15 August 1939 and started its armed rebellion against the Central Government on the 2nd April 1948. It collapsed due to internal mutinies of the ethnic Wa and Kokang (ethnic Chinese) armed forces on 16 April 1989. They represent one of Asia's longest communist rebellions.

DAB (Democratic Alliance of Burma)

The DAB is the political umbrella of the ethnic and other political dissident groups of Burma. It was formed following a meeting from 14 to 18 October in 1988 and is composed of 23 member organizations.

Khun Sa (well known as a Drug Lord)

Khun Sa, who is from the Kokang (ethnic Chinese), controls a private army based in the Golden Triangle where Burma, Thailand and Laos meet. Khun Sa and Moh Hein adopted the name "Mong Tai Army" (MTA) for their group in April 1987. Moh Hein is also commander of the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA). The MTA is estimated to have 6,000 armed soldiers. Rangoon has never launched intensive offensives into Khun Sa's areas.

KIO (Kachin Independence Organization)

The KIO was established in 1961 to fight for independence of Kachinland and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) is its military branch which continues the struggle. It is one of the larger ethnic armed groups in Burma today. It has an estimated 8,000 armed soldiers in its forces.

KNPP (Karenni National Progressive Party)

The KNPP was formed to fight for the liberation of Karenni State against Rangoon. Its army is called the Karenni Army.

KNU (Karen National Union)

The KNU was formed on February 5, 1947 to take responsibility for national affairs and later began fighting for more autonomy against Rangoon. The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Karen National Defence Organization (KNDO) are its military branches and are still struggling. They are also one of the stronger ethnic armed groups, with about 12,000 soldiers in their armed forces.

NDF (National Democratic Front)

The NDF was formed on May 10, 1976 as the central coordinating group of the minority organizations. It is composed of about eleven members of the non communist ethnic minority dissidents.

New Mon State Party (NMSP)

The NMSP was formed in July 1958 to fight for more autonomy and their armed branch is the Mon National Army (MNA). It is still struggling against the Burmese military.

NSCN (National Socialist Council of Nagaland)

The NSCN is a breakaway faction from the Naga National Council (NNC) set up to fight for Naga inde-

pendence from India. Since Nagaland is an area inside both India and Burma, the NSCN is responsible for the independence struggle against the Burmese junta. It was formed in 1979.

(PNO) Pa-O National Organization

The PNO was established in 1949 and in the earlier to fight for "feudalism". The Pa-O National Army (PNA) is its military branch and the majority of its members signed a cease fire with Slorc on the 25th of December 1990. However, a small number still continue to struggle against Slorc.

SSNLO (Shan State Nationalities Liberation Organization)

The SSNLO is a pro leftist group and is still struggling as guerrillas in the liberation movement. It has more than a hundred armed forces.

SSPP (Shan State Progressive Party)

The SSPP was formed in 1964 and the Shan State Army (SSA) is its armed branch. The SSPP is now affiliated with Rangoon.

UWSP (United Wa State Party)

The UWSP was a former armed branch of the CPB but mutinied against the CPB on April 16, 1989. Their armed branch is the United Wa State Army (UWSA). The UWSP cooperated with Rangoon following their mutiny against the CPB. Currently they still exist in their own area with their own arms. They have about 8,000 armed men.

Back Ground of the current Slorc Offensive

In earlier times the CPB was the priority target of the Rangoon military regime. Following the collapse of the CPB in 1989, the Kokang and Wa ethnic groups accepted cease fires with Slorc and agreed to cooperate with Slorc under the Border Area Development Program (See details of

this program in BURMA Vol.2 No.2). Several other smaller ethnic groups, such as Pa-O and Shan, also entered this program after agreeing to cease fires. Many observers feel that the Border Area Development Program was the bait used by Slorc to convince these independence armies to accept cease fires so that Slorc could free up its military divisions there for use against more stubborn and determined resistance in the Kachin and Karen States.

Most of the roads built under this Border Area Development Program lead from Burmese army regiment bases directly into the new cease fire areas. There is no doubt that the roads are to support Slorc's military transportation into and out of these areas so that they need fewer troops to guarantee their hold over the areas. The UNDP used about US\$1.3 million to implement the program. (See *The UNDP and Military Offensives* in box)

As soon as Slorc had arranged for the cease fires in these areas, they began transferring their military divisions deployed in these cease fire areas into the Karen and Kachin States which were now obviously their primary targets. During the past dry season, Manerplaw, which is headquarters of the ethnic Karen as well as of allied groups such as DAB and NDF, came under very heavy attacks by Slorc divisions transferred in from the Shan State.

Results of the Offensive

Slorc's dry season offensives (from December to April 1992) against Manerplaw were code named "Operation King Dragon and Operation Dagger". Casualties were tragically high. Slorc poured about 25,000 men from three divisions into this campaign which is the highest use of man power in any campaign during the Burmese military's 43 year-old civil war against the ethnic minorities.

While the combined resistance forces from the DAB lost 358 men, Slorc suffered 570 men dead including 10 officers while 2,414 were wounded including 85 officers. Seventy five men are still listed as unaccounted for by Slorc. It has also been reported that a large number of Slorc soldiers are suffering emotional diseases in the military hospitals, brought on by

severe physical and mental hardships in the jungle campaigns.

Following the clashes, six new refugee camps have developed along the Thai-Burma border. Currently 65,095 refugees are reported living in Thailand. Another 8,798 ethnic Kachin refugees are on the China-Burma border. Reports from Bangladesh say that 268,551 Rohingya refugees are still on the Bangladesh-Burma border and more are still arriving despite an agreement between Burma and Bangladesh for their repatriation back to Burma.

Reports from new refugees arriving along the border also suggest that huge numbers of internal refugees have been created by the Slorc policy of forcibly moving entire villages to military controlled camps. Other internal refugees are created as perhaps tens of thousands of villagers flee Burmese military campaigns in their

areas. The people fear being tortured and raped by the soldiers and being forced to serve as porters and mine sweepers. They seek refuge deep in the jungles where they survive off of the meager amounts of food they can scavenge there. These internal refugees are receiving no assistance of any kind, and rumors indicate that malnutrition and disease is causing the deaths of an extremely high number of these people.

• Sources

Burma's Golden Triangle
Burma Coordinating Group
Burmese Army's Report
Kachinland Information
Kawthoolei of h.Katoh
Mon National University
The Nation

The UNDP and the Military Offensives

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has been carrying out a variety of projects in Burma under a five year plan initiated in 1991. These programs include the Border Area Development Project, and Drug Eradication Project among others. In a recent UNDP meeting with donor nations, the UNDP representatives of Burma presented a US\$93 million budget for their next five year plan. Apparently their project plans included large "development" projects which were probably initiated by the military junta rather than based on the needs of the urban and rural poor of the country. Donor countries, including the United States, reacted strongly against the UNDP work in Burma citing increasing international criticism and Slorc's use of the UNDP work to legitimize their power in the country as reasons to reconsider the value of these development efforts in Burma. Consequently the UNDP work in Burma has been drastically reduced. This will be a strong blow to Slorc which depends on these

United Nations programs to help give them credibility in the international community. However, this news will be very positively received by the democratic movement in Burma which has, for years, been calling for the UNDP and other development agencies to withdraw from Burma until a truly democratic and representative government is established. Other Non Government Organizations (NGOs) contemplating opening offices and operations in Burma will now certainly look more cautiously at the political ramifications of entering Burma to work at this particular time. Under the present repressive regime, it is impossible for NGO involvement or foreign investments to be carried out in Burma without being a part of the present political struggle shaking the entire country. UNDP's embarrassing experience of having their hands slapped should alert other NGOs to the dangers of getting involved in Burma at a time when it is probably impossible for such involvements not to be political in nature.

ENVIRONMENT

The Environment and Dirty Politics

The Pathumthani Co., one of the 37 Thai logging companies doing business with SLORC has not only been raping Burma's forests for the past three years but also appears to be involved in dirty politics with the Burmese military regime. Khun Sia Huk is owner of the company which is linked closely with high ranking Thai officials including ex-General Chavalit who was the first foreigner to set up economic and political relationships with the SLORC in December 1988 shortly after thousands of unarmed pro-democracy demonstrators were crushed down by the SLORC.

The Pathumthani Co. signed a two year contract with SLORC for two logging concessions in Kya Inn township and Win Yaw township of the Karen State on July 10, 1989. (For details, see map of foreign investments in Burma produced by B.U.R.M.A.) Extraction work was started on 1st September of that year. Later the contract was extended for an unknown number of years. The total area of the contracted concession is estimated to be 3,500 sq. miles. An very large number

of ethnic Karen and Mon live in this area and are directly affect by the company's deforestation work. The affected Karen and Mon forest area flows across the Thai/Burma border into a forest reserve in Thailand called Anu Ya Permit where Thai law forbids any logging of any kind.

"We used to often see numerous elephants as well as other wild life which we could hunt for our meals," a Karen villager in the area recently said. "Now, after only a few years of logging by this company we find it very difficult to find elephants and it is even becoming very difficult for us to hunt other smaller wild animals such as antelope and guars." Rhinoceros, which once roamed the area now seem to have absolutely disappeared. The Karen villager suggested that perhaps some of the wild animals had migrated to the Thai forest reserve where it is quieter and safer because logging is prohibited there.

Currently most of the mountain ranges are without trees and the weather is becoming hotter. Soil erosion is beginning to appear in many places.

The highest rate of wood extraction by Pathumthani was in 1988 when at least 70,000 tons of trees were cut and

carried out. From early 1992 until now, 20,000 tons of logs have been extracted. In the monsoon season (from middle of May to October), extraction work ceases because of heavy rain and extremely difficult transportation. According to the earlier contract, Pathumthani had to pay US\$180 per ton to the SLORC but later the rate was bargained down to US\$140 per ton.

Unofficially Pathumthani pays more for the wood by building free roads in the area for the Burmese Army to launch military operations against the ethnic Karen and Mon. Additionally, Pathumthani supplies canned rations for the Burmese Army in Three Pagoda Pass and extra bribe money has been given to Regional Tactical Commander Lt. Col. Sit Maung of the SLORC's Army.

Last year ethnic Mon armed dissidents blew up two trucks belonging to Pathumthani because the company refused to pay the standard tax to them and continued to use a restricted route through their area which was being used by the Burmese army in the Burmese army's anti-Mon campaign. Subsequently, Thai officials invited three top Mon leaders to Thailand to solve the conflict. After the arrival of the three mon leaders in Thailand, they were arrested and charged as illegal immigrants. After more than three months they were finally released.

● Source
Mhan Patriot (Ethnic Karen)



Abbreviations of sources used in this issue:

WPD - Working People's Daily, Burma
TN - The Nation, Thailand
IDR - Industrial Development Research
VOM - Voice of Myanmar, Burma military radio station



Logging road build by the Pathumthani Company in Karen State

HUMAN RIGHTS

Political Prisoners used as Porters

In early 1990, more than 500 prisoners from the Mandalay prison were taken to Kachin State by the Burmese Army to be used as porters. The prisoners were told that they were being transferred to the Myitkyina police station, and were totally unaware that they were to be used as forced laborers. Instead of stopping at the Myitkyina police station, they were taken for front line duty with the Burmese Army.

A total of 100 prisoners were sent to the Burmese Army garrison in the Chibwe Lawhkawng area of Kachin State. Another 50 prisoners were taken to N'Jang Yang, 150 to Mogaung and 200 to Sadon. According to some prisoners who managed to escape, two prisoners died of dysentery and jaundice while being transported to these sites as the Burmese Army did not have any medicines to spare for the prisoners.

The prisoners who escaped also reported that of the 200 prisoners in their group, over 100 were political prisoners who had been arrested for their participation in the pro-democracy uprising in 1988 and 1989.

None of these political prisoners were well known leaders of the uprising, nor are their names known to the international community. It is feared that a large number of political prisoners such as these 100, may now be serving the Burmese Army on the front lines as forced porters and mine sweepers.

• Source:

Kachin Independence Organization Report

Sex Slavery

On June 10, 1992, Crime Suppression Division police freed 36 women from a brothel in Ranong, a Thai city which is immediately opposite the Burmese town of Victoria Point, southern-most tip of Burma. Thirty three of the women freed were from Burma and said they had been lured into Thailand by Thais who promised them jobs to earn money for their families. Instead they were taken to a brothel in Ranong where they were forced to have sex with customers, and were savagely beaten if they refused. The brothel was surrounded by barbed wire and live electrical wires. The only exit to the brothel was watched by a guard.

One of the Burmese women who was found nursing her newly born child, said she had been working in the brothel for two years and had never received any pay. Three days after giving birth to her baby, she was forced to go back serving customers.

According to Pol Col Bancha of the Thai Crime Suppression Division, police involved in the raid were stunned by the condition of some of the girls. Three of the women showed the police wounds over their arms, legs and backs which had been inflicted by pimps in the brothel when the women attempted to escape. The women said they were stripped naked and beaten with steel coat-hangers until they fainted.

Pol Col Bancha said of the brothel owners, "They are very cruel people. They treat the women more like animals than human beings."

• Source:

Bangkok Post, 11/6/92

Economics and Oppression

Myanmar-Singapore International operates a department store in downtown Rangoon. Although the department store stocks many luxury goods, few people can afford to buy them. It is reported that every day the store is filled with people looking at the goods for sale. The local people jokingly refer to the department store as an "Exhibition Hall" as they can only look, but can not afford to buy.

The department store provides each staff member with one bottle of juice at lunch time each day. One of the sales representatives in the store saved her bottles of juice instead of drinking them. At the end of the week she sold them in the market for 35 kyats each in order to gain a little extra money to help her children. In this way she could earn an extra 210 kyats (approximately US\$3) each week.

When the management of Myanmar-Singapore International found the staff person selling her juice in the market, she was immediately dismissed from work.

• Source:

Visitor from Burma



Houses in Kachin State burned by the Burmese army.

POLITICS

Peace Possibilities in Burma

The past few months have seen some significant changes in Burma. Following the resignation of General Saw Maung from leadership of the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (Slorc), a small number of political prisoners have been released, family visits have been allowed for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Slorc has announced that a national convention will be held to lay the ground work for a new constitution, and the offensive against Mannerplaw has eased up. Yet calls by Slorc for the armed ethnic groups to lay down their arms and join the regime to bring about national reunification have not been hailed as a great step forward by the ethnic minority groups. Their experiences during the past 40 years under the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) have given them cause to be suspicious of any moves by Slorc (the successor of the BSPP).

The present 1992 peace talks called for by the Burmese military are a repeat of a similar call already made by the ethnic minorities and opposition groups in 1990 through the office of Thai general Chavalit who agreed to act as mediator. However, the military junta simply rejected those peace talks request.

At almost the same time, though, the military was secretly dealing with several of the smaller armed ethnic groups along the China-Burma border and managed to get cease fires with them by yielding to three demands which these minority groups made. The demands were:

- 1) recognition by Slorc that they are a lawful organization
- 2) the right to keep their arms and armies without interference from Slorc
- 3) control over their own territories.

Apart from these concessions, the Slorc also allowed the groups to be involved in the drug trade.

The armed groups involved in these cease fires include the ex Communist Party of Burma commander like Phon Kyar Shin (Kokang), Phon Ni Phu, Kyauk Ni Hlaing (Wa), and Kyauk Khun Hsar. All of these men

are now deeply involved in opium trade within their own areas.

Most of these groups who have agreed to cease fires with Slorc are no longer politically active. Even if a democratic government would take over Burma, there will be difficulties dealing with these groups. Some observers speculate that Slorc is giving them these concessions as a preparation for future defence bases. In case a new democratic government is finally established. Slorc may need these areas and these groups to serve as their new strongholds. At present the military is using these areas to bring in the US\$1.5 billion worth of arms and ammunition that they purchased from China to attack the Kachin, Karen and other armed democratic forces.

In 1990, the military junta initiated secret talks with a small group that was politically strong. It was lead by the brother of one of the most well known Burmese women writer - Daw Khin Myo Chit. When talks with Yebaw Lwin, also known as Bo Thein Aung, finally came about, the Slorc offered him the same concessions as previously given to the Wa and Kokang groups along the China-Burma border. Yebaw Lwin was a former Central Committee member of the Communist Party of Burma. The military junta invited the 47 members of Lwin's "Communist Party of Myanmar" (CPM) to a military controlled area for peace negotiations.

When the delegation arrived in the military controlled area, all were arrested and sent to Mandalay prison. Most are still there and suffering from torture. It has been reported that some have died while in captivity.

From these experiences, the ethnic minorities and the opposition should look at the failure of peaceful negotiations critically. The main problem in the past has been the failure to recognize the fact that a serious imbalance between the government and the opposition groups exists. The military regime has always been able to maintain its "top dog" position in both the military and political fields. The opposition groups, in contrast, have all along been in an inferior position. Thus it is not surprising that all past

negotiations have broken down. Even an agreement with a minor Karen faction in 1963 was not long lasting when many of its members again went underground shortly after the agreement was made. They felt that the Burmese military was not being sincere with them and that they were not to be given equal status in the country as they expected.

From these and many other experiences, it can clearly be seen that it is impossible to reach a lasting solution to the civil war in Burma if the ethnic minorities must negotiate from a position of "underdog".

However, since the nation-wide uprising in 1988, the situation for the opposition movement in Burma has changed considerably. A strong and wide based Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) has been formed which helps link together many of the minority groups and other democratic forces of the country. Presently the DAB is working hard on the draft of a new constitution which they want to present to the national convention if it is actually held. This constitution will deal with the issues facing the minority groups of Burma, and will outline a federal state system which the ethnic minorities feel comfortable with.

It is doubtful that Slorc will be willing to seriously look at the constitution, but they must realize that the only way to end the civil war and bring about national reconciliation is to deal with the issues which started the civil war more than 40 years ago. At the same time, if DAB and all the opposition groups can enter a national convention with their own agenda and constitution, they will no longer hold the position of "underdog", and the potential for a lasting peace will be greatly increased.

(excerpts from a soon to be published paper called *Burma: Peace Talk*)



NEWS IN BRIEF

China's Assistance

The Chinese government will assist in the construction of facilities for the new international airport in Rangoon which is to replace the antediluvian one which now welcomes travelers into the country. The plans also call for the construction of an airport hotel in Rangoon. This announcement came as a bit of a surprise since in February of 1990, the Japanese Government agreed to provide US\$600 million for the airport construction. It is speculated that perhaps Japan has suspended its financial assistance and thus China has taken over responsibility for the project. China also held discussions with Slorc about the possibility of extending their air service to Rangoon.

(VOM/TN; 28/5/92).

World Bank Loan

Following discussions between Slorc and the Executive Director of the World Bank, Mr. Aris Othman on May 14 of this year, Slorc has received a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) of the World Bank in various currencies for the Wood Industries (2) project (production of plywood, wooden furniture etc.). The project was started with the financial assistance of the World Bank in 1984/85 and was supposed to be finished in 1988/89. However, the World Bank is still carrying on with the project despite delays in its completion.

(WPD; 15/5/92 & 1/6/92)

(IDR; 16/12/87)

IMF & World Bank

Slorc's Brig-Gen Abel, Minister of Trade, affirmed on the 30th of May that the Rice Miller's Association of Burma will soon cooperate with international organizations such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in order to develop their rice milling factories.

(WPD; 31/5/92)

Colombo Plan

On May 27, Slorc held their fourth meeting to prepare for the Colombo Plan Consultative Committee Meeting which will be held from 26 November to 2 December 1992 in Rangoon. Member countries of the Colombo Plan will attend the meeting.

(WPD; 27/5/92)



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

AIR MAIL