

Burma Issues

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A villager who escaped forced labor on the Ye-Tavoy rail road, demonstrates how his friend was tied up before being stabbed to death (see story on page 2)

ALL I WANT IS TO BE ABLE TO GO BACK HOME



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HUMAN RIGHTS

A Culture of Coercion

"I would categorically like to state that there is no element of coercion or force involved concerning the use of civilian labourers. In fact, the development projects are for the benefit of the local populace and the government has spent a substantial amount of money on these projects. The daily wages for the labourers, contrary to the allegations, are found to be commensurate with those prevailing in the areas concerned. A point worthy of mention is that donating labour is a tradition deeply rooted in Myanmar's culture. There is a belief that donating labour in the building of pagodas, monasteries, roads and bridges gives mental and physical well-being. It is widely accepted in my country that voluntary work for the good of the community is not tantamount to forced labour or violation of human rights" – U Win Mra, Permanent Representative of the Delegation of the Union of Myanmar to the Forth-Ninth session of the United Nations General Assembly, December 1994

N Chan

(The following is part of an interview made in Mergui/Tavoy District of Karen State on November 29 and 30, 1994. The interviewee was a 43 year-old Karen farmer.)

When were you relocated from your village, and to what location?

Starting in 1991, nine villages in Tomya Sub Township were relocated to Thechaunggi Village by SLORC.

Why did they relocate you?

They said they wanted to free us from rebel groups and the Democratic People's Army.

How far were you relocated?

It was about a four hour walk. However, because of the rains, we could only carry a few things on a bamboo raft down the stream. We could not take all of our rice. We only had a little food with us.

How many families from your village were moved?

There were about 70 families, or nearly 380 people.

What if you refused to go?

SLORC soldiers said that if we refuse, they would kill us.

Were any villagers killed?

Three villagers were killed on suspicion of being insurgents. About 5 others were put in prison. Later 14 more were arrested. Four were re-

leased within 4 years. The rest are still in prison I guess.

Why were they arrested?

The soldiers said they violated Act 17.1 which says it is a crime to be against the government.

Did you know any of those killed?

I knew one of them. He was Kyaw Thein, a 35 year old Karen Buddhist. He was stabbed to death.

Did you see it happen?

Yes. I was a porter at the time and saw them kill him in the rice field.

How did they do it?

They tied his hands behind his back and beat him with bamboo sticks. They beat him for at least two hours while interrogating him. He was beaten on the back, the head, and on the arms. After two hours of beating, they stabbed him in the back.

How far away were you when you saw this happen?

About 60 meters.

What work did you do in the camp?

We were forced to work on a rubber plantation and we were given no salary.

Who owns the plantation?

The military owns the plantation. It is not less than 10,000 acres large. The law says that all laborers must be paid, but we never received anything. The local LORC officials

would report how many laborers were in the plantation, and then pocket the money allocated for salaries.

Who worked on the plantation?

All of the people, men, women and children, had to work. I think they relocated us to this area because they needed our labor on the plantation. I don't think it had anything to do with security.

What else did you have to do?

We were also forced to dig ponds for shrimp farming. This site was quite far from the relocation camp. It is in Kanethari, about one day's walk from the camp and very near the ocean. It is in Theyachaung Township.

Tell me about the ponds?

A total of about 13,000 people were working at the site. We had to dig a big pond and also an 8 foot high dike to keep the sea water out. It was the rainy season, so it was very difficult. We had no shelters, so had to live with other villagers in the area nearby. Some of us took shelter in schools or monasteries.

The dike was very long, stretching for several miles. Shortly after we finished the work, a high tide came and washed it all away. All of our work was for nothing. The SLORC engineers did not plan it well. They did not use any cement or other reinforcement. Only a dirt dike.

SLORC had a budget of 300,000 kyats to pay us workers, but the local officials kept all of the money

HUMAN RIGHTS

for themselves. We provided free labor for them.

SLORC often tells the international community that there is no forced labor in Burma. He says that community service is a tradition among the people of Burma, and that they volunteer for this kind of project. How do you respond to that?

That is not true. We are definitely forced to work. Most of the people can not even produce enough to feed their families when they work full time on their farms. It is impossible for us to donate any of our labor in such a situation. We are forced to work. Those who fail to work are punished, and sometimes locked in leg irons all day long. They have to pay the officials if they want to be released.

Also, every family in the camp must give the military three bundles of fire wood every month. Each of the nine villages are also forced to provide the soldiers with 2 pairs of bullocks for carrying water. These bullocks are worth about 14,000 kyat each. This is an impossible burden for the people.

Did you have to work on the Ye/Fa-voy railroad?

Yes. In February of 1994, I was first forced to work on the railroad.

Did SLORC explain why the railroad was to be build?

They said it was being built to carry goods from upper Burma to lower Burma. They said it would provide us with food more easily and cheaply.

Tell me something about work on the railroad

Our village of Meke was sent to the railroad slave labor camp four times during 1994. The first time we worked for 15 days and the last three times we worked for 20 days each time.

We were sent to Maung Mae Shaung camp along the railroad line. The first task was to clear the

way. A strip at least 400 yards wide had to be cleared.

The railroad runs through many old rubber plantations, so we had to clear out all of the trees. Some of the trees were very large; at least 15 feet in circumference.

The first group had to clear a length of 4 miles. Some people died during this time. They were usually killed by falling trees. I also saw some die from malaria. There was very little medicine for fever, etc.

What was the area like through which the railroad passed?

It was farms and gardens, and some rubber plantations. The owners of the farms did not even dare to request compensation. In fact, most of them were even afraid to say they owned the land. We also cleared out many sugar and betel nut plantations.

Were the workers only men?

No. Men, women and even children worked.

What else happened?

Every evening each person had to carry firewood back to the camp. This was collected as we cleared the rail line. At the camp we had to give the fire wood to the soldiers and they sold it to local villagers. We received nothing. Since we had to provide all of our own food, we had to spend at least 3,000 kyats during the 20 days we worked on the railroad. This was for our food, medicine and even our transportation.

What are your strongest memories during your time on working on the railroad?

1) We had to pay all of our own expenses while working. To get enough money, we had to sell all of our possessions.

2) We had to freedom at all - no time to relax.

3) We were always guarded, just like prisoners.

4) We were forced to go work on the railroad. However, when we arrived at the site, the soldiers demanded that we pay 10 kyats each for the privilege of working on the railroad.

Tell me a little more about the camp you lived in when working on the railroad

The camp was about 4 miles from the railroad in Theychaung Township. As we worked, the distance became further and further, so every day we had to walk a little bit more. The camp was about one mile square and housed 10,000 people. There was no fence around it, but about 100 soldiers were guarding it. They were hidden at places all around the camp, so it was hard to know where they were. We had to construct our own shelters. We build long barracks to protect us from the rain. We brought bamboo for the construction from our old villages. Posts for the barracks were gathered free from the area. We could get them as we cleared trees for the railroad. However, we had to buy roofing from villages in the area.

There was a river nearby which we could use for water. The women had to work as hard as the men, carrying big baskets of soil, etc.

Was the camp crowded?

Physically it was not so crowded, but mentally it was extremely tight.

What would you tell SLORC?

I dare not talk to them at all. If I talk, I will be tortured and killed.

What will you do now?

All I want is to be able to go back home. I always think of my relatives and the other villagers still there. I want to rebuild my village and live with them again. I want to farm my paddy field, and harvest my fruit trees.



Thailand and Burma - a Relationship of Concrete

by La Lor

A plan to build a friendship bridge across the Moei River and linking the western Thai province of Tak to the Burmese border town of Myawaddy came closer to reality on the 20th of October this year when officials from the two countries finally signed a formal agreement. The plan for the bridge emerged in Thailand during the Chatchai government in 1991 but failed to get off the ground during his administration or the following two governments of Anand. The final success of the plan can be attributed to much pressure and hard work by business people in the Tak border trading town of Mae Sod. This group is led by Udom Tonthi Sunthorn, a representative from the Palang Tham Party. Mr Udom is vice chairperson of the bridge building committee, and is well known in Mae Sod as a member of a large realty company called Ban Yai Group.

According to supporters, the bridge will result in three major benefits to Thailand: 1) it will build good friendship between the people of Thailand and Burma, 2) it will benefit the economies of both countries, and 3) it will support the U.N. plan to improve the infrastructures linking the countries in the region.

Burmese officials have been reluctant to agree to the plan. They do not fully trust Thailand, and fear that ethnic insurgent forces operating along the border could be allowed by Thailand to use the bridge to attack Slorc forces, or to carry supplies from Thailand into their camps deep inside Burma. Concerning Slorc's fears that the bridge will create security problems for them, local Thai officials have assured Slorc that they have already spoken to Karen insurgent forces who have agreed not to interfere with the bridge building, or to disrupt trade the bridge will bring to Burma. The Thai officials also point out that the bridge can open the area to tourism which will benefit the local

economies of both Thailand and Burma.

However, only three days after the formal signing of the agreement between Thai and Slorc officials, Karen forces expressed serious dissatisfaction with the construction of a bridge linking the two countries, and fired shells at Myawaddy, several of which landed on the Thai side of the border. Luckily, no injuries were reported.

The economy of Mae Sot and other districts of Tak Province are heavily dependent on trade with Burma. Most of these districts border directly with Burma, and the Moei River serves as the boundary. The Mae Sot crossing is particularly important as it is only 400 kilometres from Burma's capital of Rangoon, thus being the closest trading point for Thailand with Burma's capital. Many small-scale Thai merchants make their living by selling necessities across the river into Burma, and by bringing Burmese handicrafts to Thailand for sale to tourists in Mae Sot.

In the past, trade has often been hampered by fighting between Slorc and Karen insurgents, by fluctuations of the exchange rates between the Thai baht and the Burmese kyat, and by vague laws concerning the export and import of goods. Supporters of the bridge say that construction of the bridge will help deal with these problems.

Thai officials and big businesses in the Mae Sot area are hopeful for big profits from the bridge, especially from increased trade, tourism, and better security in the area. However, there are several serious potential obstacles to actually achieving these benefits. One is the unstable nature of Slorc's policies, which seem to change regularly and which can have serious negative effect on border business. Another is the lack of a good peace process to help end the long conflict between the Burmese military and local insurgent forces. Thailand should

look back on past experiences carefully if it does not wish its fingers to be burned once again.

Slorc's attitude towards the bridge has been cautious. Almost all of the work in drawing up the plans, seeking funding and negotiating for the contracts has been handled by the Thais. Slorc seems not so much interested in the bridge itself as in the fact that the project could result in the upgrading of the road from Myawaddy to Moulmein and Rangoon, a distance of a little over 100 kilometres. This road, if improved, could greatly increase their military control over the area.

However, not everyone on the Thai side of the Moei River is happy with the construction of the bridge. Those most negatively affected will be the small merchants who sell goods at the bank of the river. They rent their stall areas from local government agencies for about 12,000 baht (US\$500) per year. Business at this border market is not easy. Often fighting between the opposition forces and the Slorc military has a serious affect on their business, causing them loss of much needed revenue. Last year, a fire raged through the market destroying more than 10 of the shops. The financial loss to the merchants was over 10 million baht. The Thai government, however, only offered help to four of the victims, giving them each about 20,000 baht. When asked if the merchants thought the fire could have been arson attempting to drive the merchants away, they refused to even think about it, saying that the fire was painful enough without having to consider than perhaps it was done to them on purpose. (continued next page)

Sources in this issue

SP = Siam Post (Thai), NPK = Northern Manager (Thai), PK = Manager (Thai), BP = Bangkok Post, TN = The Nation

(continued from previous page)

During the last rainy season, the Moei River suddenly flooded, again destroying many of the shops along the river bank. Although the river often overflows its banks, this year's flood was especially severe. Observers say the flood was so devastating because forests upstream have been clear off through logging contracts sold by Slorc to Thai logging companies. Water running off of the bare hills now creates flash floods which will have a serious affect on the people in Mae Sot District in the coming years.

These small merchants fear that the bridge will not result in any economic benefits for them. During the two years that the bridge will be under construction, the merchants fear that they will either be forced away from their sites, or will be unable to carry on business as usual.

In the city of Mae Sot itself, small merchants also worry. The experience of their colleagues in the north-

ern border town of Mae Sai is the cause of this worry. Here, a bridge already connects Thailand to Burma and the border has been opened as a formal crossing point for business and tourism. Thai souvenir sellers who used to bring handicrafts from Burma to sell to tourists in Thailand at this border crossing now have lost their income since the tourists go directly into Burma for their shopping.

In Mae Sot, the situation will not be much different. Large businesses supporting the bridge project see it only as a way to more easily bring logs out from their logging concessions deep inside Burma. They are not much interested in long-term business objectives, or the negative effects the bridge, or their logging for that matter, may bring on the rest of the people.

People in India and Bangladesh will also be negatively affected by this bridge. It is through this crossing that much cheap labor is illegally imported into Thailand. The bridge will be a part of the Asian Highway which runs from Thailand through Burma and

into Bangladesh and India. Export of this illegal labor will thus be much easier if the bridge is built and the roads improved.

Thail authorities need to place much more emphasis on human rights than simply on economic benefits when looking at such "development" projects as this bridge. They should also consider the history of Slorc more carefully before joining too closely with them in anything. In this instance, it is not only the people of Burma who will probably suffer, but also the people of Thailand, India and Bangladesh. International relationships should not be build on concrete bridges, but on a deep respect for the human rights of all people.

Sources - SP931206, NPK940310, NPK940315, PK940308, PK940502



Books

BURMA'S REVOLUTION OF THE SPIRIT:

The Struggle for Democratic Freedom and Dignity

Published by Aperture (20 East 23rd Street, New York, NY 10110)

112 pages Price US\$25

This appealing, beautifully-produced book is designed to give readers an insight into Burma's past and tragic present. Photographs, both black and white and colour, have been drawn from a number of sources, many of them smuggled out of the country. Some are truly horrifying, but the overall impression is one of a country whose natural beauty and ancient civilisation is being systematically destroyed.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama provides an introduction and Dr Sein Win writes a preface, in which he points out that "none of us were born revolutionaries. Circumstances have demanded that we stand up for our rights, and we have done so. If that has made us revolutionaries, then we will proudly continue to be revolutionaries." The book contains clearly-

written chapters on the peoples of Burma, their varied origins, culture and religions, an account of the events leading up to the 1988 uprising, and an overview of the current situation in Burma. The dignity and courage of a people besieged by its own self-appointed rulers shines clearly through the words and pictures.

The person who most cogently articulates the aspirations of Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi, has the last word, in an excerpt from her essay "Towards a True Refuge" delivered by her husband at Oxford University in 1993. "A small light cannot dispel acres of encircling gloom. It needs to grow stronger, to shed its brightness further and further. And people need to accustom their eyes to the light to see it as a benediction rather than a pain, to learn to love it. We are so much in need of a brighter world which will offer adequate refuge to all its inhabitants."

It is hard to look through this elegant, eloquent book without feeling moved. It will also serve as a valuable introduction for interested persons with little knowledge of Burma.



The Story of Thwe

This is the true story of a young Burmese woman who was sold by two Thai soldiers to a brothel in Thailand when she was only fourteen years of age. She is now 20 and living in the Thai border town of Mae Sod. Her name has been changed to protect her.

By Saw Thu War

Though I would like to tell my story to other women, I can not tell the exact date and month of the events based on the English calendar. When I was sold, I had very little education so that I do not know how to read the English calendar and I also can not recall the dates in my memory.

My name is Thwe and I was born in 1974 in Moulmein which is a coastal town of the Tenasserin Division of Burma. Thirteen days after I was born, my mother passed away and left my older sister and me behind. My father married another woman within a few days and he is, indeed, a womanizer. My grandparents from my mother's side looked after me and my sister, but they were also very old. We were dependent on our grandfather who was a carpenter and could earn a little money for us to live on. My grandmother was a retired government servant. I was able to study only up to primary level education. When I was 5 years old, my grandmother passed away which is one of the greatest losses in my life as she was very kind to me. When I was 11 years old, my sister was 16 and she married and followed her husband to his home in Myawaddy which is a Burmese border town on the Thai-Burma border.

When I was 12 years old, my grandfather passed away and my aunt from my mother's side took me to Rangoon. I was able to live with my aunt only for a few months because she forced me to do house-work the whole day which made me extremely tired. Her children also usually bullied me. Sometimes when I was extremely tired I was not allowed to take a rest. Finally, I ran away from my aunt's home and headed for Moulmein by train but unfortunately I took the wrong train and instead ended up in Mandalay, which is the capital of

northern Burma. I had never been there before so I did not know where to go. I sat at the train station and was thinking what I should do. A few hours later I met a Chinese-Burmese woman and she took me to her home to stay. A few days later she gave some money and put me on the train to Rangoon. I returned to my aunt's home in Rangoon. Several weeks later, some of my relatives in Moulmein knew that I was unhappy living with my aunt, and so they took me back to Moulmein.

I then moved in with my sister's family in Myawaddy where I worked as a hard laborer, carrying heavy goods at the border immigration gate. I could barely earn enough from my hard labor for my living. At that time I was 13 years old and sometimes the loads were very heavy and much bigger than my body. Some traders in Myawaddy told me about job vacancies in Mae Sod, a Thai border town opposite Myawaddy. They said I could earn more there. After about a year in Myawaddy, I moved to Mae Sod and worked at a bamboo shoots canning factory. I was then 14 years old. A few months later I met two Thai soldiers in a Buddhist monastery which is near the canning factory. They urged me to work for better wages as a maid at their friend's house in Pichu of Amphoe Pathan Hin.

After I agreed with them, they took me to their home at Mae Taw in Mae Sod where I slept one night. They were very friendly and treated me very hospitably in their home. The next day, they took me to their friend's house. We entered the three storey house which is surrounded by a brick wall and met a big, tall man and his wife sitting in a private room. I immediately assumed they were the house owners. They looked very rich. About half an hour later, after the two Thai soldiers had talked to the man

and his wife, they left me in the house. Then the woman showed me a room to stay in. I met about 16 girls there who did not look like house maids and I became suspicious that this was a brothel. I asked them about the house in Burmese, but all of them only spoke Thai which I barely understood at that time. However, the house owner fed me well and asked me to do only a few cleaning jobs in the house. One day, after about two months, the couple told me to go along with them to visit a hotel. When we entered a room in the hotel, I met a man of about 40, sitting in a chair with a pistol on the table next to him. The couple stayed for a few minutes and then left the room. I thought that they went out to buy some food for dinner. A few minutes later, the man grabbed my arms and try to take me to the bed room. Then I realized he was planning to rape me and I started struggling, pulling my arms back and yelling at him, but I was also afraid of his gun. He then pushed me down on the bed. Though I was struggling he was very strong and I became tired. He raped me for a long time and finally I was unconscious. When I regained consciousness, I was again in the couple's house. Afterwards, they did not ask me to do any thing for about two months. By that time, my Thai was better and I started asking the other girls about the couple and the house situation. I found out that they were all prostitutes and the man in the hotel paid 10,000 baht to the couple to have sex with me. I was given nothing but sorrow. The price was very high because I was a virgin. Furthermore, one of the Thai girls told me that the two Thai soldiers had sold me to the couple but she did not know how much the couple had paid. This news frightened me, but I felt totally helpless.

(continued next page)

Changes in Kachin Leadership

Mali Zup Zau Mai

Following the death of Chairman Maran Brang Seng, Major General Mali Zup Zau Mai has been elected Chairman of the Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and President of the Kachin Independence Council (KIC) while remaining leader of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA).

As a student at Rangoon University in the late 1950s, Zau Mai actively recruited Kachin soldiers in the Burma Army to join the *Pleiades*. He visited the KNDO (now KNU) headquarters with KIO Vice-Chief of Staff Zau Tu, where he met the Karen leadership and discussed future plans. He encouraged General Zau Seng to found the fledgling KIO.

After his graduation in 1960, Zau Mai became a teacher. He officially joined the KIO in 1963, since when he has been steadily promoted. He has been the KIA Chief of Staff since 1980.

Lanyaw Zawng Hra

Lanyaw Zawng Hra will bring international and administrative experience to his position as Vice-Chairman of the KIO.

At Rangoon University he became secretary of the Kachin Student Organisation. He joined the KIO in 1963 and has since held a number of administrative positions. In 1980 he accompanied Chairman Brang Seng to peace talks in Rangoon with the then-government of Burma, and was leader of a subsequent peace delegation for ten months in Myitkyina, Kachin State.

During 1986-87 he accompanied Brang Seng on a 6-month journey on foot round the Thai-Burma border, to co-ordinate with the KNU, NMSP and other ethnic groups. He later travelled extensively in Asia and Europe to participate in international conferences, most recently attending the UN Commission on Cambodia meeting in Bangkok.



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About two months after being raped, the brothel owner told me to accept having sex with men who came to the brothel. He threatened to kill me if I refused or was impolite to the customers. So I was forced into prostitution. Now every day I have to accept about ten customers.

About three months after I was brought to the brothel, four new Burmese girls were also brought by somebody to the brothel. This was the first time I had seen Burmese girls in the brothel. They all were also lured into prostitution. When I explained about the situation, they were all shocked and started talking with me about escaping. I told them there was no good way to escape at the moment. However, we all tried several times to escape, but always failed.

A year after being sold to the brothel, we Burmese girls planned that me and another girl would run away and inform the police since it was very difficult for all the Burmese girls to run away simultaneously. One evening, two of us climbed up the fence and jumped down behind the

brothel. Immediately the brothel owner heard the sounds and followed us. We were hiding among the tall grass. The man could not find us but he knew that we were hiding somewhere among the tall grass. He finally shouted that if we did not come out, he would torch the grass. We panicked and decided to come out of our hiding place. He then took us back into the brothel and started slapping, kicking, and punching me in the face and all over our bodies. I was rolling on the floor in terror and pain. He kept yelling if I would try to escape again. It lasted for about half an hour. By the end, my face was swollen and my entire body was painful. I even could not walk. Someone took me to my room. He did not hurt my friend because he assumed that I was the mastermind of the escape attempt.

I continued to think of some way to escape from the brothel even though the man and his wife were always watching us carefully. We all decided to save our tip money from customers to be used for an escape. After about four years working in the brothel, we got our chance. One night in December 1992, the man was out of the

brothel. Only his wife remained in the house. We all were staying on the second floor. The brothel owner's wife thought we could not run away without going through the front door but we all climbed down the drain pipe to the ground and immediately rushed to the main road. A tuk tuk (three-wheeled taxi) driver helped us by taking us to the bus terminal. That night we escaped to Mae Sod.

After a few days in Mae Sod, the other four Burmese girls returned to Burma. I remained in Mae Sod. I do not want to go back to Burma because I do not want to tell my story to any of my relatives. I have decided to live in Mae Sod.

One time I married a Thai man in Mae Sod, but our marriage could last only a few months. I am so discouraged about living with men. Generally, I think the Thai and Burmese men are only interested in sex, and not in women as human beings.

I am now working as a waitress in a restaurant in Mae Sod.



NEWS BRIEFS

New Alliance - Disappointed that the SLORC has not responded to any of their political aspirations, eight of the ethnic parties which have signed ceasefire agreements with the SLORC have formed an alliance, the Peace and Democratic Front (PDF). The groups include members of the Wa, Akha, Ko Kang, Shan, Karenni and Kachin. All the groups will continue their participation in the SLORC-organised National Convention.

(TN 941209)

SLORC dismisses UN Report - Burma's Foreign Minister, Ohn Gyaw, dismissed special rapporteur Yozo Yokota's criticism of the country's continuing human rights abuses as 'a ritual thing', and claimed that a possible release date for Aung San Suu Kyi was not discussed.

(TN 941201)

Constitution - Burma's dissident groups met recently to draft a parallel constitution in opposition to that of the ruling junta. More than 200 delegates from 41 groups proposed a federal system of government.

(TN 941127)

Position Change - Brig-Gen Tin Aye, who was present at the second meeting between SLORC and Aung San Suu Kyi, has been moved from Inspector-General of Burma's Defence Services to Deputy Minister for Hotels & Tourism.

Aid - Tokyo will resume official development assistance to Burma due to what is deemed a more conciliatory attitude towards Aung San Suu Kyi. It will probably offer US\$10-20 million in grants annually from next April for humanitarian purposes.

Renewed hostilities - Breaking its declared unilateral ceasefire, Burmese government troops attacked and captured the dissident student headquarters at Daw Gwin in mid-December. Reports of the conflict varied greatly, but it appears that the students were taken by surprise and fled into the jungle or sought refuge with the Karen. There appeared to be no casualties. Earlier speculation that the Burmese troops may have been planning to attack Manerplaw appears to be unfounded, though their presence at Daw Gwin cut off the Karen supply line from Mae Sam Lap.

The attack may have been prompted by dissension within the Karen ranks.

A few days earlier, several hundred Buddhist guerrillas occupied a hilltop monastery at the junction of the Moei and Salween rivers in protest against the mainly Christian leadership of the KNU. Several delegations were sent to negotiate with the Buddhist faction, and it appears that the dispute has been settled amicably. The KNU claims that SLORC agitators were fomenting the dispute.

(BP 941216, BP941217, TN 941218)

Desmond Tutu Warns - Nobel Peace prize Winner Desmond Tutu warned powerful nations that they should be increasing, not decreasing pressure on certain Asian governments to improve the human rights situation in Burma and East Timor. He pointed out that apparent changes of policy direction in Burma - such as meetings with Aung San Suu Kyi and the UN Gen-Secretary's representative - are meaningless unless they can be demonstrated to have real substance.

(TN 941217)



BURMA ISSUES

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED