

DAWN

NEWS BULLETIN

December 1990

Vol. 2 No. 23



*Life of a youth in Burma
since 1962 . . .*

YIN MIN NWE — 91



DAWN

NEWS BULLETIN

PUBLISHED BY THE
ALL BURMA STUDENTS' DEMOCRATIC FRONT

Vol. 2 No. 23

December

1990

THE CHRISTMAS VISION

IS A VISION OF PEACE AND HOPE

It is once again the Christmas season. It is the third Christmas for the Burmese students living in exile to be away from their families and homes. While you share a time of joy and peace together with your families, these students will once again be facing a day of not knowing what lies ahead. if there will be food or medicine enough, and if or when the Burmese military will attack their simple camps.

However, the students are not complaining. They have chosen this path, and they remain committed to it. They still believe that, for Burma to finally have peace, the civil war must be ended, and all people in the country be given equal participation rights. This is something they must continue to struggle for with the faith that one day they will succeed.

The Christmas gift which they seek from you is your solidarity in this struggle. Your solidarity means learning all you can about the true situation in Burma today, and sharing this knowledge with your family and friends. Solidarity means joining with them to carry out boycotts of those companies which are investing in Burma now, and thus providing money to the military regime which it can use to oppress and suppress the people. Solidarity means writing letters to encourage your government to pressure the military regime in Burma to listen to the cries of the people. It means writing letters to the United Nations to seek their help in bringing a quick and peaceful end to this conflict which is causing so much suffering to the people.

The first Christmas took place amidst much suffering and oppression. It brought to the oppressed a vision of hope and peace. That vision must be renewed each Christmas, and must be put into concrete action so that Christmas is not just a celebration, but a way of life and a way of hope.

We take this opportunity to wish all of you a most meaningful and joyful Christmas this year. We hope that this Christmas will be a new sign of hope for our country and for our people who have suffered for so many years under the yoke of tyranny. We also pray that this Christmas season may usher in a new hope for peace in the world among all people and all countries. This is our true and sincere Christmas wish for this season.

May the spirit of peace and hope visit all of us this Christmas season.

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

ARREST OF OPPOSITION LEADERS

Name.....U Maung Ko
Age.....approximately 45-years-old
Occupation...Central Workers Body member of NLD
Address.Inya Yeitha, Yankin township, Rangoon
Date of arrest.23rd October 1990
Place of arrest.unknown
Tortured to death.....9th November 1990

Short biography

On the 13th of November 1990, the British Broadcasting Corporation announced that one of NLD's organizers, U Maung Ko died in prison. He was arrested on the 23rd of October. Since he was arrested by military intelligence agents in October, his family received no news about him until they heard that he had died in prison by committing suicide, on the 9th of November 1990.

However, according to his family, they saw injuries on his dead body, on the left side of his face, neck, and ear. They also noticed a suture on his neck and from his neck to his abdomen. But, the authorities made the excuse that they operated on him during the post-mortem. But diplomats in Rangoon said that is not an ordinary procedure, although the injuries on his dead body were prominent, the authorities allowed his family to transfer his body for a funeral. But, our sources in Rangoon informed us later, actually, the authorities did not transfer U Maung Ko's dead body to his family directly. Police from Mingalardon police station just sent his body to Rangoon General Hospital as normal procedure and the police did not identify his name. So, a doctor on duty on that day, examined the dead body and transferred it to a mortuary. Unfortunately, his family heard about that and found his body in the mortuary at the same day. They found injuries, bruises, sutures and a needle which was still in one of his toes. Our sources quoted a medical doctor who had read the forensic report of U Maung Ko that there was no evidence that he hung himself. Because, there was no sign of hanging on his neck, eyes or tongue. The doctor reportedly mentioned a bruise on his back of about 2 inches radius. But, the medical doctor was forced to agree with the authorities saying that U Maung Ko died after he committed suicide. Some medical doctors said that he was badly tortured and suffered from tetanus without treatment and died in prison.



*U Maung Ko (deceased),
NLD, Central Workers
Body member.*

U Maung Ko

Amnesty International also reported that U Maung Ko was tortured to death in prison. Amnesty said his family claimed that they saw signs of torture such as injuries and bruises on his body. They were not allowed to do a post-mortem by themselves. They were forced by the authorities to have his funeral immediately. But, the Secretary-1 of SLORC, Maj-Gen Khin Nyunt said at the 107th SLORC press conference on the 7th of December 1990, U Maung Ko became an informer and revealed his plans, the plan to form a parallel government and to go underground. Only after revealing these, he committed suicide.

Even, the State Law and Order Restoration Council is not stating the truth and trying to discredit U Maung Ko by saying he became informer. His picture was reported in the Working People's Daily 9th Dec. 1990 and announced his death and charged him with conspiring to form a provisional government.

Name.....U Pipe Ko
Age.....43-years-old
Address..Pauk street, No.7 ward, Pakhaku Township
Occupation.....Merchant, NLD's deputy candidate for
Pakhaku constituency-2 Pakhaku Township. NLD's
CEC member Date of arrest.first week of December
1990
Place of arrest....at a restaurant in Pakhaku Township

Short biography

He was arrested at a restaurant by a deputy-MI agent from Mandalay Division with some local LORC officers while he was having dinner with his two friends at 6:30 pm. They were taken to Pakhaku LORC's office and his two friends were released. But he did not come back to his home by the end of December 1990. Although the authorities did not give any reason for his arrest. some said he was arrested for connections with the formation of the provisional government. They said he was taken to Yae-kyi-Aeing, MI headquarters in Rangoon. But, his family has not received an official reason for his arrest or details of the place of his detention.

Name.....Dr Kyi Min (BDS, Rgn)
Age.....33-years-old
Address.Pauk Street, No.7 ward, Pakhaku Township.
Occupation.....Opened a private Dental clinic in his
house, NLD's Hluttaw representative for Pakhaku-2
constituency
Date of arrest.....approximately 10 December 1990
Place of arrest.thought to be at his house in Pakhaku
Township

Short biography

Dr Kyi Min, a 33-year-old dentist from Pakhaku, was arrested by MI agents on approximately 10 Dec 1990. His was arrested after following his colleague, U Pipe Ko, a NLD deputy candidate from Pakhaku who was arrested during the first week of December 1990. There was no reason for his arrest and authorities did not give any reason for his arrest. But he may have been detained for refusing to sign SLORC's declaration No.1/90. His family has no idea who to ask about his whereabouts. They do not know whom they have to ask or who knows about his condition. Even local authorities could not provide them with any details. We did not receive any news about his disappearance from our sources in Burma until the end of December 1990. This is his second arrest for political activities. He was also arrested on 13 March 1989 for nearly 24 hours during Maung Phone Maw's memorial ceremony in Pakhaku Township. It commemorated the first anniversary of the first students who were shot dead by the military during the 1988 pro-democracy demonstrations.



**U Tin Htut, NLD CEC
member, Einme-1 Hluttaw
representative.**

U Tin Htut

Name.....U Tin Htut
Age.....Over 60 years old
Address.....No.2A, 87 Street, Kandawkalay,
Mingalartaungnyunt Township, Rangoon Occupation.A
retired registrar from Institute of Medicine-1, NLD
CEC member (Headquarters), Elected Hluttaw
representative of Einme-1 Date of arrest....at the end
of Nov or at the beginning of Dec 1990 Place of
arrest.....at his house in Rangoon

Short biography

A 60-year-old NLD CEC member and elected hluttaw representative was arrested by MI agents and township LORC officials, at night at his house, at the end of Nov or beginning of Dec 1990. He was arrested at the same time with U Kyaw Min, an architect and NLD CEC member and Pathein-2 hluttaw representative. The MI agents came to his house at night and said "we just want to take him for a moment." When he was put on the military jeep he was blindfold and taken to an unknown place. But he had not returned to his house by the end of Dec 1990. The authorities did not inform his family of his condition or of his whereabouts. Our sources in Rangoon said he refused to sign the SLORC's announcement No.1/90 and therefore he could not be released. They also said any political leaders who refused to sign the announcement 1/90, were arrested and they would not be released until they signed it. U Tin Htut is one of the 68 members of the Committee which was formed during a two-day conference of senior officials of the NLD (8 and 9 Oct 1990) to press the SLORC to allow the newly elected Parliament to be convened. The sources said U Tin Htut and U Kyaw Min were arrested with the first group of the Committee members to be arrested --12 members out of a total

of 68 Committee members. Later, the number of Committee members detained increased to 32 out of 68 members by the end of Dec 1990. We are quite worried about U Tin Htut's health in prison. According to our sources, he suffers from 'Cerebral Ischaemia,' narrowness of brain blood vessels since some years ago and he has to take medicine regularly and needs close attention by a physician. But the source could not confirm his current condition.

His picture appeared in the Working People's Daily on the 9th Dec. 1990, as a NLD member who took part in anti-government activities.

His youngest son, Si Thu Htut, a 19 year old first year Rangoon Institute of Technology student, was also arrested with a dozen other students by MI agents on the 12th of March 1990 while they were attending an organizational meeting for the second anniversary of Maung Phone Maw's death, on 13 March 1990. He was sentenced to 3 years imprisonment with hard labor by a military tribunal in Rangoon. He has been detained in Insein prison.



U Kyaw Min, NLD CEC member, Pathan-2 Hluttaw representative.

U Kyaw Min

Name.....U Kyaw Min
Age.....approximately 50 years old
Address..No. over 60, Yae Kyaw Street, Pazonthoung Township, Rangoon
Occupation.....Architect
Date of arrest.at the end of Nov or at the beginning of Dec (the same day as U Tin Htut)
Place of arrest.....at his house by MI agents

Short biography

A 50-year-old former private contractor, an architect and husband of a shopkeeper from Thein Kyi market, U Kyaw Min, a NLD CEC member and Pathan-2 hluttaw representative was easily arrested by MI agents in his house. When he was arrested, he was blindfold and taken to an unknown place. There was no reason, no excuse and no reply provided by the end of Dec. Our sources said he just disappeared from his house and no news of him appeared except when his photograph was printed in the WPD on 9th Dec. as a NLD member who took part in anti-government activities. He is one of the 68 member NLD Central Executive Committee.

Name.....U Ohn Kvaing
Age.....unknown
Address.....unknown
Occupation.....Reporter for the Batatoung newspaper which stopped circulation after the military coup, 18th Sept 1988, Mandalay Division Central, Committee member of the NLD
Date of arrest.....7 Sept 1990, in the evening
Place of arrest.....in Mandalay

Short biography

U Ohn Kyaing, a reporter for the Batatoung newspaper who wrote political analysis of the world, translated from Time, News Week magazines, etc. under the pen name, Aung Wint, was arrested by authorities on the 7th of Sept 1990, & reported in the WPD, dated 8th Sept 1990. He was arrested with U Thein Tan, Mandalay Division Organization Committee member, U Ye Myint Aung, head of Mandalay Division North-East Township Organization Committee and member, U Sein Hla Aung for having incited disturbances by writing false news in connection with the scuffle that took place in Mandalay 8-8-90, reported in the same WPD edition.

He and U Thein Tan, Mandalay Division Organization Committee member were sentenced to 7 years imprisonment by a military tribunal in Mandalay. It was reported to the press by a SLORC information officer at the 106th SLORC press conference, dated 19th Oct 1990. The officer said the action had been taken against them according to the law for creating disturbances by writing false news regarding the 8-8-90 disturbances in Mandalay.

Name.....Ex-Col Hla Pe
 Age.....unknown
 Address.....Near the Thuwana play ground,
 Thuwana Township
 Occupation.....former personal assistant to
 U Tin Oo, former Defence
 Minister
 and chairman of the NLD party,
 He is a member of Old
 Patriotic Comrade League Date of arrest.....unknown
 Place of arrest.....unknown
 Remark.....We have not received any detailed
 news about him.

Name.....U Tin Aung Aung
 Age.....Unknown
 Address.....Mandalay
 Occupation.....NLD hluttaw representative,
 Mandalay North-West Township,
 constituency-1, Mandalay
 Division Date of arrest....at the end of Nov 1990
 Place of arrest...at his house in Mandalay

Short biography

He was arrested by MI agents and members of the
 People's Police Force at his house, at the end of
 Nov 1990. He was hand-cuffed and taken to the MI
 office at the east of the Royal Palace in Mandalay.
 After that, we heard that the authorities asked 1,000
 kyats from him to send to MI headquarters, Yae Kyi
 Aie in Rangoon.

Name.....Dr Soe Lin
 Age.....Unknown
 Address.....Mandalay
 Occupation.....NLD hluttaw representative
 Mandalay South-West
 Township,
 constituency-1, Mandalay
 Division Date of arrest....at the end of Nov 1990
 Place of arrest....at his private clinic in Mandalay

Short biography

Some police officers and MI agents arrived at his
 private clinic while he was working in the evening,
 at the end of Nov 1990. They told him that they
 just wanted to ask him a few questions and took
 him to his house. After that, they searched for
 documents and papers in his house and took him to
 the MI office in East Royal Palace in Mandalay.
 Two days later, a police officer arrived at his house
 and gave a letter bearing his signature to his family.
 The letter asked for 1,000 kyats for him. According
 to witnesses, he was carried to Yae Kyi Aie, MI
 headquarters in Rangoon by plane.



Burmese and Australian friends demonstrate in front of the Burmese embassy in Australia, calling for release of all political prisoners and the return of democracy to the people.

UN RESPONSE TO BURMA

UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar has repeatedly asked Burma's military government to release opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest but has so far received no positive response, a UN spokesman said on December 18. The interest which the UN Secretary General has shown towards Burma and the suffering of the Burmese people is a valuable source of encouragement in the on-going struggle for human rights and the return to a multi-party democratic system.

In November, a Japanese expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Commission, Sadako Ogata, visited Burma to evaluate the human rights situation there. Her visit was reportedly made extremely difficult by SLORC officials who did not allow her to visit Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, or to move freely about the country to collect the information she needed. It has also been reported that a group of people in Mandalay who attempted to meet her have been arrested and detained.

Ms. Sadako Ogata's report should be released early in 1991, and it is expected that the report will help

push the United Nations General Assembly to take action against the continuing abuse of human rights and power which the SLORC carries out against the people of Burma.

Earlier in November, a discussion on Burma was called in the UN General Assembly, but it was tabled until 1991. The reason for the tabling was to wait for Ms. Ogata's report so that more information would be available to UN members.

It is important that action be taken against SLORC. One effective action would be to remove SLORC from the Burma seat in the UN, and keep the seat vacant until the government elected by the people can place a true representative of the people in it. SLORC has no legal right to rule the people of Burma, and the people have clearly elected the NLD and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to assume power.

The people of Burma call on the UN to consider the true aspirations of the people. International friends should also make every effort to encourage their representative at the UN to support the struggle for peace and democracy in Burma.

Saw Maung and freedom of the press

(speech by General Saw Maung, given in Rangoon on November 14)

"There is only one newspaper (in Burma) today. I'll tell you, there must be all sorts of newspapers in a democratic nation. Well, now is the transitory period and we have imposed restrictions on the other hand such as the Declaration No 8/88. We have had to impose restrictions so that no allegations could be made against us.

There is the right to publish news without attacking us. These matters should be considered. We have had to seize books published by party organizations. We have had to take action because they attack us. That's why we take action. A large number of books have been published. We are giving permission for novels and magazines to be published. People buy them and read them. I am talking about freedom of the press taking this opportunity. I will not talk much. You ask what my desire is. Our desire is revealed before your eyes and in the newspapers everyday. We are not persons who harm or damage democracy. We want democracy. That is why we mention this in the newspapers everyday. It is mentioned everyday to make you remember it. If one does not take note of this, it will be the responsibility of the one who omits to take note."

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

(Statement to the Student Environmental Action Coalition conference in Urbana Ill.)

Ten years ago, a leader of the Karen people who lives in the Southern part of Burma, stood on the top of a mountain in the Dawna Mountain Range and looked out over the surrounding expanse of teak forests, rich in animal and plant life. "This", he said, "is the land of my people."

This land of the Karen has gone unchanged for many generations. Wild animals roam freely. Teak trees grow to tremendous size. The air is clean and fresh. The Karen and the Dawna Mountain Range live in close unity.

Now, however, as this leader stands on the same mountain top, he sees huge stretches of his beloved land, stripped clean of the trees, and lying in waste. Wild animals are now hard to find, and the Karen themselves must move to other places to survive.

The killing of this area of pristine nature is being done by Thai logging companies working hand in hand with the military dictatorship of Saw Maung which now rules the land of Burma. Over 49 huge logging concessions have been sold to these Thai companies which strip the area of all trees, large or small, to sell in Thailand for big profits.

The money paid to the Saw Maung military regime is used by them to buy ammunition and guns which are used against the Karen people in the military's war to eliminate ethnic minorities from

these mountain ranges. The Karen are losing everything. The world is losing one of the last remaining teak wood forests which was once filled with abundant animal life, some of which has still not yet been identified.

Further north in Burma, oil companies from America, Canada, Japan, South Korea and Europe are beginning the process of exploiting the large oil and gas fields which lie under the Burmese soil. Once again, the people of Burma get nothing. The profits all go to the military to build up their oppressive strangle hold over the people.

American companies such as Amocol and Unical are helping kill the people of Burma and destroy the environment only in order to gain profits for themselves. Other companies, such as Pepsi Cola, are also investing in order to make fast profits at the expense of the Burmese people.

Boycott these companies. Force them to stop their support of a brutal military regime which came to power through tremendous bloodshed, and continues to spill the blood of the people in order to protect their own power.

Our people continue to be arrested, tortured and killed daily. We need your solidarity and help. Stand with us so that we too can know justice and peace.

Burma Underground Rights Movement for Action
B.U.R.M.A.

"Every day now in the dry season, when the muddy roads through the mountains are more easily passable, rafts of teak logs come floating down the river. The logs, some worth as much as US\$25,000 are winched onto trucks to be taken farther into Thailand, and then beyond to Japan, the United States and Western Europe, where they are largely turned into furniture.

Over 24.7 million cubic feet of teak a year are now coming out of Burma's forests, said Y. S. Rao, the regional forestry officer of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Bangkok.

"After the Burmese military crushed pro-democracy demonstrations in September 1988, it was shunned by much of the rest of the world. It found itself with all foreign aid suspended, trade negligible, foreign debt of some \$6 billion and foreign reserves of only \$10 million to \$12 million.

"But from Thailand came a series of contracts and concessions giving Thai companies, some of them with military connections, sell Burma's rubies and cut Burma's teak."

The New York Times, December 9, 1990, by Steven Erlanger

Preliminary analysis of recent satellite photographs of Burma's teak forests indicates that 1.2 million acres of tree cover has disappeared annually in the past five years, an exploitation rate five times that of 1976-80, according to United Nations officials and conservation groups. Some estimates put the damage much higher. Only about 50,000 acres are replanted each year and Burma will soon be virtually bare of forest unless the trend is dramatically reversed, experts say.

The Irrawaddy Herald, Issue No. 2, 8 August, 1990

SLORC AND WEAPONS

In mid-December, a four-day Asian Defence Services Exhibition and Conference was held in Bangkok. The huge arms bazaar was attended by more than 210 companies from 24 countries. The largest exhibitor was France, while China, Taiwan, the United States, Poland, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Britain, India, Brazil and Switzerland were also present in force.

American companies were proudly showing their latest military technology to former enemies such as Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia, as well as to some of the world's worst dictatorial regimes such as SLORC from Burma.

The following article ran in the Bangkok Post on December 13.

"Burma's powerful head of army intelligence Maj-Gen Khin Nyunt arrived in Bangkok yesterday to head a Burmese military delegation at the Asian Defence Services Exhibition and Conference.

The Visit comes during reports Burma is sharply beefing up its military capacity through arms deals with China, Yugoslavia and Poland. Besides Maj-Gen Khin Nyunt, who is also secretary of the ruling SLORC, the 20-man delegation included Army Commander-in-Chief Gen Than Shwe, who is also deputy commander of Defence Services.

Rangoon has the largest number of delegates attending ADSEC '90. Other high-ranking officials have arrived from Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Viet Nam for the show.

The December 6 issue of the Hong Kong news magazine Far Eastern Economic Review reported that Burma had signed an arms deal with China worth almost US\$1 billion, AP reports.

It said the purchase included 12 F-6 or F-7 fighter aircraft, six Hainan class naval patrol boats, and 100 light and medium tanks, including T-6911s and the Chinese version of the Soviet PT-76 light amphibious tank.

The deal also included a substantial number of armored personnel carriers and a number of anti-aircraft weapons.

In October, Yugoslavia reportedly delivered six G-4

Super Galah aircraft and three naval patrol boats, through to be Korcar class, it said.

Both the boats and the aircraft were fitted with Rolls Royce engines and the boats armed with Swedish-made Bofors cannon, the report said. It said Yugoslavia had signed an agreement with Britain in 1972 forbidding the re-export of aircraft with such engines to countries like Burma. The same rule applied to Sweden's Bofors cannon.

The report also said Poland had agreed to deliver 20 combat and transport helicopters.

The article quoted analysts as saying the build-up also appeared partly aimed at intimidating the civilian population."

With tacit support like this from countries around the world, the struggle for democracy in Burma will become more difficult and take a longer, more bloody time.

ALERT

Foreign investments have added millions of dollars to the pockets of the Burmese military, which they in turn have used to purchase weapons and increase the numbers of their military to over 200,000. This strengthening of the Burmese military has further endangered the lives of ethnic villagers living along the border areas of Burma, as well as students living in border camps.

The Burmese military is now preparing to launch their dry-season offensive. Reports say that they are grouping near Wan Kha and Ye Kyaw camps, and that soon they will begin their plan to totally eliminate all ethnic strongholds and student camps before the rains start again.

An Economic boycott, carried out by countries as well as the United Nations, is necessary to stop this bloodshed and murder of the people in these areas. We call on all international friends to join us in bringing about this boycott.

BUDDHIST MONKS AND THE PEOPLE

Buddhism around the world plays various roles in the struggles of the oppressed for justice and human rights. In some countries, the monks play a purely religious role, standing clear of the social injustices which swirl around them as they administer to the religious needs of the community. In other countries, such as Viet Nam during the American occupation of that country, Buddhist monks and nuns have led the people in the anti-violence movement, even sacrificing their own lives by self-immolation in order to push the peace process forward at a faster pace.

The Buddhist monks in Burma have a long history of standing with the people in times of oppression, despite suppressive attempts of the ruling elite to keep them passively in their monasteries.

During the 1988 uprising, Buddhist monks of all ages could be seen in most demonstrations, in many cases leading the people. Their monasteries became centers where students and working people could gather to talk, plan and organize; something the military regime of Ne Win had forbid for 26 years. As the military rose up against this people's movement, many monks were slain along with the students. Their blood stained the streets of almost every urban center in Burma.

After the bloody military coup of September 18, 1988, the movement for democracy in Burma paused a bit, reeling under the vicious gunfire of the military. However, the monks along with the people, have never given in to the repressive rule of the military.

In September of 1990, monks in Mandalay once again challenged the military. Their tactic was a beautiful and creative non-violent act against repression. They refused to perform religious services for soldiers and their families. Their reasons for carrying out this act included the fact that the military had shot to death at least two monks in August. This violence against the religious leaders of the country showed the total disregard which the military holds for the Buddhist faith, and therefore the monks need not provide religious services to the military.

Their protest was effective. To be refused religious services, and to forfeit the right to provide food offerings to monks is a serious issue to most people in Burma, especially to families of military personnel. Families know that their sons are sent to

the front line were the civil war rages. Making religious merit can provide some safety for these soldiers, and thus ease the worries of the family. When making merit becomes impossible, the families begin to worry, ask questions and the military ranks become less stable.

For the ruling military elite, this was a problem of great concern. They remain in power only because they can control the population through fear and coercion. This fear is created by their military which they can control with high salaries. However, if the religious well-being of the common soldiers is threatened, it is always possible that the military clutch over the country will begin to weaken. Therefore, the military had to take action.

On October 22, 1990, Burmese troops raided 133 monasteries in the Mandalay area. At the same time, they put strong pressure on senior monks to sign pledges to end the boycott and once again provide religious services to the military families. Reports say that some senior monks did finally sign the pledges, but that most of the younger monks were determined to continue their protest. Of the 300,000 monks in Mandalay, probably 50,000 are still actively opposing the military regime through acts such as the boycott.

To attempt to prove that their power is higher than that of the Buddhist faith, the military regime placed troops with drawn bayonets around most monasteries, and declared the most active monks organizations as being illegal. The military also gave military tribunals the right to try monks with treason. Under martial law, treason can be punishable by death.

It has also been reported that the military quickly brought in monks from distant villages who were unaware of the political struggle going on. These monks could be used to collect alms from the families of the military and provide other religious services, thus once again protecting the ranks of oppression from dissolving. The military regime has also begun gift-giving to senior monks and to monasteries, providing them with TVs and videos among other things. Can religious approval be purchased by the military with a TV and a video? The history of the Buddhist church in Burma suggests not. Monks have always stood with the suffering people, and now they will continue to do the same.

NEWS BITS

Japan, Australia and South Korea have decided to temporarily suspend financial support for the US\$10 million ESCAP (UN) project to build a highway bridge across the Moei river because of the military's refusal to transfer power to the NLD.

Burma Alert No. 11

"The new name (Mynmar)...is wrong both phonetically and politically. Phonetically, the correct spelling should be "Myanmah". This term (in writing) or Bamah (in speaking) refers directly to the majority ethnic group which the British and Western scholars confusingly call "Burmese" or "Burman"... Politically... the present military regime... proclaimed the political suzerainty of the Myanmah over minority ethnic groups...who have been waging war against eh Myanmah government for more than 40 years."

Dr. Mya Maung, Professor of Finance in the School of Management, Boston College

U Tun Ngwe, military intelligence officer and former Counselor at the Tokyo Embassy is a member of the Burma delegation to the current session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. Japanese police believe U Tun Ngwe planted the time bomb that was found at the Tokyo Embassy on Nov 13, 1989. They think he was trying to discredit Burmese dissidents in Japan. U Tun Ngwe was sent home before police could interrogate him and escaped being declared a persona-non-grata by Japan

Burma Alert No. 11

In reality the farmers rights are the workers rights. I would like to ask regarding the workers rights. Here all are workers. There may be some farmers present here. Say, what rights you are losing? Well speak out. What rights have you lost? That is why I am saying that I am not delivering an address. I am holding dialogue, discussions with you. Well what privileges have you lost? Just tell me and if possible I will fulfil them. Are you content? What do you need? When were measures taken to give you such privileges you are enjoying now? Do you get leave? I think I have mentioned about leaves at a certain place. Is leave entitlement or privilege. Do you understand this? Entitlement means one has a right to something and privilege means some right or advantage one can enjoy. We also have this in our Tatmadaw (army). It is more critical in the Armed Forces. We can go on leave. Some people cannot go on leave even when their mother or father dies. I was very young when my mother died and I did not know it. When my father breathed his last, I was not with him. I was transferred to Taungoo during the Revolutionary Council. Will you believe if I say I know more than you do? Older people will know. You are late-comers. I had to go to Ketkyitada.

(Speech by SLORC Chairman Senior General Saw Maung in Taungoo printed in the Working People's Daily on November 15, 1990.) 8 pages

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

PORTER NEWS

Name.....Maung Pan Mying
 Age.....38 years
 Father Name.....U Shwe Thaung
 Mother Name.....Daw Shwe
 Address.....Pa-an city, Karen State, Burma#.
 Occupation.....wood cutter

Story-- Maung Pan Myint has six children; four boys and two girls. He was forced to serve as a porter by Regiment No.1 under control of Battalion No.44 in June, 1990. He was forced by the military to carry heavy rice bags for military rations at the Mya Wa Di port, opposite Mae Sod, Thailand. Last month, he fled from this place.

Name.....Maung Myint Than
 Age.....21 years
 Father Name.....U Tin Oo
 Mother Name.....Daw Mya
 Address.Mataban city, Tennassarain Division, Burma#.
 Occupation.....Fisherman

Story-- Maung Myint Than was forced to be a porter by Light Infantry No.1 in Mataban city. He carried heavy rice bags, onions and salted fish bags for military rations. The BSPP troops treated the porters very badly. Sometimes the BSPP troops brutally beat the porters. Even when the porters were seriously sick, the troops did not give them any medicines. When Maung Than ask for medicines from the troops, they threatened to beat him. Now, he has been able to flee from that military area.

Name.....Maung Myint Hlaing (Pho Taw)
 Age.....24 years
 Father Name.....U Chit Hlaing
 Mother Name.....Daw Chaw Sein
 Address.Se Sone Ward of Moulmein city, Tennassary Division, Burma. Occupation.....unknown

Story-- On 25th September, 1990, two privates from Regiment No.97 drank a lot of alcohol and came into the Moe Goke Set Wine Monastery where the privates swore at all the people. Then, they shot their guns and robbed some of the people on the

main road in Moulmein city. The people ran to escape from this place. At that time, Maung Myint Hlaing was going to his shop and saw this incident. So, he also ran along the main road to Thaung Yin stream. The two privates chased him. Finally, he dove into the stream but he does not know how to swim. The two privates also dove into the stream to arrest Maung Myint Hlaing but the privates could not swim because they drank a lot of alcohol. At that time, other privates also arrived at the side of the stream and aimed their guns at a boat driver to force him to go save their two soldier friends. The army men, however, neglected Maung Myint Hlaing. For this reason, Maung Myint Hlaing drown in the stream.

October 17, 1990

Name.....Maung Maung alias Ai Suit
 Age.....24 years
 Father Name.....U Ai Suit
 Address....Kya Inn Sake Kyi township in Karen State

Contents-- He was arrest on a ship which went from Kya Inn Sake Kyi to Moulmein on 16 of February 1990 by Government troops who used him as a porter for more then seven months. After that he could flee from the soldiers' atrocities.

Name.....Ah Di
 Age.....22 years
 Father Name.....U San Mya
 Address.....Unknown

Contents-- He was arrested in Naung Ka Lar village in Belin area of Mon State by government troops who used him as a porter for about five months. While he was a porter, he received only a two-spoon-size amount of soybean for his one meal. After that he could flee from the soldiers' atrocities.

(Continued next page)

Atrocities of Rangoon Troops • PORTER NEWS

Soldiers from Regiment No.5 came into Paung Da Ba Ya Village in Karen State and shot whatever they saw in the village. Some of the people were killed and some were wounded.

Dead people:

Name.....U Ru Bi
Age.....45 years
Father Name.....U Saw Phu
Address.Kya Khat Chaung Village in Belin township in Karen State. (He has three children and wife.)

Name.....Maung Kyant Khaing
Age.....15 years
Father Name.....U saw Pe
Address.Kya Khat Chaung Village in Belin township in Karen State.

Wounded people:

Name.....Maung Cho
Age.....36 years
Father Name.....U Saw Pe
Address..Kya Khat Chang Village in Belin township in Karen State.

Name.....Maung Soe
Age.....17 years
Father Name.....U Ta Pa
Address...Ye Kyi Village in Belin township of Mon State.

The soldiers from No.4 led by Captain Sein Thaung of Light Regiment No.24 came a second time into Paung Da Ba Ya village in Belin Township of Mon State on 7 of September in 1990 and shot whatever they saw in the village. Two people were wounded seriously.

Wounded people:

Name.....U kaw Htoo
Age.....75 years
Address.Paung Da Ba Ya Village in Belin Township of Mon State.

Name.....U Maung Aye
Age.....Unknown
Address..Kya Khat Chaung Village in Belin State of Mon State.

Commander Maj. Soe Min and the soldiers from Regiment No.19 came into Ka Naing Village in Pa Pon District of Karen State around midnight and arrested about 20 villagers including four women to be used as porters.

The men's ages were from 13 to 65 years and the women's ages were from 17 to 20 years.

The men were transfer to Light Regiment No.5 under control of Battalion No.44 but the four women disappeared. Although the parents whose daughter disappeared informed local authorities, they have not yet received any information about their daughters.

The four disappeared women are;

1.Name.....Nan Hla Sein
Age.....17 years
Father Name.....U Ka Lar Gyi
Mother Name.....Daw Ohn May

2.Name.....Nan Mya May
Age.....20 years
Father Name.....U Saw Aung Yin
Mother Name.....Daw Nan Than Kyi

3.Name.....Nan Win Kyi
Age.....17 years
Father Name.....U Saw Aung Yin
Mother Name.....Daw Nan Than Kyi

4.Name.....Tan Than Mya
Age.....19 years
Father Name.....U Saw Ohn Maung
Mother Name.....Daw Nan Yin May

The soldiers from Regiment No.4, Light Regiment No.5 and No. 10 under control of Battalion No.44 arrested the people from Ka Dai Ti, Ye Pu, Kyo Wine and Myit Kyo villages which are on Papon-Belin highway, and Kwi Lay, Kya Thung Sake, Lay Kaw, Me Lan and Mae Nan Than villages in Tha Thon District of Mon State.

The men in these villages abandoned their homes. When the soldiers could not find the men in these villages, they arrested some women whose ages were from 14 to 60 years old. Some women were about 4 months pregnant.

The soldiers forced these women to carry heavy weapons and to march in front of the columns to be human shields in the front lines.

January 9, 1991

(Report prepared by Burma Underground Rights Movement for Action (B.U.R.M.A.)

ONE SIDE

In a move, unwelcomed by dissidents from Burma, the Thai Foreign Minister has stated that the Thai government will go ahead with its plan to put Burmese students seeking asylum in Thailand in a border camp. One of the reasons for this move is to prevent these students from engaging in "subversive and political activities" against Rangoon.

Presently there are over 1000 students staying in Bangkok, most of whom are recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as persons of concern. This means that the UNHCR has reason to believe that if they were sent back to Burma, their lives would be in danger.

The UNHCR provides these students with a paper stating that they are persons of concern to the UNHCR, and also provides them with a living allowance of 3000 Thai baht. The Thai government has asked the UNHCR to stop this support which would leave the students with no means of support for housing or food. The UNHCR has refused to abide by the government's request.

Many students see the border camp, often called a "safe detention center" as a plan between the Burmese military and the Thai military to break down resistance against the military regime which has ruled Burma since September 1988. The Burmese military, through the SLORC continues to control state power despite the fact that they have no legal right to do so, both under Burmese law and international law.

If students are placed in such a camp, they will not be allowed to continue their struggles for democracy in Burma. They will simply be asked to sit silently in the camp until such time as they decide to go back home. According to UNHCR, and most other observers, "going home" would most certainly mean imprisonment for most of them, and death in many cases.

Dissidents from Burma living in Thailand, with the support of some Thai students and human rights groups, have ask Thailand to review this policy, and to rather give them political asylum.

ANOTHER SIDE

ABSDF welcomes a statement by newly-appointed Thai Foreign Minister Arthit Urairat that he would review Thailand's policy on Burma, and that the policy should be based on balancing respect for the neighboring country's sovereignty with a concern for human rights, and the need to minimize adverse effects from its internal political turmoil on Thailand.

Thailand provides refuge for political dissidents fleeing persecution in Burma, but concerns on the effects on Thailand's border security and business interests have prompted the Thai government to tend to ignore human rights conditions inside Burma.

"We cannot sit idly by given the concerns over the human rights situation there. It (the violation of human rights) demands a proper reaction," he said.

ABSDF has always appreciated the hospitality given them by The Thai people. Without this kindness, it would have been extremely difficult to survive the past two years. The plan of the Thai government to set up a so-called "safe detention center" is alarming as it would hinder our efforts to bring about peace, democracy and human rights to our motherland. Arthit Urairat's willingness to review this policy is a welcome relief to the tensions which plague us continually.

GUEST EDITORIAL

Democracy in Burma: How Committed are You?

The protest against Thakin Saw Maung's Tatmadaw (army) dictatorship in 1988 and subsequent massacres of brave and unarmed citizens have outraged many of us Burma-born individuals scattered all over the world, and it has inspired many to fight, in various ways, for the restoration of democracy.

Democracy is not a sweet dream; it is an approaching reality. However, we must also be aware that democracy can turn sour, decay, wither, and die, as it once did twenty-seven years or so ago. Unless we value and cherish, and learn how to nurture democracy, it is inevitable that Burma will again be plunged into the long night of despotism. In order to plant democracy firmly in our soil, we must not only be committed to democracy, but understand what it is, and what is required of us, its adherents.

As it is generally understood, democracy is "the rule of the people, by the people, for the people". And as such, we assume that it is "the people" who must cherish, defend, nurture, practice, and understand democracy. On a practical plane, however, the question arises as to who or what "the people" are? The term, "the people", is vague and ambiguous, a two-edged ideological tool. As shown time after time in history, millions have been imprisoned, maimed, executed, and persecuted by despots and tyrants in the name of "the people".

The term, "the people" is an abstract term, and an abstract entity cannot defend, nurture, or cherish democracy. We cannot take it for granted that democracy will be defended by "the people". To the contrary, democracy can be defended only by our adherence and commitment to its practices and principles. In other words, those who want democracy, must practice democracy.

We must, firstly, understand that democracy is a philosophy, a way of life, a mind-set which is based, above all, like all great religions, on tolerance. We must, as such, be prepared to tolerate, and even defend, all sorts of views, aspirations, and behavior, no matter how objectionable or "dangerous". Democracy is the total acceptance of disagreements and diversity, and as such, it implies an unconditional respect for opposing viewpoints, no matter how repulsive they are.

A very important component of democracy is, therefore, the sanctity of human rights and freedom, particularly, the freedom of the press. In a democracy, the press must enjoy absolute freedom, even the freedom to be "destructive" and irresponsible. In this respect, we must not forget that those who want to "protect the people" from whatever, and "safeguard" the "national interest" are, in many cases, aspiring despots and autocrats, with hidden agendas to install a system of repression.

Secondly, in the realm of politics, democracy means, above all, the acceptance of defeats in elections and in the legislative process. That is, those who participate actively in politics must be prepared to be defeated even by third-rate opponents and their fifth-rate policies. As committed democrats, we must learn to accept adverse outcomes with grace and dignity, and resist the idea that as a consequence of one's defeat, the "nation", or the country will be destroyed or "dismembered". The despotic mentality which equates one's convictions, policy, or party with the interest of the "nation", must be thrown out. In the light of cold logic, no person or group can represent the "interest of the people", and it must be remembered that in politics, no one is indispensable. In a democratic society, the concept of a "savior-hero" is redundant simply because it is the ordinary people who are the heroes, they are both leaders and followers, and it is they who determines the future and destiny of the country. The father-figure, a "hero-protector" who "saves" the "nation", or "leads" it towards a glorious future, is but a crude myth created by despots in order to perpetuate repression and terror, and to deprive the country's citizens of the right to manage their own lives and to govern themselves.

Thirdly, democracy presupposes the equality of all people, and the political implication of this is that no belief, creed, viewpoint, or aspiration should be forcefully suppressed or arbitrarily dismissed as without any merit. Democracy requires the expression of all ideas and creeds, and allows men and women with diverse creeds, convictions, goals, agendas to compete with each other peacefully and rationally.

In a democratic political system, there is no room for the imposition of one's policy or creed through the politics of violence, or for the "surgical" removal of one's "enemies" or rivals by means of trumped-

up charges, arbitrary imprisonment, forced exile, or "disappearance". Once political violence and coercion is used, no matter how little or much, democracy must die, sooner or later. Politics in a democracy is a peaceful process: it is, essentially, a competition between rival political salesmen, each touting his/her "solutions" to society's ills; it certainly is not a zero-sum game between warlords and godfathers. Further, democracy involves not only competition, but as well, the recognition by active political actors that there is no "total" or perfect solutions to any of life's problems, and that problems must therefore be "solved" through discussions and compromises. It must be remembered that only a despot "knows" all the answers. In a despotic system, the despot is the "Solution", no other choice is permitted.

Lastly, but most important, it must be remembered that undermining democracy and the democratic process is what is termed "the rule of law". Essentially, the rule of law is the submission of every individual to a system of law and a set of impersonal, impartial, and rational rules and procedures which governs all aspect of life within a society. The country's constitution, regulations governing the actions of government, laws defining what is legal and illegal, procedures governing interactions between individuals, between corporate bodies, bureaucracies, associations, and so on, comprise what is known as the Laws of the land. Laws are, however, not ordained by God, nor written in stone. It is the commitment to, and our

respect for laws that make them what they are.

There can be no democracy without the Rule of Law, because without laws, people must control each other by force and violence, and they must confront each other in a jungle environment where the one with the biggest stick, or with the largest number of followers triumphs. Without the Rule of Law, it is impossible to differentiate between what is fair and unfair, between justice and injustice, legality and illegality, equality and inequality, truth and falsehood, guilt and innocence, and so on. The erosion of law is the first, but sure step in the downward slide of society towards the tyranny of the sword and rule by the caprice of one man.

We all say, with deep conviction, that we want democracy, but at the same time, we have not, to be honest, deeply thought out the commitments required of us as democrats. Overthrowing the despotic regime is not democracy and it will not ensure democracy. When a despot is toppled, he is usually followed, after a short period of "democracy", by another despot. It is time therefore for us to ponder the above issues, and answer them honestly. They define what democracy is all about, and suggest that personal commitments are required of us if we sincerely want democracy in Burma, the land of our birth.

(written by "A Committee of One" in Vancouver, Canada)

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