



NO.10
NEWS BULLETIN

DAWN



STOP
KILLING
PEOPLE AND ARRESTING
IMMEDIATELY RELEASE THE
INNOCENT PRISONERS



DAWN

NEWS BULLETIN

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ALL BURMA STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC FRONT

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DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

THEY ARE NOT A GIFT FROM THE GOVERNMENT, THEY ALREADY BELONG TO
THE PEOPLE!

We love our motherland, Burma. We were born here and have spent every living minute of our lives in her care. We are part of her life-blood, and she is a part of our very existence. Now she stands as a pawn in the economic and political chess games played out by a dictatorial military regime and cash-crazed neighbors who care only that Burma be open to their economic exploitation and manipulation. We can not stand to see her destroyed in such a heartless way. Although we are small, we have decided to say that enough is enough. Our motherland must no longer be treated in this way. We have joined hands to bring an end to this injustice and rape. For those who believe that justice can prevail, there is always hope and always a dream. We dream of a new Burma in which the people are free, happy, and able to work together for the good of all. We have hope that this dream will soon become reality.

FRIEND OR FOE?

On May 21, readers of THE NATION newspaper in Bangkok were shocked to read the headline: "BURMESE TROOPS CAPTURE THAI VILLAGE". Were Burma and Thailand at war? If so, it must have happened very suddenly for during the past months important government officials and private businessmen from the two countries were exchanging visits so rapidly that the mass media almost gave up hopes of keeping track of all the movements.

No, the two countries were not at war. They are close brothers (or sisters) and are benefiting from each other so successfully financially that even an incursion by 300 to 400 troops into Thai soil, and the destruction of over 100 houses by those troops, can not shake that friendship. Money is definitely stronger than blood.

The poor villagers whose houses were burned to the ground by Saw Maung's troops must be wondering whether Saw Maung is really the kind brother certain Thai officials claim he is, or if he is a foe in a smiling sheep's coat. However, they should not be too shocked. A military general who seems to have no qualms about shooting down his own unarmed people (including monks and children) can not be too concerned about the fate of poor villagers from a neighboring country who just happen to be in his aggressive way.

"DAWN", P.O. Box 1352, GPO Bangkok 10500, Thailand

8-8-89 CAMPAIGN

Burma has sold almost a million tons of timber to Thailand and is negotiating sales to other neighbours, but the deals do not pose a danger of deforestation, a government official said yesterday.

Kvaw Khin, head of the timber planning department, told the weekly government press conference in Rangoon that Burma had agreed to sell 180,000 tons of teak and 760,000 tons of hardwood to 21 Thai timber companies over the next three years. --AP--

In 1988, Thailand experienced a great disaster in the Southern part of the country. As heavy rains fell, tons of dirt and stone suddenly broke free from the mountain sides and crashed into the valleys, destroying whole villages in its mad rush.

The blame for this sad loss of life and property was the uncontrolled cutting of trees which nature has placed there to help keep the environment intact. Economic interests of selfish politicians and companies had so depleted the natural forests that they could no longer hold the mountain sides together.

Following this tragedy, the government suddenly listened to the environmentalists, and halted all logging in Thailand. It was a policy cheered by both Thais and friends throughout the world. All of us know that we can not manipulate nature freely without finally having to suffer in the end. Banning all logging in Thailand will allow nature to once again bring the environment back into balance and we can all live healthier and happier.

The environmentalists and nature lovers must be congratulated for their effective campaign.

However, those greedy companies, politicians and individuals who are already rich because of the destruction of the forests in Thailand, have not given up their greed for more money. They have simply moved their rape to their neighbours of Laos and Burma.

We in Burma love our natural environment. We do not want to see it destroyed for the profits of a few. We have been shocked and dismayed by the silence from the environmental and nature groups

around the world who fought so hard to stop logging in Thailand. Surely your concern was not only for Thailand, but for the global issues.

We call on you to expand your struggle to stop the destruction of the forests in Burma. Please do not wait until some tragedy happens as was the case in Thailand. We know from experience that the over-cutting of trees can cause serious environmental damage which in turn will cause the death of many people. Because we know this, we must struggle now to prevent such a tragedy from happening in Burma.

We would like to see environmentalists all over the world join together to call for justice in Burma. Do not let logging companies in Thailand, Singapore and other countries destroy our land. Join with us in protest before it is too late.

On August 8, 1989 we are calling for friends all over the world to join with us in a re-newed call for justice and human rights in Burma. We are calling for the release of all political prisoners, for an end to arrests and tortures, for an interim government which can organize free and fair elections, and for the human rights which belong to all human beings on earth. We are also calling for an end to the exploitation and rape of our precious natural resources.

As environmental and nature groups, you can play an important role for Burma just as you did for Thailand. Some of Burma's forests and jungles contain special species of plants and animals. Your help is needed to protect them. Do not remain silent!

HELP SAVE OUR FORESTS! HELP SAVE OUR LIVES!

On May 19-20, 1989, the Asian Students Association held an international forum and information-action meeting on Burma in Bangkok Thailand. Although ABSDF members could not attend the meeting, they sent the following message to the participants.

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MESSAGE FROM ALL BURMA STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC FRONT TO ASA FORUM

Student leaders and representatives to the ASA
Forum:

Please allow us to take this opportunity to extend our warmest wishes to you all. We of the ABSDF cannot express our gratitude enough for the interest shown by the student bodies of Asia in the restoration of democracy and human rights in Burma which this forum will explore.

Never before in history has there been a time like now when more is demanded from us, as students, to bear the burdens of society. The outstanding trend of history today is that students are the leaders behind the massive movements for human rights, democracy, and peace that the world is witnessing.

Just as in Burma, student masses in the neighboring countries of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea are today staging mass demonstrations and hunger strikes to demand democratic and human rights. We wish to put on record that the ABSDF will cooperate with our fellow students in any way we can to further these causes and that our support for these struggles is eternal.

Today is not the time for a country or a people to keep its doors locked to the outside world and remain isolated within its own geographical boundaries. That the stability of a country has an impact on regional interests is obvious to everyone. We are of the belief that regional matters should be dealt with through cooperation and consultation, and that we in Asia should adopt this approach in pursuing peace and prosperity of our region.

Looking back at history, we find Asia, a region that is rich in cultural heritage as well as natural resources, an area of contention among colonial powers for market exploitation and influence, and thereby, an area for colonization. Asian history, our history, has had more than its share of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles and movements for national liberation. In the post-colonial times, when Asian nations achieved their independence, Asia again became an arena for regional conflicts due to the intervention of superpowers; it was also a testing ground for the modern weapons of superpowers.

Today, nations with occupation troops in other countries have withdrawn or are in the process of withdrawing their forces, such as in the case of Indochina and Afghanistan. There is, at long last, light at the end of the tunnel for Asia...a glimmer of hope for the forces of democracy.

This trend was brought about not so much because rationality has once again prevailed among world leaders but because they have started to realize the futility of using force in settling political disputes. Regrettably, however, we cannot say the same for our mother country, Burma, where civil war has been waging for the past 40 years. The barbarity of the military regime continues there: bodies of students who peacefully demonstrated for democracy have littered the streets and blood has flowed in streams.

Since September 1988, following the coup by the military clique, thousands of students and people have fled their homes to take refuge in the malaria-infested jungles of the border areas. They feel safer living there than under the tyranny of the military regime. But living in such inhospitable terrain has its price; all of the students and youths have contracted malaria, and many of them are sick at any one time. Yet, we are without proper medicine. There is food shortage and our shelters are not enough to protect us from the inclement weather. But we remain strong and united in our cause for democracy and freedom, and we will never yield.

Knowing that we represent the will of the people in Burma, the military regime has stepped up its plan to eliminate us. That is the main reason why it has been launching major offensives against the camps of the ethnic minorities where the students are also located. These camps have been where they are for ages, but it is only now when the students have come that they are attacked with such ferocity.

The camps are being shelled by thousands of rounds from the 120mm, 105mm, and 60mm heavy weapons every day. The Klerday camp fell in January and the Maela camp in April. Eleven unarmed students were killed, three seriously wounded and one is still missing as a result of the attacks then. The

shellings set fire to our makeshift shelters and we also lost our precious medicines and clothing. Our youths from there were then evacuated to Ye Gyaw camp, which together with the Old Wangkha and the New Wangkha camps, are currently the target of vindictive attacks from the military. One student was killed and three more suffered severe wounds in the latest rounds of shelling. On top of this there has been a fresh outbreak of malaria and this has caused great hardships for the students there. Meanwhile, student activists are being arrested inside the country.

Please allow us to clarify ourselves at this point. What we have just told you are simply facts and should not be taken as a complaint. This is the lifestyle that we have chosen because we believe that as long as we, who represent the will of the people, survive as a students movement beyond the reaches of the military tyrants we can keep the spirit of democracy alive for our country. But we do need the support from the international community -- your support -- to condemn the barbarous military regime bent on murdering the students.

Economic pressure from the international community plays an important role in the struggle for democracy and human rights in Burma. Just after the coup, the military regime only had about U.S.\$8 million in foreign exchange reserves, and with no recognition from foreign governments, it remained weak. Unfortunately, ignoring the plight of the entire nation in the oppressive hands of the few and the plaintive cries of the Burmese people for democracy and freedom, some countries like South Korea, Thailand, China, USSR, Singapore, Japan, and a few

others placing their economic interests above all the rest, gave recognition to the Saw Maung military regime. They happily extended economic assistance and engaged in commercial dealings with the military clique that represents no one in the country. We understand that from Thailand alone, the military rulers have gained \$17 million in fishing and \$34 million in logging concession advance payments.

It, of course, goes without saying that these funds do not benefit the people of Burma in any way. It merely gives the military regime the chance to procure weapons to oppress the pro-democracy forces in the country.

It is our ardent hope that the ASA Forum will come up with effective measures to halt the economic and commercial dealings with the Ne Win-Saw Maung military clique as well as bring about derecognition of that clique by world nations.

We, the ABSDF, wish to put on record our thanks to all of the nations that have expressed their solidarity with the Burmese people in time of crisis, and the Students Federation of Thailand and all other organizations which have always shown understanding and sympathy to our cause. We shall always remember who our friends are.

Thank you.

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE
ALL BURMA STUDENTS'
DEMOCRATIC FRONT



**DECLARATION OF THE BURMESE STUDENTS AT THE
BORDER
(ALL BURMA STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC FRONT)
CONCERNING THE REOPENING OF SCHOOLS IN BURMA**

It is our unshaken belief that there can be no freedom of education without political freedom. Hence we are convinced that taking the following steps to restore political freedom is not only natural and correct but essential in the reopening of schools:

1. Martial law imposed in the country must be revoked as soon as schools are reopened.
2. Freedom of expression through demonstration, freedom of organization, and freedom of speech must be granted.
3. Freedom of the press must be guaranteed.
4. Dissemination of false news and reports on radio, television, and the press must be halted immediately.
5. Dismissed public service personnel must be reinstated.
6. Unfair arrests and persecution of peasants must be stopped at once.
7. Political prisoners must be released immediately.
8. The activity and movement of the legally-founded All Burma Federation of Students Union must not be hampered or obstructed.
- 9/ A committee to compile the list of monks, people, and students killed in last year's state of affairs must be formed with genuine student representatives.
10. A monument must be erected in memory of the martyrs who had fallen in the struggle for democracy.
11. Tuition fees for the coming academic year must be free in order to make up for the lost academic year when schools were closed.

Our demands are in harmony with the genuine wishes of the people and hence they are just. Should schools be reopened without these demands being met or if we, the students at the border, are being ignored, we shall not be responsible for the consequences arising out of the unilateral decision taken by the military regime.

The Central Committee, ABSDF
Manerplaw

Education, as a basic human right, must be offered in a free and open atmosphere. It requires the right to unbiased information, and demands the right of the student to think critically on his or her own without being force-fed information which those in power want everyone to believe. Democracy must also exist in the educational system, for this is where students will be trained to make a positive and constructive contribution to the development of a just and free society.

NEWS ITEMS FROM ABSDF

ABSDF students from Salween who were facing the 88th Burma Regiment, reported that when the Rangoon soldiers learned they were fighting against students, they invited the students to join them for lunch. When the students refused, they sent over beef for the students to eat. The 88th Regiment troops then retreated without fighting.

In recent battles at Mawpokay, Klerday and Maetawaw, Rangoon troops have adopted heavy shelling tactics, often shooting over 300 shells a day. With each shell costing about US \$100, and with the outcome of each battle simply being the occupation of an empty camp, it is clear that the military regime think that public money is theirs to burn. It is also clear that the money they are earning from the logging and fishing concessions they have sold will not benefit the people at all.

Students in Moe Taung camp report that the Saw Maung army is forceably gathering villagers in the area to serve them as porters. If the villagers can pay the soldiers 1500 Kyats, (US \$215) they are released from this forced labor.

When the students went to Lear Thit village they heard that the Saw Maung military was moving towards the village in order to drive the students out. The military had dressed the porters up as soldiers and forced them to walk in the front line. In order not to bring harm to these porters, the students withdrew from the village.

It is reported that the price of one and a half baskets of rice in Rangoon now costs 500 to 600 kyats. This is just about enough rice to feed a three-member family for one month. However, the minimum wage is about 400 kyats per month. Rice is scarce even though farmers are forced to sell their crops to the government. The government has set up three special shops in Rangoon to sell rice at a cheaper price, but lines are extremely long, and few people can really benefit from these special shops.

We want peace.



ABSDF

To prepare for "free and fair elections", the government has found ways to force people to join their party - the National Unity Party (NUP). All government workers and their families must be members. If they join a different party, they are dismissed from their jobs. All trishaw drivers must join the NUP or they can not get a license to drive. Farmers who are members of the NUP often do not have to sell their rice to the government, but can sell on the open market. In this system, is there any hope for democracy?



Temporary shelters, built by the students when they arrived in the border camps last October and November, are giving in to the weather. This is one of the dormitories in Thay Bow Boe camp where over 300 students are living. Only one small portion of the dormitory now has a roof, and if it rains, the 25 students who live in the dormitory have to crowd under this area and wait for the rain to stop.

However, the students do not look at this as a serious hardship. Such problems can easily be overcome with a good sense of humor. Living under a military dictatorship is a much worse fate.

Now, with the rainy season fast approaching, efforts have been made to improve housing. With kind donations from some international friends, new and more stable dormitories are being built in all of the camps.

The experiences in the "Jungle University" during the past eight months have taught the students many invaluable lessons which they could never have learned back in the more comfortable universities in

the cities. Life teaches us more than textbooks can, and the lessons we learn from life help us develop the skills and visions we need to create a new and more just society.

As the rains come, vegetable gardens will be planted and tended. Perhaps in time pigs and chickens will also be raised to help supplement the food in the camps. Previously few of the students ever had the chance to produce the food which they ate, so this is also a valuable and constructive experience for them. They are learning how to take care of themselves.

These are the things which the educational system in Burma never taught the students. Instead of learning how to think creatively, students were taught how to obey Ne Win and his military. Instead of learning how to be independent, they were taught that they must depend on their leaders.

The "Jungle University" does not offer easy degrees, but it does offer a chance to become more fully human.

"Democracy" in a Burmese context is not necessarily represented by showcase elections and a plurality of political parties. To most Burmese, it appears to mean freedom of expression and freedom from fear of the ever present military intelligence apparatus. Given recent events in Burma, it appears that Burma has a long way to go before it can achieve "democracy," even if the promised elections are held. Bertil Lintner

NEWS FROM INSIDE BURMA

On the 26 of May, a small group of students organized a demonstration in front of Rangoon University to show support for the movement of the students in China calling for democracy. They did this despite the fact that the SLORC law prohibiting any gatherings or demonstrations is still in force. After shouting some slogans, they dispersed as the military police began to arrive. News in Burma concerning the struggle in China is very little. Some news is given over the Myamma Broadcasting Service and the government newspapers, but it is heavily censored. The people must depend on VOA and BBC for good international news.

During the early part of May, the government raised the salaries of permanent workers by about 400%. Before the raise, many low level government workers received only 100 kyats (about US\$14.57) per month. Their new salary is about 400 kyats. At the same time, many of the part-time workers, especially those at the port, were dismissed from service.

Although the raise in salary should make people happy, it is unfortunate that prices of many necessities has also gone up. Petrol, for example has risen from about US\$.57 per gallon to US\$ 2.28. Since there is a limited supply on the legal market, many people have to buy petrol on the illegal market where the price is as high as US\$ 11.42 per gallon in Rangoon. In other major cities, the price is even much higher. This has also caused the cost of transportation to skyrocket as well.

Thus the salary increase can not be of much help to the people, and will really hurt those people who did not get such a raise in their earnings. Basic food commodities such as rice, beef, fish etc have also gone up.

Last year 62 kilo of fish was only 20 or 25 kyats. Now the new price is 50 kyats. Due to the selling of fishing concessions to foreign

countries, Burmese fishermen are not allowed to fish in their own waters. If they want to fish, they must secretly pay the SLORC US\$2000 to US\$ 3000. South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, and especially Thailand have already caught most of the fish in our waters and have to pay only a very low price for them. Most of the Burmese people are very angry at the Thai government for causing so many of these problems which began after Gen. Chavaler's visit in December of 1988.

Very few people trust SLORC and they do not believe that free and fair elections can ever be held next year. People are afraid that the Thai government will teach the Saw Maung regime how to twist the elections to get the results he wants while still making them look free and fair.

People are also afraid that Thailand will train the Saw Maung regime how to organize the tourist trade. One Burmese in Rangoon said, "Our country is very beautiful. Our people are very polite. We do not want to see our culture and the color of our land changed by the tourists. Saw Maung can do everything he wants in order to get money. He can even start to sell the country's young girls in order to get foreign currency he needs. We do not want to become a prostitute country!"

SLORC continues to arrest students in Rangoon. They also restrict the activities of the political parties. Political parties can not freely organize the people, and the people live in fear under the SLORC guns purchased with money from those selfish countries who do not care about the wishes and rights of the Burmese people.

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## FROM THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS

### BURMESE TROOPS CAPTURE THAI VILLAGE

Mae Sot, Tak - About 300 Burmese troops crossed into Thailand, captured a border village and set fire to about 100 houses on the third day of a military offensive against the Karen rebels' strongest camp. Thai border patrol police officials said yesterday.

The officials said the Burmese wanted to attack the rebels' Kaw Moora base on the Burmese side of the Moei River border opposite Wangkaew, the captured Thai village, about 14 kms from the district seat.

THE NATION  
May 21, 1989

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### 400 BURMESE TROOPS CROSS INTO THAILAND

Tak - Thai and Burmese forces clashed when some 400 Burmese troops crossed into Mae Sot District on this province early yesterday morning to attack a Karen rebel camp from the rear.

Border sources suspect the Burmese slipped across the border at night and by dawn had intruded about 1,500 meters into Thai territory.

The Rangoon forces set the market on fire, destroying about 100 shophouses and homes.

Border Patrol Police forces said that about 1,200 Burmese troops have been trying to seize Kawmura camp which is being defended by a combined force of 1,000 rebels made up of Karens, Kachin and Burmese students.

Many Karens said they suspected the Thais, who earlier turned a blind eye to Karen guerrilla activities, had agreed to allow the Burmese advance to facilitate easier trade.

Vice President of the Karen National Union Saw Than Aung told the BANGKOK POST yesterday that this is the first time in 40 years of the Karen struggle that such a large number of Burmese troops used Thai territory to attack the rebels.

"In the past no Thai military commanders allowed Burmese troops to attack us," he said.

Another Karen officer said he was surprised the Thai forces were not pushing harder for the Burmese to withdraw.

"I must tell you our enemy's friend is our enemy," he said.

BANGKOK POST  
May 21, 1989

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### STUDENTS WANT COMPENSATION FROM BURMA

The Students Federation of Thailand yesterday asked the government and the military to force Burma to compensate Thai villagers whose houses were destroyed by Burmese troops fighting Karen rebels at the Thai-Burmese border.

Vilasinee Mokcharoenpong, SFT secretary-general, told a press conference at Thammasat University yesterday the affected villagers would "fight their own ways" if the government and the military fail to secure a Burmese apology and compensation within one week. She did not elaborate.

"The government and the military should review their performance if they can do nothing to get an apology and compensation," she said.

The SFT also asked acting Supreme Commander Gen Chavalit Yongchaiyudh to push for an end to the current Burmese crackdown on Karen rebels for the sake of the safety of Thai border residents.

Vilasinee said Chavalit, described by Rangoon as Burma's "Good Friend", should immediately persuade the Burmese government to end the battle which has resulted in the destruction of Thai villages and loss of villagers' lives.

She said Burmese soldiers had frequently violated Thai sovereignty in their campaigns against the rebels.

"And it is Gen Chavalit's direct responsibility to stop that kind of action," she said.

Rangoon has not officially responded to Thai villagers' request that it compensate their houses and

properties destroyed in previous outgrowths of the border fighting.

Vilasinee criticized Chavalit for being "complacent" saying the Thai military should have adopted measures to protect Thai villagers when the crackdown started early last summer.

"Gen Chavalit should concentrate on this matter instead of trying to play a political role which is not his duty," she said.

She added that the SFT also wants the Thai government to immediately stop trading with Burma. "We must not carry out the trade on people's bones," she said, adding that the trade with Burma tantamounts to financially supporting the crackdown on innocent pro-democracy people.

The student activist charged that only a few government and military officials benefit from the trade with Burma.

THE NATION  
May 22, 1989  
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#### DEAD BURMESE SOLDIERS FOUND AT GUTTED MARKET

Six dead Burmese soldiers, weapons and ammunition were recovered by security forces yesterday as they moved into Ban Wang Kaew market, torched by Rangoon forces on Saturday.

Border Patrol Police and army rangers found the bodies amid the remains of 150 wooden shops and homes burnt down after 400 Burmese troops crossed the Moei River on Friday night to attack the Karen rebel camp of Kawmura from the rear.

Three of the dead, from the 33rd division, had been stripped of their uniforms and were found in hastily-dug graves by the river.

A number of bodies that could not be identified were found in the rubble, and troops found tracks of bodies which were dragged from Ban Wang Kaew to the river.

BANGKOK POST  
May 22, 1989  
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#### THAILAND LODGES STRONG PROTEST TO BURMA

Thailand lodged a strongly-worded protest and demand for compensation yesterday to the Burmese

embassy after a Thai border village in Tak province was destroyed during a cross-border incursion by Burmese troops in their war against Karen rebels on Saturday.

Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan said the government will demand compensation from Burma for the burning of about 200 houses at the border village of Baan Wang Kaew in Tak's Mae Sot district over the weekend after the intrusion by about 400 Burmese soldiers.

However past claims for compensation have never been met. Thailand had already claimed for 30 million baht compensation from Burma for the casualties and damage to property caused by government troops during their offensive against minority rebels since last December.

THE NATION  
May 23, 1989  
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#### KEEP BURMESE SOLDIERS WITHIN THEIR BORDER

The Burmese troop incursion into Thai territory over the weekend to attack a Karen rebel camp from the rear is the price Thailand must pay for the government's complacency with and acceptance of the military regime in Rangoon. There is no question that the incident was a gross violation of our territorial sovereignty, not to mention the obvious damage inflicted on the innocent Thai villagers.

The incursion, probably the biggest by Burmese forces in recent years, comes not long after top Thai and Burmese military leaders had congratulated each other on their new found camaraderie. It was Thailand, and especially the military, that has brought the Saw Maung regime in Rangoon out of isolation in the name of friendship and security despite worldwide condemnation of its human rights abuses following the bloody military coup last September. We had been asked to believe that Thailand and Burma had entered a new chapter in its relations with each other.

It is worth noting that the incursion into Baan Wang Kaw in Mae Sot District of Tak by about 400 Burmese troops comes less than a month after a visit here by Burmese army chief Lt. Gen Than Shwe although it is too early to say if there is any correlation between the two. However, the fact that the Burmese troops crossed into Thai territory and set fire to more than 200 houses at this time of growing relations between Thailand and Burma leads one to question the sincerity of the Burmese leaders

in their pledge to respect Thailand's territorial sovereignty.

The Thai military and government have gone to great lengths to justify their support for the Rangoon regime, arguing that Burma is our neighbor and such backing is crucial for our own security and stability.

What is interesting, however, is the direction and development of the new-found friendship between the military of Thailand and Burma. Burmese forces appear to have gained more confidence as a result and have vigorously stepped up their attacks against Karen rebels in recent months. The incident at Ban Wang Kaew shows the problem of minority groups along our border is far from over despite the closer relations between the two countries.

Thai authorities should be commended for having taken the precaution (for whatever reason) of evacuating the villagers from Baan Wang Kaew before the Burmese incursion. The Foreign Ministry was also correct in its summoning of the Burmese ambassador to protest the incursion and demand compensation for the apparent deliberate damage to the Thai village. The Burmese leaders owe Thailand an apology and a guarantee that Thai territorial sovereignty will not be violated again.

But for a regime that does not care about the lives of its own people, we cannot help wondering whether the sufferings of the Thai villagers will mean anything to it.

THE NATION Editorial  
May 23, 1989

#### ARMY TO NEGOTIATE BURMA CEASEFIRE

A senior military officer left for Rangoon this morning to discuss ways of preventing further spillovers of fighting between Burmese troops and Karen rebels into Thai territory and to promote the idea for ceasefire negotiations between them, acting Supreme Commander Gen Chavalit Yonchaiyudh said.

The mission assigned to deputy Supreme Commander Gen Pak Akkanibutr was revealed by Gen Chavalit during his fact-finding trip to Wang Kaew Village, which was burnt down by intruding Burmese troops seeking to destroy the Karens' strongest base of Kaw Moo Ra opposite Mae Sot district of Tak.

Another assignment is for Gen Pak to mediate on the conflict between the Burmese government and the minority group in a hope to end their fighting, the acting supreme commander said.

Gen Chavalit said Rangoon had previously demanded that the rebels lay down their arms before negotiations could be held and the rebels spurned the pre-condition.

"But right now, the minority group is ready to comply with the condition," Gen. Chavalit claimed.

THE NATION  
May 23, 1989

#### ARMY OFFERS JUNTA-REBEL PEACE TALKS

The Thai military has offered to host ceasefire talks between Rangoon and its ethnic minority adversaries of 40 years in Chiang Mai, a rebel source said yesterday.

The offer came as Deputy Supreme Commander Gen Pat Akkanibutr made an urgent trip to Rangoon yesterday to assess the junta's attitude to peace talks, and compensation for damage caused to a Tak province village by intruding Burmese forces last week.

The source said Gen Chavalit had assigned an aide, a major-general, to sound out the opinions of leaders of the Burmese minority groups.

The 21 groups which form the Democratic Alliance of Burma called an urgent meeting early this month, and on May 9 told the aide they accepted Gen Chavalit's idea.

According to the source, the DAB appointed a seven-member ceasefire negotiating team and a four-member advisory team.

While the rebels said they had been ready for talks since last Monday, the junta has yet to make its position clear, although Burmese diplomats in Thailand were expected to be the initial representatives.

Gen Chavalit denied reports the military had connived with Rangoon in allowing Burmese troops to cross the border to attack the Karens' Kawmura camp from the rear.

"We will not, under any circumstances, allow any party to use our territory to fight against each other -- not even our friend," he said.

BANGKOK POST  
May 24, 1989



## RANGOON AGREES TO CEASEFIRE TALKS WITH REBELS

Rangoon has accepted in principle Thailand's proposal for ceasefire talks with the ethnic minority rebels, acting Supreme Commander Chavalit Youngchaivudh said yesterday.

Gen Chavalit said Burmese leaders agreed to the ceasefire proposal during their meeting with a Thai military delegation in Rangoon Tuesday following an incursion into a Thai border village in Tak province by Burmese troops last weekend.

Chavalit said Tuesday that the minority rebels have shown the readiness to lay down arms and negotiate peace with the Burmese Government but anti-Rangoon minority groups have strongly contradicted his claim.

Meanwhile, a leader of the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB), an umbrella organization of anti-Rangoon groups, yesterday rejected any demand from Rangoon for the rebels to lay down their arms as a precondition for peace talks.

Gen U Thwin, vice president of DAB, however, welcomed the Thai military's offer to mediate a ceasefire between Rangoon and the ethnic minority groups fighting for independence from the Thai-Burmese border.

Thwin, who has been fighting against Rangoon for 20 years, said the minority groups and Burmese students appreciate Thailand's efforts in bringing peace to Burma. "We are ready for peace talks but we reject the demand that we lay down arms first," he said.

Thwin said only after the Saw Maung government guarantees human rights, press freedom, democracy and free and fair elections would the DAB and the NDF consider entering peace talks.

THE NATION  
May 25, 1989

## BORDER INCIDENT SHOWS ARMY'S TIES WITH BURMA GOING TOO FAR

The incident in Baan Wang Kaew is deplorable and there are many questions to be asked.

How could 400 Burmese troops march into the Tak border village to launch a battle against the Karen

base at Kaw Moo Ra across the river and cause the razing of 200 houses without any resistance from the Thai security forces? Was it an accident? or something else?

The official version says it was an accident. After Thailand's protest the Burmese military regime dutifully expressed regret and agreed to pay compensation for the damage.

If we believe the official line, then Thailand's defence is in jeopardy. No defence is bad defence. No armed foreign forces should be able to enter Thai territory without permission, especially for the engagement of a military offensive along a sensitive frontier.

Ten years of continued UN protest against Vietnam and Laos for border incursions shows the disrespect neighbors have regarding their territorial sovereignty. Now this has been compromised by Burma.

Fortunately, no Thai villagers were hurt this time as they were conveniently evacuated in advance of the incursion. Thais must have known what was going to happen so they must also have colluded with the Burmese regime.

During his visit to Thailand -- the first high-level military official to go abroad since September's bloody coup -- Burmese Army Commander Lt Gen Than Shwe briefly visited Mae Sot. Some said he was on a sightseeing tour.

With the support of the Thai military, the Rangoon regime is able to breathe against the condemnation and boycott from Western countries.

With the government in Rangoon firmly under the first of military leaders, the nation's wealth of natural resources are open for plunder. Logging concessions from Burma obtained by Thai representatives from greedy political parties here have become yardsticks of success. Minerals, precious stones and fish are being lined up behind the timber.

Strike the iron while it is hot, goes an old adage. In this case, the uniformed and civilian Thais will exploit what they can while the current situation lasts. It seems it will be for quite sometime while freedom remains an equal distant prospect for the people of Burma.

THE NATION  
May 25, 1989

## RANGOON REJECTS OFFER FOR PEACE TALKS WITH REBELS

Burma has rejected peace talks with ethnic insurgent groups fighting for autonomy, despite a call by Thailand for negotiations to end the four decade long civil war.

Burma's military government spokesman, Colonel Aung Thein, told Agency France-Presse in Rangoon that there would be no negotiations with the insurgent groups battling Burmese troops along the Thai-Burmese border.

"We shall continue to fight them until they are eliminated," he said.

He went on to say that the possibility of peace talks had not been raised during talks between Thai Deputy Supreme Commander Gen Pat Akkanibutr and Burmese military strongman Gen Saw Maung and Army Commander Lt-Gen Than Shwe.

Gen Pat yesterday quoted Gen Saw Maung as saying that he welcomed the peace move and allowed all sides to take part in political endeavors "But this was rejected by the rebels."

BANGKOK POST  
May 26, 1989

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Students in Kawmura camp have had to prepare deep bunker protected by a solid roof of logs in order to protect themselves from the heavy shelling carried out by the Burmese military against their camp. Well-constructed bunkers such as this one, have prevented serious loss of life among the students.

Due to heavy investments by some foreign countries, the Saw Maung military now has enough money to launch savage artillery attacks against the students. Some estimates indicate that the Burmese military spends as much as US\$ 40,000 per day for artillery shells and mortar rounds fired into this one camp.

Five camps have already fallen to the Burmese military and the students scattered into the jungle and into other camps. Economic boycotts of the Burmese military regime are essential for the survival of the students. Those countries, those companies, and those individuals who benefit from the logging, mineral and fishing concessions offered by Saw Maung must also bear the responsibility for the suffering brought upon the students and the Karen villagers living in this area. You can support the right to life of the students and the villagers by refusing to purchase products produced by these countries, companies and individuals.

**Stand with the people in their call for human rights and justice.**

## WORD GAMES

### WHAT THEY SAID

**Supreme Commander Gen Chavalit Yongchaiyudh:**

"Previously Rangoon had demanded that the rebels lay down their arms before negotiations could be held and the rebels spurned the pre-condition. But right now, the minority group is ready to comply with the condition". May 23

**Gen. Bo Mya, President of the Karen National Union:**

If there are talks, none of the minority groups will lay down their arms until the talks have proven successful." May 27

**Gen U Thwin, vice president of the DAB:**

"We welcome the Thai military' offer to mediate a ceasefire between Rangoon and the ethnic minority groups fighting for independence. It is a very good and honorable intention. We are ready for peace talks but we reject the demand that we lay down arms first." May 25

**Gen. Chavalit:**

"We will not, under any circumstances, allow any party to use our territory to fight against each other -- not even our friend." May 24

**Deputy Army Commander-in-Chief Gen Wanchai Ruangtrakul:**

"The damage inflicted by the Burmese intruders (at Baan Wang Kaew) was not heavy because the Thai Army had anticipated the attack and warned villagers to evacuate the area." May 23

**Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff Gen Sunthorn Kongsompong:**

"I believe the incursion was ordered by a field commander with the consent of Rangoon." May 24

**Gen Chavalit:**

"The Burmese came in by accident and they only came in about 50 meters." May 25

**Deputy Foreign Minister Prapass Limpadandhu:**

"I do not believe the Burmese meant to intrude and damage Thai territory, and the incident may have resulted from a lack of communications between field units and Rangoon." May 24

**Gen Chavalit:**

"Rangoon has accepted in principle Thailand's proposal for ceasefire talks with the ethnic minority rebels" May 25

**Colonel Aung Thein, Burma's military government spokesman:**

"There will be no negotiations with the insurgent groups battling Burmese troops along the Thai-Burmese border. We shall continue to fight them until they are eliminated. At present the Government cannot consider this matter, especially when it has been gaining successive victories over the KNU insurgents." May 26

The word games of the generals and politicians do nothing but raise many questions in our minds.

Did the Thai military know the Burmese troops would invade Thai territory? If not, why were the village people all evacuated, and why did Gen Chavalit and Burmese army chief Lt. Gen Than Shwe visit the area shortly before the invasion?

Are the suggestions for peace negotiations serious? If so, why are there so many contradictions between what Gen Chavalit says and what the Burmese government and DAB say?

Is Thailand really upset about the Burmese incursion into their territory? If so, why did they not protest to the UN as they have done so often when conflicts along the Thai/Lao and Thai/Kampuchean border arose?

Perhaps the answers will never be known to us.

# THE GREATEST OF ALL

