

B. U. R. M. A.

BURMA RIGHTS MOVEMENT FOR ACTION

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The Moei River which serves as part of the Thai/Burma boundary also symbolizes the close economic links between the two countries.

The United Nations General Assembly recently passed a resolution soundly condemning the military junta in Burma. Opposition groups all over Burma welcomed this UN action. Yet more can be done. Refugees and internally displaced persons are in desperate need of UNHCR attention, and an arms embargo by the Security Council is needed to force the military to end its repressive military campaigns against the ethnic nationalities. This issue of B.U.R.M.A. explores some of these problems.

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Civil War

Unlike the previous year, Burma's eastern jungle along the Thai-Burma border was fairly quiet during December except for spotted exchanges of fire. However Slorc is still carrying out a "massive relocation program" which is forcing village after village in guerrillas zones to move into Slorc-controlled camps.

Villagers who are afraid to live in

Slorc also reluctantly called for dissident groups in the jungle to participate in the national convention, but the preconditions were that first the groups must totally abandon their armed struggles.

these camps are hiding in dense jungles and this is creating an drastic increase in the number of internal refugees. Inmates in the camps are occasionally used as conscripted porters by the Burmese army. This is causing an increase in the number of refugees in camps on Thai soil as well.

Following the September and November offensives, Slorc pulled out some of its troops from supplementary positions in order to tighten security in Rangoon for the national convention. The convention will start on the 7th of January 1993 under the Slorc's political supervision but the deadline to complete the writing of a new constitution is indefinite.

Nonetheless, Slorc still maintains troops at alternative and primary positions which face strongholds of Karen guerrillas including Manerplaw which is the headquarters of the Karen National Union and allied dissident groups. About 15,000 Slorc troops still are based in these primary positions.

Perhaps, Slorc's temporary halt in their offensive is also to rebuild their troops after suffering highly casualties during the past year. About 900 soldiers died and another were 1,100 wounded during the previous offensives. Tactically, the object of the operations in previous offensives was to cut all the guerrilla's supply routes to the frontier areas.

Slorc also reluctantly called for dissident groups in the jungle to par-

ticipate in the national convention, but the preconditions were that first the groups must totally abandon their armed struggles. It was absolutely impossible for the armed dissidents to lay down their arms while the Slorc offensives continued. At the same time, Slorc sent a mission to the UN General Assembly led by foreign minister Ohn Gyaw who announced that

Slorc had halted their offensive in Karen state for the sake of national reconciliation.

This contradiction was publicized by the Slorc themselves in an announcement of casualties in the Karen State military campaigns which was broadcast over the State-owned radio on the 11th of November. The report said that Slorc troops suffered 168 dead and 262 wounded. The Karen and the other guerrillas lost a total of 526 from April to the 6th of November. The Karen National Union (KNU) and Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) denied Slorc's casualty reports. Saw Bo Mya, President of the KNU claimed that over 500 Slorc troops were killed and 400 were wounded while the KNU lost about 30 combatants in the Karen State. About 60 Karen civilians were killed in the clashes and 550 crossed the Thai-Burma border to become refugees in refugee camps in Thailand. The KIO stated that in Kachin State, 300 Slorc troops were killed and 700 were wounded. Moreover, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) captured 30 Slorc troops alive.

The expectation in the new year is that Slorc will intensify their offensive against four major strongholds in Karen State following the national convention. This will happen after Slorc has reinforced their troops in these areas from troops in the urban areas which are providing security for the convention. The number of

civilians which will come under danger will increase tremendously.

To save human lives in Burma, the United Nation Security Council should immediately pass a resolution on an arms embargo against the Burmese military. At the same time, the UNHCR should take serious action in support of the Burmese internal refugees as they are doing in Yugoslavia.

International economic sanctions could weaken Slorc's foreign exchange position, and this is essential to prevent them from purchasing more military hardware from international markets.

• Source;

Karen Refugee Committee

Karen National Union

The Nation

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS ISSUE

• TN = THE NATION

(THAILAND)

• BP = BANGKOK POST

(THAILAND)

• FEER = FAR EASTERN

ECONOMIC REVIEW

POLITICS

On December 2, 1992, the United Nations General Assembly passed, with consensus, a resolution on the situation in Burma. This was the most strongly worded statement yet to come from the United Nations, and expresses the repulsion the world continues to feel about the gross violation of human rights which persist in Burma.

In the introduction of the resolution, Ms. Ulla Strom of Sweden said, "There is a need for a strong message to the authorities in Myanmar (Burma) that the international community does not tolerate continued violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The result of the elections held in 1990 should be respected without further delay."

Among other things, the resolution calls on the military junta to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to carry out its humanitarian tasks, an action which would allow the ICRC to provide much needed assistance to the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced persons throughout the country.

U Kyaw Min, Alternate Chairman of the Delegation of the Union of Myanmar was quick to respond, calling the overall rationale of the draft resolution fallacious.

"The most glaring and regrettable manifestation of this negativism is the absence of any mention in the draft of the most significant national undertaking which the State Law and Order Restoration Council has pledged to carry out. I refer of course to the National Convention which will be convened on 9 January 1993."

The failure of the UN draft resolution to mention the "national convention" may have come from their suspicion that the convention can not bring about any of the positive changes in the country.

Indeed, the "national convention" did begin on January 9 as advertised. Invited to the convention were 702 delegates.

Foreign journalists invited by Slorc to observe the proceedings said the atmosphere seemed tense with few delegates talking together. There

were also reports that students in the urban center were secretly passing out leaflets and putting up banners protesting the convention. Also to express opposition to the convention, women wore thanahka paste on their faces and men wore their shirt tails outside their trousers or longies.

During the first two days of the convention there were only a few opening speeches by Slorc officials. Then, abruptly, on the second day Slorc officials announced that the convention was being postponed for about three weeks and all the delegates were sent home. The reason given by Slorc was that the delegates needed time to study the constitutions from 150 different countries which were handed out at that point.

Most Burma-watchers suspect that the real reason for the postponement was Slorc's fear they might not be able to keep control over the convention. There were rumors that some delegates had prepared strong statements to present which would have raised questions about Slorc's legitimacy, and might have called for an end to military interference in the running of the State.

In opening statements, the official convener of the convention, Maj. Gen. Myo Nyunt, had stressed that "it is important for suggestions and proposals not to deviate from the six objectives". One of those six objectives laid down by the Slorc is for "the military to be able to participate in the national political leadership role of the future state." Sixteen of the 25 pages comprising the opening address were devoted to hammering home the necessity of the military's role in running the country.

The UN General Assembly resolution of December 2 indicates that Slorc can not easily dupe the world. Democracy is created by people who have a deep respect for each other and for the participation of all in decision making. A military dictatorship can hardly create a democratic climate by forcing people, at the point of a gun, to accept them or vote for their party. The United Nations General Assembly and the UN Commission on Human

Rights have been consistent in condemning Slorc and their appalling human rights records. Their statements and resolutions have been invaluable in raising more international awareness about the plight of the people of Burma who have had to live under military dictatorship for so long. Yet statements and resolutions are not enough. Despite these calls for change by this vast international body, Slorc's military hold over the country continues almost unabated.

It is time for the United Nations Security Council to become involved. The flow of refugees from Burma to neighboring countries is a threat to international security as it raises the specter of war spilling over into Bangladesh, Thailand and possibly India. The continued attempts by Slorc to eradicate some of the ethnic minorities is a gross violation of international human rights standards. The possibility of Burmese military involvement, either directly or indirectly, in the flow of raw opium and refined heroin from Burma to the international community affects all of us in some way. Finally, the fact that Slorc sits in the UN General Assembly despite having lost the elections in 1990 and only the "right of the gun" keeps them in power is a direct "slap in the face" of any respectable concept of democracy.

The United Nations Security Council must be urged to take action. They can discuss several possibilities: 1) Removing Slorc from the UN seat either permanently or temporarily, 2) Placing a total arms embargo against Slorc and holding all member countries to this embargo, 3) Placing economic sanctions against Slorc until their release all political prisoners, turn power over to the elected government, and totally withdraw their troops from ethnic areas so that national reconciliation can begin.

• Sources:

"Burma (Myanmar) at the United Nations General Assembly 1992" compiled by Burma Peace Foundation

"Rangoon" a Burma Update by SR FRG



ENVIRONMENT

When ancient travelers passed this way, they complained they could not see the sky for days due to the dense forest canopy above - today you cannot hide from the sun. Between the river and the border there is no real forest left... the animals have vanished and everywhere the creeks and streams are drying up". (TN, 4/4/92)) These dire words of ecological loss and degradation come from Pado Thaw Thi, a Karen conservationist who is struggling to preserve the ancestral forest lands within Burma's southern-most province, the Tenasserim Division, which is home to Asia's largest remaining forests. This mountainous jungle region is site to much of Burma's on-going civil war between the Slorc government and ethnic resistance groups like the Karen, Karenni, and Mon, who have lived in harmony with the jungle for hundreds of years. It is also the site of intensive Thai logging operations, who's rapacious extraction of the valuable teak and hardwoods of Burma's abundant forest wealth is causing widespread deforestation and environmental havoc. Sadly, the cultural value, respect, and status given trees in Burma has dropped considerably since the ancient Burmese monarch, King Bodawpaya, protectively declared teak the "Royal Tree" of the nation in 1752. In 1948, 500,000 of Burma's total area of 696,000 sq. km was covered by lush jungle forests. Today, Burma's total forest cover amounts to only 200,000 sq. km. Burma's rapid rate of loss, estimated at 8000 sq. km per year, ranks third on the global deforestation "Top Ten", finishing behind only the environmental holocausts raging inside the Amazonian jungles of Brazil and the rain forests of Indonesia. (13B, 041) This figure represents an incredible 700% increase from the FAO's 1981 calculation of only 1000 sq. km lost per year. In the Irrawaddy delta, the Irrawaddy and Sittang river valleys, and most coastal areas of Burma, the forests have already been eliminated. In the Chin, Arakan, and Pegu hill ranges nothing remains but bamboo-dominated, mono-culture grasslands. And now Thai logging, which has es-

calated astronomically since the Burmese and Thai regimes signed commercial contracts in 1988, is threatening to destroy the final haven for Burma's jungles - the southern Tenasserim Range, which runs south along Burma's eastern border with Thailand. Thai logging concessions have already devastated over half of the forest land in Tenasserim's central Mergui-Tavoy district alone. (PERD) It is this trend towards ecological disaster which led "green" activist Pado Thaw Thi to lobby Karen rebel leaders at Manerplaw to establish Burma's first wildlife preserve, within the Tenasserim Range. This unofficial sanctuary, located inside the Karen insurgents' "liberated zone", consists of 164 sq km of safe haven for many of Burma's most endangered species, including bears, rhinoceroses, tigers, tapirs, leopards, and mountain goats. It also preserves a natural "research bank" of plant species which may be highly useful in the development of new medicines, disease-resistant agricultural varieties, and a consistent, communal income from sustainable harvesting of the jungle's wealth of produce. (Burmese biologists estimate that over 7000 plant, 300 mammal, 360 reptile, and 1000 bird species thrive inside Burma's teeming jungles-WPD) Finally, the jungle serves as a life source for many traditional village communities, providing natural fuel for cooking and warmth, materials for shelter construction, essential components of their daily diet, comforting shade, and a stable supply of clean water.

The logging onslaught in Burma began in earnest in 1988. The major political upheaval which erupted inside Burma at this time, combined with a concurrent Thai governmental ban on its own domestic logging, set the stage for a series of events which now threaten the long-term survival of Burma's jungle ecosystems and forest-dwelling communities. The Thai decision to ban all logging within Thailand itself was necessitated by several decades of voracious operations, which looted the country's forest reserves, and left little left behind to harvest by the late 1980's. One en-

vironmental report estimates that virtually 100% of Thailand's forests will be eliminated by the turn of the century. (13B/041) One severe consequence of this self-destructive deforestation has been the extreme damage done to Thailand's watersheds, which has in turn generated a critical water shortage in the country. As a result of this man-made "drought", Thai farmers will not be permitted to plant their traditional 2nd rice crop this year. Ironically, Thailand is now hoping to dam several of the major Burmese rivers along its border to make up for its increasing shortfalls in both water and electricity.

Following the 1988 ban on domestic logging, Thai firms began looking more intently outside the country for new forests to exploit. The simultaneous political crisis which exploded that year in its next-door neighbor Burma, played right into Thai hands. After the Slorc regime had crushed Burma's student-led, pro-democracy movement, it found itself presiding over a nation spiralling downward in a rapid free-fall towards economic disintegration. Foreign exchange reserves stood at a astonishingly paltry US\$ 12 million. At the same time, foreign debt has risen to a hefty US\$ 5 billion. (FEER) Slorc desperately needed a quick shot of foreign cash to prevent the nation's immediate collapse into international bankruptcy. It's only remaining option was to open up the country to foreign exploitation, and initiate a whole-sale sell-off of Burma's wealth of natural resources, at any price available. And Thailand was ready and waiting to lead the international exploitation race for "fast bucks". A delegation led by, then Thai Army Chief, Chavalit, travelled to Rangoon within months of the bloody Slorc crackdown in August 1988, and signed the first contracts to extract Burma's most lucrative natural resource - its teak forests. (TN) In 1988-89 alone, 700,000 cu.m. of teak, and over 1,000,000 cu.m. of other hardwoods, were removed from Burma's jungles. (UNDP) Since Burma is essentially the only remaining teak exporter worldwide, the harvest generated high profit earnings. A

cubic ton of top-quality teak fetched prices as high as \$8700 on the international market. (UNDP) Total export earnings for the first year alone were estimated at \$200 million, a bonanza for the cash-strapped Slorc junta. Beyond direct logging, joint ventures were also established between the Myanmar (Burma) Timber Enterprise (MTE), and companies from Hong Kong, Singapore, Japan, S.Korea, and Thailand in the lumber-related industries of furniture, laminated flooring, hardwood veneer, plywood, rattan, wood strips, chop sticks, etc.. Many of these luxury products ended up on up-scale markets in the US, Europe, and Japan. (UNDP)

One of the most surprising aspects of the rapid exploitation of Burma's forests has been the role of the UNDP in facilitating the unsustainable process. UNDP involvement in 5 Burmese forestry and logging projects in 1989 alone amounted to \$10 million, with at least 5 more projects planned for the future (UNDP). Michael Gautier, chief of the UNDP office in Rangoon, claimed that despite the three-fold jump in teak exports that year, it was the slash and burn agriculture of local villagers, not Thai chain saws, that was causing the evident widespread environmental destruction occurring in the jungle. (TN) If the original, enormous cut rate weren't devastating enough, Slorc's Minister for Forestry estimated that Burma had the potential to increase its log exports to over 8 million cu.m per year, an astronomical six-fold leap from previous domestic cutting rates. (PERD)

Logging operations also generate numerous social and political consequences beyond the obvious environmental disruption that takes place. For example, many of the logging roads built by Thai firms, or the UNDP, serve a dual purpose of providing strategic access into isolated ethnic insurgent territory for Burmese Army vehicles. The counter-insurgency campaigns of Slorc troops in Burma's jungle areas are notorious internationally for their gross violation of human rights, characterized by burned and looted villages, relocation of whole communities into concentration camps, slave labor, rape, torture,

execution, extortion, intentional deprivation, and genocidal "ethnic cleansing". According to a report made by the Philippine Environmental Research Division, "military operations and displacement of people are inseparable from the arrangements made for Thai logging companies to operate in the area of the border. The social consequences of these activities for the Karen, Karenni, and Mon peoples will be the destruction of their basis for sustainable community life and of their culture". (PERD) Over 70,000 refugees from among the ethnic nationalities living along these border areas have already fled into Thailand, while tens of thousands of others have been internally displaced by Slorc's forced relocations, or have fled deeper into the jungle in fear, leaving behind their home communities and natural sources of food, shelter, and livelihood. Furthermore, the disorienting cultural and social uprooting inflicted upon traditional village communities by the invasion of both logging companies and the Burmese Army is incalculable, and may be causing irreparable damage to a unique way of life, and several distinctive ethnic heritages. The PERD report goes on to point out that the traditional logging practices carried out by the Karen for generations have "paid much attention to maintaining the forest and keeping a stable environment". (PERD)

The attitude of Thai business-people and the Thai government (often one in the same, as many high-level government officials are heavily invested in logging firms) continues to be one of promoting unlimited (and thus unsustainable), neo-colonial exploitation of its poorer neighbors' resources. As Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai has asserted, "there is no limit in our foreign relations policy in regard to trading volumes of logs. We can buy and sell as much as we want. We have an open policy and businessman can do what they want". (TN, 26/10/92) Another attitude, expressed by the owner of one of Thailand's 46 logging concessions in Burma, highlights the fact that if operations in Burma are not retained, Burmese stockpiles in Thailand would run out by 1996, and, as he says, "by that time, Thailand will be in short supply of wood to export to

overseas markets". (TN 29/10/92) In a highly-publicized parallel development, Thailand's logging operations in Cambodia, in conjunction with the notorious Khmer Rouge, have recently come under intense international criticism, as the UN Cambodian peace-keeping forces have called upon Thailand to cut off their sustaining flow of trade in logs with the legendary human-rights abusing group. Ironically, it is the Slorc army that has assumed the mantle of the greatest human-rights violator in the region from the Khmer Rouge, yet Thailand's trade with Burma continues with little international attention or condemnation.

Many Burmese dissidents have reached the same conclusion expressed by a gathering of concerned people at a recent environmental conference in Amsterdam, which declared that, "the resources of Burma are being squandered and future chances of national development and prosperity are being sacrificed for the short-term political and economic ends of the local military and foreign commercial interests." (Towards a Democratic and Sustainable Burma Conference declaration, May 30, 1992) Many of the long-suffering Burmese people would also resonate with the words of the Karen conservationist, Pado Thaw Thi, whose comments opened the article - "The only thing that can save Burma, the people and the environment, is for the military to be replaced by the elected government and federal democracy introduced that will stop the war - and then my work begins". (TN, 4/4/92)

- Sources - 1) The Philippines Environmental Research Division's "Report on Forestry Activities in Burma", 1990, 2) "Towards a Democratic and Sustainable Burma" Conference Report, May 30, 1992, 3) UNDP/FAO "Agricultural Sector Review Mission" in Burma, 1989, 4) The Nation (various articles), 5) "Tropical Deforestation Rates: Present Status in Select Countries", 1989 (chart), 6) FEER, Bertil Lintner, 8/8/91, 7) Working People's Daily.



HUMAN RIGHTS

Displacement of Karen Villages

We left our homes 17 days ago and walked all the way here (refugee camp) because the Slorc ordered us to move into a camp. They sent a letter to our village headman on December 8 and it said everybody had to leave our village and move to their camp by the last day of December or we would be shot dead along with all of our animals. The headman kept the letter and he didn't come with us, but I saw the letter myself, and it said "move or you will be shot" - I'm sure of it!

At first they said we had to go to Tee Pa Doh Hta, but when people started arriving there the Slorc ordered them to move on another mile to Kya Thaun Zeit, where the army has their strategic headquarters. At Kya Thaun Zeit the soldiers had already forced all the villagers in the area to bring bamboo and build a big fence, and the families from Tee Pa Doh Hta were forced to build their new huts inside that fence.

We didn't want to go there because we knew it would be very hard for us at Kya Thaun Zeit. The Slorc would always make us work for them, they would always interrogate us, and we know they'll always use the people in the camp as porters. The soldiers have already made it like a prison camp. They don't provide anything for the villagers, and they guard the fence to keep the people in.

At Kya Thaun Zeit there is a river for water, but I know two-thirds of the villagers don't have enough food to survive. This is because all last year the Slorc was always making us work for them and go as porters, so we couldn't tend our crops, and the weather was also bad for growing. So our harvest was not good, and the army also took much of our food. They often came to our village just to take all the rice they wanted, and to kill our livestock for meat.

Now that everyone has been forced into the camp, I'm sure many of the villagers will starve. The army will never give them any food. Even now, the soldiers in the camp are eating the

villagers' supply of food as if it were their own."

This report from a 42-year-old Karen man from Belin Township is one of many thousands of stories which can be heard by villagers now being forced to move from their villages to concentration camp-like areas under military control. Some of these villagers are escaping and fleeing to refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border. They say they expect many thousands more to follow as the people fear living under the guns of the military. A recent report from Manerplaw suggests that the total number of displaced persons could well number in the tens of thousands, and if they all come to the border it may be impossible to provide them all with housing, food and medical care. A terrible human tragedy is in the making.

Numbers are hard to come by yet, but several reliable reports give a hint of what is happening. Since December 2, a total of 43 villages were forcibly moved by the Slorc in Belin and Pa'an Townships, Thaton District in the Karen State. In these two Townships alone, the number of displaced persons is approximately 10,435. Refugees who managed to flee to the border reported that vast areas of land they walked through were abandoned already.

The Burmese military appears to be adopting a "scorched earth" policy in their attempt to cut the village people off from any contact with the "ethnic insurgents". It suggests that their plan to eradicate the Karen continues despite statements to the contrary.

On October 5, just three days after the mass relocations of people in Thaton District began, U Ohn Gyaw, Burmese Minister of Foreign Affairs made a statement to the UN General Assembly in which he said that the military had "undertaken various measures designed to create an atmosphere and conditions conducive for the establishment of a democratic system in Myanmar."

One of these measures was:

-The suspension of all offensive operations in Kayin (Karen) State and other parts of the country to consolidate national solidarity and unity."

The United Nations has been given a responsibility to help bring the world closer to peace and stability. This task can not be taken lightly. To hesitate in carrying out this task with conviction and vision leads to deplorable human suffering as can be seen today in Somalia and Cambodia. If the international community, through the United Nations, can take effective action on Burma today, perhaps the people of Burma need not suffer as the people of Somalia and Cambodia do. Should they fail to act now, it will be the people of Burma who will suffer, and the world which will have to pay the bill to help some of them survive.

Translation of Slorc order sent to villages in Papun Township

Letter No. 2-3/Village SLORC, Ka Ma

Date: December 9th 1992

Subject: Removing All Villages from this Area

I have been informed by letter regarding the above subject that all under-mentioned villages in Papun Township must move between 12th December and 31st December 1992. After this date any one found hiding in the villages by the military columns will be shot, and any possessions still remaining in the villages will be confiscated.

Signed: Aye Myint, Chairman Village Slorc, Ka Ma Maung, Papun Township

INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS

Pepsi Boycott

The Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility in New York has put together a shareholders resolution calling for Pepsi to withdraw from Burma. The resolution is to be presented at a shareholder's meeting of Pepsi where the voice of the people can make a difference. The resolution gives some background on Burma and Pepsi's involvement and then concludes:

"Therefore be it resolved the shareholders request the Board of Directors to adopt the following policy; The corporation and any of its subsidiaries or affiliates will terminate forthwith their investments and operations in Burma until political prisoners are released and political power is transferred to the democratically-elected government of Burma."

They have furthered urged PepsiCo to prepare a report on its operations in Burma by April 30, 1993. PepsiCo has agreed to do this.

Germany

The European Burmese Association Hamburg organized a European Burmese Conference the end of October. A photo exhibition provided by B.U.R.M.A. was a part of this conference. The exhibition was displayed on the street along with various other materials so that people passing by could stop, look, ask questions, and get involved.

Canadian Friends of Burma

The Canadian Friends of Burma, 145 Spruce, #206, Ottawa Canada has been very active in developing effective actions to promote peace and human rights in Burma. Along with a Burma Fact Sheet which gives background and history on Burma, how Canada is involved with Burma and also suggests actions the people of Canada can become involved in, the Canadian Friends of Burma also raises funds to help villagers fleeing war in the border areas, lobby their government, participate in the UN Human Rights Commission meetings,

and seek every way possible to bring the plight of the people of Burma to the attention of Canadians and their governments. They welcome membership and participation.

Britain

British Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke has said London supports the return of Burmese Muslim refugees, but repatriation should be safe and supervised by the United Nations.

"We wish the Burmese refugees return home ... (but) we would like to be reassured that when they return they would be treated properly and would be safe," the reports quoted him as saying on his arrival in Dhaka Tuesday for a three-day visit.

(Bangkok Post, 31/12/92)



Street photo exhibition in Germany

BRIEFS

Thai Policy On Burma

On the 1st of January 1993, Thai Interior Minister, General Chavalit, said that Thailand should compromise in negotiating problems with the Slorc military regime.

However, following the recent border dispute at hill 491, local Thai armed forces at Chiang Mai border are worry about the 1,000 troops from the Burmese army which are grouping along the Thai-Burma border opposite Mae Hong Son. The Burmese army is preparing for a new summer offensive against ethnic Karenni (Kayah) rebels, and there are fears that the fighting will spill over into Thailand.

Source:

TN-(2/1/93)

Thai Banks in Burma

Two of Thailand's leading banks are finalizing agreements with Slorc to set up branches in Burma.

Senior officials from the Bank of Thailand and Krung Thai Bank discussed these agreements with Rear Admiral Maung Maung Khin, Deputy Minister of Slorc on the 22nd of December in Rangoon.

On the first week of December, the Executive Vice President of Krung Thai bank stated that Slorc has already granted the operating license and the bank expected the branch would be established either in January or February, 1993.

Source:

TN- (24/12/92)

Repatriation of Rohingyas

At least 5,989 Rohingya refugees have been repatriated under the supervision of the Bangladesh government and Slorc from September to the end of December.

The UNHCR is not allowed access to the repatriation program by both countries.

More Than 265,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh to escape from alleged persecution by the Slorc.

Source:

BP- (29/12/93)

UNHCR

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AIR MAIL

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED