



BBC

DAWN

NEWS BULLETIN



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ELECTIONS

AS FREE AND FAIR AS MAN CAN ORGANIZE?

What is democracy? It is the right to meet together freely to discuss ideas and debate issues. It is the right to a free press and the right to information. Democracy is the right to an equal distribution of the country's *resources* and a voice in how those resources are going to be developed. It is the right to criticize the government and each other in a responsible and constructive way. For democracy to truly exist, each individual in the country must have the right, the responsibility and the ability to participate in decision making which affects the life of the country. Democracy can only exist in a society where power lies with the common people rather than with the military or with a few government officials who may have been elected by the people.

AS UNFREE AND UNFAIR AS MAN CAN ORGANIZE

On April 11, 1989, Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Prapass Limpabandhu began a three-day visit to Burma for political and trade talks. This is the highest level Thai official to visit Burma since the bloody coup staged by General Saw Maung on September 18 of last year. It is seen as an official act of recognition by the Thai government of the present blood-stained Rangoon government.

During his visit, he met with U Ba B1^ who is the chairman of the Election Commission which is responsible for arranging elections promised for May of 1990. During their discussions, U Ba Thoo assured Prapass that the elections will be "the freest and fairest man can organise."

Prapass, of course, was convinced of U Ba FfUqfs sincerity and returned to Thailand full of praise for the great progress Burma is making towards true democracy. He also returned to Thailand with his pockets filled with new trade agreements which will make some Thai businesses (and some Thai politicians?) rich, and will provide Saw Maung with the money he needs to buy guns for further suppression of the Burmese people. What a strange course "democracy" takes in this part of Asia!

It may indeed seem that General Saw Maung is reaching out his hand in a democratic gesture to the Burmese people, but let us not forget that his hands are soaked in blood - the blood of the Burmese people ~ and that makes free and fair elections totally impossible. It would in fact take something more than human to create free and fair elections out of this oppressive and devilish situation!

"DAWN", P.O. Box 317, Rajdamnern Post Office, Bangkok 10200, Thailand

WHO PAYS THE BILL

AND WHY?

**As bees around a blossom swarm
And flies abound where garbage lies.
Ardent swains will scarce resist
A damsel's gay, inviting eyes.
(Burmese proverb)**

A FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW article of March 13, 1989, stated that Burma had only 10 million US dollars in its coffers by the end of 1988. Other sources suggested that the amount was even less. However, it indicated that the national budget was in severe trouble, and Saw Maung was fighting for life. With only this amount of money available, Saw Maung could *not* carry on with his oppressive manipulation of the Burmese people, nor could he continue his fight against the ethnic insurgents who have been a thorn in the side of the Burmese government for many decades already.

Not only was Saw Maung facing serious economic problems, but he was also feeling the pinch of being politically isolated from the rest of the world. Many countries had seriously criticized him for his bloody take-over of the government, and of his continuing violation of the human rights of the people. He was weak and vulnerable.

The 35th press conference given by the Information Committee of the Union of Burma held in Rangoon on April 19, 1989 did not deny the information given by the FAR EASTERN ECONOMIC REVIEW. Their failure to do so suggests that the Saw Maung government was indeed in deep trouble during this time. However, the Information Committee quickly added that **the government received over US\$ 17 million as deposits for fishing licenses, and expected to earn more as and when fishing works progress. From sale of timber by auction beginning October 17, 1988, the government earned about 34 million US dollars.** At least two thirds of these contracts were made by Thai private and government companies

This emphasizes the immense importance of the visit Thai Supreme Commander Chavalit made to Burma in December of last year which threw open the door to *economic investments* by Thailand and other



countries. Because of this visit, and the consequent logging and fishing concessions which it helped arrange, Saw Maung has gotten the money he so desperately needs to purchase guns and ammunition to control the people. The political recognition he gained from this visit also has given him the confidence he needs to carry out his acts of suppression against the Burmese people who still cry out for democracy. He can do this freely now, knowing that he has "neighborhood friends" who will help cover for him.

In the past month, the Saw Maung military has made serious attacks against several Karen strongholds near the Thai/Burma border. During one such attack, the Burmese soldiers entered Thai territory in order to attack the Karen from the backside. Student camps have also been affected by these attacks, and several students have already been killed in battle. At the same time, many students in Rangoon and other urban centers who have remain there to continue with their non-violent struggle for full human rights have been arrested, and have disappeared inside Saw Maung's prisons. Many have been tortured-some may have been killed.

All of this has been made possible by the money paid by Thai companies for the right to exploit Burma's rich resources. Little if any of the benefits from this exploitation reach the Burmese people. We can, in fact, say that the bullets now killing the Burmese people are "paid for by Thai money". This must stop!

We call on all countries to stop all economic aid to the Saw Maung government, and to isolate it politically so that the Burmese people can finally solve their own problems. Be aware that your economic interests in Burma do not benefit the people in any way, and simply pay for further exploitation and suppression of the students and working people.

A PAGE FROM RECENT BURMESE HISTORY

On July 28, 1988, the moon hung lull and heavy in the night sky over the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon. The largest pagoda in the world was filled with people saying prayers and slowly walking *around* the base of the gold-covered spire which climbs majestically into the sky. For many years, this pagoda has played an important role in Burmese life and struggle.

On this night, the evening breezes were not only filled with the smell of burning incense, and the hum of murmured prayers, but also the excited voices of hundreds of high school students. They had gathered here to give speeches calling for an end to the one-party rule of Ne Win, which had already lasted 26 years, and they were calling out for democracy for their land and people. The fire of discontent in the country was quickly growing.

On August 3rd, at least 20,000 students and working people gathered at the Sule Pagoda in central Rangoon, and began marching towards Rangoon University. This was not just a hit-and-run demonstration, it was a public display of anger over the way the country was being run by the military, and the general population of the city cheered the demonstrators on.

Obviously the government was concerned by this open show of criticism over their ineffective rule of the past 26 years. From one of the wealthiest countries in Southeast Asia, Burma had recently been listed as the 6th poorest country in the world, and the Burmese people were not proud of this title. To control the population, the government declared marshal law on that night, but it was ineffective. The demonstrations continued, and grew in size.

In nearby Pegu city, a clash between demonstrators

and police occurred on the 6th. The demonstrators were completely unarmed, and many fell in the streets on that day. About 5 students were killed instantly and another ten wounded seriously. The cruel actions of the police and military only served to anger the people more, and the number of participants in the demonstrations grew.

August 8 had been identified by the students as an auspicious day to call for a nation-wide strike. It was significant because it represented the 8th day of the 8th month in the year 88 (8-8-88). The BBC broadcast this planned strike over their regular program and so the news spread over the entire country.

On August 5, the Rangoon General Hospital was ordered by the government to begin preparing for the 8-8-88 general strike. Beds and medicines were to be prepared for the large number of people the military knew would have to be admitted. This is evidence that the military planned to use violent force to prevent the people from carrying out non-violent calls for democracy.

The fiery red sun rising over the Rangoon skyline signaled the arrival of 8-8-88. It was a new day for Burma, for it started the nationwide protest which finally saw the resignation of two prime ministers, and the end of the one-party system of government. Never before in Burmese history had so many people united across the land to protest so strongly and in such a spontaneous and united way.

8-8-88 stands as one of the momentous days in Burmese history, and will be celebrated as a true example of PEOPLE'S POWER struggling to build justice where only oppression has existed.



CALL TO ACTION--CALL TO ACTION

8-8-89 CAMPAIGN

In about 3 months, the Burmese students and working people will celebrate the 1st anniversary of the 8-8-88 general strike. Through the issues of "Dawn" we have tried to share with you our concerns for our country and our people.

Democracy has *not been achieved!*

The announced elections for May 1990 are a farce!

Burmese continue to be arrested, tortured and killed!

Ne Win still rules the country through his henchmen such as Saw Maung!

This dictatorship is being paid for and protected by "friends" of Burma who only have their own economic interests in mind!

THE STRUGGLE IS FAR FROM OVER!

We are calling for true friends all over the world to join with us in a campaign scheduled for 8-8-89 to make a united call for the present Saw Maung military dictatorship to step down and a neutral interim government to be established so that free and fair elections can be arranged, and democracy brought back to our land.

The campaign will focus on several issues:

- 1) Pressure on governments and companies who are investing in Burma, to withdraw their investments in order to stop paying for the military's suppression of the people.
- 2) Political isolation of the government in order to pressure them to negotiate with the people and allow an interim government to be set up.
- 3) The release of political prisoners, and the release of the names of those students and working people whom the government has already executed.

Information which can help organize this campaign has been shared in past issues of "Dawn". As the 8-8-89 celebration nears, "Dawn" will continue to provide names of companies now investing in Burma, governments which are providing political recognition to Saw Maung, and other information which can help raise understanding of the true situation in our country.

We respectfully request that you begin preparing with us for this campaign. It is one way you can get involved in an effort to end civil war and more bloodshed in our country. Your help and support is needed. Please join with us.

Non-violent struggle for justice and human rights is not an easy task. Such struggle does not take place in panel discussions, and academic exchanges. It takes place only when we are willing to personally confront those involved in injustice, and challenge them to change. It is only effective when we are no longer afraid of their guns, their jails and their laws. Non-violent struggle for human rights takes place on the streets of our cities, in our slums and in unity with our poor and oppressed. It requires the willingness to sacrifice everything we have including our lives.

FROM THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS

U THANT'S WIDOW DIES AT 80

THE widow of former United Nations secretary-general U Thant of Burma died yesterday at Samitivej Hospital.

Daw Thein Tin, 80, had been suffering from illnesses related to old age for about two years.

Daw Thein Tin was born in Maubin District, Burma and married U Thant in 1934. U Thant died in 1974.

Daw Thein Tin had lived in Thailand since 1979 with the family of her son-in-law, Dr Tyn Myint-U, who works at ESCAP.

Bangkok Post
April 8, 1989

RANGOON DENIES DEATH SQUAD REPORT

Rangoon (AFP) - The Burmese government denied on Friday reports charging that the military had formed a "death squad" in the southern Tenasserim division to murder popular opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Burma's founding father Aung San.

"These are all rubbish. The military will never stoop down to such dastardly deeds," deputy director of Military Intelligence Lieutenant Colonel Than Tun said.

"All these accusations have been fabricated to discredit the military," he said.

He said the military harboured no enmity towards political parties.

Bangkok Post
April 9, 1989

PRAPASS SAYS BURMA ELECTION IS SCHEDULED

by Nattaya Chetchotiros in Rangoon

BURMA will hold its first general election since 1956 in May next year, Deputy Foreign Minister Prapass Limpabandhu said yesterday.

"The election will be the freest and fairest man can organise," Mr. Prapass quoted the Burmese official as saying.

Bangkok Post
April 12, 1989

THAILAND TO ADVISE BURMA ON ELECTIONS! (Editorial in the NATION)

THIS is incredible, but it is true. A senior Interior Ministry official will be sent to Rangoon to advise the Burmese authorities on how to organize general elections.

The Elections Commission of Burma is reportedly quite "impressed" with the Thai election law as well as the government's efficiency in holding orderly general elections and would like to learn a thing or two from Thailand.

And as a token of appreciation of the Thai friendship, Burma is going to grant more economic concessions to Thailand.

Apparently, the Burmese military regime is up to something, otherwise it would not have gone to such length as flattering Thailand with such an absurd request for Thai advice on how to hold general elections.

Burma had some experience with democracy after independence in 1948 until the coup by Gen Ne Win in 1962. But during the last 27 years under the domination of Gen Ne Win's single ruling party, the now defunct BSPP, Burma no longer knows how to hold multi-party general elections. The fact that 230 parties have already registered and most of them will likely contest in the general elections does pose some organization problem. But it is still doubtful whether Thailand will be able to help.

For a start, Thailand never had to contend with such a large number of political parties. Neither did it ever have any serious ethnic minority problem, whereas in Burma about a dozen of ethnic minorities are demanding political autonomy.

Another thing that the Burmese military regime seems to have deliberately overlooked is the wanton violations of election laws in Thailand in every general elections. The law limits the campaign expenditure of each candidate here to Bt 350,000, but how many of the elected MPs actually stayed under this spending limit? There are also laws against vote-buying, but it is an open secret that the surest way to win is by means of vote-buying.

Thus Burma would need to import the vote-buying expertise of Thai politicians and their canvassers, plus the service of "big bosses" (chao-por) in training gunmen to provide security for leading candidates and make the security necessary for their rivals.

After the general elections, Burma, hopefully, will be able to get Thailand to certify that the general elections were "free and fair." And as a gesture of friendship, Thailand can lend the expertise of some Thai military leaders in arranging a coalition

government, which seems inevitable given the large number of the political parties to be in the general elections and the rather low popularity of the BSPP's successor, the National Unity Party, among many ethnic minorities.

In exchange, Burma can send former members of the BSPP to advise all interested Thai political and military leaders on how to organize a single dominant party like the BSPP in Thailand for a change. To these Thai leaders, the current multi-party system in Thailand is not working, at least not as well as they would like to see. And they often cite the rampant violations of election laws as one main reason for finding a better alternative to the Thai multi-party system.

The paradox in this issue is that the Thais who don't seem to know what they are doing would like to look smart. The smart Burmese know what they are doing but just play dumb.

Perhaps we should blame this absurdity on the April heat.

THE NATION
April 13, 1989



BURMESE LEADER CALLS THAILAND A "TRUE FRIEND"

By Yindee Lertcharoenchok

RANGOON-Burmese leader Gen Saw Maung yesterday described Thailand as its true friend" and said that is why the country is being given preferential treatment in economic and trade cooperation.

Saw Maung indicated during his meeting with Deputy Foreign Minister Prapas Limpabandhu that Rangoon is rewarding Thailand's non-interference policy by giving more fishing and logging concessions than those granted to any other country.

Unlike many other countries, Thailand refrained from condemning the Saw Maung regime for the deaths of unarmed pro-democracy civilians during and after the military coup.

Saw Maung was quoted as saying that "some countries" had over-reacted by condemning and boycotting his regime.

Saw Maung told Prapas that two-thirds of fishing and logging concessions Burma has granted to foreign countries so far went to Thailand.

THE NATION
April 13,1989

PRAPAS CLAIMS BURMA TRIP A "MAJOR SUCCESS"

DEPUTY Foreign Minister Prapas Limpabandhu returned yesterday from his three-day official visit to Burma which he described as a "major success" setting up a broad framework for cooperation in areas ranging from trade to politics and border security.

Prapas signed a trade agreement with Burma that Thai officials said is only the first of a number of cooperation agreements that Thailand plans to have with the Saw Maung regime.

Prapas's trip signals Thailand's readiness to resume lull relations with the regime that has been condemned world-wide for its violations of human rights. It also serves to further break Burma's isolation after Gen Saw Maung came to power last September.

Prapas, who claimed to have made the trip in Thailand's national interest, quoted Saw Maung as saying that Rangoon considered Thailand its "Important and true friend." Prapas said Saw Maung expressed appreciation for Thailand's "correct and appropriate attitude towards Burma" during the political crisis last year.

Thailand has refrained from condemning the Saw Maung regime for the mass killings of pro-democracy civilians at the height of the political unrest in Burma. Saw Maung indicated on Wednesday that his government had rewarded Thailand with economic concessions for its non-interference policy toward Burma.

Perhaps, the most publicized aspect of Prapas' trip was his offer to share Thailand's experience in democracy with Burma. In his talks with U Ba Htay, chairman of the Elections Commission, Prapas offered to send Thai officials to Rangoon to advise Burma on how to organize its first multi-party parliamentary election in 29 years.

THE NATION
April 14,1989

RESPIRE FOR EXILED BURMESE

DISSIDENT Burmese students taking refuge in Thailand from the Rangoon military government's persecution will be able to stay here until the situation improves, a senior Foreign Ministry official said yesterday.

Foreign Ministry deputy permanent secretary Kosol Sindhavananda said the students would be allowed to stay along the Thai-Burmese border on condition that they not take part in any political activity.

THE NATION
April 15,1989

BURMA DROPPED FROM US GSP

WASHINGTON - The United States announced yesterday that Burma will be dropped from a programme offering developing nations duty-free entry of goods into the United States because of violations of worker rights in the Southeast-Asian country.

THE NATION (afternoon)
April 15,1989

STUDENTS DENOUNCE PRAPASS BURMA VISIT

STUDENTS met Deputy Foreign Minister Prapass Limpabandhu yesterday and condemned his visit to Burma.

Mr. Prapass' visit they said, represented a "scandal of Thailand's foreign policy", and legitimised the military regime that had killed hundreds of people in its efforts to cling to power.

Thailand is cashing in on the suffering of its neighbour, flaunting its greed for economic gains and turning a blind eye on human rights violation, they said.

"Mr. Prapass acted as spokesman for the *Burmese* regime in helping it stage a propaganda exercise to fool the world into believing a free and fair election will eventually take place despite the continuing arrests and killing of dissidents," the students said.

"With the killings, arrests, and hindering of the opposition's campaign, how can there be a free and fair election?" they asked.

The students called on the Government to use its fully-elected status to sanction the Saw Maung regime to stop human rights violations.

Bangkok Post
April 15, 1989



Do not judge the Saw Maung government by what might happen in May 1990. Rather judge it by what is actually happening in the country today.

There continues to be a lot of talk about the promised elections. Some countries and politicians seem to believe that democracy is simply the holding of elections. If it were that easy, the world would be full of "democratic governments".

Even if the elections are held in May of 1990, and observed by an international team, democracy will not necessarily exist in Burma. Democracy is a process. It can only exist when the people are allowed to participate freely in all aspects of the planning and decision making.

Presently, opposition parties are often harassed as they try to campaign. Many staff members of some of these political parties have been arrested and still remain in jail. Students who have tried to speak out freely to share their concerns and ideas with the people have been arrested and hidden "salty away" in Insein prison. This completely stops the process which is needed to build democracy. The elections, if actually held in May of next year, simply can not represent any form of democracy if the process leading up to those elections is manipulated by the military.

Praising Saw Maung because he has opened the door to democracy by organizing elections is a disgrace to true democratic thinking. The poison of a cobra can be drained making it harmless, but in a few hours the cobra's fangs are once again laced with its deadly liquid. Elections mean absolutely nothing if the people are prevented from freely meeting together, sharing ideas, debating political ideas and controlling the power of the country. Once the elections are finished, the military will once again use its poison to destroy the dreams of the people.

Do not judge the democratic process in Burma simply by the promise to hold elections. Rather think carefully about what democracy truly means, and then test to see if any form of democracy exists today in Burma. If it does not, do not expect that democracy will magically blossom in May of 1990 when the military allows the people one day to go to the polls.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE JUNGLE

IN REMEMBRANCE OF MY COMRADE, SAN MAUNG

Dear San Maung:

Tonight the moon hovers bright and lull over Thay Bow Boe camp. Tonight my heart is filled with many thoughts of you. The lull moon seems tragic and lonesome.

For six months now we have lived in the Thay Bow Boe jungle camp. So often I think back to August 8, 1988 when we together became involved in the just struggle for democracy in our country. Without any weapons, we faced the military and their vicious leaders.

Together with other students, monks and working people, we stood bravely and faced the bullets the military fired at us. In front of the City Hall, we saw many of our friends sacrifice their lives. Their blood stained the street.

You told me on that day, "I have never seen such cruel acts in my life. As our comrades bleed and die here in the street, so you must one day also bleed. I will fight for justice as long as I have life! I will never bow before the guns of a dictatorial government!"

My dear friend, your words still echo in my ears.

Just when we thought we were winning, and that democracy was at hand, the military staged their bloody coup and smashed our dream under their nail-studded boots. We lost democracy once again, and many of our friends gave their lives on that day and the days which followed.

You said, "We must now fight harder than ever. We can not wait for tomorrow, for tomorrow the military will become even stronger."

All that night you were involved in the anti-military demonstrations. In a cruel and senseless way, you were killed at the corner of the Sule Pagoda along with 12 other comrades.

The next day we stood before your blood which had not yet dried on the street and vowed that we would never give up the struggle for justice and human rights. We have held on to that vow these six months.

My dear comrade San Maung, the fresh blood of the students still stains the land of Burma. I know how much you love your country and your people. You have completed your duty to us.

I will continue to struggle for the country and the Burmese people until democracy is finally won.

Now a black cloud slowly moves over the lull moon. I say a prayer that I may never lose the courage necessary to continue the struggle for democracy which you so dearly wanted and which you gave your life for.

Your dear friend,
Khant Thu Hlaine



JUNGLE REFLECTIONS

STUDENT UNION SONG

We students lead our country.
The Student Union is our ideal.
History will record that
the Burmese people stand out in this
world.
We will unite!

The Burma Student Union is a historic
symbol.
We have stood in the front line,
leading the revolution for democracy.
Our lives have been sacrificed.

We do not think about our own personal
interests.
We serve only for the benefit of the
people.
Marching under our Peacock flag of
success,
We students unite!

DEEP INSIDE THE HEART

My friend,
There is a place inside your heart
Where your dreams can grow.

In the hearts of others,
There is a place
Where their dreams can grow.

Inside my heart there is a place
Where my dreams can grow.

You, Others, and Myself,
What do we really dream?
Come inside our hearts and see.

But we must not let it grow
deep within our hearts,
hidden from others.
We might be too weak,
to make it come alive alone
my friend.

Daung Yin Ne

"Ne Win said he had to stage the coup in 1962 in order to prevent the country from sliding into a *black hole*. So he claimed to have saved the country! Actually the country really slide into that black hole after Ne Win seized power!"

A Rangoon University student
18-6-1988, Rangoon University



Our revolution depends on the will of the people. It should be known, we are fighting for democracy and not for our own power or gain. Those friends around the world who truly support democracy should stand with us.

ABSDF

Thay Bow Boe Camp, April 1, 1989

HUMAN RIGHTS

Min Ko Naing

Min Ko Naing was arrested by Saw Maung's military on March 13th, 1989. He was sent to Insein Prison and for a time no word was heard about him. Recently we have heard that he was beaten severely by the military and was unable to walk by himself. Many of his ribs were also broken. He is said to have told the military that if they beat him, he would immediately report it to the world when he was released. After that, they tortured him, and we fear that the torture continues.

Ko Thu Ra (Zargana)

Zargana is a famous comedian and was arrested on October 2, 1988 because of his comic criticisms of the government. He was released on April 20, 1989. U Maung Maung, a BBC correspondent, said that when Zargana left Insein Prison, he was fatter than when he entered last year. This is completely false. He is sickly, and was tortured severely by the military. Now he is closely watched and followed by the Military Intelligence. He was forced to promise that he will not get involved in any political activities.

ARRESTS

Since April 13, 1989, at least 30 students have been arrested in Rangoon. Most of these students are members of the National League for Democracy Party which is the strongest opposition party now. They were presumably arrested for speeches they made during the April 13 water festival in which they criticised the government, and called for true democracy.

Many students and working people continue to be arrested, but it is difficult to get names and places. Arrests are often done at night after curfew. Also, people are afraid to give out information of arrests, because they fear the military so much.

