

# DAWN <sup>BBC</sup> NEWS BULLETIN

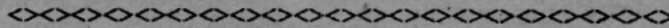
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ALL BURMA STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC FRONT

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## DEMOCRACY IS NOT ONLY ELECTIONS



OUR GOAL IS FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE PATH WHICH OUR  
COUNTRY TAKES

True nationalism also implies that there must be freedom internally as well as externally. A nation is a collection of many peoples, many races. Their rights and welfare must not be endangered by narrow and intense nationalism. There must be no discrimination on grounds of race, religion, class or sex. True nationalism, as I understand it, is an essential complement to true internationalism.

Aung San, August, 1946

### Letter to the UN Commission Meeting on Human Rights in Geneva Switzerland, February 18, 1989

We, the members of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front, living in camps along the Thai/Burma border call upon you to investigate the multitude of human rights violations which continue to take place in our beloved country. These violations have been documented by foreign journalists, diplomatic missions in Rangoon, and countless Burmese people who have directly experienced arrest, torture and executions of family members.

As students living in exile along the border, we can not get travel papers to attend the Commission on Human Rights meeting to relate our experiences to you personally. Therefore, we wish to invite a delegation from your esteemed commission to visit us in our camps so you can learn directly from us what the experience of the Burmese people has been under the Ne Win leadership. We respectfully request that you kindly consider this invitation for the sake of our Burmese people who have already suffered so much.



The Student Union Building on Rangoon University campus, which was blown up by Ne Win on July 8, 1962.

## A PAGE FROM BURMESE HISTORY

Student activism in Burma has long been at the core of change. The anticolonial struggles against the British were generally led by students, and it was in these struggles that many of the present government leaders gained their experience.

Despite the fact that many of the present day leaders played key roles in political activism in the anticolonial struggles (or perhaps because they did), they have been quick to try to stifle any potential creative unrest which might come from the student sector in recent years.

A seat of political activity and nationalist demonstrations dating back to the 1930s, the Rangoon University Student Union building symbolized nationalism and political life. This modest building, almost thirty years old in 1962 and set back from the road and main gate of the spacious university compound, resembled a third-rate, declining colonial club in one of the up-country towns. The walls of the union building, covered with graffiti, had sheltered many of the major Burmese leaders of all political persuasions who had demonstrated for independence. They ranged from Aung San, the father of independent Burma, whose assassination prevented him from assuming the leadership of the new republic; U Nu, the future prime minister; Thakin Than Tun, perhaps the most intellectual of the group and later the leader of the underground White Flag communist movement, and some members of the Revolutionary Council.

After Ne Win's coup in March of 1962, students became unhappy over new and harsh restrictions against their activities. They began demonstrating inside the campus compound. The nation's leaders, who had carried out similar acts of defiance 25 years earlier against the British, could not tolerate this threat against their authority.

On the afternoon of July 7 some 2,000 student

demonstrators protesting the increased discipline began to get out of control. Troops of the 4th Burma Rifles, commanded by Sein Lwin (the same Sein Lwin who became Prime Minister during the August 1988 demonstrations and was known as The Butcher because of his brutal killings of unarmed students and workers), were summoned late in the afternoon, and after repeated requests for the students to disperse, opened fire. According to official reports, 15 civilians were killed and 27 wounded. Reliable but unofficial accounts placed the toll at over 100.

On July 8th at 6:00 a.m. residents heard a single loud explosion from the university. The Rangoon University Student Union building had been blown up by the military at the behest of General Ne Win.

Universities were immediately closed, students were dispersed to the countryside, and public opinion, which in part had been sympathetic to the new government, now turned against it.

From that point on, the government has tried to make the university sector of the country as insignificant as possible. Student Unions continue to be banned, and students have not been allowed to develop their own creative political consciousness, or express their thinking openly.

The blowing up of the student union building may have given Ne Win and his cohorts a sense of control over the student population, but his act of vengeance has never been forgotten. The spirit of struggle has always remained, and it was this spirit of struggle which sprang into blossom in August and September of 1988, and which continues to fuel the struggle for justice and democracy in Burma.

(taken from Burma's Road Toward Development by David I. Steinberg)

## ABSDF PROTESTS JAPANESE RECOGNITION OF THE SAW MAUNG GOVERNMENT

During the August and September general strike in Burma, the countries of Japan, the US and West Germany were openly critical of the government's cruel treatment of the students and working people in the streets. To express their criticism, they immediately cut off all aid to the Burmese government until human rights were once again guaranteed the Burmese people.

This was a significant gesture since these three countries were the major financial donors for the Ne Win government which had failed so badly in developing Burma's own rich resources. Of the three countries, Japan was the largest foreign aid donor.

The cutting off of funds to the government was a boost to the energies of the Burmese people calling for democracy in the streets. They saw this as a true act of friendship.

Without this foreign aid, the Burmese government's foreign reserves quickly began to shrink. It is said that only about \$5 US remained in reserve, and this

was rapidly being eaten up by the government's military actions against the minority groups.

Changes began to take place quickly after the Thai Supreme Commander, General Chavalit, visited Burma and opened the door for Thai investors to begin exploiting Burma's rich forests and sea areas. Other countries followed suit with eyes only on quick profits rather than on the suffering of the Burmese people. The continued abuse of human rights in Burma, and the continued call of the Burmese people for economic boycotts against the government fell on many deaf ears.

Thus, it was with great dismay that we heard the news on February 17, 1989 that Japan had also decided to recognize Burma, and resume aid. Was it because they feared missing out on the open season on Burmese resources which Saw Maung had declared?

In response to the Japanese move, the ABSDF immediately sent the following letter to the Japanese embassy in Thailand.

February 17, 1989

Your Excellency:

During the August and September strike in Rangoon, we the Burmese students and people were encouraged by Japan's condemnation of the violation of human rights by the Burmese government. When the government of Japan cut off aid to Burma, we were also much encouraged and were convinced that such actions would help bring about democracy in our beloved country.

Now we are shocked to hear that as of February 17, 1989, the Japanese government has decided to recognize the corrupt and brutal military government of Saw Maung and will soon resume aid. This is an affront to all people who have struggled so hard and so long for a democratic and free Burma.

We strongly protest this action by your government, and call upon you to reconsider it. The blood of our brothers and sisters has not yet dried on the streets of Rangoon and other cities. Many of our other brothers and sisters still can not be located and others rot in prisons. We, ourselves, must live in exile for fear that upon returning to our homeland, we will be arrested, tortured and possibly killed. Your recognition of the Saw Maung government simply helps to cover up the realities which Saw Maung does not want the world to see or know about.

Please reconsider your actions. Stand once again with the oppressed of Burma, for we shall most certainly one day win the democracy we so deeply long for, and we want to count you as one of our dear and supportive friends.

With respect:

The Foreign Relations Committee - All Burma Students' Democratic Front



## REFLECTIONS FROM THE JUNGLE

### A LETTER TO ALL BURMESE STUDENTS IN THE JUNGLES, BOTH INSIDE AND OUTSIDE BURMA

In this time, and in this situation, nothing is more important than our struggle for the restoration of democracy in our Motherland, Burma. In the struggle for this democracy which we love so much, the blood of many of our friends and fellow country men and women has already been shed.

Fellow comrades for democracy, now is the time for us to love one another in solidarity, unity and love. Saw Maung and his military will do everything they can to disorganize us, so that they can destroy the people's power. He has sent their agents against us to create disunity. We must be very careful of this my comrades.

Now he is trying his very best to repatriate all our students back to Burma. Even during the peaceful demonstrations, he brutally killed the people in the open public places right in the heart of our cities. We can never forget this.

So we do not trust their evil deeds and plans. He has even gone so far as to promise to give 5000 baht to the Thai government for each student they can force back to Burma. He treats us as though we are only a material thing.

Several students who have returned to Rangoon have betrayed us by giving Saw Maung so much information. Because of them, the Burmese military has encircled our camps, and even flies planes overhead to drop leaflets full of propaganda. Saw Maung hoped that he could use these betrayers to destroy our struggle.

Perhaps he has forgotten Burmese history. In the battle of Naung Yoe during the 2nd Burmese Empire, Ba Yint Naung knew that his soldiers wanted to escape from the island fortress by boat as the enemy greatly outnumbered him and his men. So he went down to the river and destroyed all of the boats. Then he told his soldiers that they had

no choice but to stand and fight, and if they fought for their lives, they could win. With no means of escape, the soldiers fought bravely, and won the battle against tremendous odds.

So we students, when we came to the jungle, we have entered a struggle from which we can never retreat. We will return to our beloved homes and towns only after we achieve our aim.

Because of Ne Win, Burma has been forgotten in the Home of the Nations. Since the student uprising started on 8-8-88, the world has begun to know about Burma and its brave people. Now those world governments and international organizations who love peace, justice and human rights are supporting our Burmese people. This proves that we are not alone in our struggle. The people of the world stand with us. Now the world is watching us closely. Never before has there been a struggle like ours. We must be proud of our movement and *never give up our hope.*

Oh comrades, do not be discouraged because you lack food, clothing and shelter. Never give up! The day we give up our people will again be slaves under Saw Maung and his military. Now is the time for us to join hands together with the minority revolutionaries to fight the common enemy. We can not fight alone in this struggle! If, and only when we join hands, will we be able to solve all the serious problems which will arise after our struggle is successful.

Never will we accept help from outsiders who help only for their own political and economic benefits. We will never give up our country to the super powers! Our strength is only inside Burma, so with the might of our people LET US CREATE A NEW BURMA!

So beloved comrades, be united and never give up. Let us fight till our victory is won!

Ma Mee Mee  
(19 year-old woman student)

It is the people who hate poverty, not those who sympathize with it, who will put an end to it.

George Bernard Shaw

## HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN BURMA

### Repatriated Burmese Students Face Imprisonment, Torture, Execution

### Thai Authorities Believed Responsible for Forced Repatriations

Burmese students who fled Rangoon and other major cities during the army's crackdown in August and September 1988 are being deported from border areas in Thailand despite growing evidence that they may face arrest and possible torture and execution upon their return. Since September, several thousand Burmese students who took part in the August uprising have fled to the border areas. Many of the students are reported to have joined with opposition minority groups fighting for greater autonomy from the Burmese government, while hundreds more have sought refuge in Thailand. Burmese government sources claim that nearly 2,000 students have voluntarily returned to Burma in recent weeks. According to press reports, however, at least 260 were returned under a repatriation agreement negotiated by Thai Army Chief General Chaovalit Yongjaiyut and Burmese officials in Rangoon on December 14. The agreement apparently contradicts a November 22 decision by the Thai Cabinet to afford the Burmese students temporary sanctuary until they were willing to return voluntarily.

On December 26, 82 students were returned to Burma from the repatriation center at Tak Provincial Airport, despite the fact that a number of the returning students had expressed fears for their safety in Burma. According to the Bangkok Post, 30 students who had refused to join the earlier flight without assurances for their safety in Burma were flown to Rangoon on January 3. Amnesty International has reported that on January 7, an additional 22 students were forced to board a flight to Burma by Thai military authorities. Thai authorities have reportedly stated that students who failed to report to repatriation centers by January 7 would be arrested and forced to return to Burma. According to one report in the Bangkok Post, 1,200 dissident students seeking refuge in Thailand face imminent deportation. Burmese authorities have set a January 31 deadline for the return of all Burmese dissidents from Thailand.

Despite a promise of amnesty for students returning before January 31, Burmese military authorities have threatened action against those who were active participants in the demonstrations and those who joined "underground movements." Asia Watch has received reports that returning students have been arrested, and that some have disappeared. According

to the Far Eastern Economic Review, Western diplomats in Rangoon have received reports that students who were returned to their families were later taken into custody and subsequently executed, and that families seeking information on detained relatives have been informed that the students have died. The Bangkok Post has reported that spokesmen for the All Burma Students Democratic Front have claimed that students who returned were being arrested and tortured for information about military camps on the border.

According to Amnesty International, student leader Thant Zin, who was among the students repatriated on December 26, has been arrested and held incommunicado at an unknown location since his return to Burma. Two other student leaders from the Shan State, Kyi Moe and Sai Myo Wyn Tun, were arrested in Thailand by army personnel and forced to board a plane to Rangoon on January 7. Both students had reportedly expressed fears for their safety in Burma, and had begun a hunger strike to petition the Thai authorities for asylum. Upon their return, they were reportedly held for questioning by the Burmese military authorities and warned to refrain from political activities. They have subsequently expressed fears that they may be arrested. Tu Ain Tin, a student who had performed protest songs during the demonstrations in September, was reportedly repatriated and arrested after he returned to Burma.

Students, writers and political opponents of the government of General Saw Maung who remained in Burma after the August and September demonstrations have also been arrested and tortured. Amnesty International has reported that Zaw Win Tin, a student leader who had been taken into custody by the Burmese military authorities in early December and held incommunicado, died less than 48 hours after his release on December 30. It is believed that he died as a result of severe ill-treatment in custody. Thu Ra (also known as Zar Gana), a student and a political satirist who was arrested along with film director Tin Soe and actor Zin Wyne on October 2, was reportedly hung upside-down from the ceiling and beaten by interrogators. He reportedly lost several teeth as a result of the beatings. He has been charged with creating dissension between the public and the armed forces; however, Asia Watch believes he is being held for the peaceful expression of his political views. Health professionals who treated wounded students during the army's crackdown against demonstrators in August and September have also been arrested.

ASIA WATCH, Jan. 20, 1989

## FROM INSIDE BURMA

### PRESS CONFERENCE: US REPORT ON HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES "DISMISSED AS FALSE"

Rangoon home service 1330 gmt 10 Feb 89  
(Burmese radio station)

Excerpts from report

Members of the information committee of the State Law and Order Restoration Council held the 26th press conference with local and foreign correspondents at 1300 today (local time, 10th February) at the reception hall of the Ministry of Defence...

First, the information committee explained paddy and fishery issues saying that the committee is aware of reports saying that the granting of fishing licence to foreign trawlers in our territorial waters is affecting the interest of the local operators of fishing trawlers and they no longer have the right to fish....

With the intention of ending illegal fishing and in the interests of the state, the government has granted fishing licence to foreign trawlers in our territorial waters. Presently, a total of 217 trawlers - 141 trawlers from three Thai companies, 40 trawlers from Malaysia, 20 from Hong Kong, 10 from Singapore and six from South Korea - are under contract. However, of these 217 contract trawlers, only 110 trawlers are actually engaged in fishing. The country expects to earn 17.6m US dollars from the contracts. Even before fishing under contract begins, the country has already earned 1.7m dollars in deposits for the contracts. When the fishing begins, the government's income will increase by 17.6m dollars.

This government action will not affect the local fishing trawler operators because the territorial waters in which the foreign fishing trawlers are allowed to fish along the coast from Aradan State to Tenasserim division are outside the 30 mile limit. Local fishing trawlers are allowed to fish within the 30 mile limit and they would not be affected as local trawlers are small and can fish within the 30 mile limit where the most fish are...

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### ABSDF Response--

We have received news that small fishermen have now been forbidden to fish in some of their traditional fishing areas. Being deprived of their normal livelihood, they have now been forced to move inland where they must try to make a meager living by selling their labor. Is this development of a positive nature? Is this a good use of Burma's resources? Why must our own people be deprived of the fish from our own seas so that Thai companies can benefit, and the Saw Maung military earn more money just to oppress the people?

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Explaining the rise in paddy prices, the information committee officer said that the estimated paddy yield is 649.5m baskets (one basket equals 21 kg) and expected local consumption is 468m baskets. The government has allowed free trading of paddy in the country and the transport of paddy from one place to another is allowed. The government does not control paddy. Private traders can freely trade among themselves and there is sufficient for consumption. As the government does not control the paddy trade it is not appropriate to point a finger at the government for raising paddy price.

The government's target for procurement of paddy is 119.4m baskets. Paddy is procured under both contracts and organizational means. There was no forced procurement. Even after the government procures 119.4m baskets, 531m baskets will still be left for free trading by the people and traders...

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### ABSDF RESPONSE--

Burma has always been able to produce plenty of rice. The soil is rich, and the farmers are hard working. If the rains are cooperative, an abundance of food will always be available in Burma. But what good is all of this food if the people, especially the urban people, do not have enough money to buy it? Is it a glorious thing to starve to death amidst abundant resources because you do not have the means to purchase what you need for your family?

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Explaining the situation regarding returning students, it was disclosed that by 3rd February a total of 2,401 students had arrived and 75 more have arrived since then. By today, 2,476 students have arrived.

Next, the information committee officer explained about the human rights issue broadcast by the VOA at 1800 (1130 gmt) on 6th February. The VOA broadcast dealt with the report of the US State Department on the worldwide human rights situation, saying that the human rights situation in Burma - which was got very good before - has gone from bad to worse, citing the killing of peaceful demonstrators arbitrary arrests and torture, compulsory labor and the disappearance of political detainees. The report added that government security forces indiscriminately killed many Burmese citizens during 1988 and that because there were many eyewitness accounts, the Burmese authorities had not been successful in their attempts to cover up the events. The worst incident was the death of 41 students who were killed after being arrested and packed into a tightly closed van.

According to the report, it was estimated that hundreds of demonstrators were killed by police force members during June 1988, that 2,000 were killed by the end of August and that another 1,000 were killed between 19th and 21st September 1988. This brutal reaction from the Burmese government against the demonstrators led to outright denunciation within the USA and resulted in the US government suspending assistance to Burma.

Explaining the broadcast, the information committee dismissed as false the allegations against Burma contained in the US State Department report on human rights. It is said that the points and figures contained in the report are grossly exaggerated and the allegations are unjust. If force had not been used to crush the mass unrest, looting and killing there would have been uncontrollable bloodshed in the country and the country could have disintegrated. Force was used to end the mass unrest, looting and killing and to normalize the situation. Prescribed rules and regulations were observed in using force so as to minimize bloodshed.

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#### ABSDF Response-

First of all, the students and working people of Burma did not use violence during the August and September general strike. It was a peaceful demonstration, carried out by peaceful people who believed in and followed the Buddhist teachings of compassion.

The violence was initiated by the military who brutally killed men, women and children simply because they were calling for democracy. The report of the US State Department was not only correct, but did not give all of the gory details of those bloody days during which so many of our friends, brothers and sisters died.

Today, many of our friends are still in prison, and we have received news of many of them being tortured and killed as well. The human rights situation in our country has not gotten any better. The promise of elections in 1990 is a farce as long as our people are not free!

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It is believed that it is not appropriate for secure, economically developed and democratically mature nations to criticize and blame us, using their own human rights yardstick. It is even worse that they grossly exaggerate their fabrications, allegations and criticisms without attempting to describe the situation objectively. This action amounts to a violation of the norms of international relations. The superpowers should take note that the developing countries are striving for the interests of all indigenous people, for national security, food, clothing and shelter and for sovereign independence rather than individual freedom.

Next, commenting on various rumors, the information committee officers said that the report that the film actor and comedian, Zagana alias Ko Thura, had died is absolutely untrue and that Zagana is well.

B.INTERNAL AFFAIRS: Feb.13,1989

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Human rights is not a gift given to people by those in power. It is a basic right of all people. Any individual or government who speaks out against the violation of human rights against any person, speaks for truth and justice. Any individual or government who fails to speak out, fearing they may be misunderstood, or not wanting to become involved in a confrontation, becomes a party to those violations of human rights and is also guilty. Silence is not golden, it is a sin!

## NEWS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS

ASIaweek  
Feb. 24, 1989

### BURMA - TWO SCHOOLS

Most children in Burma have not seen the inside of a classroom since last August. Any schools still open then were closed due to the unrest in the streets, and the military regime of Gen. Saw Maung has kept the doors shut since taking over in September. Recently, several of the 187 newly registered political parties began making plans to reopen some schools by holding the classes themselves. Their attempts, however, were quickly stopped. On Jan. 31, Home Minister Maj-Gen. Phone Myint summoned the representatives of 26

parties and severely reprimanded them. They were then told to sign an undertaking to abide by the government order declaring a curfew and other restrictions. Private tuition, vocational classes, even nurseries they had begun were shut down.

Not all children are falling behind in their education, however. Now open are four grade schools in Rangoon which cater to the offspring of military personnel and prominent people. Similar arrangements are in place in other cities. Engineering and medical students from ruling-group families are able to study at military facilities. The government has even arranged special computer courses.



This drawing was done by a student from the University of Rangoon. It clearly illustrates the educational system in Burma today. Education is now only for the military elite. This is truly not the road to democracy and equality! If Saw Maung truly wishes to bring about democracy in Burma, and if he has any trust in the people, he should be willing to open the schools so that students can continue to prepare to become tomorrow's leaders.



Bangkok Post  
Feb. 13, 1989

### KAREN REBELS THREATEN TO BLOCK LOG IMPORTS

Karen rebels will resist any attempt to move teak logs bought by Thai merchants from the Burmese Government through Karen-held territory, according to President of the Karen National Union Gen Bo Mya.

Speaking through an interpreter in an exclusive interview, Gen Bo Mya also said the KNU would not deal with any Thai companies or merchants who have business deals with Rangoon.

"Our policy is that any person who wants to deal with us must come to us directly," he said.

Four Thai timber companies - Muang Pana, Santi Forestry, Sirind Technology and Boonsawat - have won contracts from the Burmese Government to fell teak trees in Karen territory along the Thai-Burmese border opposite Kanchanaburi, Mae Hong Son and Chiang Rai.

Bo Mya said there is a narrow border strip between Tak and Myawaddy which is held by Burmese troops and through which teak logs could be transported to Thailand.

But he warned that his men would cut off the pass

if it is used to facilitate the movement of timber.

He claimed that all the teak logs belong to the KNU because they are in their territory along the Thai-Burmese border. "You will not see teak in Rangoon or Pagan which are held by the Burmese," he said.

It was reported that Rangoon has charged about 15,000 baht per ton of teak logs to Thai logging companies whereas the Karens are charging only 1,000 baht per ton to Thai merchants with whom they have been doing business.

Bo Mya and Vice President Saw Than Aung said they hope the Thai Government as well as the Thai military would not apply pressure on the KNU to allow the transport of teak logs through Karen-held territory.

Defending the KNU's move to resist log movements, Saw Than Aung said merchants should be blamed for the inconvenience because they had entered into contracts with Rangoon.

He admitted the KNU was worried with the improvement of relations between the Thai military and the Saw Maung regime.

He cited a recent unprecedented case when a Burmese plane was allowed to fly into Thai airspace and take pictures of Karen camps along the border from Thai territory.

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Bangkok Post  
Feb. 15, 1989

### CHAVALIT DISMISSES KAREN LOG THREAT

ARMY Commander Gen Chavalit Yongchaiyudh yesterday dismissed a Karen threat to disrupt attempts by Thai merchants to import Burmese logs through rebel-held territory.

Gen Chavalit, who brokered the log import deal when he called on Burmese junta leader Gen Saw Maung in December, said Thailand did not want to become engaged in conflicts with minority rebels.

In remarks addressed to the Karens, however, he said without elaborating: "It may not be right for the minority group to obstruct things that are beneficial to Thais."

To whom do the forests of Burma belong? Do they not belong to the people of Burma? Surely the Burmese people have the right to determine how their own resources are used, and they certainly must have the right to obstruct things which are destructive to them and their environment!

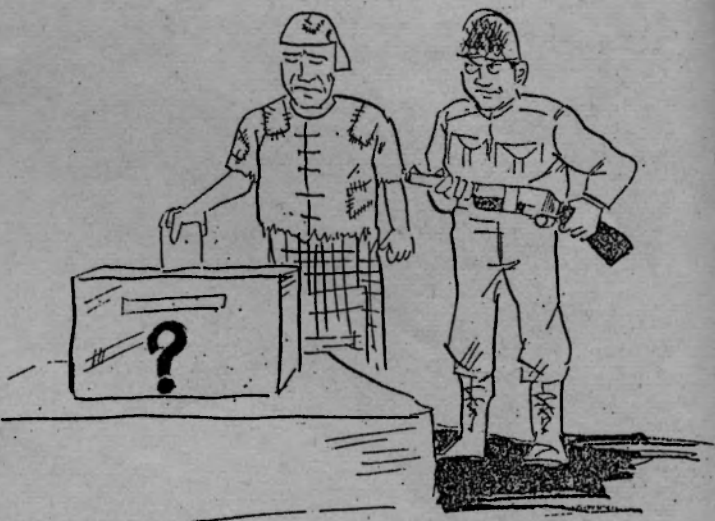
THE NATION  
Feb. 17, 1989

### BURMA ELECTIONS IN SPRING OF 1990

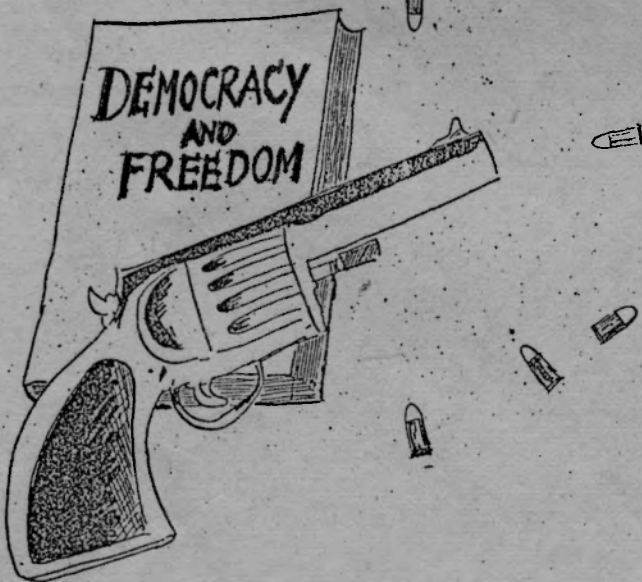
Burma, where a military coup last year ended 26 years of one-party rule, will hold multiparty general elections in the spring of 1990, an announcement on state radio said last night.

But the announcement by the Election Commission did not give an exact election date.

It said an election law would be published on March 1 this year, "14 months before the actual elections," suggesting a date around early May 1990. It said the election campaign would begin three months before the general elections.



A government which comes to power without the consent of the people, can not justify its existence simply by establishing possible dates for elections, be they free or otherwise. It can only yield to the will of the people, step down from power, and allow the people the right to elect the government they truly desire. Any individual or country which thinks the promise of elections by such a government is evidence of a move towards democracy is either ignorant of history, or has their own self-interest in mind.



Bangkok Post  
Feb. 24, 1989

### BURMESE MILITARY "NOT KEEN ON POLITICS"

Rangoon (AFP) - The Burmese military will not hand over power to any interim government and is not interested in party politics, the state-run press said here yesterday.

The People's Working Daily said in an article that the Burmese military, which has already announced a timetable for general elections, was neither interested in party politics nor would take into consideration comments and criticisms made by political parties.

### ABSDF Response--

The ABSDF believes that there can never be free and fair elections under the present government. This government came to power through violent means and against the will of the Burmese people. Setting an election date does not wash the blood of innocent people off of their hands.

We continue to call for Saw Maung to step down and allow an interim government to begin making the arrangements for an election which will truly allow the people to elect the representatives they want. Once such an interim government is established we will return home to take part in this democratic process.

### PM'S MEN RETURN FROM QUIET VISIT TO BURMA

A team of Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan's "representatives" returned yesterday from a four-day quiet visit to Burma in what is seen as the Thai government's attempts to bolster relations with the Saw Maung government which is still being shunned by the international community.

Praphat Bhotisuthon, a Chat Thai MP, and his 13-member team, which included Interior Permanent Secretary Phisan Moonlasartsathom, were whisked away in their cars immediately after they arrived at Don Muang Airport (Thailand) yesterday evening. They were apparently trying to avoid meeting reporters waiting in the VIP room which had been reserved for the delegation.

Prapas, a Suphan Buri MP, described his trip as "secret" and declined to give any details, saying he would talk to the Press after his return.

Burmese media reports played up Praphat's visit which was reported widely in newspapers and on TV and radio which addressed Praphat as "special delegation of the Prime Minister of Thailand."

A source said the Thai team on Tuesday called on Gen Saw Maung before holding business talks with Minister for Co-operatives, for Livestock and Fisheries, and for Agriculture and Forests Maj-Gen Chit Swe, Minister for Trade Col David Abel, and Minister for Energy and Mines Rear Adm Maung Maung Khin.



As the people of Burma call out for understanding, the world sleeps! Are political and economic interests so important that they must come before the rights and happiness of an entire people? We call on all people to encourage your governments to isolate Saw Maung and Ne Win so that they will finally heed the call of the Burmese people for justice and human rights.

### Notes of Interest

Gen Saw Maung calls his government administration in English the "State Law and Order Restoration commission. This sounds very impressive and "safe". However, a direct translation from the Burmese might give you a better idea just what he has in mind as he administers the country. The Burmese name for his administration is "Naing Gandaw Taya U Padei SoiMoeYe Hin Nyein Wut Pi Pya Ye Commission. A direct translation is something like: State Law for Control, To Stop any Movement, Force to Kneel and to Press Totally Flat Commission



## SUU KYI SLAMS RIGHTS ABUSE. JAPAN AID RESUMPTION

By David Brunnstrom

LEADING Burmese opposition figure Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, in her first response to last week's announcement of an election timetable by Rangoon, yesterday issued a blistering attack on continuing violations of basic human rights by the military government, adding that she did not believe free and fair polls were possible under existing conditions.

Suu Kyi, also denounced last Friday's announcement by the Japanese government that it would resume suspended aid donations to Burma and recognize the Saw Maung government.

Responding to the Japanese decision, Suu Kyi told The Nation in a telephone interview from Rangoon, "I think it would have been so much better if people could put human rights issues above economic issues, especially in a country like Burma where the human rights issue is so pressing.

"I don't think there can be any real progress on the economic front until the political situation has been sorted out," she said.

"One needs to make the point that we have no basic freedoms at all and there is no point in having elections in 15 months time or at any other time under these sort of conditions."

"There are all kinds of restrictions, and people are being arrested all the time. There is no freedom of speech, no freedom of association and no freedom of movement," Suu Kyi said.

Suu Kyi said that at least 20 of her supporters remain in detention after her recent campaign tours to the Mon State and the southern peninsula towns of Mergui and Tavoy, where huge crowds took to the streets to greet her.

Suu Kyi also criticized the tightly-controlled state media which bars access by opposition groups.

"There is no freedom of the press. The government newspapers are attacking us all the time, but there is no way that we can retaliate. We started producing handbills and videos, but they are trying to stop those now."

Suu Kyi said she did not think international supervision would help to ensure a fair election, "It would only happen when the election is actually going on and that is too late. We need to start having our basic freedoms now. How can people decide which party they are going to vote for when there are so many restrictions?

"Instead of giving us more democratic freedoms, we are getting less and less. The closer we get to the election, the government is trying to restrict us more and more," she said.

To hold a tiger by the tail

As safety measure it must fail.

To let it go might mean the end.

By holding on, would matters mend?

'twixt the devil and the deep

'tis hard indeed the wits to keep.

(An old Burmese proverb)



Bangkok Post  
Feb. 18, 1989

### RANGOON CONFIRMS INFERNO IN MERGUI

Rangoon confirmed yesterday that fire had caused extensive damage to the southern port of Mergui on Thursday evening, gutting more than 2,000 homes and leaving 22,000 people destitute.

Rangoon television monitored in Mae Sot, Tak province, said last night the fire started at about 3.30 p.m. on Thursday afternoon.

The television report said a short circuit in a power generator in one of the houses caused the fire.

Despite the official explanation, a Thai merchant in Ranong Province quoted merchants in Mergui as saying rampaging government troops caused the fire.

The Thai merchant, who had been in radio contact with Burmese colleagues yesterday, said he was told troops threw bottle bombs into homes.

The Burmese merchant said the troops sprayed machinegun fire into homes in the town areas of Mya Ngae, Kangyi, Dawaesu, Kyaw Ngae where about 17,300 people live.

About 5,400 homes were gutted in the fire, the Burmese merchant said.

Burmese troops also shot at residents who tried to put out the fire, he said.

The troops were said to be angry at Mergui residents who gave a warm welcome to Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who campaigned in the area at the end of last month in the expectation Rangoon's military rulers will hold to their promise of a general election.

The welcome for the highly popular Aung San Suu Kyi contrasted markedly with that accorded the daughter of former President Ne Win earlier this month.

Bangkok Post  
March 2, 1989

### DRAFT POLL LAW ISSUED BY BURMA GOVERNMENT

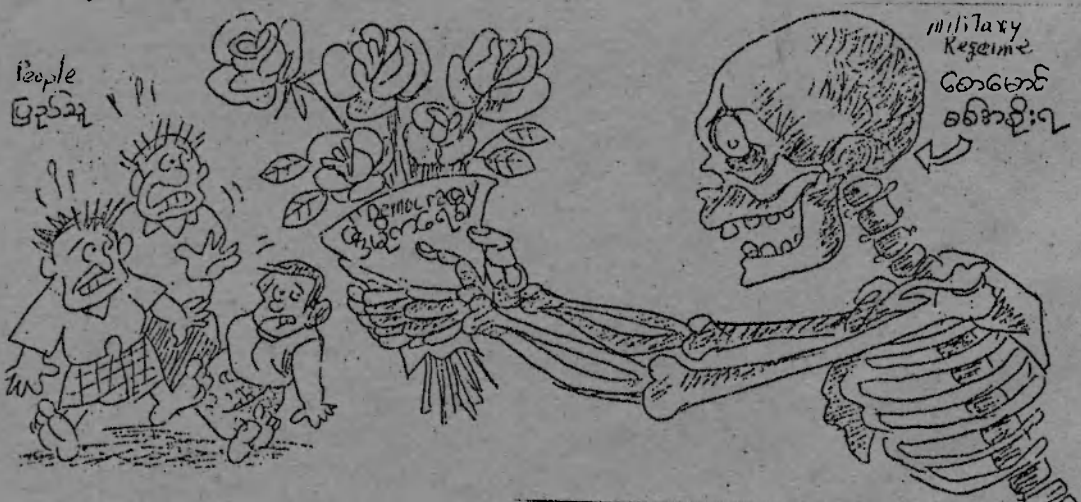
Burmese people, who rebelled last year after a generation of single-party socialism, could face several years of military rule before winning a multi-party government, diplomats said yesterday.

They said excerpts of a draft election law broadcast by Rangoon's state radio did not indicate how long it would take for a full transfer of power to elected representatives.

The law, proposed by Burma's State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), outlined voting and candidacy rules for elections promised by the ruling military council by next May.

The opposition has charged that free elections are impossible because of restrictions on speech, travel and public assembly.

(continued next page)



(Draft Poll, continued)

"This law doesn't set out a new government structure, you only have a parliament, SLORC performs the constitutional government role while parliament drafts a new constitution," said one diplomat.

"SLORC may retain an overall political veto. It could mean years of interim rule under SLORC or SLORC by another name," he added.

Another sign of the military's cautious approach to democratic rule came last week in a state-run newspaper article which said:

"The defence forces will directly hand over state administrative power to the representatives elected by the people themselves. Can such a huge number of political parties reflect the true wishes of the people?" it said.

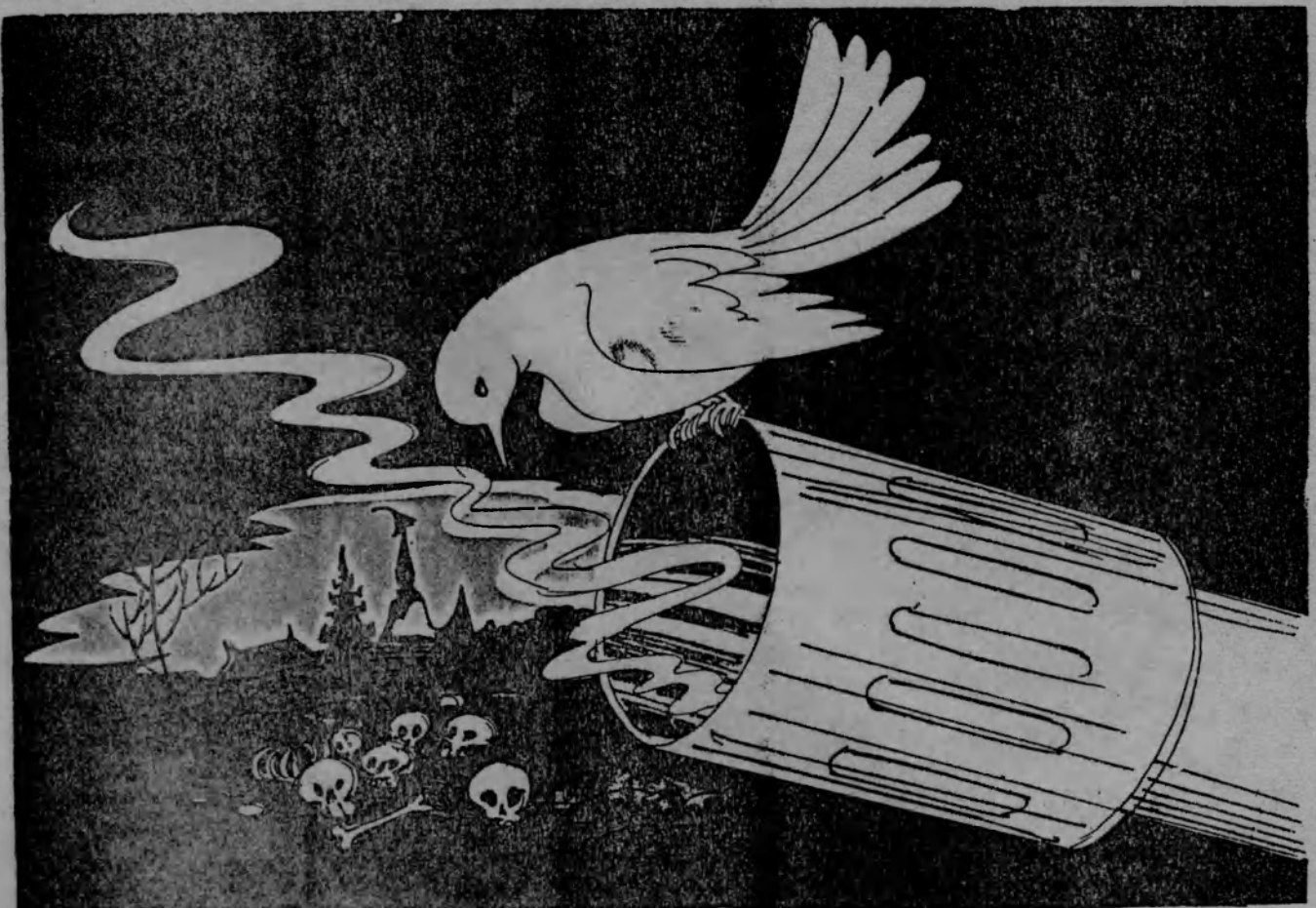
MESSAGE TO OUR FRIENDS

These are difficult days for us. The recognition of the Saw Maung government by Japan has not been welcomed by us.

We call on all of our friends to earnestly begin protesting this action by Japan, and to make every effort possibly to prevent other countries from following the Japanese example. Your continued support and encouragement are important to us.

Our deep-felt thanks to all individuals and organizations who have expressed solidarity with us in this struggle for full human rights and democracy. We must all sacrifice together to truly build a world of peace and justice.

ABSDF





OUR HEADS  
ARE BLOODY,  
BUT  
UNBOWED...

