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CHANGING FACE OF FOREIGN INVESTMENT



OPPRESSION



DAWN

NEWS BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE
ALL BURMA STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC FRONT

Vol. 2 No. 5

March

1990

DEMOCRACY GROWS ONLY WHEN PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION GROWS

What is it we dream for in our Motherland?

{ } We dream for the right to learn freely about our own country and about the true situation in the world around us. We dream for the right to learn all aspects about the world and then discuss and debate among ourselves, choosing what we think is right and wrong, good and bad. We dream for the right to use this knowledge in useful and constructive ways in order to make our country a better and happier place to live in.

{ } We dream for the right to stand up in public and shout out our dreams for everyone to hear, so that they can share with us their own dreams. Together we can discuss what is the right path for our country to take, and we can all work together to make those mutual dreams a reality.

{ } We dream of electing a government from candidates we know and have had the right to debate issues with freely and openly. We dream of knowing what each candidate stands for and feeling confident that those candidates will listen to our concerns and truly represent us in the government. We dream of having the right to democratically remove them from their posts of responsibility if they practice corruption, or if they refuse to listen to the dreams of the people.

{ } We dream of being free to choose our own occupation through which we can serve our people and our country. We dream of working hard for our income, and being able to use that income to care properly for our families. We dream of being able to provide our children with a good education, proper medical care and sufficient food and clothing.

{ } We dream of a nation in which all ethnic groups, all races and all religions can live together peacefully sharing in the country's resources as well as sharing equally in the running of the country. We dream of an end to the civil war, and unity among all our peoples.

{ } We dream of an army which is truly a People's Army and serves the people rather than rules over the people. We dream of an army whose sole task is to protect the nation, not meddle in politics, an army which the people trust and respect, not fear and hate.

This, my friends, is a part of our dream for democracy in our Motherland.

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

THOUGHTS FROM THE JUNGLE

BBC

Many friends who meet with us raise the question. "What political and economic system do you want to establish in Burma?" When we do not give them a clear answer (at least the kind of clear answer they want to hear), they shake their heads sadly and say to themselves, "The Burmese students are fighting for democracy, but they do not even understand what democracy is."

Two responses to their well-meaning, but insensitive thoughts should be made. First, we do not want to transplant any system, democratic or otherwise, from any other country into Burma. This itself is not a democratic idea, even if the transplanted system is democratic. This is a top-down approach in which the people are the recipients rather than the participants. Such a system can only survive if there are strong leaders who can enforce it over the people. Democracy can not be borrowed from someone else, and can not be imposed on people.

Secondly, we do not want to take a system designed by ourselves, and impose it on the people, even if that system is one of the most progressive and interesting systems of this century. Once again, it is not participatory, and can not result in a democratic form which will be controlled by and effectively used by the people.

In our simply understanding, the development of true democracy is a long process. It must start with the poorest people of the country and work up. It must come from the experiences, the sufferings, and the hopes of the poor and oppressed. It must meet the unique needs of the people who have suffered the most in the society in order that they will have the right and ability to participate freely in it and truly make it a "rule by the people." It can not be borrowed, nor can it be learned in a classroom. It must be allowed to freely emerge from the people who are suffering the most under the present military regime.

For this reason, the development of a democratic system in Burma must start from our living with and learning from the poor villagers and peasants. We must let them tell us how the new Burma should be shaped. This is the only "political seminar and training program" which can truly bring a democracy to Burma which will grow and be nurtured by the people.

Our country and our people do not fit into the same molds as the countries in the world which are known as "democratic." It is for this reason that their systems can not work effectively in our country.

We can not tell you clearly what the new Burma will look like, because the people are now in the process of building it. We believe that if you truly understand the democratic process, you will understand and support the people as they begin the difficult work of building, and will not try to force us to answer the question "What is democracy?" with old intellectual cliches and packaged answers.

In order to begin building up the democratic process in Burma, students from ABSDF camps along the border have been making team visits deep inside Burma to remote villages. Each team usually consists of one or two medical workers, political education workers and teachers.

The purpose of these team visits is to learn to know the villagers, gain their confidence, and learn from them what their experiences under the present military regime have been. Through discussions, the villagers can also start sharing what it is they want from the government, and what their dreams for the future are.

The students find that, in many of the villages, the people hate the Burmese military very much. Very often their rice harvest has been stolen by the military, their villages burned and many of the people taken off as porters.

The students also see that there has been very little, if any, medical care provided to the people. They suffer from easily treated diseases, and many of the children die from chest infections etc.

These villages must be the foundation for the new democratic system in Burma.

THE CRY OF A CHILD



A small Karen girl stands crying beside the home she once lived in with her mother, brothers and sisters. The house was torched by the Burmese military during their attack on Thay Bow Boe camp, and this small girl is the only survivor in her family. Even at her age she knows the meaning of despair.

The entire village was burned by the military. It is not yet known how many of the villagers were killed. Many other villages in the ethnic regions have also been burned and the people's lives totally disrupted.

The saddest victims of war are those who can not yet understand what it is all about. Can you hear them crying?

HUMAN RIGHTS

On the 6th of October 1989, two students, Yin Yint (3rd year, Electronics, Rangoon Institute of Technology) and Yin Thi Ha (High School Student from Thayawardy) allegedly hijacked a Burma Airlines domestic plane with 80 passengers shortly after it took off from Mergui (Southern part of Burma). The flight was scheduled to land in Rangoon.

The two students asked the pilot to land at Bangkok airport. But the airport authority did not allow the plane to land and instructed the pilot to land at the U-tapao naval air base in Chon Buri where the anti-terrorist troops had taken position to face them if they did not surrender peacefully.

But the two students released all passengers without harm after 11 hours and surrendered peacefully after they got a promise from the Thai negotiator, Mr Tienchai Srisamphan deputy prime minister who made an official visit to Rangoon in March, that their demands would be mentioned in the Thai press and over the British Broadcasting Corporation.

The two students' demands to the Burmese military regime were for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi (general secretary of NLD) and all other detainees, the withdrawal of the curfew, the return of hundreds of thousands of military forces throughout the country to their barracks, a UN peacekeeping force to monitor the country, the formation of an interim government and the restoration of the freedom for writing and organization. This was already mentioned in Vol.1, no.19 and Vol.2, no.1 of Dawn, and we appealed to all democratic governments to consider giving them political asylum.

We feel that they are not terrorists. They are not guilty. They hijacked the plane only because Burma has absolutely no human rights. In the preamble of Universal Declaration of Human Rights it says that "Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law." If human rights in Burma were protected by the rule of law, the hijacking would not have happened. The two students also knew before they hijacked the plane that the military regime would not agree to their demands. The military regime does not care about the life of the people. Thus the two students just wanted to raise attention through out the world to the cases of human rights violations in Burma by the military regime. They believe that if the world will take effective action (stop any relations with the Saw Maung military regime both economically and politically) against the Saw Maung military regime, human rights in Burma can be achieved.

They have a deep hope for support from the

international community. We feel that the international community should consider their case carefully.

Their case is completely different from other hijackings which have happened around the world. When the plane landed at U-tapao air base at 5.43 on the 6th of Oct last year, the two students first asked for auxiliary power and water to be supplied to the plane at 6.15 pm before their demands were announced. They released all of women, children and elderly people, a total of 33 passengers out of the total of 84, at 9.00 pm. The remaining passengers were released one by one at an interval of seven minutes. Later they released all passengers at 4.30 am and they surrendered themselves peacefully as reported on the 8th of Oct in the Bangkok Post newspaper. The same day, the Nation newspaper reported that one of the passengers, U Than Maung said "The two students were also very gentle and very intellectual." One of the two catholic priests on board, Htun Lwin, 31, said "they were very kind-hearted. I didn't think they were going to blow up the plane. At the beginning they talked very tough, but later they listened and talked more gently." Mr Ban Chuan, 58, a wholesale merchant from Rangoon said to Thai authorities, "Don't send them back on this flight or else I will have no choice but to stay here". No passengers claimed that they saw the gun in the hands of the two students.

On the 17th of Oct last year, the Nation newspaper said that the police claimed the two violated Article 5 of the 1978 Aviation Act. Under the law, forcible seizure of an aircraft is punishable by a minimum jail sentence of 10 years and carries a maximum penalty of death.

On the 14th of March 1990, the Nation newspaper claimed that "The Criminal Court on March 21 will hand down sentences to these two students."

"Dawn" News Bulletin, published by the All Burma Students' Democratic Front, has requested Democratic governments to offer asylum for the two students. So far, no response from the any democratic government has been received.

We, the ABSDF, once again strongly request all democratic countries to take immediate action to give these two students a chance to seek asylum in your country.

We would like to urge all friends to write letters or send faxes to: the Office of the Prime Minister (Thailand), Ministry of Foreign affair (Thailand), Office of the Internal Ministry and Judicial Court (Thailand) to consider the case of two students and give them a chance to seek asylum in a 3rd country.

REMEMBERING OUR FRIENDS

PRESS RELEASE

March 16, 1990

On March 16, 1988, students from Rangoon University began to march towards Rangoon Institute of Technology in protest of the military's brutal treatment of students. Along the way, they were confronted by the military at a place called the White Bridge on the dike by Inya Lake. The students were unarmed, and were carrying out a peaceful demonstration.

About 2 pm, the military attacked the students by charging into them with army trucks and then beating them with sticks and bayonets. Many of the students, especially the women students, were driven up the Inya Lake dike by the White Bridge. They were beaten with bamboo sticks and gun butts. Many, especially women students, fell into the lake where they were beaten more until they drowned. Others were shot and bayoneted along the road. It is reported that maybe as many as 100 students died on that day. Since then, the name of the White Bridge has been changed to Red Bridge, and symbolizes the blood shed by those students for the cause of justice and human rights in Burma.

Today, two years later, Burmese students living in Bangkok Thailand are holding a memorial service for those who gave their lives on that day and since.

To pay respect to their fallen friends, the students gathered at the Thai Red Cross Society to donate blood. About 150 students attended and 77 donated their blood for use in Thailand by the Red Cross. The remaining students were not allowed to give blood due to positive tests for malaria.

At the beginning of the ceremony, Prof. Chaivej Nuchprayoon, Director of the Red Cross expressed thanks to the students for the donation. He said that there is not enough blood in the blood bank to meet the needs, and that the donation by the Burmese students was a very meaningful contribution. "A blood donation is very different from a financial donation", he said.

The Burmese students then read their own statement which said in part, "We dedicate our blood to our brother students who sacrificed their lives on that day in the struggle for democracy, to those who fell in the cause of democracy in 1988 and the champions of democracy in diverse countries."

Moe Thee Zun, chairman of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front also sent a letter expressing support for this action by the students, and encourage them to continue in their struggle for true human rights, justice and democracy in Burma.

Meanwhile, 40 Burmese students who were recently arrested and are now being detained in Immigration Jail, began a 12-hour fast to pay respect to those killed at the Red Bridge 2 years ago.

THE WHITE/RED BRIDGE (from VOICES FROM THE JUNGLE)

It is a serene and happy place
the White Bridge.
A place for friends to laugh together,
Couples in love to meet and dream,
Students to fret over exams.
A place designed for the rest of the soul.

Now blood has turned it red
the blood of those friends
those couples in love
those students.
The laughter has turned into screams of fear,
dreams have sunk to the bottom of the lake,
the fretting has become bitter anger.

The Red Bridge
now flashes a message to the world
that tyranny still exists.

And the tyrants
try to turn the Red Bridge
back to glistening white
so its voice is silenced to the world.

But the only thing
which can clearly wash
the dark red of human blood away
is the sincerity of true repentance
for evil acts done.

Now the Red Bridge
rests among the silence
of people's voices repressed.

And deep within its blood-streaked steps
can be hear
the soul of a nation weeping for its youth.

HUMAN RIGHTS

FORCED REPATRIATION

On March 10, Burmese and Thai authorities suddenly made coordinated moves to repatriate more than 400 Burmese who have taken refuge on the Thai side of the border since last year. The Burmese, who come from various towns and villages opposite Mae Sot, Tak Province Thailand, fled to Thailand to escape being forced to work as porters and human mine sweepers by the Burmese military during their current dry-season offensive. The use of villagers by the Burmese military has been criticized world-wide as inhuman, and a violation against all civilized codes of human rights.

In past years, the villagers would take refugee on the Thai side until being captured by the Burmese army was no longer a threat. Then they would return home and continue their work.

This dry season, the Burmese army has launched vicious attacks against ethnic minority villages and student camps all along the border, and they show no signs of withdrawing. Thus the villagers, fearing for their lives, have not yet returned to their home villages.

Starting on the early morning of March 10, about 100 Thai officials began the sweep. They rounded up nearly 440 Burmese villagers, and immediately turned them over to the Burmese authorities.

Mae Sot assistant district officer, Sanoh Thapthawee, who led the sweep, said that the Burmese had caused disorder and sanitation problems along the Moei River, a major tourist spot, (Bangkok Post, March 11, 1990).

Perhaps the tourists to this area can now enjoy the view without having to see these "sanitation problems" marring their view, but we sincerely wonder what the fate of these 440 villagers now is. It is almost certain that they were immediately sent to the front line to "assist" the Burmese military as porters and mine sweepers.

Tens of thousands of other refugees live in camps inside Thai territory. They are mainly Karen, Karenni and Mon villagers who have fled the continual military harassment by the Burmese military. Burmese authorities have requested that the Thai government send all of these refugees back. A

Burmese official said. "They are all relatives of the insurgents, but we are willing to take them back."

In an action which conflicts with the Burmese army's willingness to welcome back refugees, they torched six Burmese border villages in late February. The villages which suffered the fire are Mepale, Kyaw Ko, Tiwablau, Pakalo, Chikaya and Tilawthiare.

During the burning, Burmese troops from the 118th battalion of the 33rd Division also rounded up residents from Kyaw Ko and the nearby village of Pa Ka Lu and forced them to serve as porters, carrying ammunition to the battle fronts. The roundup left at least one villager dead and one wounded. The villagers were only innocent farmers who had not been involved in any fighting.

On March 19, THE NATION newspaper reported from Ranong Thailand: "Provincial authorities have sent about 300 illegal Burmese immigrants here back to Burma and are preparing to repatriate 300 others at the Rangoon government's request. Most of the immigrants are young Burmese who fled military recruitment in their homeland."

Many young men throughout Burma (from 18 to 25 years old) have been taken by the Burmese military to serve as soldiers or as porters in the government's present offensive against the ethnic minority camps. Many of these young men come from these ethnic groups themselves.

However, few young men in Burma want to be part of the military's civil war against their own people. This is why they are fleeing to areas they thought were safer.

The NATION quotes the Ranong Governor as saying, "We are in a hurry (to repatriate these young men) because the Burmese army has sought our cooperation, saying it needs the immigrants for the military."

Production sharing contract for exploration and production of petroleum between Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and Petro-Canada (Myanmar) Ltd signed

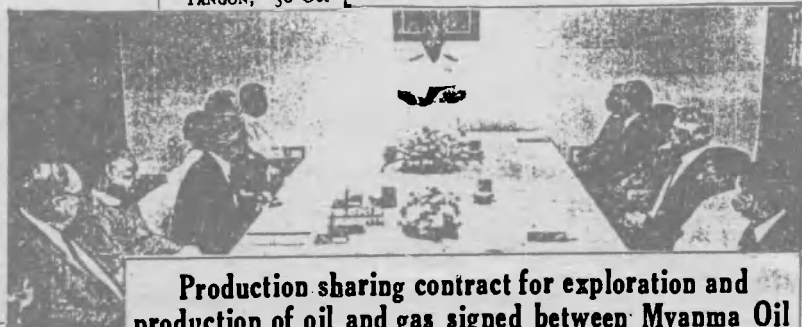
Minister for Energy and Mines Rear-Admiral Maung Maung Khin delivers an address at the ceremony for signing Production Sharing Contract between the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and the Petro-Canada for Oil and Gas Exploration and Development in the Myanmar Block "E".—MNA Photo



Minister for Energy and Mines Rear-Admiral Maung Maung Khin delivers an address at the signing of the Production Sharing Contract between Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and Idemitsu Oil Development Co Ltd. MNA Photo

Production Sharing Contract between Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and Idemitsu Oil Development Co. Ltd. from Japan signed

YANGON, 30 Oct—



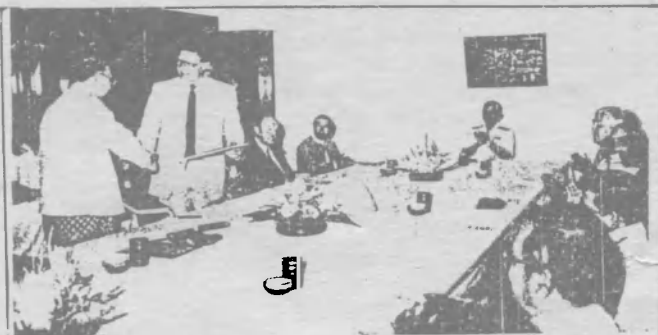
Production sharing contract for exploration and production of oil and gas signed between Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and Amoco Myanmar Petroleum Company of United States of America

YANGON, 10 Nov—



Mr Stuart Eastwood, Mr K Joe Shein and Col Tun Zaw sign the Notes concerning production, distribution and sales of soft drinks including Coca-Cola in Myanmar Naing-Ngon.—MNA Photo

Notes concerning production, distribution & sale of soft drinks signed



Managing Director of Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise U Aung Min and Managing Director of Craft Exploration Myanmar Ltd. Mr M F Ridd exchange notes after signing of the production sharing contract. (see story page 1) MNA Photo



Minister for Energy and for Mines Rear-Admiral Maung Maung Khin, delivers an address at the signing ceremony of the production sharing contract between the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and the BHP Petroleum of Australia.—MNA Photo

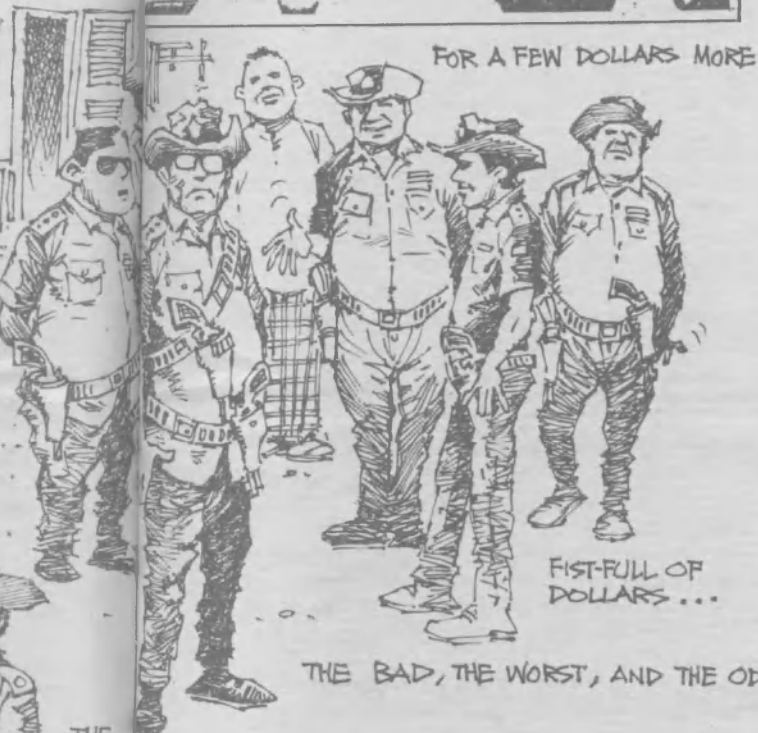


Minister for Energy and for Mines Rear-Admiral Maung Maung Khin delivers an address at the signing of the Production Sharing Contract between Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and Shell Exploration BV of the Netherlands.

MNA Photo



Production Sharing Contract between Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and Shell Exploration BV signed



State Law and Order Restoration Council Chairman General Saw Maung receives Singapore Minister

YANGON, 6 Dec—

General Saw Maung, Union of Myanmar State Law and Order Restoration Council Chairman, greets Mr Mah Bow Tan, Minister of State for Trade and Industry and for Communications & Information of Singapore at Dagon Yektha

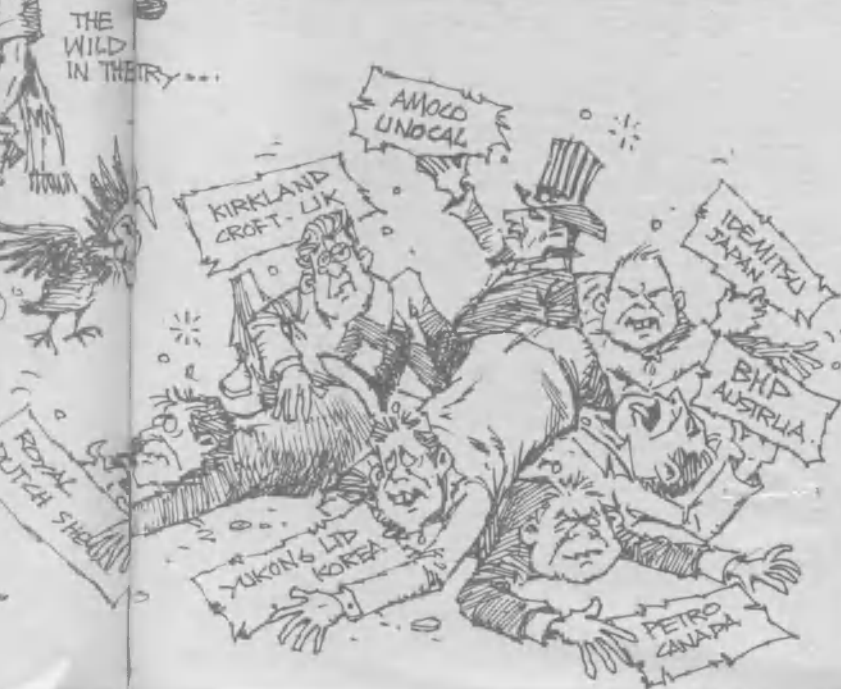
MNA Photo

Acting Supreme Commander of the Royal Thai Armed Forces General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh and members of his goodwill delegation being seen off at the Yangon Airport by Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Services General Saw Maung.—MNA Photo



GENERAL CHAVALIT YONGCHAIYUDH'S
GOODWILL VISIT TO UNION OF MYANMAR

PHOTO DOCUMENTS



THE ROAD AWAY FROM DEMOCRACY

On March 13, Thailand's Acting Supreme Commander Gen Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, led a party of 80 high-ranking military leaders to Burma for a one-day visit. The timing of this visit was very significant. March 13 is the anniversary of the killing of Maung Phone Maw by the Burmese police. The killing of Maung Phone Maw, a student of Rangoon Institute of Technology, was the spark which helped set off the democratic uprising of 1988. The visit by Gen Chavalit and his 80-member team gave the SLORC plenty of excuses to fill Rangoon with soldiers and security person, thus stifling any plans for a ceremony in remembrance of Maung Phone Maw who died on this day two years ago.

Although these types of visit are becoming more common, the people of Burma were shocked by Gen Chavalit's announcement to Gen Saw Maung during this short visit that, "Thailand will stand by Burma forever!" The Burmese people have continually called for Thailand to end its logging and fishing contracts with Saw Maung, and help the people in their struggle for democracy. Now, it seems, General Chavalit accepts General Saw Maung as being "Burma" even though Saw Maung stands completely apart from the people.

The two "brothers" seemed especially pleased with some of the development "progress" made in Burma during the past year. New buildings have sprung up in Rangoon, the streets and cleaner, and the city has no more slums or jobless.

"The Burmese people are now more optimistic about their future and I have learned that there are now almost no jobless Burmese because of the government's job creation program." Gen Chavalit was quoted as saying.

It may actually be true that there are no jobless in Rangoon today. One foreign diplomat based in Rangoon estimates that the number of people countryside who have been forcibly evicted out of the cities into so-called satellite towns may be as high as 500,000. No statement has been made by the government as to whether or not these 500,000 have been given jobs in these new towns, but it is doubtful, since the government has no money to pay salaries.

However, there is also evidence that it was not just

squatters and jobless who were moved. Many people from areas where strong anti-government activities took place in 1988, were also moved despite the fact that they had been living there for many years.

The purpose of the forced evictions seems to be to break up areas where uprisings might once again be brewing. People are also reported to have been evicted from areas around government and military offices, perhaps with the aim of clearing the area around these buildings to provide better security. Such is the confidence SLORC has in the people it claims to be benevolently ruling.

A second reason for this uprooting of the population which both Gen Chavalit and Gen Saw Maung seem to think is "good development" may be to attempt to destroy the voting power of the opposition. Many of the evictions have taken place in areas where the NLD party of Aung San Suu Kyi is very strong. The military is effectively redistributing the votes for their own benefit.

True development can never use people as an object in this way. Burma is not becoming more democratic, nor is it experiencing development. The SLORC rule is as oppressive as ever, and no high-level military visits, or beautiful platitudes will change that. The truth is that these so-called satellite towns are often in malarial areas with no running water and no electricity. The people have been herded their like animals. Development must improve life, not destroy it.

Burma's minister of Health and Education, Pe Thein, perhaps best summed up the government's attitude when he said. "The relocations were for sanitary reasons. We want Rangoon to be a good, clean city and these are just squatters." **Just squatters** Dr. Pe Thein? They are human beings with rights equal to all others. These rights are what the democratic movement in Burma is fighting for, and that fight must continue until all people in Burma are treated with dignity and not "just as squatters!"

If Thailand will "stand by Burma forever", it is important for Thailand to decide just which side they wish to stand on. The jobless of Rangoon are now the jobless of the satellite towns. Who truly represents Burma -- Gen Saw Maung, or these jobless and suffering people?

REMEMBERING MAUNG PHONE MAW

IN MEMORY OF MAUNG PHONE MAW

Editor's note: This speech was given by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on the 13th of March 1989 at the One Year Ceremony of Maung Phone's death and the ceremony for the Burma Human Rights Day. It was given in the meeting room of the National League for Democracy Party Rangoon office. Dawn News Bulletin, published by the All Burma Students' Democratic Front, translated this speech in memory of Maung Phone Maw and all the other students and people who sacrificed their lives inside the country and at the Burmese border areas for our struggle for freedom, human rights and democracy in Burma on this second anniversary.

We also wish to remind the world about the situation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi (general secretary of NLD), who is still under house arrest by the fascist military regime and has been disqualified from standing in the so called free and fair elections to be held on May 27. March 13 is also Burma human rights day.

We are very sorry to say that in this year, on the 13th of March 1990, Rangoon was crowded with tens of thousands of military troops and the people have no chance to hold the second year ceremony of Maung Phone Maw or to remember the Burmese human rights day. On this anniversary day, acting Supreme Commander Gen Chavalit Yongchaiyudh of Thailand visited Rangoon, so the streets were filled, not with the people, but with soldiers. The people could not have the right to hold a ceremony in honor of their own martyrs. This should make it very clear who is helping violate the human rights of the Burmese people.

13th of March 1990

Today is the second year anniversary of Maung Phone Maw's death. When he was killed by the riot police on the 13th of March 1988, he was only a youth. It is very sorrowful for us and for our country to lose the life of youth like that. Young people like Maung Phone Maw have many things to contribute to our country now and in their future. It is, indeed, very sad for us when our youth lose

their lives before they have a chance to really work for our country. If we look back to his killing, we

see that he not only lost his life, but also his family can not hold his funeral peacefully, religiously and traditionally. This is because in Burma, people have lost all human rights. That is why in this remembrance ceremony, we have to think again about our basic human rights and continue to struggle to get these basic human rights which we lost 26 years ago.

Why do these human rights exists in society?

Why do the people yearn for these human rights?

After reading the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it can be seen why people want these human rights. I would like to point out some important facts from this declaration. This declaration explains what are human rights. The preamble of this declaration explains why people want these human rights. I think this issue is most important. Everybody wants their human rights, but sometimes we do not thinking enough about why we want these human rights and why we need these human rights. Therefore let me read part of this declaration, and please listen carefully to the preamble.

" Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world,"

Only when the people can recognize the inherent dignity and equal inalienable rights, can they live peacefully and get equal justice. That is why we want these rights. It is only to receive what is rightfully ours. Only when these rights exists in our society, our country, and the world can there exist peace, equality and justice.

" Whereas disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind,"

This is also right. When these rights do exist, mankind becomes outraged. Now, in our country, during the period of the past 26 years, the national character has fallen. This has happened because of there are no human rights.

This can be seen in the case of corruption. If everybody cannot work to get enough for their survival, they have to find enough for their survival by incorrect ways. They must find enough money for their survival. Therefore, corruption becomes more and more serious. This is only one small example. In the past 26 years, as the people lost their rights, they also lost their moral character. This is why we want human rights. When we have full human rights, we can begin to rebuild our national moral a character.

So, we want human rights. If we cannot change our moral character, we can never reach our national goals. Therefore we have to get these rights first, and after that we can begin to change the people's character more easily. There is one other thing in the preamble:

"Whereas it is essential, if man is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression, that human rights should be protected by the rule of law,"

This we have also said several times. Give us basic human rights! If given basic human rights, the people can carry out the democracy movement to success by peaceful means. When we can not get these rights, some people are forced to make arm struggle. People then have an idea to violently destroy the bad system. This is definitely because we have no human rights.

If the human rights are protected by the rule of the law, people have no need to be violent. Nobody wants to be violent. Everybody wants to live their lives peacefully and to be self-supporting. When they do not have these rights, their final recourse becomes violence. That is why we continually ask to be given basic human rights! Give us these rights so that people are not forced into violence.

Today it is one year since Maung Phone Maw was killed. During this year, our country has had many changes. It is because everybody wants human rights for survival, and will always struggle to get

those human rights. We have to continue our struggle bravely to get all of human rights which are expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Do not be discouraged because we can not achieve this goal easily. If we read these rights today, we see that we have nothing in our country. Our situation is starting from zero. We will not be able to reach our destination quickly. That should not make us angry and of low moral. Many martyred youth like Maung Phone Maw have already lost their lives. If we withdraw, these youth cannot see our country get the human rights they struggled for. Therefore we have to make a strong commitment to succeed in this struggle for the remembrance of the people who have already sacrificed their lives in our struggle for human rights. We must never give up the hope for human rights, and we must live like people who should get human rights.

Our youth have to serve our country in the near future. For that reason, you have to be strong enough to serve. You need good character. Also you must learn the lessons from the past. We have to learn what is bad and what is right. When we have the idea that we must maintain the right things and we have to change the bad things, then we can our country well in the future. So, we must learn the lessons from the period of the independence struggle, from the 1988 uprising, from yesterday and from this morning. We have to always seek the lessons from the past and consider them carefully. Then we can be a good service for our country's development.

I would like to urge you today, as we remember Maung Phone Maw and the other people who sacrificed their lives in our struggle for human rights, to make a strong commitment to march to success in the struggle for human rights in our country.

EDUCATION IN BURMA TODAY

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In early March a World Conference on Education for All was held in Pattaya Thailand. Dr Pe Thein, Education Minister in Burma, represented Burma at the conference. From his 14th floor suite in the first class Ambassador City Jomtien Hotel in Pattaya, Dr. Pe Thein shared his personal opinions of the situation inside Burma today, especially those related to education.

"Our primary education is cause for alarm," he said. "We are quite worried that we would not be able to cope with the growing number of entrants into our education system. Our country's population increased by 2.2 per cent last year. There were three million new students entering primary schools last year."

Concerning teachers to take responsibility for these students, Dr. Pe Thein said, "There are roughly seven teacher training colleges in Burma. There are 200-300 schools in Rangoon district alone and the number of teachers is not enough. We need to modernize and improve the quality of our teaching methods too."

When asked about the present situation inside the country, he said, "The universities might open after the scheduled elections on May 27 of this year. We would like to see our students back at classes. But we have to avoid any unrest that could disrupt the elections. Traditionally Burmese students have always been actively involved in politics."

"The figure of the students that fled to the border has been quite exaggerated. It is not over 11,000 as widely reported, it's roughly only around 8,000. And those that died during the disturbances were mostly looters. I would say only about 20 students were killed. I myself didn't see any shooting."

In response to a question as to whether he regretted the severity of the 1988 suppression of the democratic movement, Dr. Pe Thein responded, "You have to be clear what you mean by severity. Of course we regret having killed people. We are a Buddhist country. But the situation was such that...We did have to shoot."

Pe Thein said that he did not think foreign journalists would be allowed to cover the elections because of their negative reports in the past.

(The Nation, March 6, 1990)

"Dawn" would simply like to respond that the shootings of students and other civilians during the 1988 non-violent uprising have been well documented by firsthand accounts, photographs and even video films. Far more than 20 students were killed at the Red Bridge alone. Reporting such as that given by Dr Pe Thein simply further destroys the credibility of the SLORC.

There are tremendous opportunities to improve the educational standards in Burma with the resources which Burma already has. It is possible that Dr. Pe Thein was attending this conference simply to request more funds from the United Nations for "educational purposes". If the country's money were used in constructive ways rather than for military offensives against the people of Burma, the educational system could be improved and sufficient teachers found for all the schools in Burma.

Proper use of a country's resources, both material and personnel, is essential for true development to finally take place.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I was a geology student in Rangoon University. I was in my fourth and final year with only a few weeks left to graduation when the military closed the universities and ended my university education.

If you want to understand the Ne Win educational system, a good place to start is to look at the entrance examination system. Entrance to university is based on our test scores from the tenth standard (final year of high school) test. We can not choose for ourselves which subject we want to study in the university. The Minister of Education Department assigns us to a university department depending on the score we make in the final tenth standard test. For example, a perfect score in this examination is 480 points. Students getting around 420 points are assigned to the medical school. An average of 410-400 points allows a student to enter Rangoon Institute of Technology, and 380-400 points means an assignment to geology or economics, etc. (the actual point division varies slightly from year to year.)

This is an unjust system because many students are assigned to study university subjects in which they are not really interested. This means that they spend four valuable years of education studying a subject which is not a part of the life's goal.

A Personal Experience.....Continued

Three decades ago, English was the medium for teaching in the schools. When the military took over state power in 1962, English was no longer used as a teaching medium, but only became a minor subject in the schools. When I entered the first year of university, the military government suddenly decided to once again use English as the medium for instruction in the classroom. Since the students did not have a good background in English, there was tremendous confusion and frustration. Once again our education progress was hindered because the government suddenly changed their minds. We were like guinea pigs for their experiments. They often changed the educational system, depending on their whims and fancy, and if they then decide that the new changes are not good, they simply make new changes.

Under the military rule many of the education ministers were not educators, but rather military men. For example, U Kyaw Nyein, former war veteran and head of the Defense Service Academy was transferred to the education ministry. Without training in the field of education, how can they design a proper educational system? Military strategy and the education of the country's youth are certainly not the same thing.

The government supplies us with two dozen notebooks each year. This is not nearly enough for us to use in all our classes. Therefore we have to buy many more at very high prices out in the black market (the government stores have no notebooks to sell us). Those students who are very poor can not afford to buy on the black market, so have to borrow notebooks from their friends.

It may be true that in the past the government has tried to develop more schools, but, at the same time, they have failed to develop more jobs for the graduates. So now you can see many jobless graduates in Burma.

Dr. Pe Thein, present Minister of Education, lamented to the recent World Conference on Education for All held in Bangkok, that there is a lack of teachers in Burma due to an insufficient number of teacher training colleges. In reality, Dr. Pe Thein could very easily solve the problem of a teacher's shortage by appointing many of the jobless graduates to the schools. They are highly qualified for these jobs. Why does he not do this? Perhaps because the government wants to use all of their money for military campaigns against their own people rather than for paying teacher's salaries. By calling for sympathy in this world conference, Dr. Pe Thein only hopes to get more money from the

United Nations, so that there are more funds for the civil war the military junta is carrying out.

In the universities, there are few laboratory instruments for the students to use in their practical work. The students thus lack good "on hands" experience which would help them make a more constructive contribution to the country in their various technical fields. Again, there is little budget for these equipments only because the government uses most of the country's (and the people's) money to wage their war against the ethnic minorities.

Although graduates have to compete for a dearth of low-paying jobs in the public sector, the military offers good paying jobs in the military. Through this means, the government uses the poor (those who can graduate from university) to fight against the poor (the peasants and ethnic minorities who can no longer bear the oppression). The civil war continues with the people killing each other while Ne Win and his cronies sit back getting rich by selling off the country's resources which are in reality the inheritance of all the people.

Dr. Pe Thein also said that the government's anti-illiteracy campaigns have raised the literacy level in Burma to 70%. It is the sacrifice of the youth, not the government's campaign, that has achieved this victory. Although the education authorities select students to carry out this campaign, the government does not offer to pay any of their expenses, including transportation. The students selected, usually pay their own expenses willingly because they want to serve the people. At the same time, however, the military provides Youth Cadre Training, and Refresher Training courses for students to become full-fledged members of the Burma Socialist Program Party (the military political machine). This training is provided absolutely free, and takes two months.

During my final year in university in 1988, the student uprising began on Prom Road in front of Rangoon University. I took part in the uprising with the other students, and we were beaten severely with hard wooden batons by the riot police. Many students died, and many more suffocated to death in police vans while they were being taken to prison. Despite this reality (the situation has been documented extensively), Dr. Pe Thein said that "We are a Buddhist country and we are taught not even to kill animals". He further claimed that probably not more than 20 students were killed during the 1988 uprising, and that he himself did not see any shooting. This simply illustrates how distant the

A Personal Experience...Continued

Minister of Education is from the students he is suppose to be a role model to.

The military junta claims that the universities will be reopened after the May 27 elections, more than a year and a half after they were closed. Pe Thein claims that "We would like to see our students back in class."

The dreams of the Burmese students is to bring democracy, peace, freedom and true human rights to our motherland. The elections in May, we believe, will not be free and fair, and therefore can not bring democracy and human rights to our people.

Pe Thein must finally understand that only when democracy and human rights have been achieved will he see us back in the class rooms striving to pass our final examinations. We can never again sit in those class rooms as prisoners under a system which does not give us freedom of thought, the democratic right of participation, and the human rights which are the right of all human beings. Our struggle will continue!

VOICES FROM THE JUNGLE

As soon as I heard the sound of artillery shells being fired, I dived into the trench and tried to enter the bunker. But suddenly, shells exploded very near me. The explosions threw me to the ground and rolled me about. The concussions from the exploding shells bashed me against the sides of the trench, and I was thrown six feet along the trench. Luckily I was not injured.

When I could, I stood up and looked into the dark bunker. The air was thick with dust, and I could see nothing. From the corner of the bunker came a voice:

"Are you Ko Nyi Nyi?"

"Yes I am," I answered. "Are you Ko Win Myint?"

"Yes. Did any shrapnel hit you?"

"No, Ko Win Myint. I have survived."

"Then quickly come inside and do not stand by the entrance."

Meanwhile, the artillery shells continued to explode all around the camp. Jokingly, one of my friends commented that they do not even give us time to go outside to the bathroom. Unfortunately that joke was true. The shells had been coming continuously for three days except only for short pauses now and then.

My watch told me that it was now 3:20 am. My guard duty will be finished at 4:00 am. It is once again a new day - April 29. The Burmese troops seem to be concentrating their attack against our side of the camp. The incoming shells are as heavy as a sudden rain.

I think about how we have to try to protect ourselves. It is now 6:40 am. The shelling

suddenly comes to a short halt.

I start to think about all these artillery shells. The Burmese troops are using 120mm and 105mm shells along with assault rifles and many hand grenades. I begin to wonder how much the military pays for all of this so I ask my friend:

"Brother, how much does one 120mm artillery shell cost?"

"Between US\$240 and US\$320 each I think."

"Oh man!"

I am very surprised because they are sometimes using about 20 artillery shells every minute. So they probably spend over one million dollars each day only on artillery shells. Added to this must be the cost of other ammunitions and shells, food and medicines. It must cost about two million dollars each day. The Burmese military has been waging this war for many years already. During the past forty years, they must have spent many many millions of dollars. If the Burmese people know this, they will be extremely sad. This money comes from the people, and from the export of our timber, fish, oil and other resources.

General Saw Maung claims that he staged the coup in 1988 to save Burma, and that the military is the father and mother of the military. He took this money from the people by force. Now he is using the money to suppress the ethnic groups and the student's democratic movement.

So, I want to tell all the people of Burma that it is not strange why the price of food is so high!

Nyi Nyi Lwin



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