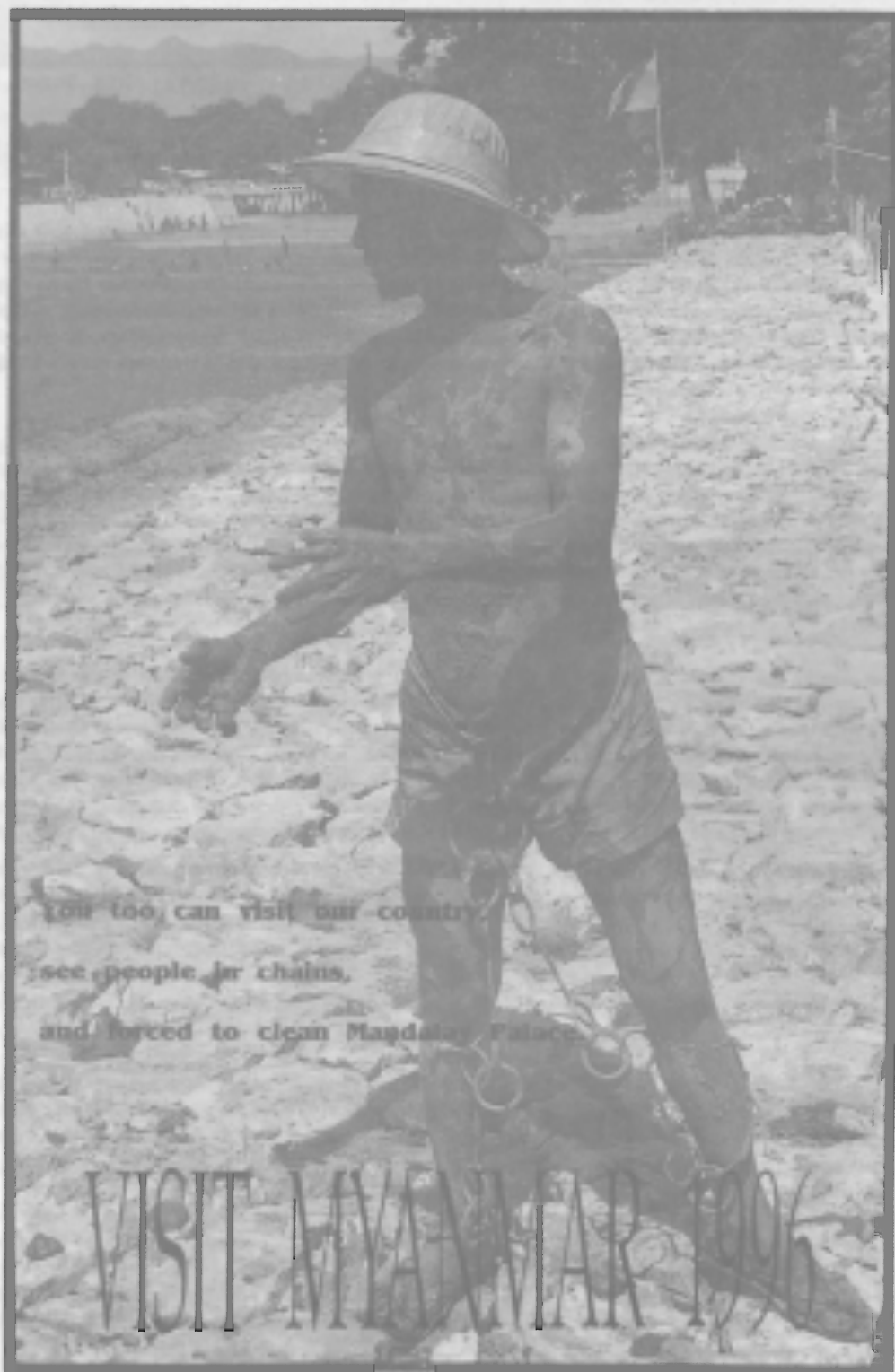


BBC

**DAWN**  
NEWS BULLETIN



You too can visit our country  
see people in chains,  
and forced to clean Mandalay Palace.

VISIT MYANMAR 1996

# DAWN

## NEWSBULLETIN

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**...To serve the people's true will, this is the way to auspiciousness.**

It has been almost six years since the peaceful demand of the Burmese people for democracy and human rights had been crushed by the military dictators. Tragic and bloody events on those days never faded in our memories. Military trucks and tanks loaded with soldiers invaded the streets of Rangoon like the occupying force of a foreign country, gunning down people on sight. Military marching songs continuously soared in the air from State-controlled radio and television, intimidating the trampled demonstrators. Thousands of students, Buddhist monks and people were killed ruthlessly. It will be recorded in Burmese history as Black September.

Military dictators might have thought that the power of a gun could silence the voices and overwhelm the aspirations of the people in their just demands for democracy and human rights. In reality, the oppression strengthened the determination of the people even more. The general election on 27 May 1990 reveals valid evidence of the will of the people that explicitly proved the fact that people no longer wanted military dictatorship and they were eager for change. Bloody massacres in Burma symbolised an unforgettable event and drew the attention of the international community. Since September 1988, the Rangoon military regime has been continuously condemned by the international community for its human rights violations and suppressive measures against political dissidents.

It is because of the relentless struggle of the people and ever-present international pressure that the military is now starting an about-face. For the first time in six years' rule by SLORC, it started to hint at dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and dialogue with the United Nations. However, it will be difficult to judge the attitude of the military based on their words. Verbal statements require a careful analysis of the regime's forthcoming deeds. It is a doubtful tactic to take their sayings at face value; the national convention with the intention to legalise the military domination in politics is still occurring. Recently, the military proposed to take 25% of the seats in both Lower chamber and Upper chamber of the Parliament.

In a civilized democratic society it is found that armed forces are a permanent institution in the service of the nation. They have to be obedient professionals apolitical and non-deliberative. Their institutional regime and operations have also to be consistent with the principles deriving from the rule of law, the primacy of the dignity of all person and respect for human rights; respect and defense of the sovereignty of people: the concept of the armed forces as an institution agreed from all considerations of politics, ideology or social position or another discrimination: and the subordination of the armed forces to the constitutional authorities.

Gen Aung San, founder of the Burmese army, set a noble example in Burmese history. He gave up the life of a General when the country needed him as a politician, to lead in political struggle for independence. Even good soldiers in Burmese army should learn Gen Aung San's clear-cut demarcation line between military service and politics.

The time is up for military rule in Burma. People will not tolerate military dominance and interference in politics any more. It is time to think for the sake of the country; the Tatmadaw need to go back to the barracks as they promised before the election. National reconciliation and peace can be built up only by mutual respect and sincere openness; not by violent threats and sly manoeuvres. Stop the National Convention. Stop any attempt to impose military domination in future political life of Burma. Sovereignty of the State is owned by the People. Those People have the right to determine their political future.

*Published By The All Burma Students' Democratic front.*

**(DAWN)** GPO Box 1352, Bangkok 10501 THAILAND

## ABSDF ON THE MOVE

### ABSDF SUPPORTS PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS

THE All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), which had been denied permission to stage peaceful demonstrations during the ASEAN gathering because of restrictions imposed by Thai authorities, expressed its continued support for and encouraged peaceful demonstrations staged by interested organisations sympathetic to the plight of Burma's citizens.

ABSDF openly and honestly declared its position, denouncing the invitation by the host country, Thailand, to SLORC, which continues to violate both fundamental democratic rights and basic human rights, to attend the ASEAN meeting as an observer." We also deplore the practise of 'constructive engagement' by ASEAN member nations towards this tyrannical regime," said ABSDF in a statement released on 14 July.

In its attempts to move ASEAN nations towards an open and honest understanding of the real nature of the ruthless military regime and the problems facing the people of Burma, ABSDF will continue to focus on public education and organising and mobilising the people inside Burma while at the same time sharing the facts about the situation of those tortured people with the international community. All of this will be accomplished through peaceful means.

"ABSDF again urges ASEAN to sincerely take notice of and respect the voices of the democratic forces by inviting them, not SLORC, to the meeting as a guest of the host

country," added ABSDF.

Referring to the widespread rumours from so-called "well-informed Thai authorities" that the democratic forces, in particular ABSDF, were planning to stage a bomb blast or other form of terrorist attack in Thailand, the Front stated, "We know that the true intentions of certain parties will be unmasked and known for what they are: cheap ploys to discredit peaceful and dedicated workers for the future of Burma."

### ABSDF MESSAGE OF FELICITATIONS

On 19 July, 1994, the ABSDF extended its heart-felt appreciation to the Southeast Asia Network for Human Rights (SEANET), sponsor of the Southeast Asia NGO Meeting on Human Rights and Development, for its concern in Burma. ABSDF added that uncovering the facts and spreading the truth is the best weapon in the struggle.

"Today, it is not only our right but our duty to speak out, to be heard,

and to listen. We need to examine and analyze what is occurring in the world, what the people want and what the governments propose. Only through an exchange and discussion of ideas and mutual cooperation can we hope to correct the mistakes of humankind, whether committed individually or collectively, whether with intent to do harm or as a side-effect of ignorance; now the time has come for NGOs to take the lead, bridging the gap between the people and the governments and bringing them together for the sake of all," said ABSDF.

ABSDF expressed its wholehearted support and encouragement for the process of reconciliation of masses and might. "We would like to make clear that we respect other countries' sovereignty, and that our struggle is directed at those who oppose freedom, peace, and democracy in Burma. We stand resolved in our goals, and hope that, with your continued support and commitment to peaceful solutions to violent problems, we can all make this world a better place to live in."



The Spirit of 8888 represents all values of life, age, background — all united in the struggle for Democracy and Human Rights

## ABSDF ON THE MOVE

### DEMOCRATIC FORCES COMMEMORATE 8888

The commemoration of the 6th anniversary of the 8888 Uprising



The determination and cooperation shown here by a cross section of democracy groups who remember and stand ready for the realisation of 8888.

by the students and youth of Burma, now organised into ABSDF and other respective organisations, under the sponsorship of the **National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB)** was held on 8 August 1994 at the headquarters of the ABSDF, Dawn Gwin. The uprising took place when the people of Burma struggled for the restoration of democracy against their motherland's dictatorial military regime.

U Maung Muang Aye, Information Minister of the NCGUB presided over the ceremony while Dr Naing Aung, Chairman of ABSDF, U Tin Aung, Secretary of the National League for Democracy (Liberated Area) (NLD[LA]; Myint Zaw, Joint Secretary of the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB); and Ven U Teikkha of the All Burma Young Monks Union (ABYMU) acted as members of the presidium for the event.

During the proceedings, the participants to the ceremony saluted the flag of NCGUB, Gen Aung San and all fallen Martyrs of Burma and all the people who

sacrificed their lives during the 8888 Uprising and the chairman of the ceremony, U Maung Muang Aye; Dr Naing Aung of the ABSDF; Aung Saw Oo of NLD (LA); and Myint Zaw of DAB delivered speeches to the gathering.

"On this occasion, the NCGUB urges people all over Burma to pay tribute to all martyrs who have given up their lives for the just cause and to double their efforts toward strengthening the struggle for democracy. As Aung San Suu Kyi said very often, we need to be united even more, we need to be more courageous, we need to be more disciplined. Any change in Burma can only come through the efforts of the Burmese people. Let us prepare ourselves to take that one extra step and work for the betterment of our country and people."

"The NCGUB also takes this opportunity to call on the international community to exert even

more pressure on the regime until the junta gives in and join the mainstream towards democracy and human rights in Burma."

The "Declaration of the ABSDF on this auspicious occasion of the 6th anniversary of the 8888" was read out by Aung Kyaw Toe from ABSDF while a message of felicitations from National Democratic (NDF), NLD(LA), Karen National Union (KNU), and United Wa Anti-Narcotic and Development Organisation (UWADO) was read out by Kyaw Kyaw (Kachin) from the students' organisation.

ABSDF is dedicated to all martyrs who sacrificed their lives during and since the 8888 Uprising. Upholding the Front's National Political Trend, and with the flaming spirit of 8888, ABSDF will continue its struggle until the illegitimate military regime now ruling Burma has collapsed.

"In order to fulfill the unfinished historic task begun by thousands of people who sacrificed their lives, sweat and blood during the uprising for the restoration of democracy, we, the Generation of 8888, duty-bound to unswervingly follow this path, have continued unflaggingly, struggling and sacrificing our lives, sweat and blood," declared the ABSDF on 8 August.

"We strongly believe that our democratic struggle will succeed one day. In numerous countries around the world, dictators who rule their own people at gun-point are gradually collapsing under the vigorous wave of the struggle for democracy and reform initiated by the people. Their revolutionary songs and banners, rising at the break of dawn in these newly-

## ABSDF ON THE MOVE

emerging democratic states, serve as an example, mobilising the oppressed people living in other, undemocratic countries, such as Burma."

ABSDF also pointed out that the SLORC military regime has continued to refuse to honour the results of the 1990 election, in which the people clearly expressed their will. In order to prolong their power, the regime's alternative to the election is the installation of a puppet civilian government through the SLORC-manipulated sham National Convention.

Oppressed ethnic groups, which had reached ceasefire agreements with SLORC under the regime's sugar-coated propaganda promises of border area development programmes and "guarantees" of participation in the National Convention, are now preparing to continue their armed struggle after experiencing SLORC's deceit and insincerity.

"If SLORC were sincere in serving the interests of the country and its people, it would attempt to achieve national reconciliation and restoration of internal peace by solving political problems by political means. Talks should be held with all parties concerned — democratic forces led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the ethnic minorities — rather than practicing the "divide and rule" approach with the revolutionary organisations under the guise of ceasefires

and border area development programmes," said ABSDF

"We will continue our diligent struggle by applying all appropriate and effective measures to pressure the regime to find political solutions to Burma's problems, including the need for the restoration of democracy and human rights and the establishment of a democratic Union for a genuine internal peace."

Various topics were touched upon in the "History of the Student movement" "To the cut the line between the enemy and friend" and "Victory through the Spirit of 8888" among others were shared to the gathering by members of ABSDF.

The epilogue of the ceremony was successfully concluded with slogans. More than 500 people were in attendance, composed of leaders and members of alliance organisation and members of the ABSDF.

## BASIC COMPUTER TRAINING COURSE OPENS

A basic computer training course organised by Information Department of the ABSDF was conducted from 20 July to 20 August 1994. The training was joined by 10 members from respective departments of ABSDF and resource persons from the Computer Branch of the Front directed instruction on how to use DOS, how hardware works and the basic on command of software. At that training, Win Myint Thein and Maung Maung Gyi from Central Headquarters won first and second prizes while third prize went to Aung Kyaw Toe of the Organising Department.

Even in the jungle, education continues..



## NO MORE MILITARY INTERFERENCE IN CIVILIAN RULE

## F88 FORCES MARK 7 JULY UPRISING

On 7 July 1994 F88 Forces commemorated the 32nd anniversary of the historic uprising on the same date in 1962. The uprising occurred when hundreds of students from Rangoon University were massacred, and the historic Student Union, which played a crucial role in the fight against British colonial rule, was dynamited by the military regime in Burma.

The Student Union spearheaded the struggle for national liberation against colonial rule since its foundation in 1931 for the benefit and well-being of the people of Burma and for the restoration of peace in the country. The students continued their struggle, this time against the Burmese military regime, when Burma was plunged into the darkness of military dictatorship led by Gen Ne Win, who took power on 2 March 1962.

After 7 July 1962, the Student Union was branded as an unlawful association and activities of the students were banned in 1964 by order of the so-called Revolutionary Council, which was in reality a military council of Gen Ne Win. Democracy ceased to exist in Burma, and the Student Union turned into an underground movement.

"The denial of democracy and human rights, and dis-

crimination against the ethnic minorities by the military regime has, within the past 32 years, plunged Burma into political, social and economic chaos, and reduced an otherwise rich land to one of the poorest countries in the world, while bringing the country's national dignity to the lowest levels," said the F88 Forces in a statement released on 7 July.

F88 Forces added that political changes in line with democratic principles are the primary means of overcoming the current general crisis.

The statement said in conclusion that members of the F88 Forces dedicated themselves to fulfill major political changes in Burma. The overthrow of the SLORC military regime, pressure to release all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and implementation of the results of the May 1990 election, which still remains an unfinished political issue.

### PM IN THE PHIL

Dr Sein Win, Prime Minister of the NCGUB, accompanied by his personal advisor and editor of *Burma Alert* Harn Yawngnwe, visited the Philippines on 9-14 July at the invitation of the Partido Demokratiko Sosyalista ng Philippines (Philippine Democratic Socialist Party -- PDSP), headed by Norberto Gonzales.

At high-level meetings with senior policy makers in the Philippines, the NCGUB delegation took the opportunity of expressing the Burmese people's concerns over reports that ASEAN was about to admit the Burmese military junta into the

association at the upcoming ASEAN foreign ministers meeting.

"Our concern right now is that the international community might believe what the junta says.... The international community might believe the idea that the military has softened and has become more liberal. That is our utmost concern, because this is simply not true," commented said Dr Sein Win.

The visit by NCGUB highlighted the plight of Burmese people under repressive military junta and has raised a new level of awareness in the Philippines about Burma situation.

Dr Sein Win described the SLORC as "one of the most brutal regimes in the world" and commented there were more than 1,000 dissidents still in detention, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and 60 others, members of parliament.

Dr Sein Win said ASEAN's constructive engagement policy toward Burma, rather than pushing them toward reforms, has further strengthened the military junta's iron grip. Moreover, he said that hard-line approaches, such as linking Burma's membership in ASEAN with the adoption of democratic reforms, should be taken instead of the prevailing gradual approach the group is known for. The Prime Minister urged ASEAN to abandon their unworkable constructive engagement policy and instead pressure the military junta into substantial political reform. "We think it is a very, very wrong and incorrect approach. This constructive engagement policy is not leading anywhere."

He also cautioned members of ASEAN against dealing with SLORC, saying they were "very dangerous." "It is very clear that ASEAN should be very careful in dealing with that kind of government," Dr Sein Win said, pointing out that the junta had increased opium production to over 2,000 metric tonnes per year and bought more than one billion dollars worth of arms from China.

The Prime Minister told Manila-based foreign journalists in a press conference that this constructive engagement policy has failed as, instead of encouraging the military rulers to implement reforms, it has lent their dictatorship some legitimacy. "It is not forcing the military in Rangoon to make serious reforms," said Dr Sein Win. "This policy is one which we think should not be pursued if the ASEAN countries want to see Burma democratic, if they want to see Burma stable," he added.

He also said that ASEAN officials must also work to cancel Thailand's invitation for SLORC officials to be its guests at the ASEAN ministerial meeting in Bangkok. He said the invitation only gives credence to the junta which is "not the government of, for or by the Burmese people." He stressed that "this is not the right time to invite Burma."

As ASEAN's policy only entrenches a junta which has no intention to embrace democracy, he urged the re-

gional grouping to refrain from drawing Rangoon into the organisation, saying SLORC would just use it to obtain legitimacy. "The military depends on the UN to help ensure the junta's legitimacy... And the junta will use ASEAN for the same end," warned Dr Sein Win.

Dr Sein Win asked ASEAN to exert political and economic pressure on the ruling junta to restore democracy and to release Nobel Prize winner Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from detention. "ASEAN can put a lot of pressure... ASEAN should insist on seeing concrete results first before considering its membership," the Prime Minister said. He urged ASEAN to shelve its constructive engagement policy towards Burma and instead adopt Japan's "clear cut" position against SLORC.

Touching the issue of the UN, the Prime Minister said, "If the UN announces economic and arms embargoes, this would make a political impact."

Harn Yawnghe said ASEAN and the UN should consider sanctions against Burma. He pointed out that economic benefit or lack of it is not the issue, but rather the message being sent.

Reacting to PM Dr Sein Win's appeal to ASEAN, President Ramos said: "The entry of Burma into ASEAN is not about to happen." Similar views were also voiced by the chairpersons of the Foreign Relations Committees of the House and the Senate. They have called on the Philippine government to be more active

in blocking the junta's efforts to enter regional grouping. Senator Blas Ople said ASEAN "should not grant the Burmese military junta a passport to international respectability" by asking the junta to sit in the regional conference. "At the very least, ASEAN hospitality to Rangoon must be premised on a demand for the immediate release from detention of NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi," he said after meeting Dr Sein Win. Representative Jaime Lopez, Chairperson of the House Foreign Relations Committee, said "it would not be appropriate for the Philippine government to recognise the military junta because the prime minister-in-exile has the mandate of the people."

Foreign Secretary Roberto Romulo said it was too early to consider the question of Burma's membership as the matter had not yet been raised in ASEAN. He said that ASEAN will use consensus in deciding whether to reject SLORC's application for ASEAN membership.

Former Senator Aquilino Pimentel said the Philippine government "could use a little pressure to ease the repressive Burmese government's action against its own people" and "use it as a bargaining chip" in exchange for international relations.

During his visit, Dr Sein Win also met with the first president of the restored democracy, Corazon Aquino. Dr Sein Win explained the junta's dilemma with Aung San Suu Kyi: "It's very difficult for them because they are afraid of Aung San Suu Kyi, and they know that she is the one who can rally the people." Ms Aquino said that she wants

to see a democratic Burma. She is especially concerned about Aung San Suu Kyi. The history-making leader drew parallels between the democratic struggles of Filipinos under Marcos, and of the Burmese people under the military. She shared her experiences in the democratisation of post-Marcos Philippines and expressed a profound interest in the welfare of detained leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the progress of the democratic movement in Burma.

Dr Sein Win's proposal for a tripartite dialogue between the junta, the democracy movement led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Burma's ethnic leaders was favorably received by the leaders and officially endorsed by the PDSP, who also called on ASEAN to recognise Dr Sein Win's provisional government.

### OPPOSITION ON SLORC/DASSK MEET

Following the statement by SLORC Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt regarding his decision to hold talks with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and his willingness to "work hand in hand with politicians who have opposed us in the past," the NCGUB on 12 July demanded that SLORC abandon its goal of imposing military supremacy over civilian rule, and that talks be aimed at resolving the political problems of the country.

NCGUB said, "It has always been the position of the leaders of the democratic move-

ment in Burma, including the NCGUB and particularly Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, to settle political problems through dialogue... What Burma needs today is genuine goodwill on the part of all the parties involved. Prevailing problems can be resolved with sincere efforts by all... Talks at a personal level would not benefit the nation," said a statement released on 12 July.

NCGUB also stressed SLORC's needs to show that its latest decision is not just a public relations effort aimed at easing international pressure and gaining support at international forums. Moreover the coalition government demanded that SLORC release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi before July 20 and set the exact date to begin dialogue.

"To genuinely begin the national reconciliation process, SLORC needs to give up its goal of imposing military supremacy over civilian rule through the national convention. The convention, which has gained no recognition at home nor within the international community, should be abandoned completely and an alternate political programme that would lead to democratization and national reconciliation should be explored during the talks with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi," added the NCGUB.

In a statement released on 16 July, the F88 Forces said, "We found that the point made by Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt needs confirmation in order to convince us that his statement is believable."

F88 Forces said that it will not

agree to any "personal" talks because this carries a suspicion of real motives from Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt.

"Any talks must have the aim of finding political solutions which are in line with national benefit as a whole, to all citizens," added the F88 Forces.

The F88 Forces cited that the statement of Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt is an attempt by SLORC to achieve political and economic cooperation from the international community.

If SLORC is genuine in its pursuit of solutions to political problems through dialogue, F88 Forces believe that the regime must definitely reveal a scheduled time-frame, set forth their intentions for the talks, and allow the United Nations and the international community to mediate the talks.

NLD(LA) said, "If this is the case, the SLORC need to show their good will and sincerity by putting these words into deeds. What Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt has said should not merely be yet another political ploy. In the meantime, we will have to wait and see what further steps the SLORC will take, and whether they are realistic. In our view, the initial prerequisite is to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi immediately and unconditionally and to normalise the tense situation prevailing in the country."

Moreover, NLD added, "We firmly believe and consistently uphold that the best way to save our nation from the present crisis is to seek a political settlement with all the parties concerned through sincere dialogue

leading to genuine national reconciliation.

## ONSOB WANTS OPENNESS

The dialogue between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the SLORC general, Khin Nyunt, should not be on the level of inmate and jailer, but "held on par and in an air of equality and esteem besides official", according to a statement released in Bangkok on 27 July 1994 by the Overseas National Students' Organization of Burma. Talks could commence only after the detained leader democracy advocate is unconditionally freed from forced internment in her own home.

Publicity should play a major role in any talks, the ONSOB went on to point out. The beginning date should be openly known in advance, unlike the irregular scheduling and delays in the constitutional publicity stint, better known as the national puppet show convention.

Not only should there be press and live Burmese television and radio within earshot of the negotiating table, but foreign media should also be present to observe, record and distribute general information about a new era in Burmese history.

Official invitations to the occasion should be extended to a United Nations representatives and members of the international community, to ensure a fairness and encourage the end to Burma's nightmare of no human rights and democracy for over 30 years.

## F88 FORCES VOICE CONCERN OVER DASSK

F88 emphasised that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's role is important in finding ways to overcome the crises facing Burma in the fields of politics, social welfare and economics.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi led the people of Burma by means of democracy and peaceful activities during the 1988 uprising. Under the reign of SLORC she led the democratic struggle by non-violent means, organising the people under the slogan of "Oppose all Orders which are against the will of the people," and bravely confronting the military dictatorship.

In order to solve currently existing problems in Burma, F88 Forces demanded that SLORC release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners immediately and unconditionally; talk with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, other leaders from democratic forces and ethnic organisations in order to find solutions to Burma's long-standing political problems; and respect the results of the May 1990 election.

## ASEAN: RE-EXAMINE SITUATION IN BURMA

The NCGUB on 12 July called on the ASEAN to re-examine the situation in Burma seriously and urged the working out of a plan which will enable the Burmese people to re-build their nation while preventing the re-occurrence of an international crisis. NCGUB also voiced the opinion that the invitation to SLORC to attend the ASEAN Ministerial meeting as a guest of the host country Thailand is a

grave mistake by Thailand.

"While ASEAN members continue to insist that they do not want to interfere in the internal affairs of Burma, they blatantly do so by choosing to cooperate closely with the SLORC while isolating the democratic opposition groups in order to force them to negotiate under terms that are favorable to the SLORC only," said the NCGUB's statement released in the United States on 12 July.

Thailand and its ASEAN partners have refused to go along with the approach of western democratic countries and put pressure on Burma, but instead have insisted on pursuing a "constructive engagement" policy that only attempts to politically justify the continuation of profitable relationships with a ruthless dictatorial regime.

Referring to the reality in Burma as it relates to the so-called constructive engagement policy, NCGUB said that the situation in Burma is not normal and cannot be compared to Thailand, Indonesia, Taiwan or South Korea.

"The only thing Burma has in common with these nations is military rule... In Burma, the situation is very different. The military saw everything it could not control as a threat to national security. In 31 years of uninterrupted military rule, this attitude has destroyed Burma's economy, its civil service, its social infrastructure, its public health system, and its education system. Nothing really functions in Burma and there is nothing to build on," said the NCGUB.

No amount of foreign aid, trade or investments can turn Burma's economy around as long as the military remains in power.

"Instead of solving the problem, ASEAN's support for SLORC will only aggravate the situation by widening the gap between the SLORC elite and ordinary people. As the gap widens, the upheaval taking place in Burma will, at a later date, erupt with even greater violence," stressed NCGUB.

NCGUB also pointed out, "If the Burma situation goes unchecked, it could become an international crisis which will require massive emergency humanitarian aid to prevent millions from dying. At the same time, continued human rights violations, the exodus of refugees, drug trafficking and rapid military expansion of the SLORC will result in Burma becoming a threat to regional peace and stability."

#### GEN MYA APPEALS TO ASEAN

With the aim of beginning a dialogue which can help bring peace and prosperity to Burma and open the way to Burma's political and economic advancement and re-integration into the Southeast Asian community of nations, Gen Saw Bo Mva, Chairman of the KNU and DAB, appealed to the foreign ministers of the ASEAN countries gathering in July in Bangkok to provide a venue in which representatives from KNU could meet SLORC's representatives in the presence of mutually agreed-upon observers.

A letter dated 15 July and addressed to the foreign ministers of ASEAN said, "Saw Bo Mya appeals for ASEAN's help to end the 45 year-old civil war and the suffering of the people of Burma through more than three decades of political repression, economic neglect and mismanagement. After so many years, with so much suffering, frustration and disillusionment, all the people and ethnic groups of Burma long for peace. But they long also for justice, for recognition of their basic human and democratic rights. They long for a prosperous Burma which can proudly take its place in the community of Southeast Asian nations.

"Because of the deep-seated suspicion and distrust brought about by previous deceptions and broken promises, the necessary dialogue could only satisfactorily occur on neutral ground, i.e. outside Burma, and with the assistance of an international mediator," said Gen Mya. He added that SLORC's record of failure to honour its promises has taught KNU to be wary.

"We believe that it is necessary to talk, but trust cannot be re-established overnight. Confidence must be built carefully if it is to be sustained. And Burma's problems cannot be solved simply through a cessation of fighting. For peace to return to Burma, the way must be opened for a political solution which is satisfying to all involved," stated Gen Mya.

In a separate letter to the ASEAN foreign ministers, Gen Mya urged ASEAN not to support "the military dictatorship" in Rangoon and to encourage

"SLORC to undertake democratic reforms, solve the country's political problems by political means and realise countryside peace in accordance with the promises it has publicly made."

He urged ASEAN not to accept Burma as a member "until and unless SLORC sincerely takes steps for the realisation of true and countrywide peace and the transfer of power to a democratically elected government."

#### THAI-MON CONDEMN SLORC

On 20 July 1994 the Mon community in Thailand condemned violations of human rights in Burma and demanded that the SLORC dictatorial junta stop all such activities at once, and release all political prisoners immediately and unconditionally.

Regarding Thailand's invitation to SLORC to join the ASEAN meeting, the Mon community said, "it is very unsuitable under the current situation for the government of Thailand through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to extend an invitation to the dictatorial junta of Burma to participate in the forthcoming meeting of foreign ministers of ASEAN."

Thai-Mon community representatives demonstrated SLORC's grave human rights record in Burma with concrete evidence from the construction of the 180 km-long Ye-Tavoy railway line in southern Burma, where more than 35,000 Mons, Karens and Tavoyans have been conscripted as slave labourers.

They also said that this rail line construction was one of the many reasons why the people of Burma abandon their homes and run for their lives to the refugee camps along the Thai-Burmese border. The Mon community also said that Thai policy, which restricts the entry of refugees by unfair arrests, only perpetuates a "vicious circle" with no solution in sight. It is not the way to cure the root cause of the problem.

"As long as there is no peace in Burma and violations of human rights are continuous features of daily life, illegal entries into Thailand will be unavoidable because of the long conjoining borders. Should a stricter policy be practiced, then, more negativity would result, affecting the peace and security of the border regions," said the statement.

### WHY F88 FORCES OPPOSE INVITATION

The Fourth Round of the F88 Forces, held at Manerplaw from 12-16 July 16 under the sponsorship of NCGUB was attended by NLD[LA], ABYMU and Democratic Party for New Society (DPNS). At that meeting, the current political situations inside Burma and at the international level were discussed, and the position of the Forum regarding the invitation of SLORC to join the ASEAN meeting was stated.

F88 said that the invitation of the notorious SLORC regime to attend the ASEAN

meeting as a guest of the host country Thailand can tarnish the dignity and overall image of ASEAN. Nevertheless, F88 hoped that ASEAN will seriously consider the restoration of democracy and the promotion of human rights in Burma for the long-term benefit of the people of Burma.

For regional stability, peace and development in the long term, members of the F88 Forces seriously demanded that ASEAN; pressure the SLORC regime to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners immediately and unconditionally; open a dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other leaders from democratic forces and ethnic organisations in order to find solutions to Burma's long-standing political problems; respect the results of the May 1990 election; respect the basic rights of the ethnic minorities, including the right to self-determination; immediately stop all human rights violations, including torture, forced relocation of villagers, forced labour, forced portage, burning down villages and the gang-rape of women.

### SDC STUDENTS STAGE HUNGER STRIKE

On 21 July Burmese students in Special Detention Centre (SDC) staged a hunger strike against SLORC's participation in the ASEAN meeting in Bangkok and denounced ASEAN's cooperation in dealing with SLORC.

"We want to express our disappointment with the restriction of Burmese and East Timor dissidents from joining the

Peace Seminar in Bangkok."

"Economic development of Thailand causes high costs for the people of Burma and we believe this should no longer be tolerated. In order to maintain the natural heritage of indigenous peoples, the Thai Government must scrap the project planned to develop hydro-power dams along the Thai-Burma border."

"The profit from business deals and revenue from the purchase of natural gas from Burma directly benefit the SLORC while causing irreversible damage to the whole country."

"We strongly warn ASEAN not to make any further commitment with SLORC, particularly for the next ASEAN summit in Bangkok in 1995."

### NCGUB/F88 FELICITATIONS

On 12 July 1994 NCGUB extended its best wishes to all the participants of the Southeast Asia NGO Meeting on Human Rights and Development, for Burma is one of the topics of the meeting. Prime Minister Dr Sein Win of the NCGUB also conveyed his congratulations to the organisers for their excellent sense of timing with the ASEAN Foreign Ministerial Meetings and the Asia Forum.

"It is a challenging time for the peoples of Southeast Asia. Difficulties await them in striving to protect and promote human rights, ensure sustainable development, and achieve democratisation and security of the region. Since the peoples in the region share many common traits and characteristics,

progress achieved by one, however slight it may be, can become a lesson for all. It is therefore extremely important to strive toward the sharing of experiences, good and bad, and for the strengthening of ties among the regional peoples. What the region needs is a coordinating body to oversee this, and the NGOs from such a coordinating body," said Dr Sein Win.

He also expressed firm belief of the Burmese people that NGO participation is essential in formulating regional mechanisms to protect human rights and promote regional cooperation on socio-economic development and security.

"We hope that the Asian NGOs meeting will explore ways and means to help alleviate the situation as well as contribute to the efforts of the Burmese people to achieve democracy and human rights... We call on the NGOs to speak out on our behalf and help make the policy makers of their respective countries understand that their "constructive engagement" policy is in no way constructive for the oppressed Burmese people nor for Burma."

On 16 July 1994 F88 Forces sent a message of felicitation to the same NGO gathering. F88 observed that discussions held at the gathering will become one of the landmarks in the history of movements for human rights.

F88 concluded, "Resolutions adopted at this gathering will help support the restoration of peace and well-being in

Southeast Asia as well as promote of human rights throughout the world."

## FREE BURMA, FREE SUU KYI

**Bangkok** — Members of the Burmese Relief Center - Japan (BRC-J) gathered in front of the SLORC Embassy at 10 a.m. on July 19 and called for the release of Nobel Peace Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi amid tight security surveillance, and reminded the world that on the next day she would have ended her fifth year of house arrest, the maximum that the Burmese military junta SLORC can impose under its own arbitrary rules. Symbolically chained together, demonstrators showed their sympathy for and solidarity with the Burmese people, many of whom are literally in chains and forced to labor as slaves to build railways, roads, and a gas pipeline for their military oppressors.

In a statement read at the gathering, the participants also protested ASEAN's inviting SLORC representatives to attend its Summit in Bangkok. This demonstration was staged in cooperation with democracy

advocates around the world. The protest was part of simultaneous worldwide campaigns calling for the unconditional release of Aung Suu Kyi, and for SLORC to transfer power to the civilian government elected in May 1990 elections.

Ken Kawasaki, of the Burmese Relief Center-Japan (BRC-J) said similar peaceful rallies were taking place in several capitals, including Bonn, London, New Delhi, Tokyo, and Washington. He said Burma lobby groups worldwide have been in close contact and that an anti-SLORC chain letter campaign, launched last year, had become a big success with overwhelming support from around the globe.

Kawasaki said the center in Japan had received more than 1100 letters from supporters in over 50 countries; all were later sent by registered mail to the Burmese embassy in Tokyo.

In a press release, BRC-J denounced SLORC's national convention, condemned ASEAN's policy of "constructive engagement" towards Burma and deplored "the short-sighted greed" that prompts the policy, saying it "is not in the



interest of regional stability or development to permit this once-proud country to be bled white by its own bloated military even as China, Thailand, Singapore and Japan wait to carve up the remains".

**Japan** -- Members of Burma Youth Volunteer Association (BYVA), International Network for Burmese Relief (INBR) and (BRC-J) staged a protest at the SLORC embassy in Tokyo on 19 July, one day before Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's fifth anniversary under house arrest, and called for her release. The demonstrators also manacled themselves together and marched through the streets of Tokyo, past the SLORC, Thai, and Indonesian embassies.

The groups delivered letters to the embassy demanding that the regime release Nobel Peace Prize laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In a statement, they also urged ASEAN to abandon their policy of "constructive engagement," which keeps the military junta in power by providing it with economic

support and political legitimacy. They also delivered the statement to the embassies of Thailand and Indonesia in Tokyo.

**India** -- In New Delhi some 200 demonstrators, including about 70 Burmese nationals wearing red headbands, staged a protest near the SLORC embassy and demanded Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release. It was reported that while they were trying to proceed to the SLORC embassy they were stopped by police barricades.

**England** -- A gathering of some 100 people composed of London-based patriotic Burmese, members of the Burma Action Group (BAG) and Amnesty International (AI), wearing Daw Aung San Suu Kyi masks, staged a demonstration in front of the SLORC embassy in London for the release of the 1991



MPs symbolically detained behind the bars

Nobel Peace Prize laureate. Alan Rogers (MP, Labour Party) and Sir John Steele (MP, Democratic Party) symbolically detained themselves behind bars and handed one petition letter to the SLORC embassy.

**Germany** -- On the occasion of the 5th Anniversary of the solitary confinement of Burma's Nobel Peace Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as well as the 6th Anniversary of the nationwide 8888 democracy movement in Burma, the United Front of the Burmese communities in Germany, together with Burma-related groups (CRDB, INDB, EBA, GBA, BYVA, Burma Kreis Muenster and Burma Bureau), strongly protested against the SLORC and its unparalleled human rights violations by staging a 3-day hunger strike in front of the SLORC embassy in Bonn.



Discussing Burmese issues and planning strategy for action

"The rule of law and justice in



Outside the Thai embassy in Oslo one fine day.. Demonstrators conner a Thai bussinessman with his back against the wall of destrutive engagement and DVB (Oslo) was there.

Burma has been totally violated by the SLORC regime and the country is ruled — or better to say ruined — by martial law and the military courts," said the demonstrators.

They strongly urged SLORC to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and U Tin Oo, to transfer political power to the elected civilian government based upon the results of the 1990 election in accordance with the wishes of the people, and to dissolve the State Law and Order Restoration Council immediately.

Norway — With loud cries of "Thai Business Is Burmese Death," "Stop SLORC Support" and "Don't Deal With Killers," some 25 Norwegian and Burmese demonstrators chanted slogans outside the Royal Thai Embassy to commemorate the fifth anniversary of the house arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. A short film about slave labour was also shown by a

Norwegian photojournalist who had previously visited Burma and could tell something of the impoverished conditions of the common people.

The Burma Support Group-Norway stood behind the arrangement, authoring a letter to express the grave concern Norwegians as a whole harbour about the Thai authorities' hard-line policy against the Burmese democracy movement and against the Burmese refugees and villagers on the Thai frontier who are forced to flee, helpless against the guns and brutality of the SLORC regime. The letter went on to explain that the reason behind the embassy being picketed was because of the massive Thai investments in the exploitation of Burma's natural resources.

This letter was handed over to First Secretary Phasporn Sangasobane of the Thai embassy and distributed to Norwegian and international press, which gave the event full media coverage over nationwide TV and radio. In addition, news agencies and several local newspapers were present.

With this small gesture the people of Norway made clear that they had not forgot the 1991 Nobel Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, often referred to in press accounts as "Asia's Nelson Mandela," who is trying to free her people from the iron fist of a small military elite who are running the country and its many ethnic nationalities as a "military apartheid state."

"We are waiting the day when she [DASSK] can come to Oslo in order to give her acceptance speech personally," commented one enthusiastic supporter. "I hope it will be soon now Burma is free and so is she."

BSG-N works closely with the Burmese democratic movement, represented in Oslo by the shortwave radio station the Democratic Voice of Burma, which broadcasts uncensored Burmese news to people inside the country. DASSK ranks among DVB's most ardent listeners, admitting in the interview with US Congressman Richardson that she listens to the radio sending every night before going to bed. Since then, the Oslo-based station has expanded its broadcasts to both early mornings and late evenings.

The "Free Suu Kyi" demonstration was the second time the newly formed grassroots organisation BSG-N arranged a public protest in Oslo. The first took place on the fourth anniversary of the 27 May elections when DASSK's party were the over-wheeling victors.

Similar protests were also staged in Australia.

## VIGIL FOR FIFTH YEAR

On July 20 1994 the NCGUB, the Burmese community, NGOs, labour unions, human rights organisations and environmental groups across the USA held a candlelight vigil in front of the White House and marked the fifth year of Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's detention.

Scores of participants in the candlelight vigil wore Aung San Suu Kyi masks and carried red banners to highlight the event. Dr Sein Win, NCGUB Prime Minister delivered a speech. "Since Aung San Suu Kyi represents the will of the Burmese people, her release has to be coupled with a political process to restore human rights, end the civil war, and establish a civilian government in accordance with the results of the 1990 election.

"The NCGUB call on the international community to exert even more pressure on the regime through such means as mandatory arms embargo and trade and investment sanctions until the junta gives in and joins the mainstream towards democracy and human rights in Burma."

"On this occasion, the NCGUB also wishes to urge people all over Burma to double their efforts toward strengthening the struggle for democracy. Many have given their lives for the just cause. Democracy will not come cheap in Burma, but ultimately we will prevail. As Aung San Suu Kyi said very

often, we need to be united even more, we need to be more courageous, we need to be more disciplined. Any change in Burma can only come through the efforts of the Burmese people. Let us prepare ourselves to take that one extra step and work for the betterment of our country and people."

The DAB affirmed its full support of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy as the legitimate government of Burma and pledged to look forward to being a full participant in her government.

"The Democratic Alliance of Burma fully endorses Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's call for economic and political sanctions against the illegal regime occupying Rangoon and many towns and villages in Burma and request that the United States government honor her request by encouraging US private sector investors to cease their business relationships with SLORC," said the DAB in a statement.

The Democratic Alliance of Burma said it will remain steadfast in its objective for a just peace and democracy. "We will continue our struggle with Aung San Suu Kyi. We will not surrender. We are not afraid. We now ask the American people to stand beside us in our cause for freedom and democracy."

The NLD(LA) strongly condemned the SLORC military regime for its barbarous acts and emphatically demanded that it cease its criminal deeds immediately, release Daw

Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners and transfer power to those elected in 1990.

Moreover, floor statements by the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, Senator Claiborne Pell, Senator Max Baucus, Congressperson Howard L. Berman, Congressperson Gary L. Ackerman, Congressperson Jim Leach, Congressperson Neil Abercrombie and Congressperson Dana Rohrabacher and a statement by Nobel Laureate Betty Williams were read at the vigil. In addition, a Dear Colleagues letter forwarded to the Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, by senators and congresspersons, and an open letter from the Nobel Peace Laureates to the SLORC were released on that day.

The International Republican Institute, Refugees International, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Nonviolence International, Institute for Asian Democracy, Asian-American Free Labor Institute (AAFLI), US Refugees Committee, Industrial Union Department (AFL-CIO) and the American Federation of Teachers also participated in that ceremony.

### NCGUB HOPES FOR A DRIVING FORCE

At the end of the Post-Ministerial Conference of ASEAN, NCGUB hopes that the new "critical dialogue" approach by Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the European Union will become a driving force for the world community to attain goals that have eluded

them in the past. Regarding the position of the US, NCGUB stated, "A firm and strict policy by the United States to keep the SLORC in line is definitely needed. This is the policy that have made SLORC concede to demands for democratic changes today."

Moreover, NCGUB regarded the trend as a positive development. The western nations were welcomed for showing greater interest in the democratisation process and the improvement of human rights in Burma. Their concerns over the slowness of improvements emphasised that greater and faster reforms are needed if Burma is enter the world community any time soon.

NCGUB and other democratic forces, which have been demanding dialogue as a means of settling conflicts, noted a comprehensive lists of benchmarks necessary which included the unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, political dialogue with political opponents, access to political detainees for the International Committee for the Red Cross and UN special teams, some reality of constitutional reform through full and free participation, legal rights for minorities, cessation of portage, the repeal of political censorship legislation and other constraints that restrict political rights and the freedom of speech.

"The NCGUB and the democratic forces have for years been demanding the same

changes and this has been made known at various international forums and through the UNGA and UNCHR. The world bodies have many times passed resolutions through consensus to this effect. The NCGUB from its early days has also advocated dialogue as a means of resolving problems. But, we have yet to see any concrete changes in Burma," said the NCGUB in a statement released on 28 July.

NCGUB recommended the international community to work as one, united under a more comprehensive policy after appropriate working mechanisms have been designed to achieve the outlined benchmarks and to bring democracy to the Burmese people without fail.

Additional factors recommended by NCGUB to be taken into consideration are to convene an international forum on Burma under the sponsorship of the UN to design these mechanisms, followed by the formation of a "contact group" of influential democratic countries, including several ASEAN members, to assist and advise the UN Secretary General, set the mandate of UN Special Envoy or Special Representative of the UN Secretary General to mediate in the process of dialogue and oversee the transition to democracy and peace in Burma, work out an exact time frame to implement the different phases, to clearly spell out the specific kind of action that SLORC could expect from the international community if it fails to implement the outlined steps in the democratisation process.

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## 8888 REMEMBERED

**Australia** — There was a successful and peaceful demonstration outside the SLORC embassy in Canberra, Australia on 8 August 1994, between 10:30 am and 1:30 pm on a cold (8 degree centigrade) winter day. Over 100 people with banners shouting slogans denouncing SLORC and for the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. the crowd was addressed by several politicians, the chairman of the ABC (Australia Burma Council) and several newly arrived students from the Thai-Burmese border.

A wreath was laid at the gate of the embassy, under a sign reading "Lest we forget 8888". The guest speakers and many of the crowd laid single red roses. The "last post" was played by a bugleman (An Australian tradition).

**Norway** — Around 20 Norwegian students and DVB in Oslo staged the 6th anniversary of that most famous 8 August 1988 pro-democracy uprising in Burma, in front of the Thai Embassy in Oslo. The group chose to demonstrate in front of the Royal Thai Embassy to show their disapproval with that government's errant policy on Burma, the so-called constructive engagement.

The voices of the demonstrators filled one of Oslo's last summer-like days with cries of "Help Release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi", "Thailand out of Burma", "Shame on you to deal with murderers and killers!" and "Down with Dictatorship", while the stronger and physically determined of the band of protesters waved a

6 ft. banner against the wind, which declared simply, "State of Terror — Burma's 6th Year".

After the 30 minutes of chanting slogans, an official from the Thai embassy ventured out to meet the undaunted demonstrators. The

tastic T-shirts and artistic postcards of paintings by a Burmese artist, and found many new members.

"Most importantly, we collected signatures from people for the release DASSK," commented the coordinator for BSG-N. "One man, who was

rights in Burma.

A cultural show was presented at House of Representatives with guest speakers, Congresspersons Abercrombie and Lantos giving strong speeches that said no amount of window dressing would deter Congress from pushing for an end to the SLORC regime. Yuzana Khin gave a one-woman show about Burma — A Struggle for Freedom — and photographs and paintings from a variety of Burmese students were on display. 80 people were in attendance.



### Unforgotten spirit of 8888

two sides are almost like old friends as the supporters of a free Burma have been seen standing on the same street as the Thai Embassy more than once this summer, due to Thailand's open support of SLORC suppression. The Thai official talked with those steadfast "visitors" and accepted the letter of protest to Prime Minister Chuan's government by the Burma Support Group-Norway — but the protest didn't end there.

The same day at 4 p.m., the Group also had an informational stand on Karl Johan Gate, the main street in Oslo leading from the palace past the university and the National Assembly into the downtown pedestrian area. Feeling that information flow and publicity are vital to the struggle, these friends of Burma distributed leaflets to passersby, sold fan-

even from Lithuania, knew very much about Burma's struggle and Aung San Suu Kyi and said people back home understood what such suppression and fear could feel like for 40 years."

**Thailand** — In Bangkok, some 30 Thai-Mons protested at the UN building and students from ONSOB protested at the Slorc embassy to mark the 6th anniversary of the 8888 Uprising.

**USA** — 35 people demonstrated at the SLORC embassy in Washington DC on the same day. Led by students, NCGUB and CRDB, the demonstration had speakers from the International Republican Institute and the Burmese Relief Center-Japan. Then, they held a memorial service at a Burmese Buddhist temple for those who sacrificed their lives for democracy and human

## 18 AUGUST MON ACTION

Of course, the Thai-Burmese border is already very isolated place from the outside world, thanks to the Burmese army's unrelenting aggression against its own people, official Thai restrictions on travel there, not to mention the fear of malaria-carrying mosquitos and unrelenting rains washing out what "roads" sort of existed. When you consider how remote that even Norway seems from Continental Europe, people might be surprised to know that we know about the tragic plight of the Mon refugees from Halockhane Camp firsthand.

Over a dozen Norwegian students from a regional college just come back from a three-week "holiday" in Thailand and managed to visit "Old" Halockhane Camp, before Burmese troops attacked and burnt the refugees' houses and possessions to the ground on 21 July.



The students told what life was like on the border, experiencing both sides of the imaginary line when Thai officials purposely harassed their group on several occasions, including one incident at a checkpoint where an unacceptable derogatory remark was made directly to a female Norwegian student by a Thai officer when she was clearly traveling away from a refugee camp in a car. "Imagine if she was a Burmese woman without a passport," one of the passengers commented after the harrowing incident, and everyone fell silent while the rental bounced along the muddy road, trying to avoid unavoidable potholes.

These not-so-suntanned students -- there is not much sunlight and the temperature is very cold in the jungles, compared to Pattaya Beach where most tourists go to "see" Thailand -- and 15 other Norwegians participated in a demonstration against the Thai authorities' action to send refugees back to Burma, claiming they were "economic refugees" who come to "steal our rice". This was obviously not the case, as the eye-witness accounts the students pointed out the realities of "Border Area Developments"

by SLORC, shown us through numerous photographs and slides as well as first-hand accounts of torture, forced labour and other inhuman treatment.

The demonstrators believed that the refugees should not be sent back across the border checkpoint as the situation inside Burma has not changed and the earlier promises of safety, when refugees moved from Loh Loe Camp in Thailand to Halockhani, have been broken by both Thai authorities and the Burmese officials. "Without any guarantees of safety and with many sorrowful memories of charred houses, refugees should never be put back into danger like they already risked -- and

lost," one of the protesters summed up the feeling of the crowd, which chanted phrases like "Help Halockhani" and "Give Assistance to Mon Refugees -- Not One-Way Tickets!"

The demonstrators also held an impressive banner for all the world to see through the media's eye, demanding that food and medicine aid to the Mons refugees be immediately continued -- no matter if they are on the Thai side or the Burmese side of the border. Thai officials are withholding all humanitarian aid until the refugees cross the checkpoint to the remains of the devastated camp. Norwegians cannot forget their past humanitarian aid destined for Burmese refugees which "disappeared" at a Thai border checkpoint, and which remains unresolved

BSG-N was received by a Thai embassy official who promised she would inform the Thai Foreign Ministry of their concern.



## US PRESIDENT: RELEASE DASSK

On the fifth anniversary of the arrest of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, US President Bill Clinton urged SLORC to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other prisoners of conscience, to honour the results of the 1990 elections, to undertake genuine democratic reform, and to begin a substantive dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

"I urge the Burmese military regime to heed the will of its own people by releasing unconditionally Aung San Suu Kyi and all other remaining prisoners of conscience in Burma. I also call on the regime to honor the results of the 1990 election and to undertake genuine democratic reform. To this end, the regime should begin a substantive dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi aimed at achieving a political settlement that respects the sentiments of the people of Burma."

As the issue remains a priority for his administration, President Clinton said that the United States would look forward to discussing Burma's vital issues during the ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference in July in Bangkok, at which the US government will make "an intensified effort to gain the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners, and to promote genuine democratic reform."

"The remarkable resurgence of democracy in so many parts of the world in recent years demonstrates that authentic voices of freedom cannot be stifled and ultimately will triumph. Aung San Suu Kyi reflects the fundamental yearning of the Burmese people for freedom and justice. She honors the memory of her father Aung San, the founder of modern Burma, and continues to embody the hopes of the people of Burma for an end to the military dictatorship and the re-establishment of popular, representative government," said President Clinton in a press release made from the White House.

## NOBELS URGE: SET HER FREE

Fourteen Nobel Peace laureates called on SLORC to unconditionally free 1990 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

In a statement the laureates also called on the international community to express its outrage and demand her immediate, unconditional release.

"We the undersigned Nobel Peace laureates, on the occasion of this sad anniversary, wish to once again express

our deep concern over her arrest and the denial of her fundamental rights of free speech and political association. We condemn [SLORC's] suppression of her rights and those of other political prisoners illegally detained in Burma," the statement said.

Signatures on the statement were Institute for International Law, American Friends Service Committee, Linus Pauling Institute, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, Mrs Mairead Corrigan Maguire, Mrs Betty Williams, Mr Adolfo Perez Esquivel, President Lech Walesa, The Most Reverend Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Dr Elie Wiesel, Dr Oscar Arias, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Mr Mikhail Gorbachev and Sgr. Rigoberta Menchu.

"Five years have passed. Even according to SLORC's own draconian laws, Suu Kyi cannot be held any longer than five years without trial. The international community must express its outrage and demand her immediate and unconditional release. The long and unjust incarceration of Aung San Suu Kyi belies SLORC's declared intention to allow a transition to civilian rule," they said.

They called on SLORC to free Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all Assembly members currently imprisoned, and to begin serious discussions with these and other groups to bring democracy to Burma.

"As Nobel laureates we applaud Aung San Suu Kyi's adherence to the principle of non-violence and human rights. We condemn the cruel treatment she has suffered at the hands of SLORC. She must be set free".

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## WAKE UP CALL FOR CORPORATE AMERICA

On the fifth anniversary of Aung San Suu Kyi's house arrest, grassroots organizations in the US and Canada used the occasion to unite against US businesses which are directly or indirectly supporting the Burmese military junta. Protesters demonstrated at Texaco, Unocal, PepsiCo and other sites.

This unified "Action for Burma" originated in Boston with the Massachusetts Campaign for a Free Burma, which is promoting a bill introduced by State Representative Byron rushing that would penalize companies doing business in Burma.

This selective purchase legislation, modeled on that enacted against the then-apartheid South Africa, is the first of its kind in the US and would effectively bar most state contracts with companies doing business with the regime or even in the country.

Rep Rushing said, "We hope to spark similar legislative action across the country."

This protest stretched across the North American continent, and included the following groups: Burma Round table in Los Angeles; OPIRG in Ottawa, Canada; Westerville Social Action in Westerville, Ohio; Pepsi-Burma Boycott Committee in Portland, Oregon; Reconciliation International in Huntsville, Texas; Seattle Campaign for a Free Burma; the San Diego and San Francisco Rainforest Action Groups; Greenpeace in Boulder, Colorado; Committee for Restoration of Democracy in Burma in New York City and Los Angeles; Canadian Friends of Burma in Toronto; Indigenous Mon Council for Burma in Philadelphia; Free Aung San Suu Kyi in Madison, Wisconsin; and the Democratic Burmese Students Organization in New York City.

- Source: *Citizens for Participation in Political Action*, Boston

### WHAT THE WORLD SAID:

"The military tyranny which rules Burma continues its policies of shameful repression, unconscionable exploitation, and brutal violation of universal standards of human rights. Through this darkness, the inspiration of Aung San Suu Kyi's example continues to shine like a beacon. Her steadfast commitment to nonviolence and democratic values reminds us of the power of the human spirit. It is those same values, that same spirit, which move all of us who observe the anniversary of Aung San Suu Kyi's arrest. Despite the power of her jailers she remains the rightful leader of Burma. That fact cannot be erased by bayonets or obscured by repression."

(US REP. NEIL ABERCROMBIE)

"During these past five years, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's courage and dedication to her people have won the admiration of the entire world. As she has written, the only real loss of freedom comes from fear. And by that standard, she is free and her jailers are trapped.... At the end of the difficult road she has chosen is freedom — for Aung San Suu Kyi herself, and for Burma. Each day that passes brings that inevitable result one day closer."

(US SENATOR MAX BAUCUS; DEMOCRAT-MONTANA)

"A woman whose faithful devotion to the ideal of peaceful resistance on behalf of political freedom and human decency has checkmated a repressive military. A woman whose defiance of authority wrongfully wielded has inspired her people and captured not simply the imaginations but the hearts of millions around the globe. [The illegal incarceration of Aung San Suu Kyi is] an incarceration that offends the sensibilities of freedom-loving people throughout the world, and violates every notion of fairness and justice known to mankind. An incarceration that, more than anything else, demonstrates the moral and political bankruptcy of her jailers. By their actions, and by their cruel disregard for the freely expressed wishes of their people, they have forfeited their right to rule. So let us use this occasion, this lamentable anniversary to renew our dedication to the cause for which Aung San Suu Kyi toils. Let us draw inspiration from her example, and pledge unceasing hostility to the forces of tyranny that, in Burma and elsewhere around the world, are so obdurate that they cannot tolerate the existence of even a lone woman crying out for freedom."

(US REP GARY L. ACKERMAN;

## CHAIRMAN OF HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIA AND THE PACIFIC)

"Let the word go out to Rangoon, we do not accept SLORC's cosmetic embrace of civility.... We know that the situation is as bad as ever for the overwhelming majority of the Burmese people. It is long past the time for the Rangoon regime to release Aung San Suu Kyi. Her heroic stand for freedom is an inspiration for the Burmese people and the entire world. For five years she has given up her freedom, withstood separation from her family, and endured cowardly political attacks from SLORC. At this point, it should be clear to everyone that she is making these sacrifices for the Burmese people, not for herself. She is giving up her life for her people and her country. That is why she is a hero, that is why she is a patriot."

"Our message to the Burmese military must be loud and clear: release Aung San Suu Kyi and all political prisoners immediately and begin a genuine dialogue aimed at rapidly transferring power to a democratically-elected government.... We need more patriots in Burma, patriots who understand that real freedom is not the sterile 'order' of repression, and that patriots do not enslave citizens for privilege, prestige, or possessions. Patriotism is about sacrifice and service. The question a patriot asks himself is 'How can I serve my country?' and not 'How can I exploit my countrymen for personal benefit?'"

"Yesterday the House Foreign Affairs Committee passed H.Res. 471, a resolution urging the regime in Rangoon to release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and to support human rights in Burma. I hope that this Resolution gives some hope to the millions of Burmese people who may feel that their struggle is going unnoticed by the rest of the world. The message that the Congress is sending to SLORC's tyrants is that they must listen to the democratic aspirations of the Burmese people, and that the United States speaks one voice in support of their cause of freedom." (US REP DANA ROHRBACHER)

"...At a minimum, the SLORC needs to immediately begin a genuine dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi.... In addition, the US should continue to seek the appointment of a UN Special Envoy to Burma, as well as use other UN for a to call attention to and seek redress of the ongoing serious human rights situation in Burma, such as unconditional release of nonviolent political prisoners such as Aung San Suu Kyi.... The Congress is certainly unanimous in its support for restoring democratic government, in demanding respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and in ending the trafficking of illicit narcotics. There could be no more appropriate time for

this Congress to urge the military leaders in Rangoon to unconditionally release Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners, as well as to fully respect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all the Burmese people." (US REP JAMES A. LEACH)

"The detention of Suu Kyi, under a 1975 law to protect against 'subversive elements', was illegal at the outset and turned the law on its head, since it was the SLORC which had subverted political legitimacy, whereas Suu Kyi was the legitimate leader of Burma. Even then, at the time of her detention, the law made by the Burmese military only allowed detention for three years. That meant that Suu Kyi should have been released two years ago. The SLORC has only compounded its original illegality by retroactively arrogating to itself the authority to detain for five years. Unless the SLORC release her today, it will have violated its own illegal rules."

"The SLORC has demonstrated that it is one of the most illegitimate regimes in the world, and one of the worst violators of human rights. The brutality has resulted not only in the death and detention of peaceful political opponents, but also in widespread refugee migrations from border areas.... I believe that we should go further still. I believe that we should impose economic sanctions; and should forcefully advocate to our allies and trading partners the need for an international arms embargo. I also believe that all United Nations agencies and other international organisations which wish to continue operations in Burma should do so only in consultation with the legitimate authorities of Burma."

"Your presence here today is a

testament to the possibility of a better future for Burma. I look forward to working with you to help restore the government of Burma to its people, and to then help Burma take its place in the community of nations."

(CONGRESSMAN HOWARD L. BERMAN; DEMOCRAT-CALIFORNIA)

"The US Committee for Refugees (USCR) once again calls on the SLORC to unconditionally release Aung San Suu Kyi. USCR also calls on the SLORC to stop abusing the human rights of its citizens.... The Burmese military had abducted the refugees from their home areas and were using them as porters during a military offensive in the region."

(THE US COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES)

"Myanmar's ruling military council has for the last five years persistently denied its citizens some of the most basic human rights, with thousands of people being forced to porter for the army and hundreds of political prisoners, including more than 58 prisoners of conscience remaining in detention."

"[Improvements which SLORC has made relating to human rights in Myanmar] do not ... represent a fundamental change in the SLORC's repressive policy and practice on human rights."

"The solidarity shown today by ordinary people all over the world for victims of human rights violations in Myanmar must tell SLORC that it is time for change."

(AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL at an international day of solidarity for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and for the 26 members of parliament-elect held as political prisoners in Myanmar. Politicians and members of Amnesty International staged events in Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Italy, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, UK and USA, appealing to the ruling military in Burma for their release.)

"I feel profound sorrow today, as I remember my spiritual sister 1991 Nobel Peace Laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, who begins her sixth year under house arrest. Her crime: exercising nonviolent advocacy while leading her country towards democracy in her homeland, Burma.... Her courage and determination in the attempt to free her people from oppression and barbaric cruelty has caused her own loss of freedom. I know if Suu were able to talk directly to me she would tell me that her captors have succeeded only in arresting her physical being, but will never succeed in arresting her spiritual and intellectual aspirations for a free Burma."

"I echo the words of Bishop Tutu when we met with President Clinton: the only thing that worked in South Africa was sanctions, sanctions, sanctions and embargoes, embargoes, embargoes. The time has come for stronger action by governments of the free world against the brutal and illegal junta which rules Burma by fear and force. The time has come to heed Bishop Tutu's impassioned words. The time has come for the SLORC to unconditionally release Aung San Suu Kyi and allow her to partake in her country's political process and to start an earnest dialogue with this woman's indomitable strength and courage and for all governments to take appropriate measures whereby negotiation leading to a political settlement between the SLORC and the democratic opposition can begin."

(THE INSTITUTE FOR ASIAN DEMOCRACY (IAD) CHAIRPERSON BETTY WILLIAMS, 1977 NOBEL LAUREATE)

"We mark a sad anniversary not only for Burma's peoples, but for men and women around the world who stand for democracy and human rights. As we reflect on this day, we are struck by Aung San Suu Kyi's commitment to political freedom for her compatriots and her determination to deny victory to the treacherous SLORC. After all, she could easily be free and with us here today if only she agreed to SLORC's terms and left Burma, forsaking her country's democracy movement. Her fortitude and courage is an inspiration to all of us as well as to the millions of victims of brutal dictatorships around the world."

On behalf of the American labour movement, I join with you today in calling for the immediate release of Aung San Suu Kyi, in condemn-

ing Burma's illegitimate military regime, and in urging immediate respect for the results of the 1990 elections, in which Daw Suu's Party won a resounding victory." (LANE KIRKLAND, PRESIDENT OF AFLCIO)

"Nonviolence International calls upon the people of Burma to continue to fight for 'freedom from fear' using nonviolent action. We call upon the Clinton administration and the international community to support the aspirations of the Burmese people for an end to their civil wars and the resumption of genuine parliamentary rule. We call for the unconditional release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners. We call upon the SLORC to step down and re-institute the rule of law and the will of all of the people of Burma through the assumption to power of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma. We call for a worldwide arms embargo of the SLORC regime. We call upon SLORC to recognise the importance of individual and group rights, particularly those of ethnic & religious minorities.... We call for boycotts of Pepsi, Unocal, Total and other businesses which support the corrupt military elite who now rule Burma.... We remind SLORC that 25 governments have fallen to nonviolent struggle in the last 15 years. Led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, a people-power victory is inevitable in Burma."

(NONVIOLENT INTERNATIONAL)

### **SEC OF STATE, PLEASE DON'T ABANDON US POLICY**

On 12 July 1994 Members of both the House and Senate initiated a letter to US Secretary of State Warren Christopher to show the wide bi-partisan, bi-cameral support for the Burmese democracy movement. They also urged Mr Christopher to announce that the Clinton administration will maintain its policy of denying direct military and economic assistance to SLORC and call for him to do everything to bring about an improvement in human rights conditions in Burma.

Daniel P. Moynihan, Jesse Helms, Edward M. Kennedy, Larry Pressler, Paul Simon and Alfonse M. D'Amato initiated the letter to Mr Christopher expressing their concern about the lack of progress in Burma on human rights and political reform over the past year, and urged the Secretary of State to make Burma a priority at the ASEAN PMC in Bangkok.

"We continue to be concerned about outstanding cases and persistent patterns of human rights abuses.... Many others, including key leaders of the NLD, remain behind bars. Torture and ill-treatment, forced labour and portering, denial of freedom of speech and association, and other

gross human rights violations continue unabated. We also remain concerned about the treatment of internally displaced people and refugees, in particular the forced repatriation of Rohingya refugees and the limitations placed on the UNHCR's activities in the region," said the congresspersons in their letter.

They also noted that SLORC has rejected the UN's criticism and has tried to defuse international concern through a combination of limited steps which neither restore democratically elected government nor end Burma's human rights emergency.

The congresspersons stated their disagreement with ASEAN's policy of "constructive engagement" aimed at encouraging improvements in Burma through investments and joint ventures, because it fails to convey the international consensus opposing SLORC's rule in Burma.

Moreover, they revealed their concern over Thailand's invitation to SLORC to attend the ASEAN meeting to strengthen bilateral economic ties with Burma because these ties could be interpreted as improving SLORC's standing in the international community, despite an egregious human rights record.

"We believe that the ASEAN PMC could signal an important turning point in the international community's relations with Burma and significantly enhance prospects for the future of peace and democracy in Burma."

Regarding SLORC Secretary (1) Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt's statement, they said that the announcement was clearly timed to influence the ASEAN meeting and underscores

the importance of Mr Christopher's discussions in Bangkok.

The congressmen urged the Secretary of State to call on ASEAN's member states to send a clear and unambiguous message to SLORC that political and economic relations with Burma should only be established if there is concrete progress in three areas: SLORC needs to undertake a genuine dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, release her unconditionally and allow her to participate freely in the political process; SLORC needs to facilitate the transfer of power to the winners of the 1990 parliamentary elections; and SLORC must cooperate fully with a Special Envoy, appointed by the UN Secretary General, to foster a genuine dialogue with the democratic opposition including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the major ethnic groups, as well as with the UNHCR's Special Rapporteur on Burma.

### **NGO SYMPOSIUM SYMPATHISES WITH E. TIMOR, BURMA**

Representatives of the "NGO Symposium on a Social Development Agenda for the ESCAP Region into the 21st Century" expressed solidarity with the people of Burma and East Timor in their struggle for human rights, democracy and self-determination by calling for the immediate cessation of abuses committed by the military regimes against the peoples of these two countries and the initiation of internationally mediated talks. The symposium of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific, a department of the UN, was held in Bangkok on the 12-15 July.

"We condemn the systematic abuse and denial of the basic human rights of the peoples of these two countries, by the SLORC in Burma and the Indonesian regime that is occupying East Timor," said a letter signed by 35 NGO representatives.

The representatives of the NGOs said the ruling regimes in both countries not only continue to reject the calls of the opposition movements for internationally mediated talks to end the ongoing conflicts but continue to detain the legitimate leaders, Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma and Xanana Gusmao in Indonesia. Moreover, they added that these regimes have denied the right of self-determination to the peoples of these two nations.

"In both countries, the political, economic and social subjugation of the peoples has led to the routine and complete disregard for basic human rights, including extrajudicial

### **THE TIME IS NOT RIGHT**

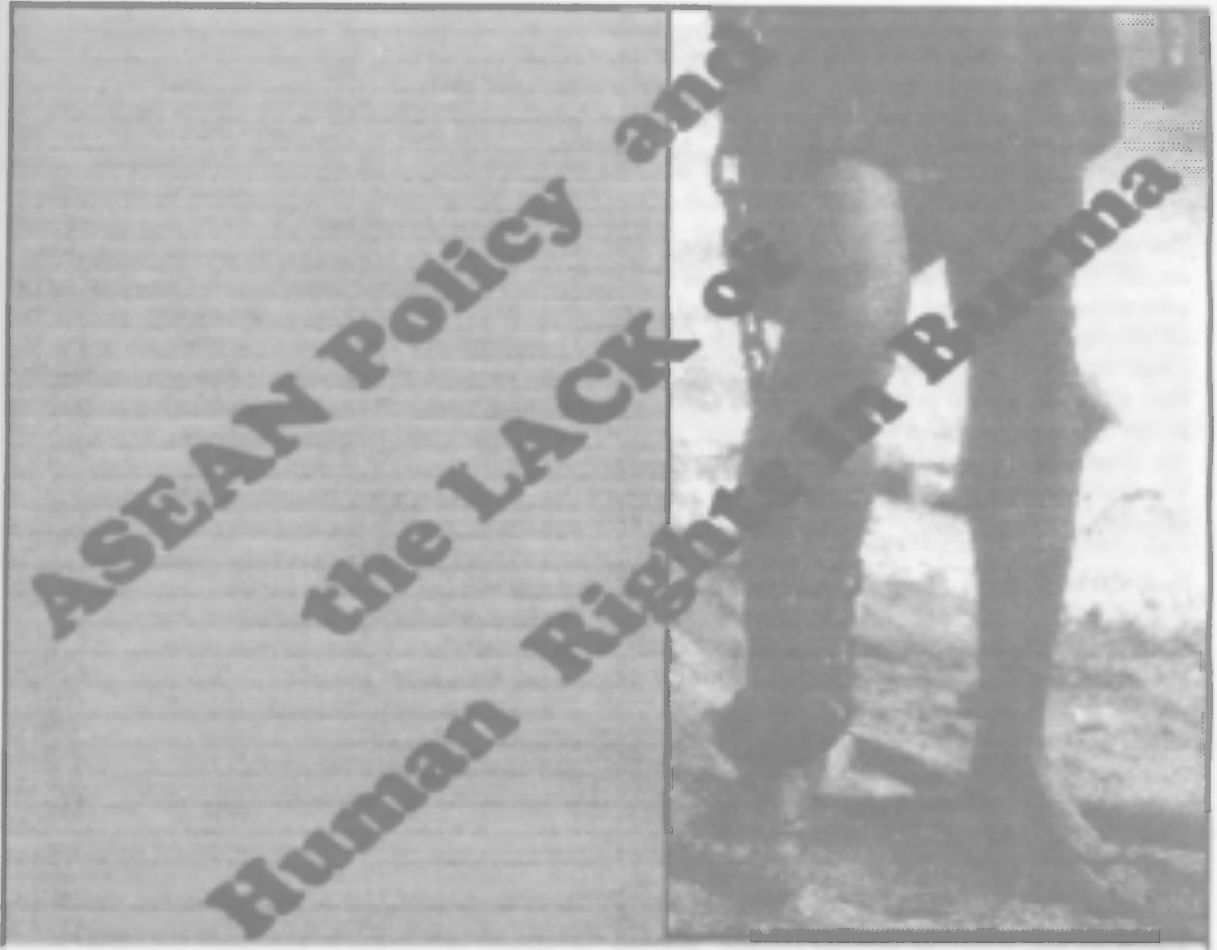
Since a Buddhist priest in Shimane Prefecture, Rev Jonen Sugawara, has aimed to raise money, by walking around Japan at the start of September 1994, to build a pagoda to commemorate the more than 100,000 Asians and prisoners of war who died in forced labor during the construction of a 450-kilometer railway linking Thailand and Burma during the World War II, Burmese Relief Center-Japan (BRC-J) has been suggesting people contact the monk by phone, letter, or fax to tell him that now is not the right time to carry out this sort of project in Burma.

It is offensive that the current Burmese regime, SLORC, internationally condemned for its policy of human rights abuses, wants to assist by providing a site for the planned pagoda to commemorate human rights abuses by the Japanese fifty years ago.

Although the monk learned about the victims of forced labour during the war in 1991, he hasn't heard about the victims of forced labor in Burma today. Ye-Tavoy railway under construction and the proposed gas pipeline from the Gulf of Martaban to Thailand are concrete evidences to tell the monk where entire villages are being uprooted, thousands of people are being forced by the SLORC army to work without compensation, and many refugees are fleeing to Thailand.

Rev. Jonen Sugawara  
Sennenji  
312-2 Kanbara  
Tomiyama-cho  
Ota-shi, Shimane-ken 699-22  
JAPAN

Continued on page 59



**(Following is the full account of ABSDF paper present on 20 July 1994 to the Southeast Asia NGO Meeting on Human Rights and Development sponsored by the Southeast Asia Network for Human Rights (SEANET) in Bangkok.)**

Although this symposium deals with two seemingly varied topics, they are closely interrelated; ASEAN policy and Human Rights. The first, there is very much to say about, having been well-documented in official agreements and international press; the other half of today's topic, sadly, there is absolutely nothing to say about. Human Rights do not exist in Burma. This also has been well-documented by government statements and actions, as well as independent observation and records. Thus, we would like to offer an alternative and more apt title for today's gathering: "ASEAN Policy and the Lack of Human Rights in Burma."

Human rights is only coming of age in the '90s, despite that this subject has been with us ever since the dawn of Humankind. When we talk of human rights in Burma, the talk often begins in 1988. However, human rights has been an issue in Burma ever since Ne Win's brutal 1962 coup and its repressive aftermath; ever since independence from the British when ethnic minorities resorted to civil war in order to gain their legal and neglected equal and democratic rights; and ever since selected privilege for some groups under British colonialism; and so on... Therefore, in order to satisfy today's topic, we must focus on human rights in the future, after a brief look at the past.

It is very difficult to talk about Human Rights in Burma even before Ne Win's minions tried their hand at mass oppression in 1988, their demagogic icon for the past 26 years, General Ne Win himself, had been suppression

all forms of dissent, ethnicity, even personal freedoms in his failed "Burmese Way to Socialism." Indeed, up until a half dozen years ago, one could almost claim that a translation for "Human Rights" did not even exist in the official English-Burmese dictionary, and is still conspicuously absent.

The reason 1988 occupies such a central theme when we talk of Burma and human rights, is because of the unremitting violence and sheer sadism inflicted upon all peoples of Burma, whether they be ethnic, religious, economic, or gender-oriented – no family has been spared except the privileged few who direct and accept the brutality played out in the villages, on urban streets, in the homes and on individual persons. The documented figures are staggering and requires some strength to stomach:

- over 20,000 people slain or missing since 1988 alone...
- over 40,000 innocents tortured in prisons...
- over 2,000 political prisoners of conscience still incarcerated without charge or trial...
- results of fair and free elections from 1990 – ignored...
- total censorship with no freedom of press or media...
- over 800,000 forced workers on "infrastructure" projects which only benefit SLORC...
- relocation through destruction of homes and forced eviction of whole villages...
- arbitrary execution, destruction and theft of property...
- untold number of gang-rapes by soldiers, and female suicides due to shock and shame...
- unchecked and untreated HIV/AIDS from forced prostitution...
- no national health plan, every 5 out of 500 Burmese children die needlessly...
- 1993's most productive crop harvest: 2,600 raw tonnes of opium in 1993...
- arms purchases worth an estimated US\$ 1.4 billion from China alone...

The figures are unparalleled, yet we continue to call ourselves a "civilized world": How can we claim to be? When we allow these tragedies and horrors to continue? When we do not stand up to suppression and rejection of human rights for all human beings. The words do not, for example, say "some-human rights", or "not-all-human rights". It says "human rights" as in all humans, humankind; humanity. The sooner we understand this fundamental asset, the closer we come to a solution to our common problem, and our mutual goal. The Hopes of the Future.

As the neglected and put down peoples all across Burma rose up from their situation during that incredible year of 1988, peacefully protesting against the government, against the dictatorship, the government changed hands four times in three months. Those hands were marred with the blood of thousands of innocent and peaceful people. Dates and places stick in our throats as a lump of sadness, our hearts ache to hear; White Bridge Massacre 16 March, the 21 June Massacres, 8888 Uprising 8 August, Day of the Coup 18 September... The deaths, disappearances and fatally wounded toppled 10,000 that year alone. Unfathomable slaughters of ethnic villagers in over 40 years of civil war will never be known.

One must remember when describing Burma that, addition to the Burman majority of half of the population, there are 7 main ethnic groups with over a total of 100 internal divisions, living mainly along the remote mountainous border regions. Ethnic peoples occupy 60% of the land and many of them have been waging insurgent movements against the central government in Rangoon since independence, dissatisfied with their treatment under the 1947 constitution, and then under Ne Win's acculturated "Burmese Way to Socialism." Even SLORC's name for the country, "Myanmar," which means "Burma" in Burmese, does not represent nor respect the ethnic diversity of the country.

It should be remembered, however, these atrocities mentioned above are nothing new. The world has seen brutality in this, humankind's "most humane," century under names other than SLORC; Nazis, Stalinism, Hirohito's Japan. Idi Amin in Uganda. Pol Pot in Kampuchea. Argentinean corpses buried in walls from world view. Bloated and mutilated Armenian bodies floating down Turkish rivers. Determined Black versus undermined white apartheid in South Africa.

The difference today from earlier days is the way the world reacts and deals with oppressive regimes before the whole world loses control. The UN General Assembly has taken on a more active and unified involvement, especially in the past five years since the Berlin Wall fell. There have been two resolutions passed by the UNGA condemning the SLORC regime, with a Special Rapporteur mandated, and -- very soon we hope -- a Special Envoy will be appointed on Burma.

Sometimes the UN voices its concern with despotic governments through embargoes on military hardware

and economic trade, in an attempt to stem the supplies which support repressive regimes. Other times, direct military intervention has been employed. Although this last option has been used successfully and at times necessarily, an early or comprehensive world commitment to isolating and "shutting off" unjust rulers from needed foreign funds and weapons of destruction can often work miracles to save the common people from suffering continuous hardships and impeded Human Rights.

On the other hand, there are those individual countries who choose to pursue other measures than those mentioned above. Self-serving interests or opportunism rank among the chief causes of this collusion between an authoritarian state and themselves, whether the latter be "democratic" within their own boundaries or not. One such misguided policy, deceptively coined "constructive engagement" in the 1980s by the Reagan Administration, dealt with the then white-led administration of apartheid South Africa. This ploy was soon unmasked for the harmful effects of propping up a destructive regime, providing them with the means to prolong oppression, not encourage its swift conclusion.

Constructive engagement became a keyword for a failed economic initiative aimed at influencing and "bringing around" a repressive government to democratic values and observance of just Human Rights. In layman's words; support a rich but bad government for economic reasons (and your own benefit) and hope that country's rulers change their evil ways due to increased contact with the outside world through trade. As with South Africa, this proved to be unpalatable both to the disadvantaged majority and to world opinion. Indeed, international pressure was crucial in overcoming this mislabeled policy and settled for economic sanctions which forced apartheid leaders to confess the error of their ways and compromise, resulting in the election of Nelson Mandela as that country's first popularly elected president, symbolizing the national unity of a country as ethnically diverse as -- for example -- Burma.

Constructive engagement was born on the folly of self-interested economic gain which in reality does not benefit the citizens of the host country. Rather, a few rulers and their kith and kin benefit while the downtrodden majority suffer, either because of their ethnic or religious background. This fictitious trickling down of the wealth to poorer classes, usually ethnic rural dwellers, has not yet happened with what foreign investments have been made in Burma so far.

Statistics and personal accounts show how the situation is worsening. Inflation is running at 45%-plus annually. Natural gas and oil and hard currency buttress a "government" which expends a third of the annual state budget on "defense spending," almost one and a half billion dollars of military sales from China alone, despite that there are no external enemies of the Union of Burma, only the internal adversaries.

By the "internal adversaries" we do not, of course, refer to the armed ethnic groups nor the democratic forces, but to the terrifying paranoia which the junta and leaders feel the longer they refuse to relinquish power. This is understandable, being hated and despised by just 42 million citizens which the "government" should be protecting and serving, not torturing and murdering, extorting and robbing their future by the selling out of natural resources at "bargain prices," to quote one businessman eager to take advantage of SLORC's starving hunger for foreign capital to bolster an economy which is not creating any sustainable growth, only consuming foreign-made goods in exchange for renewable resources which are used up faster than they return.

Areas without the abilities to grow sufficient food-stuffs must turn to other forms of livelihood, and one which pays well and has been around since the KMT set up operations in northern Burma is opium production. Trapped between starvation and ineffectual outside relief, some ethnic groups have agreed to a tentative ceasefire agreement with Rangoon in exchange for rice and other food rations promised by SLORC. However, as many of these impoverished people have discovered, the junta not only does disregard its own agreement, having supplied only half of the pledged support, but SLORC has even engaged in covert military operations to destabilize local ethnic authorities. Opium production in the area has not dropped but actually risen 2,600 tons over the past 5 years. Many of the poverty-stricken people without any means have no choice but to rely on the most viable cash crop in the region for survival, calling into question what SLORC is doing about this increasing calamity. Many are convinced of complacency in drug production and export.

ASEAN was not formed under the aegis of fostering ties with such a government. Instead, the organizations charter talked about increased economic cooperation while helping one another promote security and stability in southeast Asia through a regional forum meeting periodically while maintaining regular contact at other times. Misunderstanding were to be

avoided through this channel of discussion, with the declared Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN) for Southeast Asia as a featured goal. So, what went wrong? And what could go right? Is constructive engagement the true villain?

Obviously, there are positive aspects to constructive engagement in relation to Human Rights if the policy is implemented with these goals honestly in mind. As tourism tops the list for development inside remote countryside, contact with foreigners, their language and ideas would expand the abilities for communication with the outside world for average people, who are currently deprived of even objective media (unbelievably, just one newspaper is published for the whole of Burma, in Burmese and English editions, while magazines and other paraphernalia are strictly controlled via the censor's active black pen). As the number of outsiders traveling to Burma increase, SLORC's network of intelligence organizations would be unable to restrict communication and exchange as has been commented on by current adventurers to the forbidden land. Also, the international community might obtain opportunities to discuss with the leaders of SLORC, to carry out some social reformation work and to take part in the activities of SLORC inside the country. There could even be some possible economic benefits to conditions inside Burma, with increased exposure to new manufacturing methods and increased technical information flow. On the other hand, since SLORC is not encouraging these sort of ventures, rather concentrating on fishing and oil concession and tourism, industry in Burma is unlikely to develop much, and unrestrained harvesting of natural resources could lead to early depletion.

Of course, negative side-effects of so-called "constructive engagement" could as easily be understated as over-exaggerated. However, if we look at what direction events have taken, and look as though they will go, constructive engagement could spell the end of our struggle for peace, freedom and democracy as ASEAN members value appeasement of SLORC over these ideals. The situation in Thailand has already become unwelcoming for democratic forces. Officials have raided and closed down offices, harassed individuals and arrested members, regardless of their activities. Pressure to sign ceasefire agreements with SLORC has been put on ethnic nations along the Thai-Burmese border as the number of business contracts for Burma's rich and virtually untapped natural resources grow. The proposed Ye-Tavoy natural gas pipeline runs through ethnic-controlled areas, not to mention road access for teak wood and other raw commodities. Even water is planned to be diverted from the Salween River into

Thailand, affected Burmese citizens livelihood all the way from Shan State to Moulmein city. Refugee camps in these areas have been moved more than once, and threats of forced repatriation through SLORC-held territory around Three Pagodas Pass could signal the imprisonment and death of many victims of SLORC, as has been seen in the past's disastrous 1989 repatriations.

An increase in business contacts and trade supplies SLORC with the necessary hard currency to buy weapons and other military equipment directly used in the suppression and killing of civilians. Infrastructure programs brings SLORC soldiers into areas which were up till now free of their brand of law and disorder, which has even as recently as last week in Karenland, forced whole villages to evacuate their homes and flee to the safety of the Liberated Areas. This is also due to the fear of forced labor, gang-raping of female villagers and pillaging which the army brings with them and is an accepted practice of SLORC's "restoration." Outside countries encourage SLORC's atrocious behavior and total disregard for Human Rights by pumping money into the country and making hollow statements about how Burma is on the road to democracy under the military regime and should be thus nudged towards improvements by implementing "constructive engagement." What this policy of patronage points to is a clear increase in internal stability for Burma as SLORC aims for the unattainable legitimacy of rule denied to it by the disorder and chaos the military take-over incited and continues to fuel.

Rapid and unchecked economic growth is one of the main culprits. At last, the world's poorest and most populous continent are hopeful of financial betterment. How could this not be alluring? But the lesson yet to be learned from their western counterparts, who have experienced the flaws of unrestricted economic growth firsthand, is of sustainable growth versus what exists is actively in practice now. Renewable resources are literally being eaten up by greedy big business interested in making a quick buck, or baht, or rupee, or dong, or yen, or ... In the race to action off raw goods, sustainable development is neglected as cash becomes the chosen prize over local development for the future. This has also been true of Human Rights being "put on the back burner" in what regional authoritarian like to claim is "Asian democracy" of a home-grown sort which varies from western values of democracy.

ASEAN has been infected with this disease called

greed. Long-range development is being neglected for temporal gains; much like the policy of constructive engagement, which puts its main focus on economic aspects, but esthetically deals with fostering or hindering self-determination by peoples. Again, as with economic growth, there is no comprehensive look on the long-term effects and lack of benefits on the well-being of the peoples of a repressed country. What the future holds for them is overlooked by outside nations, despite what the evidence of history clearly shows. Realizing that, how can we constructively engage constructive engagement?

- 1) ask companies to invest in sound business ventures which directly benefit locals in the Liberated Areas, including funding of NGOs working there;
- 2) introduce and support international legislation aimed at removing the SLORC regime from power, and urge the international community to a real effort for direct change in Burma;
- 3) make a clear and comprehensive statement as to what steps are necessary for SLORC to take in order for normalized relations with Burma to take place;
- 4) demand immediate release of all political prisons and back reforms such as the guarantee of freedom of association and freedom of press;
- 5) urge SLORC to sign and whole-heartedly observe international Conventions and Covenant, especially International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its Optional Protocol, Slavery Convention, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- 6) open dialogue with SLORC for transition of power to elected representatives (the May 1990 elections were fairly held, but simply and illegally ignored by the junta);
- 7) enact trade and weapons embargo with strict enforcement, and boycott nations which ignore or fail to comply with embargoes;
- 8) discourage new investments and encourage divestment by multinational corporations in SLORC-controlled areas (Amoco reported paying US\$ 5 million as a mere signing bonus to SLORC).

These are steps of action generally supported by the democratic forces, such as the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, the National League for Democracy, the Democratic Alliance of Burma among others. As Daw Aung San Suu Kyi stated in her recent "privileged" visit by US Congressman Richardson (one wonders why a woman who has never been charged, given due process of law

nor sentenced according to those laws, should be restricted in meeting with anyone), "foreign governments should consider whether their trade with Burma is really helping the people or is it simply helping SLORC to dig its heels?" Moreover Daw Aung San Suu Kyi revealed that she can never accept SLORC's imported Indonesia Style democracy and ASEAN ways of thinking in reconstructing the future of Burma. As in the case of South Africa, positive outside influence can and will lead to increased benefits for all parties concerned with increased trade and cooperation of all peoples.

ABSDF follows a declared objection to the Constructive Engagement policy exported by ASEAN which fails to take into account Burma's long-standing political problem. Under the Constructive Engagement policy, ASEAN is encouraging SLORC politically, supporting it economically and turning a blind eye on SLORC's crimes against the people of Burma. Constructive Engagement policy is only the by-product of ASEAN member countries to lend legitimacy to SLORC, help to delude the international community about its abysmal human rights records in Burma, and undermine the democratic movement of the people of Burma. ABSDF believes that access to enjoy fundamental democratic rights and basic human rights by the people in respective countries is of vital important than senses of good but sugar-coated bilateral relations of the regimes in those countries. Aiming at good relations in the long run with the ASEAN member countries, ABSDF has been emphasising this point which is in line with the will of the people.

What is on the agenda for Burma's future? Much depends on the international community, but especially on the immediate neighbors in the region. China has already show its willingness to support SLORC regardless of conscience or consequences. Indonesia and Malaysia — Muslim countries — seem more willing to invest in money-making enterprises than raise concern over the fate of 2-300,000 Rohingya refugees being forced repatriation from Bangladesh. The Golkar, the Indonesia military's own form of ingrown presidency and one-party system, seems to have founded its first offspring, or clone, in the SLORC national convention. Considering the recent Filipino fiasco with East Timorese delegates to a Human Rights conference, and the same ban on those same people for this meeting, ASEAN policy is not encouraging. What it is, despite the stringent PR statements, is meddling in other countries' internal affairs. Yet, ironically or sardonically, constructive engagement is a prime example of this.

# VISIT MYANMAR 1996

*Mandalay* is Burma's second capital with a population of approximately half a million people. It is also in my opinion the hottest place on earth.

While the cities of Rangoon, Moulmein and Maymyo receive their annual rainfall during the rainy season, Mandalay stays dry. What it is like in the dry season I cannot imagine as this city is under construction and dust permeates through everything.

Mandalay Palace is a central point of focus and was once the heart of the city. Described as a fortress within a fortress, its history shows so much relevance to the mentality of the ruling military regime in power in Burma today.

In 1857 King Mindon moved his capital from Amarapura to Mandalay and began to build a city that would rival the growing city of Rangoon now occupied by the British. Built according to an ancient plan and under the direction of astrologers and monks, King Mindon arrived in Mandalay with the entire population of Amarapura and moved into a temporary palace. Under his direction the city of Mandalay and the palace took shape. The foundations of the city had been laid before his arrival as

had an essential rite that was insisted upon by Brahmin Ponnas ( Indian prophets) but denounced by the Buddhist Sangha. Fifty two people had been buried alive, three under each palace gate of which there were twelve, one at each corner of the wall, some were buried under the stockades, and four under the Lion Throne in the Hall of Audience. Mandalay would be assured of its guardian ghosts who would protect the King from his enemies. The palace was built from teak which was carved and lacquered, and consisted of hundreds of rooms housed under pavillions with many courts. Thousands of people were conscripted to build the palace under a system that by all accounts still remains to this day. A village headman had great power during this time, apart from providing labour, he was also the chief tax collector. He had the power to command the local militia and decide on issues of conflict between those under his law. Above the headman was the governor of the province who was usually a member of the of the royal family. Taxes collected by the headman

Above the headman was the governor of the province who was usually a member of the royal family. Taxes collected by the headman went to the governor who would then give them to his King and the royal court. Thousands of people were forced to work on building the city of Mandalay with no return for their labour.

I went to visit Mandalay palace in July this year, with stories of King Mindon and a ridiculous image of a city described in many an Englishman's tale as one of romance in my head. It was of course a boiling hot day and the breeze was a relief from the heat as I stood in front of the palace taking a rest and trying to figure out how to get inside without having a "guide" escort me around. You see when you visit Burma as a tourist, especially monuments controlled by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), there are "guides" assigned to ensure your visit is informative and pleasant. They stick to you like glue and it seems their main objective is to ensure that you don't speak with "the locals" and that the local people don't speak to you.

As I stood there pondering the many ways of giving my guide the slip my eyes were rivetted to an extraordinary scene being played out in the moat that surrounds the palace, only this moat held no water. Instead, I saw people, thousands of them bending over and collecting what I thought must have been the mud from the bottom of the canal. The mud was being passed along a line of men who eventually threw the dirt into a pile on the sidewalk that ran alongside the palace. From where I was standing the scene reminded me of any building a nest for their queen. I crossed the road and made my way to the edge of the

moat in order to get a closer look. I was right, people were collecting mud, to my left was a huge pile of dirt which had once been at the bottom of this canal. Who knows what was in there, the souls of many people killed during the cities history, the tears of those who have stayed in Mandalay after the bloody days of 1988? Whatever it was, there was an awful lot of it. I stayed there watching, wondering what was going on. The breeze came round again bringing with it the sense that perhaps it would rain today. Windchimes sounded in the distance and people continued to work, chew beetlenut, and drink from water canisters. Windchimes? Where on earth would they be? How could they be heard in such a huge space, surely not the palace? I slowly walked towards the edge of the moat. Looking closely I realised that all these men were wearing the same coloured longyi (Burmese sarong), and I realised with a jolt that these were not ordinary workmen but prisoners. I had seen this longyi before on men building a road somewhere between Rangoon and Mandalay and had been told they were prisoners. We had passed by so quickly that I didn't have enough time to really look. Someone called out to me from the moat, I leant forward to see who it was and saw one man standing in the dirt holding a big clump of mud grinning wildly at me. I smiled back and then to my horror watched as he turned to give his parcel of earth to a person next to him who had chains secured around his ankles. Next to him was another, and another. I quickly walked to another spot to see if these were the only people in chains. They were not. I realised that there were hundreds of people forcibly being made to work in the dirt that had chains that seemed to be wound around their waists. The

chains came down between their legs and eventually manacled around their ankles with a rod of iron in-between. Windchimes? No Chaingangs.

I took my camera and started taking pictures, convinced that at any moment either a prison guard or SLORC soldier would come and tell me to move away. I managed to speak to one of the prisoners who was able to understand a little bit of English. I wanted to know if any of these prisoners were incarcerated for their political beliefs or activities. Where were they all from? What on earth were they doing? How do I ask the question?

"Are you a criminal" I asked

"Yes" he replied grinning at me

Great I thought, now what?

"Is everybody here a criminal?"

He looked at me blankly, this man covered in mud with chains around his ankles. I tried again, this time speaking really slowly.

"Is everybody here a criminal?"

He turned and pointed to a group of people working the moat and replied "Sangha"

Sangha means monk or a community of monks.

I thanked him and moved on. I stayed for another 10 minutes or so and saw young boys of 13 or 14 chained and working, old men thin as a rake, some wearing shorts but a majority of the men were in the prison longyi. The closer I got to the moat, the more interest I was receiving from those working until eventually they were pointing at themselves and waving at me smiling for the camera cheering me on.

perhaps move on. I was worried about the amount of attention I was getting from those on the moat. I walked down the pavement and turned left and observed the scene from there. The men working at this corner of the moat were not in chains and were smiling and laughing. They were soldiers, rank and file of the Tatmadaw (Burmese soldiers), also up to their knees in dirt, but no chains. Is this the separation between military personnel and civilians I thought? One soldier noticed me with my camera, smiled and took his hat off, others began to call out to me in Burmese. I took more pictures and noticed the truck coming this way so I moved away and started to cross the street. Standing in the middle of the road on a pavement that divided the road in half, some women came up to me smiling and giggling, pointing to themselves and the camera. I took their photographs and interacted with them for a few minutes. I walked on desperate to find out what was going on.

About a month before I arrived in the city, 20,000 people had been conscripted by the Burmese army to come and clean the moat. The water held in the canals was not just for show, but actually used as a supply for those living in the city. However, in order to get the palace and the city ready for "Visit Myanmar 1996", orders were made to clean up the moat. The water was drained and people used to start digging and collecting the mud. The army was systematically going from house to house taking people for labour. If you could afford it you could pay the army instead, a fee for non-labour. This is similar to the system used by the army in the rural areas where they conscript villagers for portering as well as forced labour. As well as

residents in Mandalay, the army took farmers from areas surrounding Mandalay as well. It wasn't long before complaints from the farmers actually became a problem for the army, as this is the rice planting season and if the farmers are unable to plant rice, the army would also be affected come harvest season, as rice grown by the villagers is also taken to feed the Tatmadaw.

General Maung Aye, Vice Chairman of the SLORC and Commander in Chief of the army came to Mandalay to deal with the problem. The farmers were allowed to go back to their fields and plant rice. However for the residents in the city of Mandalay, things became worse. Eventually, prisoners were brought in and used for labour instead of residents. As well as cleaning the moat, forced labour is also used to help cleanup Mandalay. The women I had photographed in the middle of the road were not being paid for their labour, nor were they receiving payment of any kind that would benefit their communities.

I also learnt that for the residents of Mandalay their assured water supply for bathing, and cooking had been taken from them as the moat had been drained. I now understood why I had seen many people washing alongside the roads a familiar sight in Asia generally, but usually not alongside open sewers. And all for us, the tourist who will come and visit Mandalay a city with the distorted image of Kipling and colonial buildings now being replaced by Chinese millionaires whose pagodas are big buildings made from concrete and steel looming over a community tied in chains.

The issue of forced labour in Burma does not just relate to Man-

dalay. Just as in King Mindon's time communities in the rural areas now living amongst a war that has devastated thousands of lives are being conscripted to work on "development projects". In an area where the ethnic Mon live, a railway is being built from the cities of Ye to Tavoy, and thousands of people have been forced to work at gunpoint by the army and involuntarily relocated to areas away from their villages and kept under the control of various battalions ensuring that deadlines given by Rangoon are met. To go and visit Burma and see Upper Burma's major cities and witness the same mentality pervade over the SLORC's communities and so blatantly was a shock.

If you plan to visit Burma and you go to Mandalay think about the 13 and 14 year old boys forced to work in chains alongside men in their adult years, ankles chaffed by the hard iron and infected by the dirt in the mud. Then, because it is Burma, because it is a military dictatorship and because of this Junta's history you have to ask whether the prisoners are criminal or political. Without being able to go and ask each person one by one what their crimes had been I cannot say who did what, but clearly someone from the Sangha, a monk has been disrobed, charged under some emergency act of 1975 and placed in chains to work the canal in Mandalay.

**YOU TOO CAN VISIT OUR COUNTRY - SEE PEOPLE IN CHAINS, WOMEN BATHING NEXT TO OPEN SEWERS AND YOUNG BOYS CHAINED AND FORCED TO CLEAN MANDALAY PALACE. FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT SLORC - FREE GUIDES FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE. BE CARE! YOU TOO CAN BE ARRESTED AND CONSCRIPTED TO WORK THERE IF YOU VOICE DISSENT TO THEM OR STATE SOMETHING DISOBEDIENCE TO THEIR RULE.**

## ON-GOING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Like in real life, nothing can ever be so neatly categorised as was attempted here with the plethora of human rights violations perpetrated by the soldiers of a regime which seems to define a "human right" as beating, robbing, raping and terrorising. One can only wonder what the initial response would be of a SLORC soldier after being read Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; "No one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Would their face show surprise -- or solemn remorse?

There is no way to define the brutality which is occurring in Burma today, a continuation of over 30 years of military mis-rule. We can only record the frightful actions for a real justice in the future Burma of democracy and fairness to all. Unfortunately, nationwide violations are too staggering for DAWN to be able to reach all of them within these pages, and perhaps these lists of naked atrocities are too overwhelming for readers to stomach.

As an example, here is just one incident involving no less than five violations of human rights alone:

On 16 Jan 94 the same SLORC troops again ransacked Mong Yong Parish in Hsenwi Township in northern Shan State. Sarng Kham Luan, a resident of Worn Parng Yarp Village in the same parish was arrested. During an interrogation, he was severely tortured by cutting the skin on his chest. At 6 p.m. on the same day, Maj Myint Kyi and ten of his men committed a gang-rape of which the following four local women were victims: Aye Ong, 27, daughter of Pu Loi La; Pa Nang Sar, 35, daughter of Pu Loi Tun; Ea Kham, 32, daughter of Pu Loi Ywat Saam; and Ea Noan, 28, daughter of Pu Loi Sarng Lu.

In this issue, then, the focus concentrates on Shan State in 1994, which often receives attention as an "opium wonderland" rich in heroin production. What is overlooked, however, is the situation of the common people who suffer for their daily life. Opium production does not mean prosperity, and you cannot eat poppy. It is difficult to forget that this is one of the limited options villagers are forced into if they want to survive against SLORC brutality and extortion in an unjust system which promotes and maintains this impoverished way of life some must do. Others, however, have nothing to do with the drug trade and want to

live in their villages, raising their crops, living their lives as peacefully and as best they can. Then SLORC visits and disrupts their peaceful existence with vandalism, destruction and rape -- which have become institutionalised under the regime's "restoration of law and order" an observation even an outsider can make without bias.

(Note: LID = Light Infantry Division; LIB = Light Infantry Battalion; IB = Infantry Battalion)

## SIRLOIN PURLOINED, PIGS PILLAGED

On 18 Jan 94 Maj Myint Kyi's troops of Coy 5 of IB 69, while travelling to Na Moop Village, shot a cow for their food belonging to villager Sarng Par. The soldiers continued their raid and ransacked Worn Parng Yarp Village, Mong Young Parish, Hsen Wi Township, and robbed a large amount of personal property. Items taken from 21 villagers included quantities of rice, chicken, a pig, cooking oil, soy bean, cooking equipment, spoons, knives, blankets, sarongs and other clothing/cloth, torches, cassette tapes and money. Sarng Kham Luen, Nai Poo, Sarng Khe and the entire household of Pu Loi Sarng Sue were beaten by soldiers. Awk Loi Sar, Ea Ong and Ea Noon were brutally raped by soldiers.

On 23 Jan 94 these same troops stole a cow which was worth an estimated 27,000 Ks. The reason soldiers slaughtered the animal was because they were hungry. Ai Kyae, the former owner, is a Kachin national.

On 24 Feb 94 SLORC troops from Coy 2 of IB 518, led by Capt Ye Myint, raided and ransacked Worn Sai Khao Village, Sai Khao Parish in Kun Hein Township, southern Shan State, and took away 2 pigs from Sai Nya (worth 5,250 Ks), one pig from Salay Panti (3,000 Ks) and one pig from Loong Sor (4,500 Ks).

On 6 Apr 94 the soldiers of IB 246 entered and ravaged Worn Nain-lerng Village, Sa Nein Parish, Parng Long Township in southern Shan State without justification confiscated villager Lung Su's personal property of rice cooking pots (5), new slippers (2 pairs), cash (1,000 Ks) and 1 new water bucket.

On 9 Apr 94 the combined forces of IBs 246, 513

and 515 arrived at Look Meng Tseing Village, Sa Nein Parish, Parn Long Township, and compelled the villagers to meet the personal demands of the troops with the following materials; rice (59 boxes), cooking oil (6 viss), cash (350 Ks), table spoons (20), rice cooking pots (6), blankets (12) and ground nut seed (40 gal).

On 11 Apr 94 these soldiers repeated the same violations, this time on Worn Na Tsein Village in the same parish of Sa Nein, and forced residents to supply them with the following items, without any payment; rice (92 boxes), paddy grain (24 boxes), cooking oil (4 viss) and cash (440 Ks).

On 12 Apr 94 a military column composed of 60 troops from SLORC IB 520, led by Capt Kyaw Thein, and SLORC militia from Worn Hart penetrated into Worn Kiw Village, Ho Loi Parish, Mauk Mai Township in southern Shan State, and made off with a cow which had belonged to Lung Lu, a Buddhist Shan farmer. The beast was cut up as army rations.

On 13 Apr 94 soldiers of IB 246 raided and ransacked Parn Hoo Village and stole property legally belonging to the following citizens; Sarng Org (towels, blankets, watch, silver necklace, bag, 150 Ks), Tsu Sarng Lu (towels, pants), Lung Pung (towels, bag, 159 Ks, pants) and Lung Nu (towel, shirt, bag, torch).

On 15 Apr 94 the troops of IBs 246, 513 and 515 entered Worn Loi Khoo Village, Sa Nein Parish, Parn Long Township, and forcibly demanded the following materials from the villagers, which had to be given over without complaint: Sai Sar Ong (1 musket, 1 watch, 8 boxes of rice) and Lung Heng Saw (16 tins of paddy grain, 13,000 Ks, 118 boxes of rice).

On 23 Apr 94 about 100 troops from SLORC IB 332 led by Maj Myint Thein with the township officer of Mauk Mai Township, Southern Shan State, raid and ransacked Worn Na-law Village, Ho Loi Parish of the same township, and forced the residents to sell them a 3,200 Ks pig at the price of 1,200 Ks. Moreover, the soldiers then robbed another pig which had belonged to Sai Sarn Norng. He dared not claim anything for the payment as he was so afraid of them.

On 25 Apr 94 about 100 SLORC troops from IB 332, commanded by Maj Myint Thein, in collusion with the SLORC township officer of Mauk Mai Township, foraged into Worn Mai Pang Tong Village, Ho Loi Parish of the same township. Before the soldiers left,

they purloined a cow from the villagers for their ration -- offering only 1,600 Ks to the owners while the market price was valued at 8,000 Ks.

On 29 Apr 94 about 100 troops from IB 332 led by Maj Myint Thein went to Korng Lin Paoke Village, Ho Loi Parish, Muak Mai Township and abducted a cow at gun point which had belonged to an elderly lady, Pa Pu. No compensation was given by the marauding soldiers.

On 12 May 94 LIB 248 attacked Worn Fa Sorn Village, Loi La Parish, Mong Nai Township and took away the property of 15 inhabitants, totalling 252,327 Ks; Pu Suu (1,100), Tiya (1,900), Loong Kyorngta (1,900), Sarn Korn (21,900), Loong Nanda (1,690), Pa Tsarn Man (7,170), Loong Sarya (4,920), Loong Forga (1,550), Headman Loong Ta (6,700), Loong Sor Tsing (1,940), Waling (2,340), TSalay TSanda (400), Nai Soi (8,727), Loong Noi (15,045) and Loong Sarn (175,045).

On 13 May 94 a combined military column of SLORC troops from 55 LID, LIBs 247 & 248 and IB 518 raided Worng Koong Nue Village in Wong Norng Parish, Mong Nai Township, and torched houses and belongings owned by Thein Ngwe (losses of approximately 262,000 Ks), Loong Yoong (35,000 Ks), Sai Long (12,450 Ks), Nang Yung (19,300 Ks), Loong Tsitda (178,200 Ks), Pi Kann (82,650 Ks), Loong Eung (10,300 Ks), Pi Teeya (31,700 Ks), Nang Ing (8,390 Ks) and Nai Yung (5,450 Ks).

On the same day the same troops invaded Worn Yon Village in the same parish and took away property from Loong Saling (10,950 Ks), Sitda Nu (5,030 Ks), Loong Khe (6,280 Ks), Pi Ling Nya (4,560 Ks), Loong Thak Swe (900 Ks), Pi Ti (1,175 Ks), Daw Swe (870 Ks), Pa Hkam Ong (3,260 Ks), Pa Hurng (690 Ks), Headman Loong Vi (425 Ks), Daw Kya (6,000 Ks), Pa Tun (2,400 Ks), Nang Swe (1,130 Ks), Korliya (600 Ks), Pa Lu (6,000 Ks) and Sorliya (6,000 Ks).

## NOT SO HANDSOME RANSOM

In early May 94 ferocious battles broke out between the rebels in Shan State and SLORC LIBs 221, 316, 331, 334 and 526 in the area of Loi Tor Kham, Mong Seng-Mong Inn Parish. The SLORC

## HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTARY

army, after losing the battle, retreated to Worn Mark O (Upper) Village of the Akha people, near Tachileik Township in eastern Shan State and next to the Thai border. On 28 May 94 the local headman was arrested and accused by the SLORC soldiers of joining hands and cooperating with the rebels. The soldiers demanded 100,000 baht (US\$4,000) as a ransom for the release of the headman.

On the same day, at about 2:30 p.m., four SLORC soldiers were killed and two others wounded because of a boobytrap left by the rebels. Due to their losses, the soldiers were furious and in vengeance captured one Akha woman, named Ar-way Am. Her body was soaked with gasoline and she was mercilessly burnt alive until dead. Besides committing this act, an unknown woman of the same village was not only raped by the vengeful soldiers but her two children were reportedly taken into the middle of the village and their heads were lobbed off by the SLORC soldiers.

On 6 July 94, at 5:00 p.m., a combination of approximately 50 armed men from SLORC IB 96 and militia raided No Hta Village in Kyaik Hto Township, Mon State, arresting all the villagers at gun point. All the belonging of the villagers were looted by soldiers. Some villagers have not been freed until now.

On 17 July 94, SLORC's military column from IB 230 and Maj Tun Aung summoned all the headmen from the villages located nearby Na Bu Outpost in Kawkaik Township, Karen State. The headmen were told that if any porter is recaptured in his own village where he started to serve as a porter, he must pay 10,000 Ks to the troops. In addition, the military columns will eat every breeding animals in the villages where they change runners, and those who try to escape will be shot dead, and each village must compensate the troops at the rate of 100,000 Ks in case a soldier is injured by any kind of mines planted along their way.

### **TORTUROUS TREATMENT IS NO TREAT BUT A THREAT**

On 15 Jan 94 Coy 5 of IB 69, commanded by Maj Myint Kyi, raided Na Moop Village, Mong Young Parish, Hsenwi Township, northern Shan State and took prisoner the headman, Khing Kyarn. He was tied up by soldiers and suspended from the ceiling. Not only was he beaten but also burnt during an interrogation. On the same day, Ai La, a villager, was arrested and tortured by cutting the skin on his chest in

various places. The victim had to be later hospitalized.

On 20 Jan 94, after setting fire to property in Norng Sarg Village, Mong Yong Parish, Hsenwi Township, the troops from Coy 3 of IB 240 raided and ransacked Na Moop Village and arrested the village headman, Sarg Swe. They covered the local leader's head with a plastic bag and started questioning him, beating him for most of the time. Then the SLORC arrested Mong Ngwe, the youth leader in the same village, and administered a vicious beating that caused a severe injury to his head.

On 25 Apr 94 SLORC troops from IBs 425 and 426 entered Parng Luen Village, Thung Pong Parish in Hse Seng Township, southern Shan State, and arrested Paw Sarg Vee (male, 35). SLORC troops accused him of having contact with the rebels. His watch was taken by the soldiers during the interrogation. Soldiers not only beat and kicked him, but also dripped hot melted wax on his stomach. His shin bones were rolled with a magazine. He managed to escape while the soldiers were planning to kill him after the torturous interrogation.

### **EXECUTIONS WITHOUT EXPLANATIONS**

On 12 Jan 94 SLORC troops from IB 246 shot to death Sai Seng Harn (male, 24) from No. 1 Quarter of Kun Hein Township in southern Shan State without warrant. This occurred in the southern part of the town while the troops were patrolling the area.

On 16 Jan 94 a company of SLORC troops led by Hla Tun of IB 506 and a faction of the Shan State Army, which defected to SLORC and was led by Sai Norng, arrived in Norng Sien Village, arrested Sai Su, 38, male, headman of Torng Teik Parish, Hsipaw Township in northern Shan State. The victim was accused of sending information to the rebels in that area. After conducting an interrogation with torture, he was killed by Ai Thun (Kha Tong) of the SSA. Soldiers then ransacked the victim's house, took 25,000 Ks in cash and other property and destroyed one image of Lord Buddha by chopping the statue into pieces.

On 21 Apr 94 SLORC troops from IBs 425 and 426 conducted a raid while they on patrol in

Thung Pung Parish, Mong Morn Township, southern Shan State. Arrests were made of Sai Sarng (41) from Worn Mai Village, Lung Khin (55) from Ye Won Village and Sarn Pya (30) from Worn Fai Lin Village. SLORC troops accused the villagers of having contact with the rebels. During the interrogation, the villagers were forced to confess to the above-mentioned accusation although there was a lack of corroborating evidence. They were again tortured while being repeatedly questioned, resulting in their premature deaths by torture and severe beatings.

On 12 May 94 the soldiers of SLORC Division No. 55 plundered and murdered in W Koong-tee Village, Worn Norng Parish, Mong Nai Township, southern Shan State. Financial losses suffered were cattle, pigs and chickens owned by Por Keik (20,130 Ks stolen), Mae Sala (16,500) and Pi Seng (200). Por Sala (male, 56) and Por Ni-ong (male, 41) were both shot to death without explanation by soldiers who then tried to hide their corpses in the east of Koong Na-long.

On 23 May 94, at 5:00 pm, SLORC troops from Coy 1 of IB 22, led by Coy commander Capt Khin Soe, arrested Sai Aung Mong (25) son of Lung Tsam Pa and Pa Nang Pin, of Shan nationality, living in Worn Pung Laing Village, Hsipaw Township, while the victim was working on Ye Yoke farm. He was interrogated, tortured and beaten him to death.

## CIVILIAN SUFFERING; VILLAGES IN ASHES, LIVELIHOODS SHATTERED

On 20 Jan 94 SLORC troops from Coy 3 of IB 240 raided Norng Sarng Village in Mong Young Parish in Hsenwi Township, and burnt down approximately 300 four-gallon tins of paddy owned by Ai Kham Lu. Damages are estimated at 63,000 Ks. Moreover, soldiers also sequestered a buffalo of the victim, worth 13,500 Ks.

On 20 Jan 94 Coy 5 of IB 69 led by Maj Myint Kyi returned to Na Moop Village of the same Parish. They opened fire contriving to make the villagers afraid of them and when the villagers fled the SLORC troops robbed the property of the people. The following losses were suffered for a total of 150,850 Kyats; Pu Loi Sarng Yern (126,500 Ks), Awk Tsarng Kham (19,000 Ks), Ea Luen (2,050 Ks) and Sarng Yee (3,300 Ks).

On 24 Jan 94 the troops returned to Na Moop Village.

After arriving in the village, the following 10 local women were arrested and beaten without any apparent reason; Awk Loi Kya, Awk Loi Luen, Ea Lu, Awk Loi Pu, Ea Tsing Nyunt, Awk Loi Nang, Awk Loi Tun, Ea Shwe, Ea L and Awk Loi Parng.

On 6 Apr 94 in Saam San Village, Hsa Nein Parish of Parng Long Township, the combined forces of IBs 246, 513 and 515 carried out a pillage and plunder action. 31 households were burnt down and destroyed after troops looted private property, including cattle, resulting in approximately 205,000 Ks worth of damage to personal property, homes and livestock caused by these soldiers.

On 16 Apr 94 about 60 of Capt Kyaw Thein's IB 520 troops, on their way back to Worn Hart Village, Ho Loi Parish, Mauk Mai Township, accused Sai Lurng, brother of Sarn Eung, of being a rebel while these villagers were on their way to send their sick brother to Worn Hart Hospital. The army thugs threatened Sarn Eung to pay them 30,000 Ks for his brother's release and ordered them to go back to their village. As there was no choice for them, the victims had to accept SLORC's ultimatum.

On the morning of 29 Apr 94 SLORC troops arrested a Buddhist novice who was on his way from the Won Na Lao Village, Ho Loi Parish, Mauk Mai Township, to Pang Torng Monastery; his "crime" was carrying a knife and paying no respect to the soldiers, despite that the boy was in a religious order and deserves respect as such.

On 12 May 94 a collaboration of forces from SLORC Division No. 55 and IBs 247, 248 and 518 pirated 51,460 Ks worth of the people's belongings in Loi Eoon Village, Loi La Parish, Mong Nai Township, southern Shan State; Loong Korling (21,810), Loong Ong Hkam (17,730), Headman Singda (3,815), Pa Khe (2,185), Loong Yee (910), Pi Suu (1,285), Nang Khoong (5,405), Sai Nung (350), Loong Nya (400), Sanda (100), Sitda (170) and Pi Lu (300).

On 13 May 94, at 3:00 p.m., SLORC troops from IB 516 under the command of 99 LID burnt down Kung Mong Village in Nam Sam Township, southern Shan State. 12 houses, which had belonged to Lung Tsing-da, Lung Laing, Lung Eung, Sai Fiya, Lung Sarn Pe, Lung Kung-na,

Htun Nyunt, Sai Nyo, Nang Yee, Lung Yong, Sai Marn and Vilang, and one hydro-powered rice mill were razed to the ground with detrimental effects to livelihood and well-being of the entire community.

## DEFENCE FORCES' EXTORTION

On the same day a collaboration of forces from SLORC Division No. 55 and IBs 247, 248 and 518 the same troops plus LIB 246 visited Worn Koong Nue (South) Village, Worn Norng Parish, Mong Nai Township and extorted personal property at gun point from Loong Sor (24,100 Ks), Loong Or (5,420 Ks), Ong Farn (1,890 Ks), Pi Sunanda (1,170 Ks), Pu Ta (8,050 Ks), Loong Vi & Pa Lu (4,910 Ks), Daw Hkam (3,730 Ks), Loong Sarm (6,640 Ks) and Daw Man (9,420 Ks).

On the same day in Worn Koong Keng Village, Kong Keng Parish of the same township, soldiers victimised a local villager, named Sai Nyut, robbing him of 9,310 Ks.

On 16 May 94 two villages in Mong Nai Township, southern Shan State, were attacked by SLORC Division No. 55 and IBs 246, 247, 248 and 518. The first incident occurred at Worn Norng Euk Village in the parish of the same name. SLORC soldiers carted off property worth 8,475 Ks and formerly owned by Loong Vi (1,625), Loong Nya (3,210), Loong Koongna (800), Loong Tiya (2,450) and Pa Yorn (390).

Later during the same day, this combination of forces went on to steal from Worn Norng Fa Village in Kho Eut Parish. Property worth 15,895, mostly chickens, cattle, and rice, even a bullock cart, were illegitimately seized by soldiers from a dozen villagers; Sarnng Ta (185), Pa Swe (180), Por Lanna (180), Loong Toon (6,500), Sarnng Panta (250), Sai Nya (6,000), TSalay Or (90), Sarnng Or (90), Loong Toon (280), Sornanti (1,230), Sarnng Ti (510) and Loong Khorn Lu (400).

On 18 May 94 the 55 LID, LIBs 246, 247 & 248 and IB 518 entered Worn Na-Lor Village, Kho Eoot Parish, Mong Nai Township, and dispossessed various property at gun point from Sunati (450 Ks), Pa Loi-lu (700 Ks), Nantor (3,280 Ks), Pa Loi Ing (350 Ks), Korling (250 Ks), Pa Lot (100 Ks), Sarnng Vi (150 Ks), Pa Parng (780 Ks), Pi Yorn (200 Ks), Pa Suo (1,000 Ks), Mooling (650 Ks), Pa Sai (390 Ks), Nai Khyornng Pe (200 Ks) and Salay Nanda (800 Ks).

On 26 June 94, SLORC's 2nd Column led by Maj

Htay Ye from IB 263, under the central command of Tactical Operational Command 1 of the Western Command, arrested traders between Humadaw Village and Kalardeh Village in Taungoo Township, Pegu Division and took away 200,000 Ks in cash from them.

**Source:** Shan Human Rights Foundation  
Reporters of the ABSDF

## RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION

In May 1994 SLORC threatened forced eviction of entire Muslim population of 170 households in Nalapara township, Arakan State. Since May 1994, hundreds of Muslims in Arakan State have been arrested by SLORC. Muslim girls in that area were summoned by SLORC Border Supervising Committee and forced to attend a compulsory vocational training programme run by SLO RC, covering their own expenses. After the training, they were sent to different SLORC outposts and forced to sew uniforms for the troops.

On 29 June 1994 SLORC Strategic Command in Buthidaung township sent about 150 troops to the southern part of the town. These troops based at an Islamic school and committed harassing the local people. Shafi Rahman, 25, son of Noor Ahmed and Mohammed Ayas, 28, son of Ali Hossein from Pon Nyo lake village were arrested, killed and buried in a mass grave near Nyaunchaung village. In June alone at least 150 civilians in Arakan State were shot dead in cold blood. On 6 July 1994 MI18 visited Kazirbil village, 36 km north of Maungdaw and arrested Habiullah, son of Bahadoor, Abu Bakker son of Abdul Habi, Hasiullah son of Syedur Rahman, ex-village chairman, Moulvi Abdul Ali son of Abdul Rahim, Moulvi Abul Kalam, and Hossein – for alleged contact with anti-SLORC forces. Their fate are unknown.

On 5 June 1994 SLORC troops armed with automatic rifles supervised the demolition of a mosque in Thingan Nyinnaung, about 19 kilometres west of Myawaddy, Karen State to make way for expansion of a road despite Muslim community there appealed to both local and national authorities in a futile attempt to save the 70-year-old mosque. That raised fears in the Muslim community that other mosques along the road would be pulled down.

In the past six years since the historic 8888 Uprising and September coup, SLORC has upgraded its military might by purchasing modern offence weapons from foreign countries such as China, with hard currency earned from cheaply selling off the land's rich natural resources.

***Most of the youth are not interested to serve in military service but are forced to join the Tatmadaw against their will.***



SLORC has also been expanding the number of soldiers in the so-called Defence Forces in past years; from 180,000 in 1988 to an estimated 380,000 today. Junta leaders have publicly claimed they aim for the armed forces to top 500,000 men by 1995.

Despite the figures, it says nothing of the popularity of the armed forces, which routinely extorts and kidnaps youth and student "recruits" at gun point. Most of the youth are not interested to serve in military service but are forced to join the *Tatmadaw* against their will. In the military, these youth are looked down upon and under constant watch because of suspicion they will try to escape because of maltreatment and unbearable conditions. Food is in short supply and must be stolen from the countryside if the soldiers are to survive. Even such necessary items like basic clothing and cooking equipment are not issued. Many soldiers are

forced victims of these "pillage and plunder" SLORC operations for their own survival, while officers reap huge profits from villagers' property and goods. In some columns, the unwilling soldiers themselves have been disarmed, beaten and used as porters, and their salaries were discontinued or merely "promised" on paper.

The rank and file, despite committing atrocities to the people, are trapped and abused in their own army, subjected to both physical and mental torture. Being members of the armed forces in no protection from the horrors. Their eyes and ears are the witnesses to the "reality according to SLORC". Information and opinions they form come from inside themselves, influenced by the pressures of officers and the SLORC system of insanity.

They know the truth even while being prohibited from reading

leaflets and magazines issued from democratic opposition groups. They know what goes on around them is not right, but are forced by a fear and a lack of freedom into such circumstances as pawns of a higher perverted power. Listening to the radio will elicit sure punishment. Freedom of thought and actions are not tolerated, threats are common, all contact with the outside world forbidden, including to one's family. If they try to escape, army officers promise the soldier's parents, children and relatives will be killed. They dare not escape, instead silently suffering the misery each day with beatings, a lack of food and even living materials.

Despite the tales of horror by these soldiers, however, are the scapegoats for a brutal SLORC policy of lawlessness and disorder, even as the regime attempts to gain international recognition for their rule — a legitimacy which Burma's own citizens refuse to give the illegal government. Many boys and men are held prisoner of their own army, and army once founded on protecting and serving the people, now turned into an institution of terror and destruction of the SLORC.

Under such situation, 11 of the conscripted rank and file of SLORC IB 434 could no longer bear the barbaric ill-treatment of their officials. They shot dead Warrant Officer (II) Han Htun from Myan Aung, who was at that time in charge of the military outpost, Lance Corporal Than Tun and Lance Corporal Thein Win at Ne Pu Khan outpost (Point 1653), located near Yun Salin River, in the eastern part of Papun in Karen State, in an effort to escape the injustices. They then joined the revolutionary forces on 4 June 1994. Most of them are of student ages, 16-17 years old. The following stories were told by them to Reporters of the ABSDF during an interview.

— THE EDITOR)



(Zaw Win Naing is from Yetarshe Township in Pegu Division. His serial number was 898999.)

I left school after I passed the 4th standard examination as my parents were very poor. I had to sell goods in the markets to earn some money to help provide for my family's living. In 1992, on my way home from the market, SLORC soldiers forced me to get into a military truck. It was about 3 o'clock in the evening. I was 15 at that time. I have been very depressed since the time of the training. During the training,

many recruits suffered from malnutrition and lack of sanitation because they had to learn everything within 4 months and had insufficient nutrition. During the training, some recruits died of cholera. anyone's failure in the medical check-up was neglected by SLORC as the military wants the increasing numbers.

After the training, I was transferred to Ne Pu Khan Gone. No rank and file was provided with sufficient rations. I did not see any tins of condensed milk or sugar. When there was no curry and when we were about to take salt [i.e. eat rice], we were forced to stand in the rains or in the scorching sun, and kicked with combat boots.

Local people from Wai Mon, Koo Seik and Thakun Daing, living nearby Papun military area, were getting trouble from and were horrified by SLORC troops. Every farm owner was forced to pay 5 baskets of paddy to SLORC. Very often, the troops took away everything that the villagers grew and forced the owners of labourers to carry these crops without any payment. When these people refused or could not carry it, they were kicked or beaten by the troops. I saw many elderly people pulling the legs of soldiers and begging with their tears shedding.

Most of the villagers love those of us who are in our childhood. When we went into the village, the villagers provided whatever they had. We, therefore, shared our rations with them whenever they came to the outpost. But when the officials knew what we did, we were beaten or put into confinement.

Moreover, the villagers and their

cattle were forced to drag cut logs. Cattle, which could no longer pull the logs because of foot disease, were killed. The owners were never compensated. My parents taught me not to insult any elders. But if my parents knew what I did, I'm sure that they would be very disappointed with me.

The officials ordered us to bake bricks, saying that we would be paid. In reality, we were not paid. Rations of army rum for the rank and file were sold on the way to the outpost. We did not get anything from that ration. Sometimes, they forced 2 soldiers to conduct sentry duty for the whole night. Because the officials forced one soldier, who was admitted at Papun battalion clinic as he was suffering from sickness, he committed suicide. His name is Tin Hmwe. Many soldiers committed suicide because of misery, disappointment and depression.

We were not allowed to read any leaflets or magazines issued or distributed from the revolutionary organisations, and did not listen to the BBC. If the officials knew that we were listening to the BBC, we were beaten or put into confinement.



(Moe Kyaw Soe, serial #895505, son of U Soe Myint from Immigration Department in Bassein, Irrawaddy Division, and Daw Tin

Htay. His native village is Ze Phyu Chaung in Dedayeh Township).

In 1993, my family had to draw ballots under SLORCs recruitment programme and send one family member. If we could not send somebody in the family, we must pay 5,000 Kyats for hiring somebody else, plus 3 baskets of paddy and 3 baskets of rice to the military. Although I was the youngest in my family, I had to join the military as my brothers were away and others are female. At that time I was in my 15th year.

I was sent to No. 6 Division Training Corps in Taungoo for about 5-months' military training. During this time, I experienced much maltreatment. An old man, 60, called 'Mars' by the soldiers, was also at the training. As there was nobody else for him to hire or no money for the hiring price, he himself had to join the military. This man was blamed and beaten during the training period. He was not given any medical treatment. When we suffered from a malaria attack, each person was given only half a Quinine tablet.

After the training, I was sent to IB 434. There, no rank and file was given enough food. We were given a little watery worm-holed bean curry. When we were sick, we were never given any medicine nor treatment, instead were told by the officials, 'Cover the charges with your own salary.' The monthly salary of 700 Ks was on paper. We got no more than 300 Ks. We were not spared from sentry duty even though we were sick. Warrant officers and sergeants forced us to massage them and to buy liquor for them.

Now, I am occupied with a willingness to go to school again as I had no alternative than to join the military while I was preparing to attend my 8th standard class.



(Moe Kyaw, ser#895468, son of U Kyaw Shein and Daw Nwe Aye, farmers from Ywa Thit, near Kun Chan Kone and Let Khock Gone in Rangoon Division.)

I joined the military service at the age of 14 because of maltreatment by my father-in-law. I attended the military training in Taungoo and was ill-treated as others. When I was sick and could not climb up the mountain, I was beaten till blood flowed out of my mouth. While I was at Nay Pu Khan Outpost, I was blamed and kicked from the back as I was not able to climb up the mountain. At that time, I was about to commit suicide. But I failed to do so, as other soldiers prevented me. I joined the military because of the maltreatment of my father-in-law. Later on, I found that the military is worse than him.



(Than Aung, 28, is from Tak Gone Township in Mandalay Division. His wife's name is Ma Khin Wine and he has 3 children. His serial number was 8503948.)

I joined the military service on 19 June 1991. Before that I was a farmer. One day, one of my friends in the army came and asked me to go along with him by saying that he will buy some dried fish for me. Later on, I knew that my friend was assigned for recruitment. I had no choice because my friend would be beaten in case of my refusal. While I was attending the military training at No. 3 Training Corps in Yamethin, my parents and wife asked me to come back many times. I could not run away.

Lance Corporal Than Tun gave 'salary' to a married woman in Wai Mon village, Papun township and took her as his wife/mistress [against her will]. The woman's husband dared not say anything. 2nd Lieut Thein Oo mentioned himself as a bachelor and committed sexual abuses. They always beat and kicked anybody near them whenever they were drunk. Most of the underage soldiers were forced to bear hardships. When they refused, they were inhumanely punished.

In the barracks, family of the soldiers were faced with insuffi-

ciency of food and a lack of medicines which led them to death. Most of their family members had to work outside as low-paid labourers at the construction site. The family members were forever being found at fault as they could not perform their assigned duties inside the battalion [which is also expected of family members by army officials].

Due to this situation, most of the soldiers were suffering from misery and were no longer eager to serve in the military. It is not the only problem in IB 434. We have no guarantee for our lives. It's like we are walking in the darkness without knowing our future. We did not know for what we were working for. We were not allowed to listen to the BBC. Nobody dared listen to the BBC as they could be confined. Our maximum salary of 750 Ks was merely on paper. Our monthly deposits of 100 Ks was also meaningless as we were never given a bank account.



(Ye Win Htike, ser#850389, 17, was the youngest son of U Thein Myint and Daw Khin Nyo from Pabedan Township in Rangoon Division. His mother earned the household income by selling various kinds of snacks in Bogyoke Market. His eldest brother was a guard on the train

and not healthy enough. Another brother, Aung Myint Than, passed his 10th standard examination in 1990 and is now attending the Defence Service Academy. Another brother was in the 10th standard in 1990.)

I joined the military service in June 1990. At that time, my brother who was in his 10th standard was living with my aunts in Lepadan Township in Pegu Division. When my brother was assigned to join the military by SLORC, he came back with tears in his eyes. My brother was very clever and should receive an education. I, therefore, joined the military in place of my brother. At that time, I was in 7th standard.

After attending training at No. 3 Training Corps in Yamethin, I forced the local people into portering. I forced even unhealthy persons, elderly and women. Most of the women were forced to stay near the officials. I saw with my own eyes what the officials pressed them to do.

Chit Ko Ko, a 12 year old boy from Theinzayat, was also along with us. Whenever he could not walk along with the troops, he was beaten and kicked. The company quartermaster beat him all the time. At last, the child became depressed. He was beaten with a bottle in the head and was in a coma for one week. When he regained consciousness, he did not speak to anyone nor eat anything. The lower parts of his body nearly became paralysed and one of his eyes was affected. He was transferred to Mingaladon Military Hospital. The official in-charge was put on trial as the child's uncle was Maj Win Bo Shwe from Kya SaKhan in Thaton, and he complained to

headquarters [about the maltreatment of his nephew]. Any child not having relatives in the military or anybody with no family background will definitely receive more ill-treated than Chit Ko Ko.

Most of the soldiers in our battalion want to come to the revolutionary area if they can get proper contact. Because they are miserable and ill-treated in the military all the time. We were threatened by the officials that we would be killed by the KNU. We did not care about our deaths compared continuing to stay with the SLORC troops, receiving ill-treatment all the time, insulting the elderly people and doing unjust things to the villagers everyday.

When I arrived in the liberated area, I found out that the situation is very different from what we were told. The KNU and other organisations welcomed us warmly. All of us have equal rights with them. There is no discrimination between the officials and the rank and file. We have the right to discuss openly with them. But in the SLORC troops, no soldier is allowed to eat on the same table with their officers.



(Zaw Min, ser.#895561, 17, is son of U Maung Han and Daw Thein Kyin, farmers living in Thetkala, Kawa Township)

I was a 7th standard school boy and on my way to home from school, I was abducted by the SLORC soldiers and forced to get onto the military truck. Although I refused them, they forcibly took me by saying, "We will make a better life for you. Come along with us." At that time, I thought that they were forcing me into portorage. But later on I came to know that they forced me to serve in the military service.

I was in the military in April 1993. My parents did not know my whereabouts. I had to attend the military training at No. 6 Division Training Corps. My experiences in the military are the same as my friends. "I don't want to serve sentry duty anymore. I'm just willing to back to school", says Zaw Min with a tone that warns he is afraid of being forced into the military again.



(San Lwin, ser#850951, 18, is son of U Kyi and Daw Nyunt Shein from No. 5 Quarter of Tharketa, Rangoon Division.)

I was in my 8th standard in Htu Par Yon High School No. 1. On my way to home from school, I was abducted by municipal police in front of the market in No. 1 Quarter. I was forced to get onto the truck. They forced me to go along with them even though they could identify me as a stu-

dent by my school bag and uniform. Another 3-4 students were also abducted like me.

I attended the military training at No. 2 Division Training Corps in Pyinmana, Mandalay Division. I also knew very well about the story of Chit Ko Ko.



(Nai Win Tun, ser#899107, 25, is son of U Hla Kyi from Waw Township in Pegu Division. His father was a herbal medic. Nai Win Tun worked in a workshop before he joined the military.)

Even the elderly people were forced into portorage. When they could no longer carry the heavy loads, they were beaten and tortured. The girls who could no longer carry were reprovved and taken behind the bushes and raped. Even 11-12 year old girls, the age of wearing a gown, were not spared.

We are not allowed to write to our family nor relatives. Any kind of contacts with the family is prohibited. "We are soldiers." But we were tortured and left without any medical treatment as porters. Many soldiers committed suicide as they could no longer bear the hardships. Even the sergeants did it. Nobody wants to bear the arms. We were forced to work at odd-jobs, agricultural work and baking charcoal. We were fed not

in time or with enough food. We were fed only 2 meals per day. Lunch was fed at 3:00 p.m. We couldn't bear it any longer because of hard work and insufficient food. Some villagers came and gave us food. They were very friendly with the ranks and file in the army. But the officials did not like this.

Most of the rank and file, except for serial numbers 300000-500000 who are sergeants, are always trying to flee from serving in the military. Therefore every soldier is under watch. They threaten us that our family members will get into trouble or killed in case we flee. Some soldiers dared not flee because of this threat and continued to bear all the suffering.

Most of the soldiers could not take care of their families who were left behind. Some of their wives had to find odd-jobs in order to earn their household living. Some of them had to sell their bodies to get the money.

Soldiers who joined the military after 1988 were not allowed to go very far from the outpost. These soldiers were accompanied by somebody else. Most of the newcomers are not acquainted with the area very well. They threatened us that our throats would be cut by the Karens. It is also one of the reason for some soldiers to be hesitant to flee. A certain number of soldiers committed suicide when they found that there is no exit for them.

Most of the soldiers who joined the military after 1988 gave respect to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Nobody dared to mention her name openly. We had to listen BBC secretly. If the officers know, we are scolded and punished.



**(Aung Soe Moe, ser#850829, 20, is son of U Kyi and Daw Khin Ohn, farmers from Kyauk Kyi Township, Pegu Division.)**

In 1990, when each quarter in Kyauk Kyi was ordered to send 20 recruits for the military. As no one in the family could join, I resigned from my 8th standard class and join the military. If I had refused my family would have had to hire somebody else at prices ranging around 10,000 Ks. But nobody wanted to get this amount of money even if they had to serve in the military.

I attended the military training in Pynmana and then was transferred to IB 434. Soldiers were also tortured as porters and forced to work hard labour. As we were not provided with sufficient food and as there is lack of medical treatment, diseases became rampant. We had to massage the sergeants and officials every night. Whenever they were drunk, they ill-treated us more.

Most of the students who were forced into the military service against their will under SLORC's recruitment programme were derisively called "DEMO" and suffered more ill-treated than others. They were always under watch as the officers were afraid of their escape.



**(Maung Aye Shwe, ser#899058, 18, is the 6th son of U San Khin and Daw Khin Thauang from Moe Nyo Township in Pegu Division.)**

In Moe Nyo Township, each quarter was ordered to provide 5 recruits every month. I was sent to serve in the military on 4 February 1993 under this recruitment programme of SLORC. Then I was sent to No. 6 Division Training Corps.

I finished only my 5th standard class and was a farmer before I was in the military. Although my parents did not want me to be in the military, they had no choice.

When I was in the outpost, the in-charge of the outpost and sergeants frequently asked me to buy liquor for them. One night, I bought liquor and cooked for them as usual. Then I went to bed as my sentry duty was from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. At about 10:30 p.m., I was forcibly woken up and ordered to prepare a meal for them. Lance-Corporal Thein Win asked me to massage him. I told him I had sentry duty and I wanted to sleep before my duty. He scolded me and forced me to massage him. Because of that I fell asleep during my duty. The next morning, I was put in the scorching sun and a burnt knife was touched to my waist. ...Here are the remaining scars.



**(Than Tun, ser#850425, 19, is son of U Than Maung and Daw Myint Kyi who live in 38th Street, Oakpho No. 1 Quarter, Payngde in Pegu Division. His father is chairman of the local LORC and his mother earns her living by selling clothes.)**

My father asked me to join the military service when I was one of those who was selected by rotation under SLORC's recruitment programme. I trained at No. 3 Training Corps in Yamethin.

In the military, nobody wants to fight. It is very hard for soldiers to walk or march to the frontline as they are not healthy enough because of hard work assigned to them by the officials. Nobody dares to think about his life. As they are isolated from the outside world, they don't know what is good for them to do. They are afraid of being killed when they are recaptured. They also think that even if they are not recaptured and killed, they cannot survive or run away without food. They are also afraid of dying from a shortage of food.

Nobody knows that we are warmly welcomed by the revolutionary organisations. We left for here because we thought that it is better to die than to be subjected to torture by SLORC. They can

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Marc Weller (ed.), **DEMOCRACY AND POLITICS IN BURMA: A COLLECTION OF DOCUMENTS.**

Government Printing Office, NCGUB; Manerplaw, Burma. 1993. v-xvi, 453 pages, no price.

With almost six years having passed since the military of Burma seized power and displaced constitutional authority with martial law, it is not unreasonable if one cannot remember when certain events occurred, speeches were made, UNGA and UNHRC resolutions were passed and what individual leaders and nations did in response to events in that country. Journalists, who are new to the scene, and popular writers with little or no background, often do not know where to turn in order to find out what happened inside of Burma, how governments and international organizations arrived at their current positions regarding Burma, and what was said and by whom both in and outside of Burma which helped shape events.

With the publication of the volume under review, a handy reference and first-rate research tool has been created. The editor has collected documents from a variety of sources, many of which are almost impossible to find except in libraries which specialize in collecting the kind of information and date assembled.

The book opens with a useful introduction which concentrates on the immediate postwar period to 1992; this is followed by a scholarly examination of the situation in Burma in constitution and international law perspective. The main part of the book is a collection of documents which are organized by topic. It begins with the reproduction of basic documents which formed the political basis of the state, after independence, such as, the Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry, 1947 which includes the Panglong Agreement – an agreement between the Burma and minority leaders of the Shans,

Kachins and Chins which laid the foundation for the federal political system and the sharing of power in independent Burma. It also includes the two constitutions of Burma, 1947 and 1974, together with the initial announcements of the military, following its seizure of power on September 18, 1988.

The next section, which covers just under 100 pages, concentrates on the election of 1990 – from the initial election law to hold multiparty elections to the elections and the steps taken by the military to nullify the outcome. This section deserves careful study for it demonstrates, in great detail, the lost opportunity to bring about peaceful change from dictatorship to democracy. The editor is balanced in his presentation of the positions and statements of the democratic leaders and the military, thus allowing each reader to judge for himself, whether or not rules changed, once the outcome of the voting was known.

One of the real strengths of the volume is the material on the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, which forms the next section. From its beginning through its international efforts to gain recognition as the legitimate alternative to the military rulers, the editor has brought together basic and incidental documents which are nearly impossible to find anywhere else. No history of Burma for this period can be written without consulting these documents in order to gain knowledge and understanding of the struggle between the elected representatives of the people and the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the political vehicle of the mili-

tary rulers of Burma.

More than 100 pages are devoted to the issue of Burma and the United Nations. Here one will find, not only the several resolutions and formal statements of various countries, but the arguments of SLORC in response to the complaints. This section is amplified by statements and documents from individuals and states, made outside the UN which bear directly on the day to day situation in Burma. In bringing these documents together, the editor maintained the highest scholarly standards in order not to influence the reader who seeks to reach an understanding from the documental record and not from the persuasive arguments of defenders or opponents of SLORC or NCGUB.

Finally, a word about the volume's presentation. The editor has alerted the reader to omissions of parts of documents and statements, when, for editorial reasons, he had to shorten them. To this reviewer's knowledge, he has been extremely careful not to distort through omissions. The volume as printed, shows real care on the editor's part in eliminating typos and misspellings through careful proof-reading. And the sponsors of the volume are to be commended for publishing it on good paper with clear and easily readable type.

Diplomats, journalists, scholars and the peoples of Burma will use this volume for years to come and will look upon it as the most authoritative source available, outside the specialized libraries in universities, the UN and the Foreign Offices of the nations of the world. With the passage of time and the increasing difficulty of trying to recover these documents in their original forma, all who are interested will be in the publisher's and editor's debt for having found, reproduced and preserved them for generations to come.

## WHAT HAS BECOME OF US?

This month will see Thailand hosting an important meeting among emerging countries in this region, the ASEAN summit. This summit can be a historic one if any decision is made on any important matter. In fact, there is already one crucial issue which can really make history, depending upon Thailand's decision. Unfortunately, this history in the offing could turn out to be a case of condemnation rather than a commendation for Thailand. Up to this moment, Thai government seems to be determined to go ahead with its "constructive engagement" scheme to invite the representatives of Burma' State Law and Order Restoration Council to attend the event.

The term "constructive engagement" was coined by Thai Foreign Minister Prasong Soonsiri who explained his intention to bring Burma to the outside world. When the scheme was first announced, there was an indication that Thailand might even try to support the idea of including Burma in ASEAN as a member in the near future. With the reactions from the world community and the realization that the move might be too bold and untimely, it was clarified that Burma would only be an observer.

There are two main reasons behind strong oppositions from various institutions. First and foremost, the military junta in Burma still holds on to power and ignored the result of the general election in 1990, thus considered an illegitimate government. Secondly, numerous cases of human rights violations have been reportedly committed by the SLORC even to this date: the house arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the National League for Democracy, with no definite sign of unconditional release; the detentions of many politicians, activists and those who opposed the ruling party, often without trial; forced labour and forced reallocations, including cases of atrocities and indiscriminate tortures, rapes, imprisonment's and murders, conducted on villagers, especially those from opposition parties and ethnic groups.

Having said that, it should become obvious that the "constructive engagement" scheme can not be accepted under the standard of the modern world community. Should the government choose to go ahead with the plan, I feel that our nation is being lead onto a very dangerous and destructive path.

No matter how noble Khun Prasong's intention might be, and what status is given to the SLORC's representatives, Thailand cannot avoid being seen as associating with the illegal group of power holders. Moreover, the action would reinforce the SLORC's arrogance that they are recognized despite their

demonic deeds. I'm surprised not to hear much from Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai concerning this issue. I'm more surprised to see very little has been discussed or mentioned among our leaders, law-makers and politicians despite the highly unfavourable consequences that could follow.

I used to believe in our government under Khun Chuan's leadership. Personally I used to respect Khun Prasong's opinions and decisions since he was the chief of the National Security Council. And I used to lay so much hopes on our MPs since it is us who have chosen them. I began to lose faith in them lately. I feel that our government has acted in a strange and irresponsible way, not to mention how it handled our own political crisis recently.

We seem to be too enthusiastic in forging the relationship with Burma. It has been known that not too long ago when Burma was a socialist country and the fear for Communism still gripped our leaders, we used to rely on the Karen ethnic group to be our buffer against any possible influences or infiltration. Now that we appear to be madly in love with that country and are trying every possible way to woo her, we suddenly turn our back to our friend. Apart from renouncing them, to further please our new found love; we have applied various forms of pressure on those people so that they would agree to the cease-fire, or simply to show that we had nothing to do with them anymore.

We do not listen to any voice. When the United States reminded us that the invitation was inappropriate under the

circumstances, we brushed aside the remarks by saying that we had every right to decide and judge our own actions. We are very eager to start driving the piles for the bridge in Mae Sot. We show our generosity by supplying electricity to some areas in Burma. We are so keen to see the gas pipeline and the Salween dams projects substantiated despite criticisms from various sources about the devastating effects on the Mons, the Karens and other ethnic groups, that we simply said that it was the Burmese's internal problems and we could not interfere. We seem to drool at the thoughts of the water from the Salween, the gas from the Gulf of Martaban, the logs and timbers, gems and minerals, and other natural wealth in Burma. September last year, the Karen National Union sent an official letter directly to our Prime Minister pleading with him to suspend the projects and wait until a more proper time, but we didn't seem to care. The Prime Minister did not even have the courtesy to reply it.

What has become of us reasonable, gentle, generous and philanthropic Thais? What ever happened to this land of Buddhism where kindness and hospitality used to be characteristic of the people of Siam? Most recently the term "principle" has been emphasized time and again by the Prime Minister himself. I urge Khun Chuan to apply the same terminology to the situation. "Principle" connotes a righteousness, doesn't it, Your Excellency? You also always strongly advocate democracy and human rights. How do you explain the righteousness in dealing with the illegal and cruel rulers? Or your "principle" can vary in its connotations, depending on particular desires on particular occasions?

I can understand our needs for more supplies of the natural resources we have depleted ourselves of, but we need not be so greedy. I appreciate our necessities to become the economic animal in the region, but we can choose to be a more refined species of the animal. The opportunities will come once the storm is over and the sea calm.

Most recently, amid perpetual criticisms, Khun Prasong's and the Foreign Ministry's statements used the term "guest of the host country" to explain the forthcoming presence of Burma at the Meeting. No matter what status is given to Burma, it does not right the wrong.

"Constructive engagement" can still be carried out and prove to be truly constructive, but only with the government reviewing its own actions and attitudes, and being sincere to all parties involved. There are so many options we can choose to do that are constructive in the true sense, and I don't think it's too late to take on the right track. Should the Thai government finally have to back off and cancel the invitation, we need not worry. We have shown our willingness. After all, it is the SLORC and not us who disqualify themselves.

We could have shown to the SLORC that we were ready to give full cooperation and support to all those development projects in

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# Archbishop Desmond Tutu's interview

Text of Archbishop  
Desmond Tutu's  
interview outside  
Westminster Abbey, 11  
a.m.

The interview was  
arranged by the Burma  
Action Group and was  
recorded on video by this  
group. The interview

was conducted by Chris Guinness of BBC World  
Service TV and Radio.

**BAG:** We thank you so much for taking the time  
to conduct this interview, and for your continued  
strong support for your fellow Laureate Aung San  
Suu Kyi.

**BAG:** ASSK has been held for five years in  
Rangoon, do you know anything about her mental  
or physical health?

**Tutu:** Not really, although I heard from her  
husband who was allowed to see her that she is  
remarkably well. She is a tremendous, tremendous  
person. We are so proud to be fellow Laureates  
with her.

**BAG:** How concerned are her fellow Laureates  
about her, given that she has been held under  
house arrest in this way?

**Tutu:** Deeply, deeply so. As you probably know a  
number of us tried to go to Burma last year, but  
we couldn't and so we went to Thailand seeking to  
put as much pressure on the military regime and  
many of us kept saying that that regime, like  
many totalitarian regime, are going to bite the  
dust one day because there is a wonderful kind of  
confidence, you know. Sakharov won the Nobel  
Peace Prize; Russia, that totalitarian regime has  
bitten the dust. Lech Walesa was a member of a  
totalitarian communist regime; today he is the  
President after winning the Nobel Peace Prize. And  
Albert Ntuli, the South African, won the prize  
when the apartheid in South Africa was at its  
worst. So she is going to be free, and Burma is  
going to be free.

**BAG:** You are no stranger to political repression.  
Given the systematic nature of political violence

in Burma, do you think that it is on a par with  
South Africa when apartheid was in force?

**Tutu:** Sometimes I think it is worse. Now again  
the South African government tried to give the  
impression that they were decent. I think the  
world needs to use pressure, the kind of pressure  
that was used against the South African regime;  
sanctions to isolate that regime and get them to  
know that they are not respectable until they  
behave as a respectable government that respects  
human rights.

**BAG:** As a leading member of the international  
community do you think that western  
governments, particularly the British government  
which has shown itself interested in trade in  
Burma, do you think they have done enough to  
pressurise the regime to bring about this transfer  
of power?

**Tutu:** They never do enough. Enough is when a  
particular government has been forced to change  
or is toppled. They have done some, and we are  
thankful for that, but they could do a great deal  
more and the Asian countries ought to be saying  
"look, you are an embarrassment to us. Begin to  
do something to change."

**BAG:** You have seen the transformation from a  
totalitarian regime to democracy: do you think  
that kind of change is possible? Could Khin  
Nyunt be the next De Klerk of the world?

**Tutu:** South Africa is going to be a paradigm for  
the rest of the world. Most of us thought that the  
apartheid problem was intractable. It was a  
nightmare. It is ended and democracy is coming  
to birth in South Africa. If it can happen there,  
we surely believe that it can happen anywhere  
else in the world and I hope that Aung San Suu  
Kyi and all the Burmese people will look to what  
has happened in South Africa and have hope that  
they, too, will one day live in a free, democratic  
Burma.

**BAG:** Do you think Aung San Suu Kyi is a  
Nelson Mandela-in-waiting?

**Tutu:** She certainly won a resounding victory in  
the last elections and I am quite certain that she  
is going to be an outstanding leader.

# PAWNS OF A POLICY



**Welcome to Hellockhani concentration camp. Food and medicines prohibited.**

Until July and coincidentally the start of the ASEAN meeting in Bangkok few people knew of Halockhani. Aid volunteers knew, the Thai 9th Army knew, the Mon refugees forced to live there knew, SLORC's 62nd Infantry Battalion (IB) knew - and wouldn't forget.

That is, after a June 1994 altercation on a dark night, when two SLORC soldiers entered Kwan Saya Village from behind, harassing a refugee household's frightened occupants. The soldiers, at first suspected of being robbers, were driven off with home-made hunting weapons. One refugee and one soldier were wounded while the dead body of the other soldier - clearly of the nearby 62nd IB - was discovered the next day by a village search party.

## **Halockhani Who?**

Moving Burmese refugees back to Burma results from the Thai policy of constructive engagement, aimed at favor with SLORC in exchange for eco-

nomic benefits and natural resources such as lucrative fishing and logging concessions. Ceasefires help grease the smooth business transactions between the neighbours - especially in the case of the Gulf of Martaban gas pipeline which will run through Mon State and cost Thailand half the world market price. Negotiations between the New Mon State Party (NMSP) and SLORC are all too vital for the Thai economy as "national security". These ceasefire talks officially began in December last year, with the third and final round of discussion in June coming no closer to an agreement than the past 30 years.

Kwan Saya village, which had about 120 households with over 500 populations, is one of many small refugee enclaves nestled in the hilly terrain making up Halockhani Camp where there were more than 6,000 people. The village lies on the westernmost perimeter of the camp, nearest to SLORC's farthest outlying post at Three Pagoda Pass, less than an hour's walk from Halockhani via a direct road. Thousands of refugees from Loh

Loe Camp in spring 1994 were repatriated to this no-man's land of mud under the orders of the Thai 9th Army Division, stationed in Kan-  
chanaburi and largely responsible for official policy in the area.

Thai forces "assisted" the refugees in the move although refugees protested that Burman was not safe yet. Despite their deep desire to return to their native land as soon as possible, conditions were still threatening and the fact that Three Pagoda Pass was so near scared many of an easy attack. The 9th Army did not allow for any disagreement, whether or not they believed there existed a danger at being so close to the SLORC army, which had promised not to attack refugees. This is a Thai pressure tactic on NMSP to sign a ceasefire agreement at all costs.

### Disaster at Halockhani

On 21 July early in the morning the 62nd IB paid a visit to Kwan Saya. The battalion had just been relieved by the 61st IB at Three Pagoda Pass, and was scheduled for duty in Tavoy. Before heading to their new assignment, the approximately 100 soldiers occupied the village, pillaging stores and threatening the fleeing residents before taking hostage 50 refugees to use as "human shields" when the troops proceeded towards the main part of Halockhani Camp around noon.

However, after 15 minutes' advance towards the camp the aggressors were ambushed by Mon resistance group. The exchange of fire lasted for at least a quarter of an hour when the SLORC troops were repulsed and retreated to Kwan Saya about 4 p.m. There they went on a rampage, burning the refugee's houses down to the ground. 16 leaders of the camp were taken away in handcuffs, and their fate was not known for some time. Amnesty International reported from "reliable source" that they were being tortured while in SLORC hands.

After being repulsed by NMSP, Maj Aung Myint, the battalion's second-in-command, told the refugees that they must all leave Halockhani within three days or the soldier would return and kill them. The following day SLORC soldiers were engaged by NMSP defenders once again. But SLORC troops still managed to raid and loot the rest of empty Halockhani. The damage did not stop with physical destruction of the houses; the already tedious confidence of the

refugees in Halockhani was broken and they fled in droves with shock as well as fear from the whole of Halockhani to the Thai side of the border at Ban Ton Yang checkpoint -6,072 Mon refugees in all - 1,013 men, 1,209 women, 1,859 boys and 1991 girls - homeless and possessionless.

### A Touch of Irony or Just Touched?

At the same time the troops of the 62nd were on the offensive. SLORC Foreign Minister Ohn Gyaw was on the defensive over his presence at the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting. Whether the SLORC official knew what was happening at Halockhani, no indication was given in the broad headline the next day, "Burma junta to Hold Dialogue with UN." The raid on Halockhani received a reduced headline, no



**Smiling for the camera is  
all these children have to smile about.**

colour picture studded with smiles of progress, no ASEAN champagne glasses of constructive engagement success (political, economic or imagined); only a bottom-of-the-page filler about the camp's tragedy overshadowed by the "good news" the military regime was willing to talk, no never mind what they were going to say, although Halockhani had already heard first-handedly and the word "peace" wasn't among them.

"A blasting peace, sure," commented one student, not alone among the many sceptics who saw this as a calculated public relations move to detract media attention and defuse international pressure against SLORC's human rights record and intransigence in politics reform. The ASEAN statements speak for themselves, quoted from press articles:

"They can think what they like. We, as Myanmar [Burma], we are very sincere," said U Khin Maung

Win, SLORC deputy director-general of the Counsellor and International Laws and Treaties Research Department " [ On UN talks concerning human and political rights including the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, of whom he said] "I can't comment on that because it is just the start. Let me say we are always sincere about everything. We only say what we mean," he said.

Khin Maung Win... when asked whether Burma would consider the human rights issue in response to an initiative by United Nations Secretary General Boutros-Ghali to open direct talks with Burma, on 22 July: "For us, we don't think we have any human rights problems."

Thailand Foreign Minister Sqn Ldr Prasong was asked to serve as go-between for the two sides. "Burma is very sincere and we won't make any cosmetic move." At the opening ceremony for the 27th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting, Sqn Ldr Prasong said the presence of Ohn Gyaw was "testimony to the mutual recognition of the need for ASEAN and Burma to do our part in fostering a better understanding and cooperation among countries of this region"

Deputy Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan said Burma's invitation as guest was from ASEAN as a whole, not just Thailand ..countries had the right to their own opinions. It was an ASEAN consensus to invite the presence of Burma here, and the status of guest that we give to Ohn Gyaw - guest of the host country is the status ASEAN countries agreed to," he said. "For those who still misunderstand that the invitation was Thailand's initiative alone, please understand the facts clearly." [In fact, the Thai foreign minister took a "test the waters" tour around ASEAN and told them Thailand would be inviting SLORC to attend their conference, making the responses public ]

Dr Surin said direct talks between the US and Burma would provide an opportunity for Burma "to meet, to talk, to discuss, to listen and to explain their own position and their own concerns to the world directly, rather than through the media "

Government spokesman Abhisit Vejjajiva." This is not supporting human rights violations nor exploitation of another country," he claimed. He said it was difficult for one country to resist the world's trend on democracy and human rights. [As Halockhanians already realised.]

The question lies here is why the Burmese junta did not communicate directly with Boutros-Ghali in New York, deciding instead to go through Thailand, which has invited Burma, despite strong western opposition, as its guest to the ongoing ASEAN

## Ministerial Meeting.

The announcement represented "a collaboration between Thailand [on behalf of ASEAN] and Burma to save face on both sides, particularly at this time" when ASEAN has been pressured to abandon its "constructive engagement policy" and SLORC has not yet "to begin political and human rights reform.

"Dialogue is good.... It is proof that ASEAN's constructive engagement is good... We have to prove that our constructive engagement is effective " [Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said.

"I don't think it is cosmetic. I encourage it in every way. I hope Myanmar [Burma] continues to progress as it moves towards constitutional democracy," [the Philippines Foreign Minister Roberto] Romulo said [Fortunately, that progress was halted in Halockhani.]

Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdul-lah Badawi, however, responded more cautiously, saying: "It is good, but frankly I am not aware of that specific thing, May be it is the work of our colleague [Thai Foreign] Minister Prasong."

When asked if ASEAN's consecutive engagement policy had contributed to an agreement to begin UN-SLORC dialogue, Badawi said only: How can they say I am happy? ... I am happy the more Burma opens."

Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesman Shen Glafang commented that "the ASEAN framework is useful. [But] I think dialogue is much better. Pressure is sometime useless." [Except, of course, for Tiananmen square... and UN talks about Taiwan joining...and ...]

## Knock, Knock, Who's Finally There

On 28 July, after heavy criticism, two representatives from the Bangkok-based branch office of the UN Commissioner for Refugees visited to the troubled spot to inspect the refugees' situation. Ruprecht von Arnim, UNHCR representative in Thailand, made an urgent appeal to the Thai government to halt the planned expulsion on 10 August of the Halockhani refugees by saying, "We are very worried about the safety of these refugees and have no confidence in the Burmese Army," adding that "if the refugees were sent back then we can only fear the worst."

Several Bangkok-based Western embassies urged the Interior Ministry to be lenient and allowing the Mons to stay in Thailand. Thai



**"The Mon were not refugees  
but in fact illegal immigrants who  
had come to Thailand for economic reasons."**

officials had repeatedly stated that "the refugees will be allowed to stay in Thailand until it is safe to go home." Foreign diplomats argued that they should be repatriated only when the refugees think it is safe to return.

The Mons had been informed by both the Army and provincial authorities of an Aug 10 deadline for the refugees to return home. Thai authorities made various threats to the effect that the refugees would be forced back across the border once the deadline passed. However, officials from several government offices in Bangkok said they were unaware of the deadline, which would be followed by two more deadlines on the 17th and 24th as the number of refugees swelled to over 8,000 people as a result of Thai pressure tactics.

"They [9th Division] could force us back any day. It's only a matter of time," a Mon official at Halockhani admitted.

#### **The More the Merrier...?**

On 9 August the first weekly group of deportees from inside Thailand arrived, numbering about 600. In an effort to dislodge the refugees, "illegal immigrants" of any Burmese background were directed to Halockhani-without any additional supplies of food or medicines.

Detainees had to pay a 200 baht "car fee" for the privilege of being released from detention centres and just to be sent to Halockhani. The camp was preferred since the conditions in the detention centres are appalling, according to the deportees, who suffer from insufficient food, water, and even space. There is no law nor order inside the jails because of the Thai jail authorities' total negligence - unless the price for better treatment and facilities can be paid. To top it off, illegal Burmese

undergo "special" treatment thanks to historical animosity by Thais who hurl both verbal and physical abuses at both men and women from Burma. Burmese detainees told how they were forced to work without pay and were beaten or kicked if they complained or didn't work to the satisfaction of the guards.

Aside from being released from those conditions, detainees were anxious to be at Ban Ton Yang where they could begin the journey back inside Thailand, which about 70% of them did. Most detainees for the region were sent to Kanchanaburi Immigration Detention (IDC)

and then dumped at Halockhani for their "return" to Burma. In practice, brokers from Sangkhlaburi District meet the deportees and arrange their passage back to Thailand. The going rate for passage is 3,500 baht (US\$160) and the trade is done with the consent of local police, who receive 2,500 baht for each returnee.

Following the 62nd IB's July attack, Thai immigration authorities immediately changed the place of deportation to an isolated Karen area. About a thousand illegal Burmese immigrants ended up in this new "repatriation center" and were left stranded without any humanitarian help until 9 August. At that time, about 500 of them were again deported, this time to the makeshift camp near Ban Ton Yang. "The most we ever got in one week was when 800 people were sent up," a Mon National Relief Committee (MNRC) official said.

In the first weeks of August Thai authorities dumped at the border Camp 1,600 illegal Burmese immigrants arrested throughout Thailand. They were being manipulated to eat up the refugees limited food supplies. "If they send any more refugees here our rice will run out and we will face problems," said one MNRC member. The refugees were too afraid to return to Burma to forage for food because they "firmly believe there is no security, no safety on the Burmese side of the border."

#### **Food and Suffering for All**

Regardless of the new arrivals' origin or reasons for being in Thailand, MNRC still shared staple

food - usually rice, chili and fish paste - to everyone on an equal basis. The repatriated immigrants could also stay in the houses abandoned by the refugees when they fled. Those lodgings were to be relatively comfortable compared to the shacks set up by the refugees and NGOs at the border checkpoint.

Many of the male refugees did eventually cross the border to the ghost villages of Halockhani during the day to tend their gardens and livestock. None of them slept there at nights, fearing the return of SLORC soldiers. But as the number of detainees grew, they had to seek accommodation on the west side of the border. Considering the situation, the Mon refugees seem surprisingly tolerant of the newcomers." One refugee felt no animosity, "We understand they are in a difficult situation. We don't mind if they stay in our houses." Even Thai officials crossed over, but for dubious reasons, Border Patrol Police (BPP) troops also went into the original Halockhani during the days, though it is technically Burmese territory.

"We don't have enough food and water to stay for a long time if they block supplies...We have enough rice to last one or two months and we can collect roots and bamboo shoots from the forest, but we have nearly run out of beans and sardines," said one MNRC member.

Meanwhile, coupled with shortages of food, the NGO Medicines Sans Frontieres (MSF) was confronted by an increase of two to three times in the number of patients with diarrhea, while respiratory ailments had quadrupled in the three weeks since 21 July. Not surprising figures when you have a lot of people in a very limited space, commented one doctor. Cases of vitamin deficiency appeared, she said, because the situation is so unstable that people are unable to cultivate or harvest any food. Your refugees died in first three weeks after being the border, two died from diarrhea. 15 percent of the camp's population were children under five, with two new births since escaping to the eastern side of the border.

On the day of the deadline, an officer from the 9th Army entered the makeshift camp and offered that if all the Mon men returned to Halockhani, the women and children would be allowed to stay on the Thai side. Camp leaders rejected this proposal, saying it was merely a ploy to get all the refugees to move back, since families don't wish to be separated.



**Abandoned by the Thai Army...Abused by the Burmese Army...A group of IDC detainees who could pay found themselves in Halockhani -- without any supplies, only with the hope of returning to Thailand to escape the Tatmadaw.**

### **Big Brother is Watching... Waiting for You**

Meanwhile two SLORC battalions from Ye township were already headed for the Halockhani area as the 10 August deadline drew near. The 62nd was back and brought along with it the 343rd Light Infantry Battalion, for a total of some 300 troops with 80 porters in tow.

On 11 August, a group of SLORC soldiers were staying at a mountain just beyond the Ban Ton Yang, about 2 km away, Mon leaders in the camp told their people for absolute silence and all the fires and lights in the refugee camp to be extinguished. After the lights in the camp were out, torch lights were easily discernible on the nearby mountain. Mon camp leaders set up night watches and made an emergency plan for evacuating the refugees further into Thailand in the event of an attack. Despite the terror, refugees did no panic.

"The fear level was enormous," said Faith Doherty of the Southeast Asia Information network, who spent the night with the refugees on the Burmese border. "Even on the Thai side it is very difficult to feel safe."

The reason for the attack at Kwan Saya and the presence of troops near the refugee camp was SLORC wanted to make a stronghold to support logging and other economic interests in the area since Kwan Saya lies along the shortest route between Ye and Three Pagodas Pass. There has been previous attempts to establish control over the area and to make a stronghold there, but these attempts were unsuccessful.

Deja Vu

Thousands of Burmese villagers were forced to

leave their homes by a "new systematic harassment" by SLORC authorities. Mostly Karen villagers from Hlaing Bwe Township on the Salween River were barred by Thai authorities from crossing the Moei River into the refugee camps in Thailand.

Only refugees fleeing actual fighting would be allowed into Thailand, although a clear definition of "fighting" had not been given by Thai authorities in charge of policy. While past exoduses have been caused mainly by the annual threat of dry season clashes between the SLORC and armed resistance groups, the present migration, which began around April 1994, points to insecurity resulting from a different form of SLORC coercion and harassment.

Previous arrivals were young people who had fled individually, but the trend shows that village around Hlaing Bwe have emptied and whole families have moved towards the Thai-Burmese border. The situation is like "a massive dislocation of people". There were about 5,000 refugees in Klay Muh Ta Camp suffering from malnutrition and starvation. "The level of malnutrition is noticeable, people are quite shocked to see starving babies," commented a foreign visitor to the area.

Most of the refugees give similar account of harassment by SLORC authorities. They said the SLORC military insists that each village fill a labour quota each month to work as porters or on construction projects. The only way to avoid the labour gangs was to pay a compulsory fine which was increased each month. They said the officials really only want the money, and each month they demand a higher payment until eventually entire villages are impoverished and left with no option but to pack up and flee. This harassment is continuing and many more villagers are heading for the Thai-Burmese border.

Two major problems were cited known as "R&R", Burmese refugees in Thailand being repatriated to camps in Burma, and restrictions on aid agencies providing food and other humanitarian assistance to the returnees. No official agreement on cross-border humanitarian assistance between Burma and Thailand exist and probably won't exist anytime in the near future with the policy of repatriation and constructive engagement.

New arrivals to the camp were described as being in the same situation as those who previously crossed the border into camps in Thailand. There was an urgent need to open up a "humanitarian or cross-border corridor" so that assistance could be channelled to displaced persons in Burma. One aid

worker painted the situation as an economic disaster. He said the way of life of entire families had been disrupted to the extent they had no choice but to live on assistance from NGOs.

On the other foot, the SLORC military junta described the refugees as "illegal entrants" who "cross the border illegally under the pretext of persecution by the Myanmar (Burmese) government." The situation with the Karens is similar to that in Burma's southern Mon State where thousands of Mon people have fled forced labour camps set up by the military for the construction of the Ye-Tavoy railroad to the Thai-Burmese border.

### Closed for Construction Engagement

Instead of being sent back to Burma on 10 August, the refugees became prisoners of Thai economic policy. The path leading to the makeshift shelters was blockaded by a combined force of BPP, provincial police, defence volunteers and rangers. Vehicles and unauthorised people were barred from travelling to the camps including doctors and relief workers. In addition, even sick people had been prevented from seeking medical treatment at Sangkhlaburi Christian Hospital.

On 28 August one woman died from cerebral malaria. MNRC claimed that permission was given to take her to the hospital, located 22 kilometers away, but she was delayed at BPP checkpoints for several hours en route. Mi Bankyi was 35 years old and left behind five children, including a five-month old baby. Malaria, diarrhoea, beriberi and respiratory tract infections are all to be rife among the refugees.

Two people who worked among the refugees said sanitary conditions were very basic due to a lack of sufficient clean water and the continuing torrential rain. "They cannot survive long without water," said an MSF official in Bangkok. Many of the fugitives suffered from disease and the effects of torrential monsoon rains. Tropical storm ploughed through the country causing 200 million baht worth of damage in a dozen Thai province.

Water supplies, which needed to be trucked in daily, were cut off on 11 Aug. This apparently didn't bother Sangkhlaburi District Officer Kamol Rangsiyanun who nonchalantly commented, "They can drink rain water," which the refugees did indeed do as when they dug latrines to keep the water clean earlier. Showing their

continued resourcefulness and care for their welfare and the environment, the entrapped camp set up its own tanks and rigged up hoses, so that the water supply would not become a problem again - that is, until the rains would stop, or when the number of refugees and detainees rapidly grew beyond water-gathering capabilities.

As an inhumane bargaining chip, Thai authorities required that the Mons return to Halockhani before reopening the path so food and medical supplies could get through. This also applied to ill people, who would then be allowed to seek medical attention at a hospital inside Thailand. Although a few refugees had already returned, they received none of the aid from international organisations in the area. The Thais stressed that all the refugees and detainees would need to return before the roads would be opened and humanitarian assistance allowed back.

### Victims of a Shifting War: Does the Responsibility Lie with SLORC Alone?

MNRC representative said that the local district officer in Sangkhlaburi has insisted that the refugees move back to Halockhani, but that they had refused out of fear that a third incident might occur. Appeals were made to other authorities - including the 9th Army, NSC and Prime Minister's Office - for permission to stay.

On 12 August an MNRC representative said, "The army officer responsible for the checkpoint told me he was acting on orders from the 9th Division. They are acting on their own" and ignoring Bangkok, he added. The NSC gave assurances - similar to those given in early 1994 before the move from Loh Loe Camp to Halockhani by the reluctant refugees - that the Mon refugees would not be forced to return to Burma if their security could not be guaranteed.

Kachadpai Burusapattana, NSC's deputy chief, said it wasn't right for UNHCR or anyone else to say that the Mon people are refugees. "We regard them as illegal immigrants. It is well known that this is Thailand's policy," Kachadpai said, "Thailand is not in a position to accept any refugees. What we have been doing is sending them home. We have done with Lao and Cambodian refugees without any problem."

Concerning the ethnic minority groups in Burma, Thailand has helped them when in danger. They come and go according to the situation and Thailand has never used force to push them out of the country, he said. The number 2 in NSC reiterated

that "if there is fighting, they cannot go back. It is not our policy to push them back," citing humanitarian concerns. He said he could not confirm the deadline but said a security evaluation would be taken on reports from Thai authorities in the border region.

"Thailand adheres strongly to the humanitarian principle. Isn't it because of this principle that there are now a large number of illegal immigrants causing problems in our country?" the NSC deputy chief asked. "How can we allow them [the Mon] to say in that part of the country which is still rich with forests because they may soon cut down all the trees? We have also to protect our natural resources and other countries or organisations should have sympathy for Thailand concerning this matter," he added.

Pichai Nottapha, a member of NSC, said the Mon were worthy of sympathy, but were being manipulated for political purposes. "The Thai government is trying - with the help of the 9th Division - to get the Mon, the Karen and the Burmese to live together peacefully." What some critics see as Thailand trying to pressure the Mon into signing a ceasefire agreement with the Burmese junta, Pichai explained recent events as simply trying to carry out Thailand's policy sending illegal immigrants home.

The head of the Royal Thai Army's 9th Division denied on 26 August that the 6,000 Mon villagers taking shelter at Ban Ton Yang were fleeing from war and human rights abuses in Burma. Maj Gen Chalong Chotigakarm said the Mon were not refugees but in fact illegal immigrants who had come to Thailand for economic reasons. "They did not flee because of human rights abuses," he said. "There is no war in this part of Burma now," he believed, disregarding not only the presence of extra SLORC troops in the Halockhani area but also confirmed skirmishes between those soldiers and Karen and Mon resistance groups.

In a press conference held at the 9th Division's base in Kanchanaburi, Maj Gen Chalong played down the attack on Halockhani by SLORC troops which caused the Mon to flee to Thailand. "SLORC soldiers went to the camp to look for weapons because one of their soldiers had been shot. When no weapons were handed over, they got angry and burned some houses," he said. "They also needed some porters," he added, referring to the 16 Mon who were taken prisoner. Chalong said the Mon must go back to Halockhani because it was now safe and Thai policy was to send back all illegal immigrants. He equated this with the US policy concerning Cuban immigrants.

The Mons living at Pa Yaw, another refugee camp in Kanchanaburi province, would also be sent back once a budget had been allocated, he said. Chalong also said Thai troops would not use force to repatriate the Mon at Ban Ton Yang to go to Halockhane. "We will not burn any houses," he said. "We will simply try to help them move back. Officers from the 9th Division had a meeting with the leaders of MNRC on 26 August asking the Mon to persuade the refugees to returning to the west side of the border.

Chalong explained that journalists were not allowed to visit the camp at Ban Ton Yang because it would only encourage the Mon to stay. "These people must be sent back", said Chalong. "They have guarantees for their safety but they still want to say. I can only assume it is because they are living comfortable lives on help from relief agencies," he added.

A spokesman for the Thai military, Lt-Gen Anusorn Krisnaseranee, confirmed that the Supreme Command never ordered Halockhane Mons to be repatriated. It was left "to the judgment of the local army commanders," he said. "According to our policy, they should be returned to Burma. Were they allowed to stay, Burma would be suspicious that Thailand supports the minority" group. Several strong international complaints - including action by the US government - recently were made of the Thai military's support of the Khmer Rouge against the legitimately elected Cambodian government. "However, like the Cambodian refugees, they'll have to go back," Anusorn added.

Thailand will not use force to expel thousands of ethnic Mon refugees Foreign Minister Prasong stated at the end of August. However, the Foreign Ministry's responsibilities relate only to the reasons why the refugees entered Thailand. Once on Thai soil, they are the responsibility of the NSC and the Interior Ministry.

The Halockhane attack even seemed to have surprised NSC - generally considered the architect of Thailand's policy of "constructive engagement" with SLORC. "We hoped the Burmese would not attack [the camp]. It is a breach of promise by the Burmese military," NSC Col Wiwat Wisanuwinon pointed out, explaining that Thailand had received assurances the Tatmadaw would stay out of Halockhane.

He described the attack as a "gave mistake" since it spoiled a rare opportunity to improve the junta's international image at the ASEAN meeting. "They make blunders and think no one will take notice," he said. "Part of the reason is that Burma is run by

the military, not the diplomats." The incident showed that the policy of constructive engagement is "not so successful", Wiwat admitted. Yet it remains to be seen whether there will be any change in Thai policy.

### The Sixteen are Seen Again

On 9 August four of the Sixteen Halockhane leaders kidnapped by SLORC soldiers on 21 July returned to the camp, and the remaining dozen were expected back "soon". Nai Sai Mon told how he was tied up, beaten and burned with cigarettes while being interrogated by the 62nd IB.

He lifted his longyi to show several round scars on his leg which he claimed were caused by cigarette burns. SLORC soldiers also took three or four villagers and wrapped a tube of plastic around their nose and mouth, according to Nai Sai Mon. The tubes were then filled with water and held in place until the refugees had nearly drowned. The soldiers kept repeating that refugees "must not stay here. We will come back and if you are still here we will kill you" said Nai Mit who was also tied up and beaten while interrogated.

### More Incidents and Accidents

The following report, like many incidents (or accidents by drunken police or soldier) was not published until a fortnight after it occurred because of the usual request by publicity-sensitive Thai authorities keep it out of the press, which the Mons did out of concern about its impact on the already precarious situation of Mon refugees at Halockhane Camp as well as other displaced persons inside Thailand.

On 13 August, an intoxicated Border Patrol Policeman of Ban Ton Yang checkpoint fired his weapon near a makeshift shelter of the refugees and as a consequence, a 28-year-old Mon man, Nai Kyi Aung, was shot in the chest and received a near-fatal wound. He later miraculously recovered while in Kwai River Christian Hospital, 10 km away in Sangkhlaburi District. The Thai policeman is said to have been infuriated by his unsuccessful rape attempts on two Karen girls on Burmese soil of the border shortly before, which is believed to have led him to the intentional shooting of a witness.

Ma San (20) and Ma Khin Yi (17), deported by Thai immigration earlier that week, were staying in a Halockhane hut about 100 metres inside Burma. Nai Kyi Aung (the victim of the shoot-

ing), Ma Hla Aye (18), Ma Moe (20) and Maung Soe Moe (26) were present when the two Thai police approached the bamboo hut around 9 p.m. According to the witnesses, two officers were walking unsteadily and believed to have been heavily drinking. On reaching the hut, say witnesses, one of the officers armed with an M-16 rifle/M-203 grenade launcher pointed his weapon at the men on the porch and told them "lie down" and "don't interfere."

One of the Thai police opened his pant's zipper and grabbed Ma San to rape, while the other aimed his gun at the others. Ma San consistently refused to co-operate with the would-be rapist, and the candles were snuffed to foil the attempt. But the policemen did not give up, searching for the girls by their torch light. Although Ma San managed to escape, the Thais turned their sick intentions towards Ma Khin and Nai Kyi Aung and Maung Soe Moe ran to inform to a headman of the refugee camp, while Ma Hla Aye called the people nearby for help. Eventually, the rape attempts of the two Thai police were unsuccessful as many villagers in the camp came to prevent their "guardians."

However this did not prevent one policeman from gaining revenge for his sexual failures by shooting the witness Nai Kyi Aung. All lights in the camp went out after the shooting and there was no movement or noise except for the wounded man's cries. Both Nai Kyi Aung and witnesses agree that it was nearly an hour before anyone came to his aid. One witness stated that after the shooting no one moved because it was dark and "we couldn't see where the police were."

According to the American doctor who treated Nai Kyi Aung at the hospital, the bullet passed through his chest from front to back between the spinal column and right lung, and "may have ricocheted off the spinal column." Part of the bullet is still lodged in his chest. Initially both legs were paralysed but he has regained some movement in his left leg, although his bladder is not functioning and must be catheterised to urinate. The doctor has said that it is still too soon to know whether the paralysis is permanent.

Hospital staff saw police officers come to investigate the incident on 16 and 17 August, an army officer came on 18 August. Also according to hospital staff and Nai Kyi Aung himself, one of the investigating BPP officers gave the wounded man 4,000 baht but did not say what the money was for.

On 16 August BPP officers came into the IDC camp again and gave between 50 and 200 baht to 16 witnesses including Ma San, Ma Khin Yi and Soe Moe, telling them to leave the camp and go back into Burma. Residents said they departed that day before they could be questioned by inves-

tigating officers.

The Thais behaviour towards the women repatriated from the IDC was not always good. The original huts for IDC women were built as far away as possible from the Thai police outpost but when refugees were forced back into Thailand, the women stayed in houses only 100-200 metres from the nearest police outpost.

The two policemen were put under detention only after this case being revealed in the press. An interior ministry official responsible for the border area stated that nobody in his office had heard about the attack. The BPP did not answer questions which they requested be prepared and written down and then given to their office for official comment. "Thai authorities don't want us to publicise this or they will take action. We got some pressure from them," an unnamed newspaper source explained. The Thai authorities threatened to "take action" if the attack reached the international press. Locally, no statements were issued by either MNRC nor the Karen Relief Committee.

#### No to Repatriation - No to Rice Ration

MNRC sources estimated in the last week of August that the refugee had about three more weeks of rice left, perhaps less if Thai immigration authorities continue to deport illegal Burmese immigrants through Halockhani.

But then BPP, by order of the 9th Army, seized several hundred sacks of stored rice in an effort to push the refugees back into Burma. The rice was promised to those who return to Halockhani, but not those at Ban Ton Yang; however, later claims were made that only when every single refugee returned to the desolate camp would any food be distributed. Several thousand sacks of rice were taken to the refugees by foreign relief organisations over several months and stored for rainy season use. Oddly, the barn is actually located on the Thai side of the border.

Thai authorities told refugees they had spoken with SLORC military representatives responsible for the area, who said they would not launch an attack against ethnic Mon civilian again. In any event, refugees submitted five demands to the Thai authorities which went largely ignored. The Mons wanted international organisations such as UNHCR to be allowed to have an office at their new camp to oversee problems. This new camp inside Burma, not the old Halockhani Camp, should be provided for them as Halockhani is not safe lying on the route where SLORC soldiers always travel.

Meanwhile, a fact-finding team from the Thai

House Committee on Human Rights and another fact-finding mission from US House of Representatives composed of Embassy officials and congressional staff were denied access to the refugee camp. The latter fact-finding team met with MNRC officials on 31 August.

#### Sacrificing the Pawns for Checkmate

What governmental bodies are not allowed into the area, there is obvious cause for interpretation. Thai policy is being directly steered from the "defence forces" and security agencies, and not the elected government, not democratic principles. But business interests. Not only are refugees denied their status and respect shown for their unfortunate circumstances, but Thailand herds them into a concentration camp with no access to food, medical supplies or outside observers to witness their true circumstances. In addition, Thai authorities dump more Burmese victims into the camp to promote disease outbreak and increased suffering - as a matter of Thai policy. If this occurred in Europe; would the world stand by and watch the brutality in silence?

Clearly all refugees should be protected according to established international principles and practices. They should not be subjected to forced repatriation into "safe areas" which have been *proven* unsafe; nor returned to Burma in any way until international organisations such as UNHCR agrees that no danger exists for them to return to their homeland. As the Halockhani attack and the continually uninterrupted flow of refugees to Thailand shows, SLORC's Burma is perilous to all its citizens due to political suppression, deprivation of human rights and the use of forced labour which is institutionalised under the regime. How can Ohn Gyaw stand before the world at the ASEAN meeting and tell the UN that SLORC wants to improve itself?

Thai authorities have been using 75,000 people as inhuman bargaining chips to pressure ethnic minorities along the Thai-Burmese border to reach a ceasefire agreement with the SLORC regime - a regime which never will respect internationally-accepted human rights standards, as they have shown in six years of power. Forced and unconditional repatriation is one devastating witness to Thailand's self-interested constructive engagement policy, the aim of which has been misdirected in favouring SLORC for an exchange of economic benefits and cheap natural resources. Indeed, as any player will realise, the pawns are worthless and the first thing sacrificed in the quest for economic checkmate. The world won't have long to wait to see the next move, and which lives are lost next in this game, on either side of the checkerboard.



## MILITARY DICTATES ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER

We might have democracy in Bangkok. But upcountry - particularly in the border regions - a military dictatorship still reigns.

How else can we explain the decision by military authorities to block off all access to Ban Ton Yang - a Thai border checkpoint where Mon refugees are taking shelter - not only to Burmese people but also to Thais and legal foreign residents? Journalists, doctors, even a fact-finding commission from the House Committee on Human Rights have all been forbidden to enter the area.

While it is the local Border Patrol Police who are carrying out the blockade, their orders are coming from the Kanchanaburi-based 9th Infantry Division and further up from the National Security Council (NSC).

What is it they want to hide? The fact is that the 6,000 Mon villagers at Ban Ton Yang are legitimate refugees who have fled human rights abuses carried out by Burmese soldiers, in particular the July 21 attack on Halockhani located just across the border. Most of the Mon had only moved to Halockhani this year from refugee camps in Thailand on the orders of the 9th Division, which had promised that they would be safe.

The NSC says the Mon must go back to Halockhani. But if neutral observers were allowed to go in and talk to the refugees, they would find that the public explanations given for such a policy are weak.

### Nonsensical claim

The NSC claims the Mon are illegal immigrants who have entered Thailand to make money out of Thailand's booming economy. This is nonsense.

If the refugees wanted to make money, why are they staying in a cramped and muddy camp at the border? It's easy enough to hike along jungle trails to Sangkha Buri from both Halockhani and Ban Ton Yang (which has been dubbed "New Halockhani" by the refugees).

Many illegal Burmese immigrants use these trails to enter Thailand and seek work, but the Mon at Ban Ton Yang have declined to do so for fear of being arrested.

Now Thai authorities are confusing the situation further by deporting captured Burmese illegals to

Halockhani, where they are given precious food and shelter by Mon relief officials. Meanwhile, no new supplies of food or medicine are being allowed into the area in an effort to push the Mon back into Burma

Ironically, immigration officials say they have been forced to deport the illegals through Halockhani because the Burmese soldiers at Three Pagoda Pass - the legal border crossing - refused to accept them. So why are we trying to help the soldiers and hurt the Mon?

The 9th Division also claims that the Mon have to return because they have been destroying Thai forests. This must be a joke, because over the last few years this same division has moved the refugees around from camp to camp within Thailand - damaging the forest at each new site.

It's true the refugees were doing a roaring trade in bamboo shoots before the road to Sangkha Buri was closed. But this is nothing compared to what Thai migrants to Burma - loggers, that is - have done to that country's forests.

Military authorities are also claiming once again that it is safe for the Mon to live in Halockhani. But the UN High Commissioner for Refugees disagrees. And so do the refugees.

### Further trouble certain

They have a lot of experience with Burmese soldiers. They know that even if the battalion at Three Pagodas Pass is now under pressure from Rangoon to refrain from attacking the refugees, sooner or later - perhaps at the next change of battalion - there will again be trouble.

The Mon refugees are not staying in Thailand because it is *sabay*, as Thai soldiers claim. New Halockhani is anything but *sabay*; the refugees say quite openly they would like to go back to Burma. But they are, quite simply, scared to do so.

So what are the real reasons Thai authorities are pushing so hard to send the Mon back? It's all a part of the policy of constructive engagement. They want to pressure Mon leaders into signing a ceasefire agreement with the SLORC. In return, well-connected Thai businessmen will receive lucrative contracts to extract timber, gas and fish from Burmese territory.

Thailand should be promoting peace between the warring sides in Burma. But this must be carried out by neutral diplomats attempting to facilitate negotiations. And refugees from Burma should be allowed to stay in Thailand until there is a real peace settlement.

The Mon in particular should be allowed to stay at Ban Ton Yang. There is plenty of room there for them to spread out a bit, and they are willing to follow Thai regulations by preserving the forest.

But the cowardly silence on this issue from the Chuan administration has been all too deafening. The politicians - the alleged voice of our democracy - have let the soldiers hijack our Burma policy, and they are simply trying to force the guerillas to surrender.

As a result, we have taken sides in the Burma conflict, the wrong side.

(The Nation; 28 August 1994)

#### From page 43

cause trouble to my family anytime. The military is increasing only in numbers not in capability. Soldiers are in the military not because of their belief, but because of forced recruitment. **SLORC's tactic for recruitment is amazing. Even children separated from their mothers and crying in the markets are not spared from recruitment.** If somebody doesn't want to serve in the military, he has to hire another person to take his place at the price of 10,000 Ks. As all the people in general are very poor, no family has an extra 10,000 in cash even if the whole family works.

#### From page 46

Burma, but only through her legitimate government. The status of "guest" or even membership, for that matter, in ASEAN would no longer be a problem. Let them know that if they really want to come out and join the game, this is the rule upheld universally. As a matter of fact, no other country is in a better position than Thailand to promote true peace and stability in Burma. Why don't we take this advantage and take the lead among ASEAN countries while, at the same time, upholding the "Principle". The world will only praise us.

Assistant Professor Grirggiat Punpiputt  
Staff Lecturer, Faculty of Communication Arts, Chulalongkorn University  
Bangkok, 7 July 1994

#### From page 24

executions, arbitrary arrest, rape and other forms of torture, hamletting and the further subjugation of the ethnic nationalities in these states. The domination of the economy by the ruling military elites has led to increasing poverty and the marginalisation of the people," stated the NGOs.

Representatives of NGOs also expressed concern that East Timor and Burmese representatives were denied permission to attend the SEANET meeting on Human Rights and Development, scheduled for July 19-25, 1994, and called for an immediate reinstatement of their right to attend the meeting.

#### ACFOA WANTS REFUGEE PROTECTION ASAP

On 9 August 1994, the Australia Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) issued a warning that the act of SLORC military aggression, which caused 6000 Mon refugees to seek shelter in Thailand, is part of a continued campaign of human rights abuse against the people of Burma.

ACFOA Executive Director Russel Rollason said "Unless the international community addresses the problem of military aggression in Burma, we will continue to see refugees fleeing into Thailand."

Mr Rollason said that "the warning signals were there last March, when 10000 Mon refugees from Burma living in Thailand were forced from their camp back across the border, to an area one hour's march from a Burmese military base."

"We call on the Australian government to actively pursue 'preventive diplomacy' in the case of Burma's political crisis and take the opportunity immediately to seek the protection of these Mon people by the Royal Thai Government," said Mr Rollason.

Member agencies called on the Thai Government to continue to provide protection to the Mon refugees in the absence of the United Nations presence on the border and withdraw its ultimatum to them to return tomorrow.

**THE WORD PARLIAMENT COMES FROM THE WORD "TALK". IT IS BETTER TO TALK THAN SHOUT, BUT SHOUTING IS BETTER THAN SHOOTING.**

**(AUNG SAN SUU KYI)**

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