

# DAWN

NEWS BULLETIN

OCTOBER 1989

NO. 19



MY BODY IS BEHIND IRON BARS  
BUT  
MY MIND IS FREE AND UNCHAINED



# DAWN

## NEWS BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE  
ALL BURMA STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC FRONT

Vol. 1 No. 19

October

1989

### TO STAND WITH THE OPPRESSED

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### IS A PRIVILEGE, NOT A SACRIFICE

"I never feel sorry for the oppressed nor do I feel that I have so much to teach them. The more I hear their stories, the more amazed I am at their creativity in fighting oppression non-violently, and in many cases effectively. I believe the oppressed are the ones who can truly teach the world what justice, hope and democracy mean. They have learned, not from books and university halls, but from the very realities of life. Their education far outshines those of us who have degrees hanging on our walls for the truths they have learned are never taught in the text books. No, I do not feel sorry for the oppressed. I admire their survival skills, and their ability to face so much hardship. The people I feel sorry for are those who, from their high perches of arrogance, look down on the oppressed as lacking knowledge and skills, and needing the guiding hand of the "intellectually superior". I feel sorry for those in more privileged classes of society who condemn the oppressed when they suddenly fight back, but yet who do not have the courage to confront their own oppressive structures. The oppressed do not need us. We need the oppressed if we are to ever truly understand the injustices of the present social structures, and see a vision of what could actually be."

(following the news of the recent hijacking of a Burmese airliner by two young Burmese students, M. Brang Seng wrote the following)

"It was a shame to listen to another piece of news on the same day as the hijacking took place: in his speech before the United Nations General Assembly, U Ohn Gyaw, the director-general of the foreign ministry, had the audacity to "assure the whole world" that there are going to be free and fair elections in Burma next year and that his self-appointed government is leading the country towards democracy.

The hijacking reflects the desperation most people in Burma feel when they hear that kind of statement; the difference between the promises of the ruling junta in Rangoon and the bitter realities of today's Burma. Seen in this perspective, it is hard to blame these two young men who risked their lives for one simple thing: to make the world listen to the cry for democracy in Burma which is being brutally suppressed by the bullets and bayonets of the government's army, in Rangoon as well as in the frontier areas where Burma's ethnic minorities for years have been fighting for the same goal."

"DAWN", PO Box 1352., Bangkok 10500, Thailand

# A DRAMA ABOUT LIFE, PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

On October 6, two young Burmese, Ye Yint, 24, and Ye Thi Ha, 25 hijacked a Burma Airways Fokker F-28 airplane to Thailand. Eighty three passengers were on board.

Ye Yint and Ye Thi Ha demanded that the Rangoon government free opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, as well as restore democratic rights to the Burmese people.

Thai Deputy Prime Minister Tienchai Sirisamphan served as the negotiator with the hijackers, and after 11 hours, all passengers were released and Ye Yint and Ye Thi Ha turned themselves over peacefully to the Thai authorities.

The hijacking further highlights the frustrations which still simmer inside Burma. Since the military coup of September 18 last year, the Burmese people have continued to call for international support for democratic reforms in their country. Unfortunately, the world tends to forget government and military brutalities very quickly, especially if lucrative business deals are dangled in front of their faces.

Ye Yint and Ye Thi Ha perhaps represent the feelings of the majority of Burmese who have tired of trying to call public attention to the inhumanity which still is practiced daily by the Burmese military regime. People inside Burma, students along the border areas and overseas Burmese have time and again called for economic boycotts of the Saw Maung regime so that it will not be able to continue its suppressive war against the people. Few people have taken seriously this plea, and economic contracts inside Burma increase every day. Thus frustrations finally reach a peak, and acts such as this hijacking seem to become the only alternative to once again alert the world to the realities inside a closed and little-known country.

It is perhaps not a coincidence that the hijacked plane landed in Thailand which has led the mad rush into Burma to latch hold of the lucrative economic deals the military regime is selling off. The 43 Thai private and government companies which have signed logging concessions with Saw Maung will contribute a total of US \$200 million to the country in 1989 if all are paid in full (THE NATION, October 6, 1989)! What must the Burmese people do to finally call attention to this source of support for an inhumane government?

As the hijacking drama itself has come to an end, the question now remains as to what will happen to Ye Yint and Ye Thi Ha. We were much encouraged by statements by both Thai Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan and Deputy Prime Minister Tienchai Sirisamphan that the two students would not be sent back to Burma. Both PM Chatichai and Tienchai agree that if the students were sent back, they would certainly be killed. When asked about this, DPM Tienchai said, "Just imagine what will happen if we send them back." He also stated that the Burmese government is "not interested in the students and does not want to talk with them." This is a clear recognition of the problem the two students were trying to highlight.

The statements by PM Chatichai and DPM Tienchai demonstrate a true concern for the lives of these two young students. We applaud this, and urge them to continue to look at our situation with sympathy and understanding so that the Thai policy towards Burma can help bring about peace and justice.

## Statement by Ye Yint and Ye Thi Ha

To The Military Government, Date. 6.10.89

We are Burmese students. We are fighting for democracy. We love peace. we need human-rights for our peoples. We are very very want to get good and standard position for next time of Burma, our country. Please help us.

Now, the military government, Ne Win, Saw Maung, is killing the people. They are murders. But they are talking about they are working hard for people and they want to get peace for peoples lifes. So they will protect lifes of people and improvement of country. We demand the following facts. Those facts are good for people and country. Thus, if the government does not agree, we will remark that the government is not right. Their talking is unlike their working. Please declare this message to the military government, Saw Maung and the world.

1. To release detained Daw Aung Sun Su Kyt.
2. To release detained students, monks and people
3. To abolish curfew order.
4. To withdraw the government forces to the barracks.
5. To keep peace of country by bringing in UN troops.
6. To form the interim government controlled by the United Nations Mission
7. To give freedom for writing and organizing

Ye Yint and Ye Thi Ha

We love Burma  
We love Burma  
We love Burma

## Press Release of the ABSDF

(October 7, 1989)

The attitude of the ABSDF towards the two student hijackers who submitted to Thai authorities yesterday morning can be explained thus:

They may be students and they did hijack the plane, but in the light of the whole event it is obvious that they did not wish to use violence. The plane hijack seems to have been used merely as a means to show that they are really serious about their demands.

Their demands are identical to that of the entire people of Burma and these are the demands we have been relaying to the world populace with our tears and blood since the brutal military take-over in Burma last year. We regard this hijacking as a reaction to the current situation in Burma where freedom of speech is totally impossible.

However, they did not terrorize the passengers; they accepted negotiations with the Thai government; then released all passengers and did not blow up the plane; and finally they submitted peacefully to Thai authorities.

Therefore, our attitude towards them is of sympathy and understanding because their demands are just and political, and their acts are humane. It may not be appropriate to relay their demands to the world in such a way, but they seemed to be compelled to do so because of the political oppression being carried out by the State Law and Order Restoration Council. It is natural that for every oppression there is resistance. They may have tactical errors because of their intolerance to the oppressive regime. All consequences arising out of the plane hijacking are the sole responsibility of the SLORC.

Therefore, we earnestly appeal to the Thai government to take their act of peaceful submission to the Thai officials into consideration and not to hand them over to the brutal oppressive regime in Burma where they will most certainly be killed. We also appeal to all international humanitarian organizations and democratic governments to find ways and means so that we all can safeguard their lives and their democratic ideals.

ALL BURMA STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC FRONT  
October 7, 1989

### **ACTION--ACTION**

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1. Write letters to Saw Maung, SLORC Headquarters, Rangoon, Burma concerning the violation of human rights inside Burma which is the direct cause of this hijacking. Call on him to respect justice and human rights, and to allow the people to set up an interim government to lead the country into democratic elections. You can refer to back issues of "Dawn" for details on human rights violations in Burma. Please send copies of your letters to U Aung Nvein, All India Radio "Burmese Unit" ESD, Parliament Street, New Delhi - 110003, India. They will relay your messages over their Burmese language broadcast so that all people in Burma can know of your support and concern. This will help prevent the SLORC from hiding your concern from the people.

2. Write letters to Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan, Government House, Bangkok, Thailand, thanking him for his understanding of the situation, and for not sending Ye Yint and Ye Thi Ha back to Burma. Hijacking is a serious offense, and the two students will certainly face trial in Thailand. Ask that the Thai government look closely at the reasons these two young men were forced to take such a drastic action, and deal with them sympathically and fairly.

2. Seek every way possible to support an economic boycott of the Saw Maung military regime. As the situation inside Burma worsens, and as the people become more and more hopeless, other protests similar to this hijacking might take place. We need to work at prevention. An economic boycott is a true non-violent attempt at prevention.

"Let the oppressed of Burma tread on me as a bridge to cross a river of hardships and misery."

Naing Lu Aung



## NE WIN'S DIVIDE AND RULE GAME

In 1967, the Ne Win government managed to divert attention away from internal social and economic woes by instigating attacks on the Chinese community in Burma. Due to the fact that Burma has a very large Chinese community, the government chose to create a conflict between them and the Burmese community. The ploy was effective. People quickly stopped criticizing the government, and instead began attacking the Chinese community.

In June and July of 1984, there were new shortages of goods and local prices went up. In what seems to be very similar circumstances to that of 1967, widespread anti-Muslim riots in Moulmein, Martaban and in some towns of the Irrawaddy delta region southwest of Rangoon, broke out reports Bertil Lintner in his book "Outrage".

In June 1988, during the pro-democracy demonstrations, a conflict again developed between the Muslims and the Buddhists. The "Nationalistic Buddhists" organization claimed that they had discovered a secret document signed by "The Muslim League", which stated that "If we, the muslims, have to leave from this country by force, we must insure that our future generations and our blood will be left here. This is easy to accomplish, because the Burmese Buddhists women are easy to get by paying money or by sex." The secret document allegedly went on to promise that if a Muslim could marry a Burmese Buddhist women, they would be given a monthly allowance of 1,000 kyats by the "Muslim League". If they would marry an educated Buddhist women, they would be given 2,000 kyats monthly, a daughter of an army officer, 50,000 kyats. They could then make this money a gift to any mosque in Burma.

The "Nationalistic Buddhists" leaflet also called on all the Burmese Buddhists community to boycott Muslim shops, cut all relations with Muslims, refuse to enter any mosque, and furthermore printed the slogan: "Destroyer of our religion ..... our enemy, destroyer of our nationality ..... our enemy, all Muslims ..... leave our country! "

In the beginning of July violent waves of anti-Muslim riots started with the first being in Taunggyi, the capital of the Shan State. The government announced news of the clashes in detail every days (e.g. The novice was beaten and a young muslim smashed his alms bowl....several Muslim teashops were destroyed...etc). But they never announced news about the pro democracy demonstrations which were also going on. A few days later, the violence spread to Prome, 290 kms north of Rangoon and after six days of violence, martial law was announced by the government on 22nd July. The military forces never really attempted

to stop the clashes. The riots only ended when the student leaders arrived and explained the truth to all the people. Still the violence also spread to Myadae, which is a small town near Prome.

It is very clear who started the violence, who wrote the two letters of the "Muslim League" and the "Nationalistic Buddhists" and who distributed this news. It was created specifically by the Ne Win government.

After the coup on September 18, 1988, we received leaflets by a group called the "Forth Burmese Empire Protection Organization " and dated 10th Oct 1988. This leaflet is very similar to the previous letter supposedly signed by the "Muslim League". This new leaflet claimed that the men of Burmese nationality must try to marry women of Shan nationality, because these women do not care about sex, they have a loose character, and can easily be married by paying money. It urged some Burmese men to move to the Shan State, try to get married and then to organize other Burmese nationality men to do the same. The leaflet said, "If we do not do this, then the Burmese nationality will be eaten by the Shan nationality. If you can marry an ordinary Shan women, we will give a monthly allowance of 500 kyats, a middle class Shan women we will pay 1,000 kyats, an educated Shan women 1,500 kyats or if a higher class Shan women we will pay you 2,000 kyats."

Who distributed that letter? Again, it must be Ne Win.

Since Ne Win's 1962 coup, he has used this strategy regularly. In our country, we have many different nationalities and also different religions. When the people began to shout against Ne Win, he always diverts the people's attention from the real issue so that they do not fight against him, but rather among themselves. He has always used the "divide and rule" technique, and he is still using it today. This technique is despicable because it creates misunderstandings among religious groups and ethnic groups so that there is unnecessary bloodshed, and it also creates an atmosphere in which our country can not be rebuilt into a peaceful and prosperous one. Only one man gains from this dirty act -- Ne Win.

For the future of Burma, all ethnic groups and all religious groups must be united and work together. We must keep alert so that Ne Win and his government can no longer create divisions in order to rule us. Only by developing mutual trust and respect for each other can we bring Burma out of the pit in which Ne Win has buried us for these 27 years.

# ABSDF NEWS

## ABSDF POSITION PAPER (Continued from last issue)

### IV Strategy and Activities

To overthrow the military regime and achieve genuine democracy in Burma, we have taken on three main tasks:

- 1) organizing urban areas
- 2) organizing rural areas and establishing bases
- 3) international solidarity

#### 1. Organizing Urban Areas

ABSDF realizes that the main force which can transform Burma into a democratic country exists inside Burma. Therefore we place emphasis on organizing democratic education and mobilization of the people inside Burma. We are trying to implement this through an underground net work and have decided to re-enforce the non-violent movement within the country as much as possible.

We will try to collect as much information as possible concerning the real situation inside Burma such as the political and economic conditions and human rights violations by the regime. From the border area we will expose this information to the world media.

We will make contact with opposition parties and serve as a mediator between them and the opposition parties at the border. We will try to build the unity of the opposition forces to create the emergence of a United Front. We will promote good will and mutual understanding between the majority Burmans and the ethnic minorities by explaining the ethnic rights in order to create harmony of the forces inside and outside the country.

The organization of the Burmese Army is also important. We will organize the pro-democratic factions of the army so that they will stand thoroughly on the side of the people.

2. Organizing of the rural areas controlled by the ethnic minorities and the establishment of solid organizational bases.

The ABSDF realizes that genuine democracy is based on peoples' power. Therefore a grassroots level democratic movement is important. To get the majority of the people to participate, we must introduce democratic ideas into the minds of the people. These ideas must grow from the true experiences and needs of the people so that our democracy will truly serve the Burmese people.

Democratic education is the only way for this process to take place. As a first step for this program, we have already opened a Jungle University which can train political organizers who have not only political consciousness, but also some technological skills by which we can serve the people.

We intend to implement a Rural Development Program. As you know, 80% of the people live in rural areas, and they are the poorest class of people. Since the time of colonialism they were most oppressed and left behind during the progress of the society. We have to eliminate the spirit of inferiority in the people and encourage them to realize that they have the same human dignity as all others and that they can participate actively in transforming society.

## INTERNATIONAL SOLADARITY IS NECESSARY

## ABSDF NEWS

### 3. International Solidarity

There are sources of violence and there are victims of that violence. The Burmese people have been victims of the violence perpetrated by a small handful of military dictators for over 27 years now. The source of that violence is not only in Rangoon, but is also in every country which economically and politically supports the SLORC and their suppression of the people. The source of that violence also rests in each one of us who, out of fear or indifference, fails to speak out courageously against that economic and political support. SLORC can only maintain its suppressive power against the Burmese people if this economic and political support remains uncontested.

We wish to solve this problem through non-violent means. We have seen too much violence already, and we know what it will do to our people and our motherland. However, we can not fight non-violently alone. We need help and support from international friends. We need friends who are courageous enough and committed enough to confront the sources of violence which originate in their own country. Only when all non-violent forces around the world are willing to work together can the non-violent movement gain enough power to make a difference. Challenging us to use non-violent means to change our government is not just if our friends also do not use non-violent means to change their country's economic and political policies which support SLORC.

Therefore, we see the important need to build up international solidarity. We will do this through the sharing of information in publications such as "DAWN". We call on all friends to take this information and use it creatively to confront and to change the sources of violence which originate from their country. These sources of violence are the companies, both private and government, which are investing in Burma and supplying the military regime

with the money they need to buy more arms and ammunition as well as governments which recognize and support the Saw Maung regime. The ABSDF as well as the ethnic minorities of Burma have called for negotiations many times already. The SLORC government refuses to respond. A SLORC spokesman once said, "Why should we talk now? We're winning!"

As long as money flows into the country enabling Saw Maung to carry out his armed suppression of the people, the civil war in the country will continue and will grow. More innocent people will die, and our beloved soil will remain red-stained with our blood. We do not wish to see this continue. Economic and political isolation of Saw Maung will force him to negotiate and the possibility for a peaceful settlement will become more of a reality.

Our international friends can help. War is created by human beings, and thus can be stopped by human beings. However, this is only possible if all of us have the courage to act. We wish to join hands with all people around the world who are truly committed to actively building justice and peace.

We believe that true solidarity is not simply words, academic expressions of interest, or a small amount of money to ease our suffering. Solidarity means working together with us to stop the forces of oppression and exploitation. This our international friends can do by stopping the flow of money from their country to the SLORC repressive military.

We will continue to seek all means possible to share information with our international friends, and build up a solidarity movement which can help move Burma into a time of peace and human rights.

## FOR NON-VIOLENT ACTION TO HAVE POWER

## MILITARY TRIBUNALS

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Military Tribunals, therefore, can not be fair since they have no public hearing, no lawyer, no proof, no communication with counsel of their own choosing, are forced to testified against themselves and no one can review the case except Gen Saw Maung, the army Commander-in-Chief, chairman of SLORC. That is why we, ABSDF and the people, call upon the international community to put pressure on the Saw Maung regime to immediately stop all military tribunals and to establish the genuine judgement court.

Following are the list of the people who have been sentenced by the military tribunals.

On 28th July 1989, the "Working People's Daily" reported that Than Zaw (a) Nwe Thagi age 27, Nyi Nyi Oo age 25, and Moe Kyaw Thu age 17 were sentenced to death by the Rangoon Military tribunal No 1, chaired by Lt-Col Aung Nyunt (Air Force). "DAWN" has already mentioned their case in "DAWN" news bulletin No. 15, August and we called for action from the international community in the same issue. In issue no. 16 August, we called for the action second time for them and in this issue, we call for action from the international community the third time because these three young men are not the real culprits.

On 29 July 1989, the "Working People's Daily" reported that the following persons were sentenced to five year of rigorous imprisonment each under section 5 (j) of the Emergency Provisions Act of 1950:

1. San Maung ( U Tin Ngwe ),
2. Zaw Win Aung ( U Aung Thaug ),
3. Kyaw Win Moe ( U Kyaw Sein ),
4. Htay Lwin ( U Aung Sein ),
5. Khin Maung Tin ( U Myint Hlaing ),
6. Thet Naing ( U Chit Maung ) and
7. Kyaw Lwin Nyunt ( U Kyaw Nyunt )

They were sentenced by the Rangoon Military Tribunal No.(2) at Insein jail, chaired by Lt-Col Khin Maung Cho ( Army ).

They are students and they were only charged with shouting the anti-regime slogans in front of the Shwe De Gon pagoda on 17 July 1989.

On 26th August 1989, the "Working People's Daily" reported that Thet Tun (son of U tun Kyi) a cinema projector operator, was sentenced to imprisonment for life under the charged of section 376 of the Penal Code by the Rangoon Military Tribunal No. (5),

chaired by Lt-Col Aung Than (Army). We have already mentioned about this case in "DAWN" News Bulletin No. 18 Sept. Sources from Rangoon say that he is not the real culprit.

On 4th Sept 1989, the "Working People's Daily", reported the trial of the following:

- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Cho Tun         | 14. Than Htoo         |
| 2. Bakkyar         | 15. Htay Win          |
| 3. Tin Maung Nyunt | 16. Zaw Naing Win     |
| 4. Than Win        | 17. Ye Naung          |
| 5. Po Shwe         | 18. Aung Win          |
| 6. Than Lin        | 19. Khin Maung Myint  |
| 7. Tin Aung        | 20. Maung Naing(a)Win |
| 8. Kan Htaun       | Naing                 |
| 9. Than Tun        | 21. Aung Htay         |
| 10. Kyaw Nyunt     | 22. Tin Win           |
| 11. Ba Wa          | 23. Thaug Htay        |
| 12. Chit Maung     | 24. Myo Naing         |
| 13. Tin Koe        | 25. Khway Maung       |

They were charged with reportedly attacking and stealing fire-arms from the police station in Dazei, Sagaing Division during last year's disturbances; setting fire to the police station, seizing four PPF personal, taking them away and brutally beheading them. The first 11 were sentenced to death and the rest were sentenced to seven years imprisonment by Military Tribunal No. (4) of the North-West Command, chaired by Lt-Col Kyaw Win (Army) and sitting in Shewbo 24th to 29th August 1989.

On 26th Sept 1989, the "Working People's Daily" reported that Ma Mya Khaing(a)Ma Mu (U Khin Maung Pwar), Aye Cho (U Maung Than), Nan Lwin, (U Tin Myaing), Shwet(a)Maung Maung (U Oha) and Bo Lu(a)Htay Win (U Hla Maung) were sentenced to death by the Rangoon Military Tribunal No. (1), Chaired by Lt-Col Aung Nyunt (Air Force) They were accused of involvement in the brutal killing of three persons falsely accused of poisoning drinking water during the disturbances on 8th Sept 1989.

During last years demonstrations, many people were forced by the Counter Demonstration Group under the DDSI to make disturbances, e.g. put poison in the drinking water, and looting. This was done to create confusion and destroy the spirit of the pro-democratic movement.

On 6th October 1989, the "Working People's Daily" reported that U Ba Thaw(a) writer Maung Thawka (62), son of U Hman Gyi was sentenced to 20 year life imprisonment with labor accused of attempting

"It is time to construct a new house as the old one in which we have lived for nearly three decades is now in a state of decay."

Naing Lu Aung

to disintegrate the army under section 5 (a) (b) of the 1950 Emergency Provision Act. Nay Min (a) Win Shwe (42), an advocate, son of U Ohn Ngwe was sentenced to 14 years rigorous imprisonment under section 5(e)(j) of the Emergency Provisions Act of 1950, accused of sending false news and rumors to the BBC.

Both of these men were sentenced by the Rangoon Military Tribunal No. (2), sitting near the Insein Jail, chaired by Lt-Col Khin Maung Cho (Army).

On 19th October 1989, the "Nation Newspaper" of Thailand reported that Ko Ko Naing (32), an alleged member of the KNU, Aung Thu (21), 2nd years Medical Student IM (1) Rangoon and Maung Maung Thin (27), were sentenced to death by the Rangoon Military Tribunal and the newspaper said that eight of the other defendants were given prison terms ranging from seven to fifteen years for allegedly hiding explosives.

We, the ABSDF and the people, strongly demand that the Saw Maung regime release all of the arrested people who were sentenced by the various military tribunals. We, the ABSDF and the people, called for pressure from the international community to force the Saw Maung regime to release all of these arrested people and to send their cases back to the genuine civilian court for retrial.

(Note: While I was writing this article in the early morning of 19th October, I received the morning newspapers (The Nation and Bangkok Post). When I opened these newspapers, I was shocked and I shouted "STOP ALL MILITARY TRIBUNALS", because these newspapers carried the news that three more people have been sentenced to death. I want the people around the world to hear my shout and to know the reality of the Burmese people today. I want them to think carefully about the value of the lives of each one of these arrested and condemned persons. - Editor)

## MORE FOREIGN INVESTMENTS

The Yukong Ltd of South Korea has been granted a concession by the government of Burma to explore for oil in a 39,000 square kilometer (5,814 square mile) onshore area in the Chindwin Basin. This is the first foreign firm to be granted an exclusive concession to explore and develop oil onshore in Burma. The designated production area is called "C" mining block and is one of nine such areas open to foreign exploration. (NATION, October 5, 1989)

Pan American Enterprises of the US has concluded an agreement with Myanma Textile Industries Corp to produce ready-made goods from imported raw materials. (BANGKOK POST, October 6)

The Burmese Commerce Ministry on September 23 approved a joint venture between NC Woodward Co of Singapore and Myanma Metal Industries Corp to produce wooden door leaves for domestic consumption and export. They will invest about \$1.5 million on the project. (BANGKOK POST, October 6)

On September 28, Myanma Singapore International Ltd opened a department store on Pansodan Road in Rangoon. This is said to be a joint venture between the Burmese Government and SKS Marketing (Pte) Ltd of Singapore. Last July

Daewoo of Korea opened the first modern department store in Rangoon. (BANGKOK POST, October 6)

Citing small domestic demand and low prices for teak and hardwood, a Thai private firm with logging concessions in Burma has suggested the Thai government should allow exports of Burmese products via Thailand -- a move seen as significant for the future prospect of Thai concessionaries in the neighbouring country. (NATION, October 6)

Coca Cola is investing approximately \$4 million to establish a bottling factory in Burma. (NATION, October 13, 1989) This issue was reported in more detail in "Dawn" issue 18.

The military government in Burma said it would grant oil-exploration rights to at least two foreign companies after ending a 26-year ban on foreign participation in oil exploration. Nine blocks are up for tender in central Burma, from the Chindwin River down to north of Rangoon. (BANGKOK POST, October 17, 1989)

On October 18, 1989, zinc smelter Padaeng Industry of Thailand concluded an agreement in principle with the Burmese Government to jointly explore for and produce zinc in Burma

## THE RICE WARS

In the high mountains of the Mon State, west of Three Pagodas Pass, villagers still live a simple life. They have no electricity or modern facilities. Their demands are few - enough rice to feed their families, a little vegetable curry, and peace.

The land they farm is productive, and large rice fields spread out around their small cluster of houses. Yet the people are malnourished.

The Burmese military which occupies a camp in the district, takes the rice away at gun point. Not only do they take the rice, but they also take away the villagers to serve as porters. These porters carry heavy loads of food, arms and ammunition for the military into the battle zones. They are forced to do so at gun point.

The villagers fear the military, and they fear guns. When they see a green uniform or a gun, they begin running away in fear. They lose everything to the Burmese military. Even young boys of 7 or 8 years old, young girls and pregnant women are taken as porters.

The first thing the children in the villages learn is how to run to the bunker to hide from the bullets of the military. Their experience is the experience of war. It is sad that the future generations of Burma must grow up with only this experience.

Many of the houses in the villages are vacant. The people have fled to other areas. They have no way to defend themselves against the Burmese military camp just down the road. Every house also has a bunker big enough for the entire family. It is placed in a location which is easiest for the people to reach so they can get in quickly.

Around the village are scattered bullock carts and various farming tools. These are unused now. All of the bullocks have been sold to Thai traders so that the villagers can have a little money to buy necessities. The plows and other farm tools are thus useless, and lie rusting in the dirt.

Many of the people, especially the small children, are sick. One small child, about two or three years

old, was brought to us soon after we arrived in the village. He had malaria. His mother said he had been suffering from malaria for eleven days already. There is no doctor in the village, and there is no medicines. We did our best to provide some medical care for the people.

When we visit the villages, there are only very old people and a few very small children there. Most of the other people run away when they see us come. The people fear us because we too wear green uniforms. However, we try to talk and explain to them. It is difficult and takes a long time. They know we are Burman nationality, so they fear and hate us.

However, once they begin to see that we are not the Burmese military, but members of ABSDF, they slowly begin to change their attitude towards us. We live with them in the village, and try to help them as we can. We become friends. This is the process of reconciliation. It is one of our most important tasks.

During the past 27 years, Ne Win has tried to drive a wedge between the Burmans and the ethnic minorities. His military has harassed the villagers of the ethnic minorities until they no longer trust those of us who are Burmans. This makes it more difficult for unity.

The aim of ABSDF is to build up a unified and democratic Burma in which all of us can live together as brothers and sisters. When we visit the frontier villages, it is our goal to build trust and friendship. This is the process of building the new Burma.

Slowly the Mon villagers are beginning to see that the past problems were created by Ne Win and his military, and not by the Burman people. In time, we will all be able to unite together to rebuild our motherland into a peaceful and prosperous land. Then, the rice which the villagers grow and harvest will belong to them. The rice wars will be over.

(A report from a student who visited the frontal areas, October 20, 1989)

"There was never a time in history more important than the present. There was never a task more important than the task we must be responsible for today."

## TOURISM

During the past years, tourism in Burma has been limited by few hotel rooms, poor train and air service and a strictly controlled 7-day tourist visa policy. The number of tourists was around 42,000 yearly. Income generated through this business was negligible since most tourists brought in one bottle of Johnny Walker and one box of foreign cigarettes which they immediately sold on the streets. The profits they could earn from this transaction could almost pay for their one-week stay in the country.

Now, with a debt of close to \$5 billion, and with the need to arm and equip a 172,000 man army in order to control a restless population, the government wants to open the doors to more tourists.

According to Lt-Col Thaw-Da Sein, managing director of Myanmar (Burma) Hotel and Tourism Services, the Saw Maung military regime "has given priority to tourism as an important part of our economic policy." (BANGKOK POST, October 15, 1989)

Thailand, which has achieved expertise in the tourist business by hosting almost 4.5 million foreign guests in 1989 will play the lead role in developing Burma's tourist industry. At least 20 tourism-related investment projects have already been proposed to Burmese authorities by Thai investors. (BANGKOK POST, October 16, 1989) These will include the building of hotels as well as charter flights to the country.

One proposed project which the Saw Maung government has not yet given a positive nod to, is the building of a hotel and casino complex in the Golden Triangle, just across the border from Mae Sai Thailand. It would be called the Golden Triangle Paradise Resort. The irony of this project is that a Thai company has attempted several times in the past few years to build such a complex in Thailand, and the Thai government has always axed the proposal because it would hurt the culture of Thailand. So, in order to protect the culture of Thailand, the Thai company is now attempting to move to Burma where it seems it is not a problem to destroy the culture.

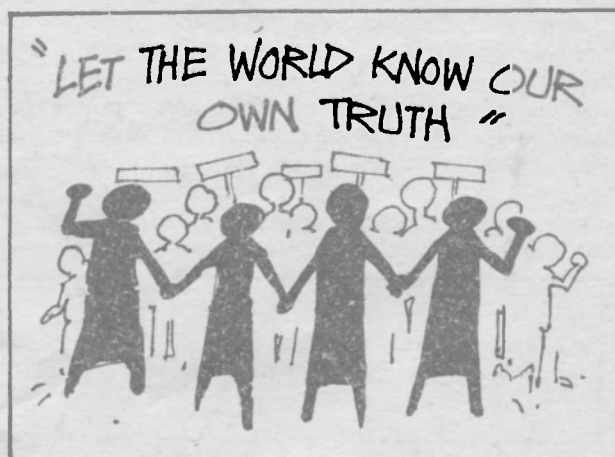
Thailand is not the only country hoping to make a few quick dollars off of Burma's tourist attractions. Three leading hotels in Bangkok are competing with investors from Hong Kong, Singapore and India to operate the famous Strand Hotel in Rangoon. This

hotel is one of the landmarks of the city. One plan is to build a 15 story addition to the old structure which will not only ruin the skyline of Rangoon, but also destroy the dignity of this historic riverside mansion.

About a week ago, an Austrian industrial group, IAEG Co, was awarded a contract to build hotels in Rangoon, Pagan and Mandalay. Other hotels are being planned at sites all around the country. The attraction for foreign investors is that they will have a three-year tax holiday, and will receive the right to remit profits abroad. (BANGKOK POST, October 16, 1989)

"Dawn" recognizes the positive potential of tourism. If it is organized properly, it can provide a situation in which people from other countries can learn about the lives, culture and traditions of the many diverse groups in Burma. It could also give the people of Burma a chance to broaden their own understanding of the world outside. However, "Dawn" also sees the dangers which mass tourism can bring with it. In Thailand we have seen the "Red Light" districts where poor rural women must sell their dignity in order to support destitute families back home. We have witnessed the way in which Western culture has often replaced the traditional culture of the people. We have also seen that generally a few people get rich from all of this tourism while a large majority of the people still remain hungry and poor.

One thing we are certain of - tourism will not bring prosperity to the Burmese people and it will not bring democracy to our dictator-controlled motherland. Only when there is true democracy, and when the people have the right to participate in planning, can a form of tourism be developed which will not just benefit a few rich foreign investors and a few profit-hungry Burmese military men.





## PHOTO ESSAY



The Mon villages deep in the jungle are very poor and have often been damaged by Burmese military attacks. When ABSDF students visit these villages, they spend time with the villagers, repairing houses, or providing any other kind of service which is needed by the people. Community organizing requires responding to the felt needs of the people, and encouraging them to get together to solve their own problems.

Through discussions with the villagers, we can learn their experiences and hopes for the future. We find that we have much to learn from them; and that they are eager to share. Unity can be built through these dialogues.



The villagers live very simple lives. Their needs are minimal. However, the war is making their existence more and more difficult. Their houses are often damaged by fighting, and the children face hunger and disease. It is especially sad to see the children, the hope for the future, growing up amidst war and suffering. They should have happy and carefree lives such as your children have. Work with us to help make their future a brighter one.

Kyaw Kyaw Oo

## THE PRESS IN BURMA

In April of this year, the first Foreign Correspondents Club in the history of Burma was formed. Its office is at 245-247, Canal Street, Lanmadaw P.O. Rangoon.

Since this Foreign Correspondents Club is starting from the scrap, they indicated in their letter that they were in need of many items. Along with typewriters, fans copier etc., they also suggested that they needed a refrigerator to chill their beer!

The history of the press in Burma during the past 27 years is one of passing on the news of the BSPP rather than seeking the true news. In 1963, several of the 30 plus newspapers in existence had been closed. By December 1966 all private newspapers were finally banned, and soon all foreign correspondents were asked to leave. Even visits by foreign journalists were banned.

"The foreign newsagencies were forced to appoint Burmese citizens as their correspondents -- and to have these approved by the government. Although several of the local "foreign correspondents" in Rangoon were competent journalists, they were restricted by government regulations and often compelled to write to please the authorities. Through this unique arrangement, the military regime managed to get its own version of the news from Burma out under internationally respected bylines such as Reuters, Associated Press, Agence-France Presse, United Press International, and the BBC. These agencies, presumably reasoning that it was better to have somebody rather than nobody in Rangoon, astonishingly agreed to this." (from OUTRAGE by Bertil Lintner)

Under these circumstances, and looking back over the experience of the past year, it is hard to imagine that this new Foreign Correspondents Club will provide much in the way of objective reporting. Indeed, one of their first actions was to boycott a press conference by opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi of the National League for Democracy. If they refuse, as an organization, to follow these news events, how can they be expected to provide believable news to the international media?

The first general meeting of the Club was held on February 28, 1989 at which the following Managing Committee was elected for 1989-90.

1. President : U Sein Win (AP)  
(A turn-coat who supported the pro-democracy movement in its initial stages - and later became a main apologist for the present regime)
2. Vice President : U Chit Tun (UPI)
3. Secretary : U Hla Htway (ANTARA)  
(Many people say he is a police informer, and thus not very reliable in reporting objective news)
4. Joint Secretary : U Maung Maung (Fiji - Press)  
(Called "Copy Maung Muang" or "BBS Maung Maung")
5. Treasurer : U Hla Kyi (Reuters)  
(Generally considered to be a "yes man" by the people.)

Presently, no foreign journalists are allowed to enter Burma.



## THE KARENNI

Many ethnic groups with their own unique languages and cultures, make up the population of Burma. Each group is special, and we would like to give our readers a brief introduction to them so that you can develop a deeper appreciation for our beloved land. With this issue, we will briefly introduce you to the Karenni.

The Karenni are a part of the Karen tribe. Since their favorite colour is red, and they prefer to dress in red colors, the Burmans, since ancient times, have called them Karenni which means Red Karen.

The Karenni land is situated between Burma and Thailand and has an area of approximately 4582 square miles. The population is around 300,000.

In approximately B.C. 2015, the Karenni began a long migration from Mongolia which took them through Tibet and then to Yunnan where they built villages, towns and cities. In B.C. 1128, they

moved south through Chu-choke and passed into the Kutakai highland plateau, traversed through the Shan Highland plateau and finally they settled down and built their last settlements in the land now known as Karenni. Since then, the Karenni have been independent and free.

Before the intervention of the British East India Company, and the introduction of Western civilization, the peoples of Karenni were animists. Barefoot American missionaries began converting some of them into Baptists. These missionaries also taught them one of the written scripts of a different Karen tribe. Catholics brought in a romanized script, and Burmese Buddhists taught them the Burmese script.

Recently a new Karenni script has been invented and will be introduced in the education curriculum. It is not the ancient Karenni script in possession of the Red Karen King, Khai-pehoh-gyee

## CASUALTIES OF WAR

Maung Toe lies on a bed in a small hospital in Mae Hong Son, northern Thailand. A few months ago, he was an active 19 year-old with dreams, ambitions and energies. He spent his time in an ABSDF student camp called Huey Zedi which was located in the Karenni State, playing soccer and working together with all the other students to take care of the daily camp duties. He was born in Lwelyn village in the Karenni State.

In July of this year, Burmese military troops attacked the Huey Zedi camp. Maung Toe was shot with a G3 rifle in the right chest. The wound has left him over 75% paralyzed. He can no longer move his legs, and has only slight movement in his arms. His laughing voice is no longer heard by his friends.

Perhaps he is lucky. Three of his friends had already been killed by the military. They are Dae Doe (23) from Kayah State, killed in April, Aung Than Lay (18) from Moepay also killed in April, and Doe Beyar (18) from Lwelyn, killed in March.

Maung Toe and his friends are a few of a growing list of casualties of Saw Maung's war against the Burmese people. His future has been destroyed by a military which claims to be bringing democracy to Burma.

We do not want to see more of our student friends suffer this sad fate. That is why we continually call on you, our friends, to help pressure Saw Maung and Ne Win to come to the negotiating table to settle this conflict peacefully. We need your help, because only you can help bring about the economic boycott needed.

We do not choose war. But at the same time, we can not sit back silently while a military dictator continues to exploit and oppress the people. We will continue to take our stand for justice and human rights.

Together, we can make non-violence a strong enough force to break the shackles of war.

# THE ETHNIC MINORITIES OF BURMA

AIR MAIL



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SLOM  
THAILAND

This map shows a few of the major ethnic groups which make up Burma. "Dawn" will give a brief introduction to these groups in coming issues. It is important that international friends know something about these groups and their struggle for dignity within their own States. Our introductions will be very brief, but we hope that they will help you understand more clearly the diversity of our country, and the true history of our struggle for justice and human rights.