

# DAWN

NEWS

BULLETIN

FEBRUARY 1990

VOL. 2 NUMBER 4





# DAWN

## NEWS BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE  
**ALL BURMA STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC FRONT**

Vol. 2 No. 4

February

1990

### **A STRUGGLE ENDS** =====

### **ONLY WHEN JUSTICE WINS**

For almost 63 years, Burma was under the colonial control of England. It was a time when Burma progressed in many fields, but chafed under the rule of a foreign power. The colonial system worked because the people of Britain allowed it to work and said little to condemn it. Their acceptance of this system could well be related to the fact that they benefited economically from it. It was only through prolonged and hard struggle that the Burmese people threw off this indignity called colonialism and became independent. However, the problems created by those 63 years of foreign rule still remain to divide and oppress the people today.

The day of the old colonial powers has finally gone. However, a new form of colonialism has become a power in the world today. This neo-colonialism is based on economic exploitation. The neo-colonial power takes advantage of a country's internal instability to arrange quick and cheap access to the country's resources. They guarantee their investments by propping up a dictatorship which keeps control over the local people and at the same time allows the neo-colonial power to exploit the resources and labor of the exploited country.

As the people of Burma began their struggle in 1988 to throw off the shackles of dictatorship, they suddenly came face to face with this new form of colonialism. Sensing an opportunity to make quick economic gains, foreign countries began "fast profit" investments in Burma. Short-term logging and fishing concessions were sold off at cheap rates, oil exploration rights passed out, etc., and the people once again became the victims. Through the profits earned by these concessions, the Burmese military once again consolidated their control over the people. Few voices around the world have been raised to protest this economic colonialism. Perhaps it is because the people from these new "colonial powers" are also benefiting economically. Money has a strange way of often silencing the movement for justice in the world today.

Today, the Burmese people, along with the struggle for freedom, still have to struggle against colonialism - the economic type - and they will continue their struggle now just as they did against the British. All people yearn to be free, politically, socially and economically, and they do not quickly forget those who colonize them in any way, nor do they easily understand those who turn a blind eye to that colonialism because they gain economically from it.

Economic, political and social justice requires a willingness to sacrifice.

"Dawn", PO Box 1352 GPO, Bangkok 10500, Thailand

## ELECTION NEWS

(Agency France-Presse, Rangoon) Burmese political parties will start broadcasting campaign speeches over state-owned radio and television beginning March 12 at the rate of two parties per day, party sources said here yesterday.

Military authorities here issued election campaign rules on February 23 giving political parties access to state media and allowing them to hold limited mass rallies ahead of the national polls, slated for May 27.

The general election commission said that more than 90 political parties presently registered to run in the elections would be fielding more than 2,000 candidates in Burma's first multi-party polls in almost 30 years.

A party source told Agency France-Presse yesterday that the election commission had so far told 10 parties that each could select a single party candidate or representative to give one 10-minute speech over state TV and one 15-minute address over state radio between March 12 and March 16.

According to party sources, the deadline to apply for air time is Thursday, and political parties could say which week between now and April 31 they preferred, but the authorities would assign dates for each party.

Fifteen copies of each speech, to be pre-recorded before being broadcast if passed, must be submitted with each application for air time, party sources said.

Observers said most political parties here have opted to launch their public campaigns through the state media instead of through mass rallies primarily because of the advantages of low risk and high exposure.

"The play-it-safe syndrome appeared to be rather dominant in most political parties who are reluctant to expose themselves to the rather risky business of a public mass rally especially under the prevailing conditions," one western analyst said.

In a speech at city hall here last week, Brigadier General Myo Nyunt, commander of the Rangoon Division Military Command, told local Slorc authorities that the right to assemble and campaign should not become an opportunity for "instigating disturbances" and specified strict security measures to prevent untoward incidents.

"The election is drawing near and special security measures must be taken constantly," he warned. No details of the security measures were made public.

Most political parties expressed disappointment over the "restrictive nature of the campaign regulations."

"Those deemed eligible to vote have been issued with "Special Citizenship" certificates. Not deemed eligible are "expatriates" like Indians and Chinese even though they and their families may have lived in Burma for generations, or those associated with "insurgents" like most ethnic minorities and Communists. What it means is that at least one third of the population has been disenfranchised."

Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Robert Hill

"Truly free and fair elections do not depend on the number of political parties allowed to register, or the number of candidates which opt to run in the polls. Free and fair elections depend on the freedom of these political parties and candidates to go out, meet the people and discuss with the people, so that the people can go to the polls and elect the representatives which they believe can best serve them."

## CARTOON POLITICS

Following the military coup of 18th Sept 1988, the military regime began publishing cartoons in the Working People's Daily newspaper to create misunderstanding among the people about what democracy and human rights really are all about. Following are some of these cartoons which appeared in the military owned Working People's Daily.



This cartoon was published on the 11th of June 1989 in the Burmese language newspaper "Loke Thar Pyi Thu Nae Sin" (Working People's Daily).

There are two groups playing music. One group is playing Burmese cultural music and the musicians are wearing military uniforms. Another group is dancing to western music and 3 loudspeakers are blaring music from England (BBC), Rock & Roll (VOA) and India (AIR). The dancers are wearing Burmese traditional clothes and the banner on the stage says "The Democracy Dance and Singing Show". The people listening are very confused, and many are walking away, angry at the "democracy" show.

It is very clear proof that the military regime is trying to create misunderstanding among the people about what the democratic movement is all about. They are trying to tell the people that those struggling for democracy only want to be able to do whatever they want to do, and that the VOA, BBC and AIR are encouraging them to give up the Burmese tradition and create divisions among the people and the army. In this cartoon, it is only the military who really love the Burmese tradition and are doing what is best for the country.

The military regime has also created many dirty cartoons to discredit opposition leaders, especially Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The Working People's Daily has also carried several articles meant to discredit her.

This picture was captured from Capt. Si Thu (a military intelligence officer now promoted to major as reported in Dawn #23) on the 26th of August 1988 in Banedan township in Rangoon. He was arrested by local security people together with many of this kind of leaflet for discrediting Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.





## Cartoon Politics Continued

Some of the cartoons which the government produce are aimed to discredit the cries of the people for human rights. They generally show people demanding selfish things such as a car, a big house etc., in the name of human rights. They never dwell on the real issues of the people such as the right to a free press, the right to assemble, the right to elect true representatives of the people to the government, or the right to express views and criticisms openly. These are the human rights which

the people have been demanding and will continue to demand until they are granted.

These two cartoons prove that the military regime has also created misunderstandings among the people about what those who call for human rights are really asking for. They are an attempt to discredit the Burmese human rights movement.



The word "democracy" literally means "government by the people as a whole" (A Dictionary of Political Thought by Roger Scruton). The Burmese military regime has been trying to convince the world that Burma is moving towards democracy simply because elections are about to be held. There are those countries and governments that define "full democracy" as that time when the leaders of the country (prime minister or president) are chosen from the elected parliament. However, we must question this definition, as it does not guarantee that there is "government by the people as a whole."

A true democracy requires a system in which the people (all of the people) have the right to share their ideas and opinions, have the ability to do so, and truly want to make responsible use of this right. Only under these conditions can the elected officials be controlled to do the bidding of the people.

In May of this year, Burma will hold

elections. However, democracy is far from the reach of the people. Opposition leaders who have dared to criticize the military regime are now either in prison or under house arrest, cut off from contact with the people. The person-on-the-street dares not express his/her opinion openly for fear that they too will be arrested and silenced.

Under these conditions, it is impossible for the people to elect the leaders they truly want to govern them, or to openly share their ideas about how they wish to be governed.

We call on all our friends to not be fooled by the May elections. They can not respond to the wishes of the people, and therefore they have no relationship to developing the democratic process. Only when peace is finally restored in our country and all ethnic groups and races have the right to participate equally can the road to democracy be built.

## HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Name .....Cho Gyi  
 Parents ..U Kyin Maung (passed away), Daw Shan  
 Age .....27  
 Address..... No.337 Mhan Pyae 8 St.  
 Thakayta, Rangoon.

On 7.8.88, I was selling small items beside Botahtaung street in Rangoon. At that time, I saw the BSPP troops shoot into the crowd of demonstrating young students with green longyi and white shirts which are the school uniform. Many were killed. On 8.8.88, the BSPP troops shot from in front of a school campus gate while the students, including my younger sister, were leaving the school.

I was captured to serve as a porter on 4.5.89 and sent to Insein prison on 6.5.89. On 4.8.89, I was taken from the prison and sent to Pyinmana. Then I was sent to Mandalay prison and slept at that place for one night. Next, we were sent to Lashio prison. We had to sleep at that place for one night. The next morning we arrived at Namto. About 500 people, including me, were forced to serve as porters on the morning of 9.8.89. On the way, when I could not walk quickly, I was beaten by gun butts and fell to the ground. Then a soldier kicked me and forced me to stand up. I explained to him that I was not able to walk. They refused to listen to me, and dragged me along the ground. So I had to carry my load even though very tired. A few minutes later I got giddy and fell down. A soldier lacerated my neck with a knife. I told them to kill me if they want. Another soldier kicked my neck and forced me to walk. At one place, I was thirsty and I asked for permission to drink water. A soldier beat my face with a belt and I fell down. I apologized and told them that I was too tired to walk. The soldiers then beat my legs with the butts of their guns. At night I walked slowly at the back of the column and hid in a bush. In the morning I escaped to a Shan village. A villager hid me in a safe place.

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Name.....Ohn Than  
 Parents.....U Min Min Lat, Daw Sein Myint.  
 Address.....No.62 Yan Myae 17th St.  
 Thakayta, Rangoon.

I took the responsibility as an organizer during the period of the democratic uprising and investigated the secret news of the BSPP. I encouraged the people to take part in the demonstrations. Since 6.7.88, I began to take part in the sporadic demonstrations in Rangoon.

At that time, BSPP troops shouted through loud speakers that they would shoot anybody who gathered on the road and chanted anti-government slogans. On 6.7.88, the demonstrators dispersed.

On 1.8.88 the people reorganized and started demonstrations and prominent persons gave anti-government speeches. Monks from Mandalay joined with the Rangoon public on 2.8.88. More and more people joined in the demonstrations with strong discontented feelings towards the government. The BSPP troops began shooting.

On 3.8.88 many people were killed in streams of blood. The dead people were too many to count. But students and people continued the demonstrations and hunger strikes and made posters which appealed to the military to not shoot the people staging the peaceful demonstrations on 4.8.88. On 5.8.88, the soldiers shot into the crowds of demonstrators in front of Rangoon General Hospital. Some medical staff were wounded.

While we were sitting at a tea shop, soldiers arrived and captured all the people in the shop. They released the government servicemen but detained all laborers and day laborers, including me. We were detained in the prison for nearly four months. Then they said that we had to serve as volunteers in the frontier for only two to three days and 520 persons were carried by lorries.

First, we had to sleep in the truck in a military compound at Pyinmana. Then we were sent to Mandalay prison, and then on to Lashao prison. The next day we arrived at Namto and were transferred into the hands of Division 99.

They ordered us to carry the ration bags from Namto to Namhai. We were not fed enough. They usually gave the spoiled food to us. During the night time, we had to sleep in the rain while the soldiers slept under shelters. Due to poor food, most people became weak and were not able to walk. The soldiers tortured the sick people in various ways so that my friends died at Monduct village. At one time I was beaten by green stick because their backpacks which I was carrying were stained by mud when I fell down in climbing the steep mountain. On that night it was raining and we had to sleep in the rain by clutching our knees to our chests and shivering uncontrollably. In the morning, I could not extend my legs.

Finally, I hid in a bush while the soldiers were busy. When the troops marched far away, I came

## Human Rights Issues Continued

out and warmed my legs in the sunlight. A few days later, I arrived near a Kachin village. At that time I was very weak. The villagers brought me to their homes and gave food and medicines everyday until I became well.

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ABSDF      REPO      RT FR      OM KA  
CHIN STATE

The list of the students of ABSDF Regiment 701 who were killed by LID 36 of the Burmese army at Namchi Maw (Jade mine) Mawan village.

### ABSDF (Kachin) 701 Regiment

- 1.Zaw Htwe Oo
- 2.Kyaw Kyaw Tun
- 3.Soe Moe Oo
- 4.Than Zaw Tun
- KIA
- 5.RM Saing Li
- 6.RM Naw Nor

### Personal history of students:

#### 1.Zaw Htwe Oo

21 years old, Burmese Buddhist, 10th standard student, son of U Myint Oo and Daw Ohn Khin. Address is, Ma Da/45, Moedasu Moe Nyin Township, Kachin State.

#### 2.Kyaw Kyaw Tun

17 years old, Burmese Buddhist, 9th standard student, son of U Tun Yi and Daw Kyi Kyi, address Ah Na/ 186, Aung Nan Quarter, Myitkyina, Kachin State.

#### 3.Soe Moe Oo

Burmese, Buddhist, 9th standard student, son of Daw Sein, Saw mill compound, Thasi Quarter, Moe Nyin Township.

#### 4.Than Zaw Tun

20 years. Burmese Buddhist, 8th standard, son of U Tun Mg, Myoma Quarter, Moenyin township, Kachin state.

### Brief background of the incident:

Myo Myint Tun, company commander of 36 LID (Burmese army) and another 30 soldiers led by local militia leader Kala Soe Myint, marched towards Namchi region situated between Thayak Maw and Lonbara Maw on the morning of 8.6.89. Zaw Tun Oo, Kyaw Kyaw Htun and Kyaw Htay, students from 701 Regiment of ABSDF, went from their camp called Thayat Maw to the KIA custom gate situated beside the road. While they were on the way, they were confronted by the Burmese army and they were captured. At that time they were dressed like civilians and they had no arms. After the soldiers found the Organizers ID card in the pocket

of Kyaw Kyaw Tun, the hands of then three were tied behind their backs.

Then they called Kala Soe Myint and asked him whether Zaw Htwe Oo was a student or not. He replied that Zaw Htwe Oo was a student. The company commander, Myo Myint Tun, ordered a soldier to interrogate them. Zaw Htwe Oo and Kyaw Kyaw Htun were beaten by gun butts and fists. Myo Myint Tun asked them "Why did you take part in the revolution?" Zaw Htwe Oo replied, "Because we want democracy." and Kyaw Kyaw Htun replied, "Because we love our mother land." Myo Myint Htun said "If you love your country, you should serve as soldiers like us. Why are you rebels?"

Then they asked "Are there any arms in the camp?" The students replied "No". The soldiers then occupied the camp and captured the record book of Zaw Htwe Oo and five student badges. They also robbed all the food and clothing in the camp. They also robbed all the beer bottles, food and everything else they liked from the small village shops at Lonbara Maw. A shopkeeper said that about 20,000 Kyats worth of commodities were robbed from his shop.

On the same day the soldiers also captured two KIA soldiers and one jade mine worker. Later it was known that the two KIA soldiers were killed.

Burmese soldiers also killed two other jade mine workers in Malaka jade mine. Then they released Kyaw Htay.

At Lonbara Maw they captured Soe Moe Oo and Than Zaw Tun again. Zaw Htwe Oo, Kyaw Kyaw Htun, Soe Moe Oo and Than Zaw were killed at a place called Natkyisin situated on the left side of the road from Maw Han village to the Jade mine, at about 7:00 p.m on 8.6.89.

We received this news on 10.6.89 and we immediately went to that area. It was seen that Kyaw Kyaw Tun, Soe Moe Oo and Than Zaw Tun were dead lying face-down on the ground while Zaw Htwe Oo was in the same position, about one foot away. The body of Zaw Htwe Oo had one bullet wound in the forehead, another one in the back and six bayonet wounds in both thighs.

The head of Kyaw Kyaw Htun was severely beaten and his eyes were bulging out. Two bayonet wounds were seen in his chest. Four bayonet wounds were seen on both thighs. Bayonet wounds on the body of Soe Moe Oo penetrated through his chest. His thigh had been penetrated by bayonets so many times that his trousers were torn into shreds. The head of Than Zaw Tun was broken as if beaten by the butts of guns. A bayonet wound was also seen in his back. The jean jacket and watch of Soe Moe Oo were taken by the soldiers.

## ABSDF ACTIVITIES

### HUAY ZEDI CAMP

Some of the students in Huay Zedi camp from the Karenni State have opened a school for the local Karenni youth who live in the area. The Karenni villagers recently fled from the Burmese military's attacks along the border area. Being forced to flee from the village creates many difficulties for the people, and one very important difficulty is that the education for their children is disrupted. The people know that the future of their children depends, to a great extent, on their ability to get education.

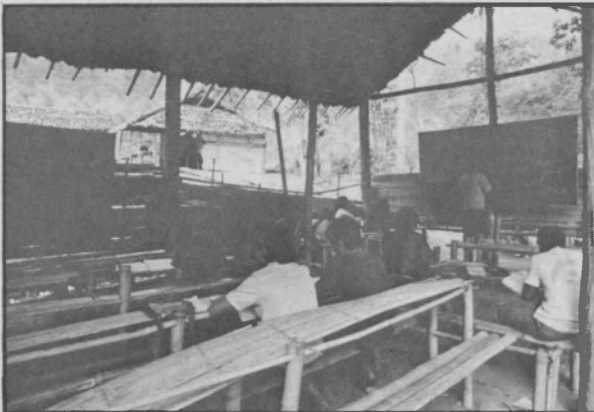
Generally the Burmese government does not put much emphasis on education for the rural villages of the ethnic minorities, even though their education program might place some emphasis here. This means that even under normal conditions, the village schools are poorly staffed with few books or other learning equipment for the children.

When the village has to suddenly move due to military attacks, the simple education which is available to the children can be entirely lost. In refugee camps, people have to spend most of their time simply trying to survive. A school for the children, even though a high priority for the parents, has to often be sacrificed.

In Huay Zedi, the ABSDF students have helped to give new hope to these students. The primary classes are taught in the morning by local Karenni teachers. In the afternoon, the ABSDF students take over to teach the middle and highschool classes. Even though short of books and teaching materials, they can help upgrade the educational standard of these children, and give them renewed hope for the future - a future of peace, justice and equal opportunities.



Above: Two Karenni children waiting for classes. Education is a luxury for them. Few note books, pencils, or text books are available, but they struggle to learn for their future.



Left: The Huay Zedi school is a simple bamboo building with bamboo desks and a thatched roof. Here the students strive to learn mathematics, history, English, Burmese, Karenni and science. Most of the teachers have no text books, so teach from memory. In this school, creativity and hard work are the most important tools for learning.



## NEWS FROM INSIDE BURMA

### SLORC'S version of democracy

A Burmese who recently came from Rangoon reports that now the government encourages stage shows in the parks where western rock is played and young people can disco. Mini skirts are also now seen on the streets, where until very recently only the traditional sarong was worn by almost all of the people. Many of the Burmese people find these things offensive since they deeply respect their own culture and traditions. The government, however, tells the people that this is a part of democracy and if the people want democracy they must accept these things as well. The purpose of this game of deception is to turn the people against the democratic movement in order to assure the continued rule by the military elite.

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### Who is Ne Win?

"How did Burma reach the point where the government would build pedestrian overpasses to be used for the shooting of demonstrators and the military would snatch men from the streets of Rangoon to become human mine-sweepers? The answer to this, as to all questions involving the government, revolves around the seventy-eight-year-old General Ne Win, who ostensibly retired in July of 1988, when he resigned as chairman of the Burma Socialist Program Party, but who clearly still makes all the major decisions. Ne Win, an intensely private man, shuns all trappings of a cult of personality; you will never see his picture displayed in a government office. A notorious womanizer who has been married seven times, he has imposed a strict code of morals on Burma, outlawing night clubs and banning photographs of people kissing. While he is said to be capable of extreme kindness and generosity, he has also had close friends in the government thrown into jail, and he has allowed his army to commit unspeakable atrocities upon the rebellious ethnic minorities and, most recently upon student demonstrators. Ne Win is so intensely xenophobic that he has sought to purge Burma of foreign influence, yet he has often left the country for months at a time -- to seek medical care in London, to patronize health spas in Switzerland, and, according to an account that came

from a friend, to undergo psychoanalysis in Vienna.

He sets the tone for life in Burma in every respect. When his daughter Sanda Win failed an English-language examination while seeking to attend a medical school in Britain, he restored English instruction to a place of prominence in Burma's schools. When he decided to take up golf, in the early nineteen-sixties, the whole country took up golf; today, there are more than a hundred golf courses in Burma, and the courses are the key places for Western diplomats to meet Burmese officials.

Ne Win leads a reclusive life in a three-house compound on the edge of Inya Lake, in northern Rangoon. At least two thousand soldiers are garrisoned near his home. Behind the compound are a steel fence and land mines, to keep out any intruders who might come by way of the lake.

In 1975, Ne Win, with his armed bodyguards, invaded a party at the Inya Lake Hotel where people were dancing to Western music. He beat up a drummer and kicked in a drum; apparently, the music was loud enough to be heard at Ne Win's house, across the lake. Western music and dancing were thenceforth banned in Burma.

Despite Ne Win's fondness for visiting the West, he lost little time expunging foreign influences from Burma when he seized power, in 1962. He nationalized industry, banks, import-export operations, and most retail businesses without compensation, including all businesses owned by foreigners. He stripped Indian and Chinese residents of their property; two hundred thousand of them, some of whom had lived in Burma for decades, were forced to leave the country without their assets. He ended all the activities of the World Bank in Burma. In foreign affairs, Burma has maintained a rigid neutrality: in 1979, it withdrew from a conference of nonaligned nations when it sensed a tilt toward the Soviet Union."

Stan Sesser, October 9, 1989 in THE NEW YORKER

## A VOICE AGAINST INSENSITIVITY

Many of the villagers living along the border areas have known nothing but the fear of war, constant displacement from their homes, and daily hunger and sickness. This has been their life and experience for over forty years. Many of the people in these villages were born into this situation, and have known nothing else their entire lives. What a sad commentary in this modern world.

Now, once again, thousands of villagers have fled the Burmese military attacks along the Thai/Burma border and live in make-shift camps inside Thai territory where they hope they can escape the shelling, and the forced porter service which the Burmese military inflicts upon them.

It is a sad but true fact that some visitors from outside Burma feel that this life, after forty years, has become a normal part of the villagers existence, and thus the villagers do not mind the suffering, displacement and uncertainty. These visitors come to this conclusion after they make a short, hasty visit to the area and talk to a few villagers who express nonchalance over their present situation. This, these visitors say, is evidence that the villagers are accustomed to this refugee existence, and are willing to simply sit it out until the situation changes and they can go back home once again. Unfortunately, this attitude results in inaction on the visitors part to truly help work towards peace, human rights and justice in Burma.

The following true story from a woman living in this refugee existence indicates that these visitors have not been able to see into the hearts of these simple villagers who do not easily open themselves up to strangers who have not yet proven their sincerity and concern. Let this woman speak for tens of thousands of other Burmese villagers who want their children to grow up in a country in which they can have good education, good health care, security, and a hopeful future.

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"Several thousand families from the Karenni territory, which is opposite Mae Hong Son Thailand, have fled to refugee camps inside Thai territory because of fighting between the Burmese military and the

Karenni troops. Still, the military junta claims that there is no civil war in Burma and there is just some small fighting with a few ethnic groups along the border areas.

Following the brutal and violent crushing of the democratic movement in September of 1988 by the military, nearly 20,000 students fled the cities to join the ethnic minorities along the border.

Among these students were many female students. They had also stood against the military in the street demonstrations to call for human rights and justice.

In February of this year, I had the chance to visit some of the Karenni refugees near Mae Hong Son. While in the camp, I noticed one woman who had an air of self-confidence working in a tiny hut. I wanted to talk with her, especially when I noticed two small children playing nearby whom I felt must be her children.

As soon as I greeted her, she invited me into her small hut and asked me to sit on the small bamboo bench which also served as the bed. Even after only a few words of conversation, I knew that she was a revolutionary with much experience.

She told me that she was a teacher and had struggled against the oppressive government since 1976 when she came to the border area. Her whole life has been sacrificed for the restoration of democracy and human rights in Burma. She had sacrificed everything she every had in her struggle against the military regime. She fought to make it possible for the children at the border to achieve an education.

During this time, she also married a Karenni revolutionary who had ideas similar to hers.

She had four children, and these children had a deep impression on her mind. She became more and more committed to provide for her children's health, education and safety. Her work was often extremely difficult and discouraging, but she never lost her desire to provide her children with a better and a safer future.

While we were visiting, we could sometimes hear the fighting which was taking place between the Burmese military and the Karenni soldiers. She told me that, "for the past 11 years, I have striven with every ounce of my strength to help my children gain an education and to be safe from the war. My eldest child was very bright. I always have very much hope for their education. I have no material things I can give them now. When the Burmese military attack, I can only run away together with my children. Everything else is left behind. The only thing I can think about is their safety and their future. My children are always my greatest concern."

There is nothing that can compare with a mother's kindness and concern for her children. We can also not fail to be encouraged by their bravery.

The mothers in the refugee camps struggle with everything they have to protect their children and help them get an education. This is always their first priority, and every day they live as refugees, they weep

for the suffering their children must endure.

There is no man whose bravery can be compared to a mother's kindness, her bravery, her sacrifice or her promise to her children."

~~~~~  
Yes, even after more than forty years of living under civil war conditions, the Burmese mothers cry every time their children have to suffer, shake with fear every time they hear incoming rockets, are devastated every time they have to leave their homes for another refugee camp. They are no different than you. This kind of life is not normal to them, even though they have known nothing else. Their desire for peace and stability is as strong as any urge a mother has to protect her child. Do not oppress them more by failing to hear the wailings rising out of their hearts. Only when we are all able to open up ourselves enough to hear the deep cries of the oppressed, will we have the courage to do that which makes for peace.

## NEWS FROM THE BORDER

### Attacks

On the 20th of January, a Karen camp called Moe Taung opposite Prachupkirikam in the southern part of Thailand was captured by the Burmese military. About 2,000 Burmese soldiers based in Mergue and Ye from Battalions No.101, 103, 104, 17 and 33 of the Light Infantry Division 77 under the control of the South-East command area Bri-Gen Nynn Linn led the attack on Moe Taung camp starting on the 19th of January. About 200 students were living in Moe Taung camp.

The KNU received information that the Burmese military might attack their camp several days before the actual attack. Therefore, the KNU sent their sliders to the front line to form a protective defensive line. But on the 19th of Jan at 1pm, about 150 Burmese military troops suddenly appeared only four hours walking distance from Moe Taung camp. After that, heavy artillery assaults were launched against the camp every few minutes. The Burmese army used 105 artillery and 81mm launchers during their offensive attack. At the same time about, 2,000 Burmese soldiers started an offensive attack against the front line of Moe Taung camp.

On the 20th of January, at noon, the Burmese army totally occupied camp. About 1,000 Karen villagers from Moe Taung entered Thai territory at Phwekalote border town before attack by the Burmese army. They were surrounded by the Thai border police and have not received any temporary assistance from Thailand.

The villagers reported that on the night of the 19th, 3 large heavily loaded trucks covered with trap sheets crossed the border and entered into the Burmese army camp. The villagers said that when the 3 trucks were crossing the border, the Thai military cut off the light in the Karen temporary refugee camp and did not allow any person to leave the camp. They added that they saw a lot of rice bags and medicine at the border, inside Thailand, for the Burmese army.

It seems possible that the 3 trucks were carrying the 160 Burmese military troops from front line through Thai territory, to the area near Moe Taung camp. That is why the Burmese army suddenly appeared near Moe Taung camp rear area without having to fight through the Karen soldier's front defensive line.

## VOICES FROM THE JUNGLE

The Burmese people are hard workers. They struggle hard to till the soil and grow food for their families. Yet, they never have enough for their simple survival. Their crops, which grow well in the rich soil of Burma, can never be used to feed their families. The Ne Win/Saw Maung government uses at least 80% of the national income for defense purposes. They do not heed the cries which come from the hearts of the people for food, medicine and good education for the children. Instead they demand that the people regularly pay their taxes so that the military will have more money to further oppress the people.

If the farmers can not pay the quota of rice (farm tax) which the government demands of them, the farmers lose their land and their right to survival. It is for this reason that one can see thousands of cows and buffalos from Burma crossing the border into Thailand where they are sold for a very cheap price. The farmers need this money to help pay off their debts. This results in a serious lack of draft animals on the farms so the farmers must do all their work by hand. Their production then drops, and they face even more serious hardships and more difficulty in meeting the government quotas.

On the way to the border to sell their precious draft animals, they are often robbed and even killed by the Burmese military. The military claims that the farmers are selling their cattle illegally, and are charged under Act 17(I)(A). This act says that it is a crime for anyone to have contact with the ethnic groups which the government label as insurgents. Actually the farmers are only passing through the ethnic areas in order to reach the border to sell their draft animals to the Thai merchants.

We see this almost daily in our area, and it makes us more frustrated and angry at the military junta which rules over our country without concern and love for the people. If we do not continue our struggle to bring peace and justice to Burma, these poor peasants will never have the hope of a better life, and their children will continue to grow up under the terrible weight of oppression, hunger and fear. We must continue our dream to build a better Burma for all the people.

(Report from Huay Zedi camp)

### PENETRATING THROUGH

Daung Ni

◇ A lost paradise  
Blended with cruelty,  
Sunk in the marshes  
And dry crusted earth  
Is a land called "Burma."

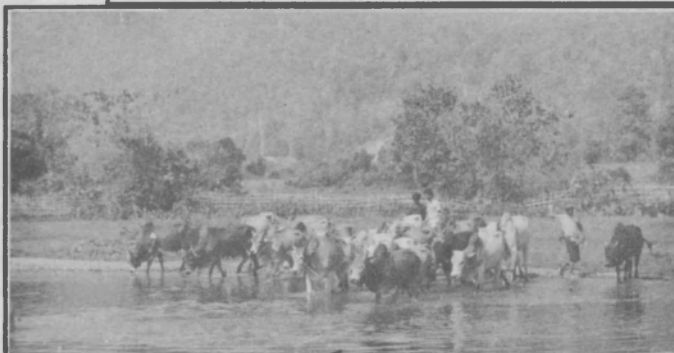
◇ Bravely and openly  
The distressed people  
Burst out in one voice  
That thundered around the universe,  
"Stop the internal war!"  
"Liberate the oppressed!"  
"Give us human rights and justice!"

◇ This is  
The authentic vindication of the Age.

◇ In this world there is  
Struggle, force, push,  
And energy in the bones  
From the time of conception.

◇ Repression, arrests, detentions,  
Slayings, destruction, bullets, handcuffs,  
Iron bars, nooses, have been cut to pieces-  
All have been penetrated through.  
And people, who are not toys,  
Wearing the wings of human rights  
Fly unbound in the free sky,

◇ So....  
People of noble behavior  
With the sword of belief  
Will continue to prevail.



Burmese cattle crossing into northern Thailand near Mae Hong Son to be sold.



## THE ENVIRONMENT



Above left and right: Foreign companies with logging concessions in the Moe Taung camp area use heavy machinery to rip down the trees for export to Thailand. Many of the trees are smaller than the contract allows to cut, but they are also marked for export. There is little or not selective cutting done, and soon Burma's forests will be gone, and only desert will remain.



Above left and right: Huge fields of cut timber disfigure the area around Moe Taung camp. All of these trees will be exported to Thailand, and the Burmese people will not benefit from them at all.

Left: These logs await export from the Karenni area near Mae Hong Son Thailand. If a reforestation program is not initiated, soon the hills will be bare, and the Karenni people will have no place to live.

## SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS

Addressing a seminar convened by the New South Wales Branch of the Committee for Democracy in Burma, the Shadow Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Robert Hill, described the Hawke Government's record on Burma as "deplorable."

"Much criticism has been made of Australia by other countries, by Opposition groups in Burma, and by the Burmese community here.

"This criticism is well deserved.

"The Labor Government of Mr Hawke and Senator Evans while professing to support the democratic forces in their struggle in Burma, have by their actions and pronouncements aided and comforted a regime against whom the people have no protection other than international attention and condemnation.

"It consistently misread the situation, took damaging actions, made inappropriate pronouncements, and, in short, has done enormous harm to the democratic forces in Burma."

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*In February of this year, the United Nations Human Rights Commission met in Geneva Switzerland. One of the important issues which they discussed was that of human rights violations in Burma. Following is a brief comment from this meeting.*

At the 45th session of the Commission, in 1989, Burma was let off relatively lightly, largely because of a promise to hold free and fair elections. At this year's session, however, Burma (re-named Myanmar) was dealt with under a special confidential procedure which is considered to be particularly condemnatory, and is reserved for the most serious and wide-spread human rights violations. The country being dealt with under this procedure is, in fact, on trial. In this case, the Commission delivered what, in UN terms, is the strongest measure that can be taken in the confidential procedure, namely to ask for the appointment of a special rapporteur (known as an "independent expert", but the function is the same as a special rapporteur). This expert will report back to the 1991 session.

People who have known the Commission for many years say they have never seen a country receive such a general and quick condemnation (even countries like South Africa have taken years to attain their special status as pariah nations whereas Burma, though not having reached the same level of public criticism, has, within a couple of years, been the subject of a general condemnation). In the confidential procedure, although some countries spoke against the resolution, it was carried by consensus - in other words, all the 43 members of the Commission including China and Pakistan, associated themselves with the resolution.

In the public discussion there was considerable criticism from governments and non-governmental organisations. The main cause of concern is the lack of apparent seriousness in holding fair and free elections, and continuing reports of severe and widespread human rights abuses, including the imprisonment of opposition leaders.

### Statement by the United States of America

Some observers of the situation in Myanmar express the view that respect for human rights there improved in 1989 because there were no killings of unarmed demonstrators, as had occurred in 1988. That view is flawed: there were no demonstrators to shoot in 1989 because the martial law edict in effect prohibits the public gathering of more than five people. Moreover, there are credible reports that torture and summary executions of political detainees were commonplace in Myanmar in 1989. If the Myanmar Government sincerely desires to demonstrate that the May 27 elections will be free and fair, let it invite objective outside observers to monitor those elections and liberate the opposition leaders and activists to participate in the process.

## REFUGEES STRUGGLING FOR SURVIVAL

Tens of thousands of refugees now live in simple camps along the Thai/Burma border. They seek safe havens inside Thai territory from the Burmese military which is carrying out offensive campaigns against ethnic minority groups and student groups who live along the long border line.

Why do they run away like this and leave their villages and fields behind? One Pa O refugee man explained it like this:

"When the Burmese army comes they create nothing but trouble for us. Often, if they catch young men in the fields, they will charge them with having links to the insurgents and kill them on the spot. Two young men from the village just a few miles down the road were killed like that a short time back.

"Other times they will take all the men and women, even pregnant women, away to use as porters to carry their heavy guns and ammunition to the front line areas. Many of these porters never return home again. The soldiers also like to rape the women, and there is almost nothing we can do to stop them.

"So, when we hear they are coming, we grab what we can and run. We don't want to be caught by them. When they come to our villages and find us gone, they burn everything down. So, now we have nothing except our lives. It's been like this much too long already."



A Pa O refugee camp on a desolate mountain top. The people have almost no way to make a living here.

## EDUCATION IN BURMA TODAY

According to Dr. Pe Thein, Minister of Education in Burma, Burma's population grew by 2.2 per cent last year, and over three million new students entered primary school.

There is a shortage of teachers for all of these students. Dr. Pe Thein claimed that the shortage of teachers is due to a lack of teacher training colleges in the country which he estimates to be "roughly seven".

Friends from inside Burma however have a different story to tell. According to them, there are only

three teacher training colleges in the country. If graduates from these colleges wish to get a teaching job in some schools, they sometimes have to pay the head of the township education council a bribe of 5,000 kyats. This is a common experience in Tykekyig Township in Rangoon Division.

Under these conditions, many qualified teachers can not get jobs because they do not have the money to pay such big bribes. Is the priority of the government to provide education to the children, or to make money?

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## TOURISM =/= DIGNITY

### Selling the Padaung

The Padaung are a small ethnic group who live in the Kayah State of Eastern Burma. Although very small in number, they have attracted much attention because of the custom of their women to put heavy silver or brass rings around their necks, slowly forcing their shoulders down and creating the illusion that they have extra long necks. Many tourists and travel agents call them the "long necks" which is not a very complimentary term.

The custom began long ago, and there are two theories as to its origin. One theory says that the men started disfiguring their daughters in this way to prevent them from being taken away by feudal lords who were looking for concubines and slaves. Another theory says that the Padaung believe that their original mother was the Naga, a large serpent, and the women try to elongate their necks to imitate their respected mother.

What ever the reason why the Padaung have developed this tradition, they have now become a tourist attraction because of it. During the past decades, some of them, along with other tribal groups, moved from Burma down into the mountains of northern Thailand. A few years back, the Thai government decided that these "illegal aliens" had to be pushed back into Burma. The Padaung were

allowed to remain because they were "good tourists attractions". Since then, almost every tour agency in the north of Thailand advertises tours to this "exotic tribe". The women are paraded in front of the tourists who can take pictures to their hearts content. Few, if any, of the tourists care much about the people, or their feelings of being treated in this way. They are only an oddity which makes good stories back home.

This new life has had a negative affect on a few of the Padaung who generally make their living by farming. These few Padaung now sit around all day waiting for the tourists to come. They no longer farm, or do the other work which in the past gave their people a sense of pride and unity. Occasionally some are taken down to the urban centers to appear in festivals. They sit for photographs, and charge for each picture.

Tourism can be a very positive activity if it helps build up understanding and preserves dignity. However, tourism as is practiced against the Padaung is only a business which exploits a people, a tradition and a history. The Padaung are one of the many groups which make up the Burma nation. They are an important part of our country, and they should never be made a part of the human zoo aspect of modern tourism.

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