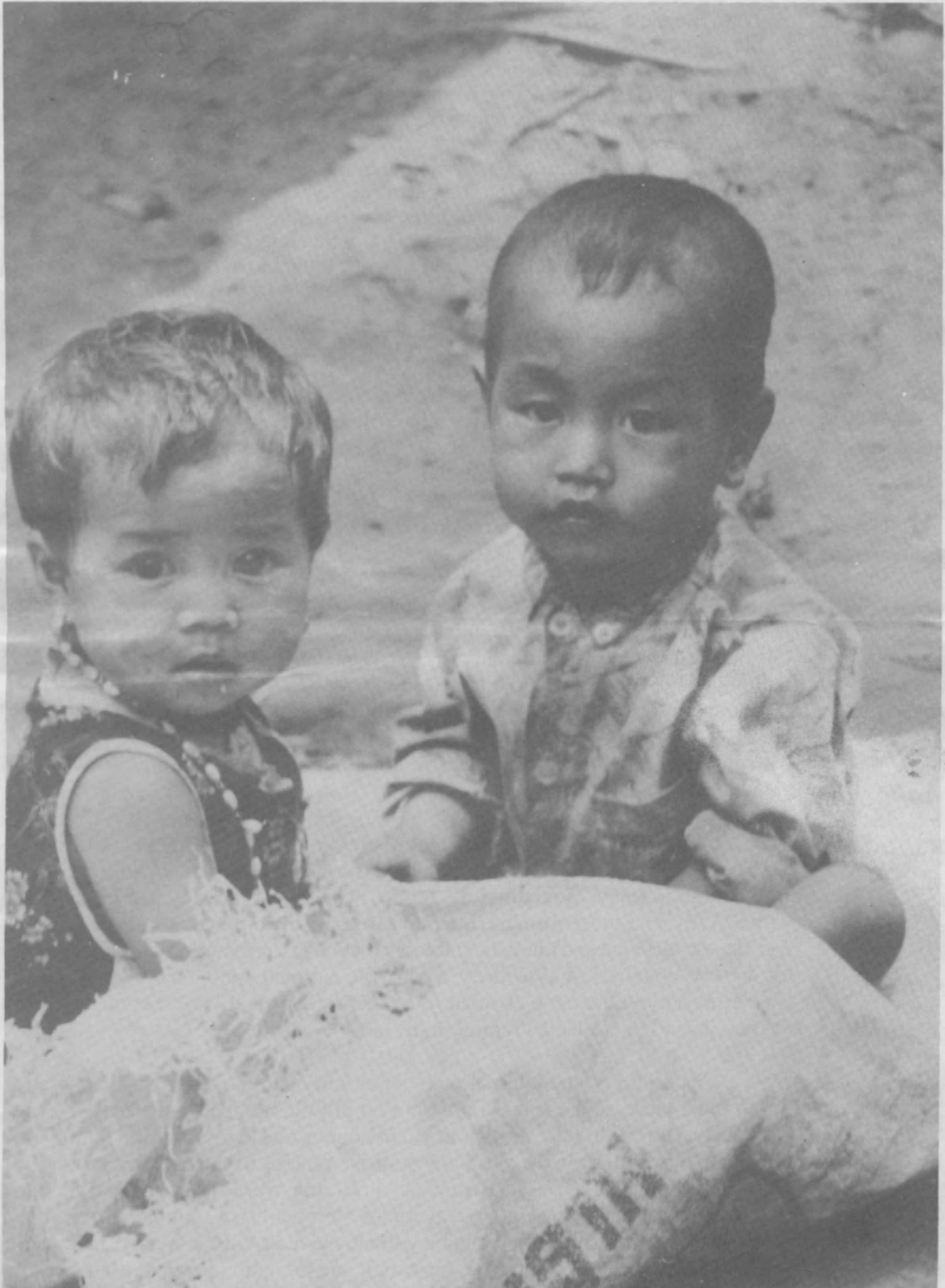


DAWN



September/October 1995

It is women and children who have always suffered most in situation of conflict.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

TOWARDS GENUINE DIALOGUE

DAWN
news bulletin

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The morale of the democratic forces in Burma has been greatly boosted by the unexpected release of Aung San Suu Kyi, who despite spending six years of house arrest, is as determined as ever to bring democracy to Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi's release only marks the beginning of another round of struggle and hence the democracy movement cannot afford to let its guard down. This is because apart from her release, nothing else has changed. Immediately following the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, the international community was hopeful that this event might indicate a willingness on the part of the SLORC military dictatorship to begin the process of dialogue and political reconciliation. Unfortunately, SLORC, until now, has not responded to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's offer of a dialogue, and the people of Burma, under laws and orders designed to serve SLORC, are still being intimidated and restricted from freely participating in the political process.

For a country like Burma, with a history of over forty years of civil war, a substantive dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi as well as with other representatives of all political organizations and ethnic nationalities is a must if the country is to make the transition to democracy. Genuine political dialogue will lead to democracy because the overwhelming majority of the Burmese people—inside Burma as well as at the border areas—want democracy.

There are some preconditions that must be met before a tripartite meeting in Burma can occur. Prior to the tripartite meeting, SLORC must show its sincerity by taking the following actions:

- Unconditionally releasing all political prisoners.
- Abolishing all unlawful acts and restrictions on political activities.
- Stopping the so-called National Convention.
- Ceasing all forms of human rights violations (including force portorage, forced labor).
- Instituting a nationwide cease-fire so all ethnic forces can be involved in the national reconciliation process.

Comprehensive political dialogue between SLORC, the democratic forces led by Aung San Suu Kyi (both from inside Burma and from the liberated areas), and the ethnic forces (including the groups which have already had cease-fires with SLORC and those from the liberated areas) is the only means of proceeding with democratization and true national reconciliation in Burma. With equality, respect for dignity, openness, and security, a tripartite national dialogue could achieve a consensus among the peoples of Burma regarding a timely transfer of power to the people and their elected representatives.

Accordingly, the international community and the Burmese democratic forces must increase the level of pressure on SLORC to open a sincere tripartite dialogue in Burma, to release all political prisoners, and to dissolve the fraudulent National Convention. If we allow the surprise release of Aung San Suu Kyi to lower the volume of the call for democracy in Burma, we will be playing right into SLORC's hands and helping its strategy for long term military domination of Burma to succeed. Any hesitation in our action will only give SLORC a tactical advantage and diminish the chances for achieving a dialogue for national reconciliation.

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Trends to Democratic Reform in Burma

A seminar entitled "Trends to Democratic Reform in Burma" was held by the Forum of Democratic Leaders in the Asia-Pacific on September 3-4 in Seoul, Korea. Participants include senators, politicians, academics and non-governmental organizations from twenty countries (Australia, Bangladesh, Burma, Cambodia, Canada, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Nepal, New Zealand, Norway, Philippines, Pakistan, Singapore, Thailand, United Kingdom, and the USA) attended the seminar and emphasized the Asian countries should assume a leading role in convincing the Slorc to give up power. The seminar's objectives was to seek cooperation from countries interested in Burma's democratic problems in order to push for political reform following the release of Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Opening the seminar, FDL-AP co-president Dr. Kim Dae-jung called on Burma's military rulers to quickly restore democratic rule, a goal endorsed by the FDL-AP's other co-presidents Corazon Aquino (former President of the Philippines), Oscar Arias (Former Costa Rican President) and Sonia Gandhi (widow of former Indian PM Rajiv Gandhi).

Special message from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was delivered during the opening ceremony. In her message to the seminar, she said "This is a time when it is crucial to make the international community aware of the situation in our country and of our endeavors to establish a democratic political system in keeping with the will of the people." She stressed on the struggle of democracy in Burma that "We who have been striving for democracy in Burma believe that peace and genuine process can be achieved only by creating a climate of trust and confidence in our nation. We need the basic rights that will give our people a sense of security and remove the shadows of mistrust and suspicion that darken their lives."

For her belief in democracy, she clearly expressed that "Our concept of democracy is fundamentally very simple: it is a system that ensures the supremacy of the will of the people by providing institutions by which this will can be effectively implemented." In her conclusion of message, she concluded that "It is my hope that this seminar will be able to bring to the attention of



U Aung Htoo, Representative of NCUB at the FDL-AP Seminar in Seoul.

the world the obstacles that have yet to be overcome before democracy can truly be established in Burma. Further I hope this seminar will be able to suggest suitable means for removing such obstacles."

Among the participants, a delegation of National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB) led by Prime Minister Dr. Sein Win (NCGUB) attended the seminar. Four-member-delegation included Dr. Thaung Htun, U Tin Maung Win and U Aung Htoo also participated the seminar. In his opening keynote, Prime Minister Dr. Sein Win commented "We hope the FDL and its members can take a prominent role in Asia to raise awareness of the problems of Burma both in individual countries and on a regional basis."

A number of Burma experts from different countries shared their views on different issues in their presentations during the seminar. Four dif-

ferent topics: Current Situation in Burma; Policies to Facilitate the Democratization Process in Burma; the Role of NGOs in fostering Political Change in Burma; and FDL Initiatives for Burma were presented and discussed by all participants in attendance during the two-day seminar.

NCUB submitted a report titled "Analysis on the Current Situation in Burma" in which emphasized four different issues namely: the Ethnic Issue; Constructive Engagement and the Economy; National Convention and Dominating Role of the Military; and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, National League for Democracy and Mass Movement.

In its report, it mentioned on the current ethnic situation that "Slorc intensified its military and political offensives to break up the ethnic armed group. The key strategy Slorc employed to achieve is the cease-fire program. Using economic benefits as an inducement, Slorc managed to sway Thailand into pressuring ethnic resistance forces to enter into cease-fire arrangements."

In terms of economy inside Burma, the report focused on the life of the common people inside Burma. Despite the growing foreign investments in Burma, the life of the common people remained unchanged, according to the report. It said since the bulk of the national income is being used to support the 350,000 strong Slorc army, the education and health sectors remain undeveloped.

Furthermore, in its National Convention and Dominating Role of the Military, it said the ongoing "National Convention" which to draft a new constitution will institutionalize a permanent leading role for the military in future politics of Burma.

In a view concerning the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, the report said NCUB could not expect the Slorc to make any genuine effort towards change or to respond to the call by Aung San Suu Kyi for talks on national reconciliation.

After the two-day seminar, the participants urged the Slorc to join substantive dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi along with other representatives of all political parties and ethnic groups and to the international community especially nations of the Asian Pacific region to implement an

immediate arms embargo on Burma until the transfer of power to a democratically-elected government there.

Suthin Nophaket, a member of Thailand's House of Representatives, urged the ASEAN to take a higher profile and more positive role in promoting democratic change in Burma saying "ASEAN can act as a moderator to help resolve the situation in Burma and build confidence among the different parties" in his "ASEAN Perspective on the Democratic Process in Burma" paper.

"A militaristic Burma serves no purpose whatsoever in promoting stability and growth in Asia," remarked by Chee Soon Juan, Secretary General of Singapore Democratic Party. He said "Even from a selfish standpoint, it would be in the interest of countries in the region to see democracy entrenched in Burma. There is no gain saying that few any, violent conflicts have arisen between democratic societies."

The FDL, since its establishment in Dec. 1994, has been dedicated in the promotion of democracy in the Asia-Pacific region. FDL is committed to democracy and assists countries who are undergoing democratization process. The FDL studies and analyzes situation of newly restored democracies and cases of countries still under authoritarian rule. If the trouble country shows a real commitment in its fight for democracy, the FDL assists them in their struggle by peaceful means. At its inaugural conference in Seoul, the FDL unanimously chose Burma as their primary focus. FDL has declared 1995 as the "Year of Burma" and much of its attention has focused on helping the democratic efforts in Burma.

On December 1-2 of 1995, the FDL will hold the first Anniversary Conference and an Seminar on the theme of "Transitions from Military to Civilian Rule." The conference has invited Aung San Suu Kyi to delivered a keynote speech, in the hope that she would be able to travel by then. Following the suggestions from Aung San Suu Kyi in her letter to Dr. Kim Dae-jun, the transitions seminar would emphasize the lessons for Burma and other countries.

Seoul, Republic of Korea

Believing that the release of Aung San Suu Kyi provides an opportunity for all Burmese peoples to join on the road to genuine peace and national reconciliation under democratic rule.

b. *Join* international community and support prompt implementation of the relevant United Nations resolutions which call on the Slorc to, among other things, release all other political prisoners and peacefully and fully restore democracy;

a. *Join* substantive dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi along with other representatives of all political organizations and ethnic nationalities aimed at achieving a consensus among all the peoples of Burma regarding speedy transfer of power to the representatives democratically elected in May 1990:

b. *Offer* unreservedly its firm commitment to the rule of law within a system of constitutional guarantees, as well as adhering to Clause 20 of Slorc Declaration 1/90 of 27 July 1990, which states unambiguously that responsibility to draw up the constitution of the future democratic state rests with elected representatives, and;

c. *Participate* in the honorable transformation of Burma's military into an institution fully responsible to a democratically-elected government.

3. Be it also resolved that the FDL-AP call on all people of Burma:

a. *Seek* a new national consensus based on human rights, democracy and respect for all peoples;

b. *Condition* all development assistance on concrete steps towards human rights and democratization.

c. *Build* a durable, just and lasting peace on the foundation of reconciliation;

d. *Commit* to sincere efforts to end drugs trafficking and the suffering caused by heroin addiction, and;

e. *Implement* urgent steps and long-term plans to protect Burma's environment.

4. Be it finally resolved that the FDL-AP call on nations of the Asia Pacific Region in particular and the international community as a whole to:

a. *Implement* an immediate arms embargo on Burma to remain in effect until the transfer of power to a democratically-elected government there;

b. *Encourage* through dialogue and other peaceful means the transition to democracy in Burma;

c. *Offer* increased levels of humanitarian assistance to Burmese refugees;

d. *Join* a democratic government in Burma to end drug trafficking, and;

e. *Cooperate* fully with urgent steps and long-term plans to protect Burma's environment.



Some of the speakers and leaders at the FDL-AP seminar in Seoul.

The First Observance of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People Held at UN Headquarters

Indigenous peoples inhabit large areas of the earth's surface. Spread across the world from the Arctic to the South Pacific, they number, at a rough estimate, some 300 million. Indigenous peoples are so called because they were living on their lands before settlers came from elsewhere; they are the descendants- according to one definition- of those who inhabited a country or geographic region at the time when peoples of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived, the new arrivals later becoming dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.

The establishment and protection of the rights of indigenous people are one of the areas of concern of the human rights work of the United Nations. The first observance of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People was held on July 9, 1995 at the United Nations Headquarters, New York, USA which highlighted the cultural and ethnic diversity that exists among indigenous people as well as focused on the common ground inherent indigenous people's causes worldwide. "World Sacred Pipe Ceremony", in other word "Sharing a Vision for

Unity" was sponsored by the UN Center for Human Rights, and NGO Committee for the

lem and can only be resolved politically. We fully support the resolution on Burma that was adopted by the UNGA at its 49th session. I called for a substantive political dialogue between democratic forces led by Aung San Suu Kyi, representatives of the non-Burman nationalities, and the Slorc." In the conclusion, he also requested



U Thumana delivering a speech at "World Sacred Pipe Ceremony" UN, NY

Decade of the World's Indigenous Peoples. At the opening session, a message from Secretary-General of the UN was delivered to the participants from the across the world.

Among the indigenous people, an indigenous delegation from Burma was there. A Buddhist blessing was followed by a statement read by Rev. U Thumana on behalf of the indigenous people of Burma during the ceremony. In his statement, he said "We, indigenous people of Burma believe that the conflict in Burma is a political prob-

the UN Secretary-General to assist in the process of democratization and national reconciliation and to work for the implementation of the resolution and bring peace and national reconciliation to Burma.

After the ceremony, the indigenous delegation from Burma met with the officials from United Nations Center for Human Rights and explained the situation of human rights violations by the Slorc against the ethnic groups along the borders, it is reported.

ABSDF

Imprisoned Surgeon in Poor Health

American Association for the Advancement of Science Human Rights Action Network (AAASHRAN), an organization based in Washington, USA issued an update statement dated 20 September on the health situation of imprisoned Dr. Ma Thida who has been sentenced to 20 years imprisonment in Burma's jail. In its statement, it said "AAAS is concerned about the declining health of Dr. Ma Thida, a Burmese surgeon and writer arrested in 1993 and sentenced to 20 years imprisonment for her nonviolent expression of her beliefs and her association with an opposition political party". According to the statement, Dr. Ma Thida is reportedly suffering from tuberculosis and a series of small ovarian tumors. She was an assistant to Nobel Peace Prize winner, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, one of the founders of Burmese main political opposition party who was recently released from her house arrest.

Dr. Ma Thida was among the many health professionals who treated those injured during pro-democracy demonstrations in 1988. She was charged under sections of the 1908 unlawful Associations Act, the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act, and the 1962 Printers and Publications Act. She is cur-

Demonstrations held in Sri Lanka for release of Burmese political prisoners

A series of demonstrations were held in front of the Burmese Embassy in Colombo, Sri Lanka, organized by the Center for Peoples Dialogue, a Burma concerned organization based in Negombo. Demonstrators including Sri Lankan Buddhist monks and some Parliament Members gathered in front of the Burmese Embassy on July 7, 1995 which marked the bloody day of the student demonstration suppressed by Ne Win government in 1962. Another demonstration was also

held on 18 September, the day military took power and killed the thousands of peaceful demonstrators in 1988 democracy uprising. People holding banners demanded the release of political prisoners in Burma and to transfer the power back to the people representatives.

The Center for Peoples Dialogue a Burmese concerned group is now launching the intensive campaign on Burma for release of all political prisoners and restoration of democracy and human rights in Burma.



Demonstration for release of all political prisoners in Burma

rently being held in Insein prison.

She has reportedly been diagnosed with tuberculosis and was admitted to the hospital in mid-June this year. There is great concern for her health, because the medical provisions in Insein prison are poor. In addition, it has been reported that she has

been held in solitary confinement throughout her imprisonment.

The continued imprisonment of Dr. Ma Thida violates the internationally protected human rights enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations

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"BEYOND RANGOON" **hits the silver screen**

A Film about Burma, "Beyond Rangoon" was on the screen all over the world and received great attention by the audience on the 1988 democracy uprising in Burma. Directed by British veteran filmmaker John Boorman, the film tells the story of one woman's journey through Burma in 1988 on the eve of the country's military crackdown on the peaceful demonstrators.

American Actress Patricia Arquette plays Laura Bowman, an emotionally detached American tourist who travels unofficially after losing her passport and other documents and falls in with a group of pro-democracy student dissidents just as the military's brutal repression begins. When she is unexpectedly stranded in the Burmese capital of Rangoon, she meets U Aung Ko, a local tour guide. The former professor takes her on a journey that proved to be much more revealing, and fright-

ening, than her original "official" tour. These two have a compassionate relationship, as is in the Buddhist culture, a love based on *metta*, or loving kindness. They slowly erase these differences in race, religion, color and culture when the journey together through turmoil. They are able to do this because of their regard for the basis for a pure compassionate love and affection. In the end, she who has gone through a great personal trauma and tragedy for the death of her son and husband becomes conscious of her own worth and is able to look at what the future might hold.

The part of Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi was played by Adele Lutz, a Japanese -American actress. She portrays as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in the scene of her out in the streets of Rangoon, a night scene when she is on her way to give a speech to thousands of people. She is stopped and surrounded by soldiers who warn her that they will shoot if she advances. She does not stop, but instead keeps walking, showing no fear in the midst of soldiers with guns aimed at her. This scene shows the strength of one woman who took courage from the thousands of those on the streets to demonstrate their desire for freedom and democracy.

Burmese democratic forces and students took an opportunity of the film's come out in everywhere it is shown. Students distributed the moviegoer the leaflet saying about the current situation in Burma and urging them to support struggle for the democracy and human rights in Burma. They distributed the leaflets in Washington, New York, Los Angeles and other cities in the United States and Canada. In the leaflet the students urged to boycott companies doing business with the Burmese regime; to avoid visiting Burma because your tourist dollars go to the military; to join different grass-roots campaigns on Burma and to write to the Representatives/ Senators urging them to back economic sanctions against Burma. As the one of main characters of the film, U Aung Ko has said in one scene "In Burma, everything is illegal", of course, military regime is illegal without people's support. Please join the Burmese democratic movement and support Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for democratic Burma.

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in 1948. These rights include: the right to liberty and security of the person (Article 3); the right to freedom from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 5); the right to freedom from arbitrary arrest, detention, or exile (Article 9); the right to free expression (Article 19); and the right to free association (Article 20).

**Help Free A
Country Held
Hostage By its
Military**

Facilitating Dialogue

Policies towards Slorc

To date, many policies to facilitate the democratization process in Burma have been proposed. One way to classify them is by their approach to Slorc. For example:

The tough approach - This approach sees the issues involved in terms of right and wrong. Slorc is in the wrong and it should change or else tough measures will be taken against it. No government to date has adopted it.

The Conditional Approach- This approach includes that of most of the western countries- The European Union's Critical Dialogue, the United State's two Visions for the Future, Australia's Bench Mark policy, and Japan's requirement that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's be released before ODA assistance is resumed. This approach does not see the issues in terms of right or wrong, but rather in terms of a commercial transaction - certain privileges are offered to Slorc (they can be aid, investment, trade, etc.) in return for Slorc behaving in a more acceptable way.

The friendly approach- This approach includes most of Burma's neighboring and ASEAN. It does not look at right or wrong and it does not bargain. Anything is acceptable as long as the relationship is maintained. With this approach, it is hoped that when the relationship is strong enough, friendly advice can be given to straighten out the wayward friend.

Another way of classifying the various policies towards Slorc is by the organizations involved:

- *World Bodies*- example, the United Nations,
- *Regional Bodies*- example, ASEAN
- *Individual Governments*- example, Thai-

land, Japan, US etc.,

- *Non-Government Organizations*- example, FDL-AP, Carter Center, etc.
- *Religious Organizations and Individuals*- example, U Rewata Dhamma.

No matter how they are classified, the various policies have at least three things in common. The first is that there is a basic and implicit assumption that something is wrong in Burma and that things need to be changed. The second common point is that each approach assumes that there is a middle ground where both Slorc and the Burmese democratic movement can meet.

The third common point is that none of these policies work.

This last point may seem very pessimistic

and some of people may point to the release of Daw Aung Suu Kyi to argue that one or more of these policies has worked. One cannot argue with success but one cannot dismiss the possibility that she may have been released in spite of these policies and because of a combination of factors which may or may not have had anything to do with the effectiveness of the policies being pursued. This statement is not meant as a criticism of existing policies. The various governments and organizations that have been working consistently on the behalf of the people of Burma should be thanked and encouraged. However, if one wants to bring about a dialogue that will eventually lead to democracy in Burma, one needs to examine the various approaches critically in order to find a more effective way.

The various policies have not worked because there is no middle ground on which Slorc and the democratic movement can meet. One party wants democracy and the other wants a permanent role

HARN YAWNGHWE

for the military in politics. The two objectives are mutually exclusive. There can be no middle ground. One side or the other has to concede. That is why, to date, Slorc has not responded to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's offer of a dialogue even with no conditions attached. Slorc is not ready to concede anything. One glaring factor that may have been missed just because it is so obvious is the implicit assumption that something is wrong in Burma and that it needs to be corrected. Slorc does not share this view.

Slorc's point of view:

As far as Slorc is concerned, there is nothing wrong with military rule in Burma in the minds of the generals, democracy is equivalent to anarchy, chaos and loss of control, which is not a desirable goal. Slorc also believes that whatever mistakes may have been made by the military in the past, the current Slorc leadership is capable of solving all of Burma's problems. Slorc may have been very vulnerable and uncertain of itself when it first emerged in 1988. But since then it has found out that the international community is not a monolith. In Slorc's estimation, there are many players involved in the international arena from governments to non-governmental organizations to business concerns, many of whom can be bought for a price. Slorc has very skillful capitalized on the self-interest and limitations of many nations and played off one country against another.

This can be clearly seen in the case of Slorc using its friendship with China to intimidate India into becoming a less vocal critic. It can also be seen in the case of Slorc using Korean and other Southeast Asian businesses to motivate Japan to renew ODA assistance in order to enable Japanese firms to join in the competition for business in Burma. American oil companies are also being held hostage with the specter of lucrative contracts going to French and other interests. The most blatant case of Slorc manipulation, however, involves Thailand, Singapore and Indone-

sia. When Slorc was weak, it welcomed Thailand's friendship to shield it from international criticism and to open the door into ASEAN. While Thailand expected to be thanked by Slorc as well as benefit economically from the relationship, Slorc had no such intentions. Contrary to Thai belief, Slorc did not look up to Thailand as an elder brother that could teach it valuable lessons. Slorc had its own agenda for Burma's traditional enemy and saw Thailand as a nation to be exploited. Once Singapore and ASEAN became more open to Slorc, the generals started to move away from Thailand. Now that Indonesia is beginning to look favorable on Slorc, the generals are even moving away from Singapore whom they consider to be too bossy. They had only intended to use the island nation as a stepping stone. As for Thailand, SLORC has found another use for it. Building on pent-up frustration amongst Burmese refugees over Thailand's support of Slorc and resentment against unethical practices employed by Thai businessmen in Burma, Slorc has revived latent historical anti-Thai feelings among Burmans to divert attention from the military. The Burman nationalism campaign is gaining momentum. Trade along the long land border has come to a virtual standstill and a boycott of Thai products has been launched by Slorc. Officials are even being told to avoid Bangkok as a transit point in favor of other neighboring airports. Therefore, as far as Slorc is concerned, instead of having to beg for assistance, it is now in a position to dictate its own terms to those wanting to benefit from Burma.

From Slorc's point of view, it has been able to turn around Burma's economic decline. From a nation that had less than US\$ 15 million in foreign exchange reserves, the generals are very proud of the fact that they have now attracted over US\$ one billion investments. The fact that these investments will do little for the Burmese economy and the Burmese people is immaterial. As far as Slorc is concerned, the economy is a success story. The generals are getting richer. In fact, the generals have never in their wildest

dreams imagined how rich they could get from business propositions.

From the general's point of view, the civil war is also a success story. While none of the ethnic people are happy with the military cease-fires they have been forced to sign with Slorc, the Burmese military has never had such success. With 15 groups agreeing to a cease-fire and the headquarters of the Karen National Union captured, Slorc no longer has to fear that it will be defeated in battle. As far as the generals are concerned fighting may flare up again from time to time, but it has at least bought the generals time and, in the meanwhile, they can get rich.

Politically, the generals are also very satisfied. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release has won Slorc an entry into ASEAN, Japan is on the verge of renewing ODA assistance and the rest of the world will wait and see how things develop. As for the Burmese public, the generals hope that the continuing news blackout on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will slow down any possible political development. Again, the generals have bought time to consolidate their position.

Facilitating a dialogue:

Given Slorc's assessment of its position internationally and domestically, there is not the slightest possibility that Slorc will of its own accord enter into a dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. In offering a dialogue, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said, "*we have to choose between destruction or dialogue*" or words to that effect. While her statement reflects the opinion of the world community that Burma is on the edge of disaster, the difficulty is that Slorc does not share this view. As outlined above, Slorc believes that it is doing well, that it is in control and that things can be worked out as the generals would like to be.

Does this then mean that there is no hope for a dialogue or a transition in Burma?

No. First, the general have seriously miscalculated the mood of the Burmese people and their determination to end military rule. Second, Slorc

has also seriously miscalculated the impact of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's release. They have been known to miscalculate in the past: the 1990 elections being the most obvious example. It is very likely that in spite of the many restrictions, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will be able to re-vitalize the Burmese democracy movement and Slorc will find that it cannot control events.

"we have to choose between destruction or dialogue"

(Aung San Suu Kyi)

This is where the role of the international community becomes critical if it is serious about facilitating a dialogue between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Slorc. If the international community does not act or decides to wait and see, Slorc will have gained tactical advantage and the chances for a dialogue will diminish.

In trying to facilitate change in Burma, it must always be remembered that Slorc does not believe that there is a problem in Burma and that is needs to start a dialogue with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to resolve it. The generals will only enter into a dialogue if it offers them a tactical advantage. Slorc will not enter into a dialogue unless the cost of not doing so increases significantly.

Therefore, to bring about a dialogue, the international community must work to achieve two key objectives:

1. Increased personal safety and freedom for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and
2. Increased cost for Slorc of not entering into a dialogue.

These two objectives are necessary because Slorc does not see the need for, not desire a dialogue. In other words, conditions have to be created to make Slorc want a dialogue. However, as the pressure on Slorc increases, the generals will be tempted to crack down hard on Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the democracy movement. Therefore, the first objectives is crucial. Only when Slorc sees that cracking down on

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi will be detrimental to its well-being, will it reconsider its options and decide on a dialogue. But when a dialogue begins, it will not mean that the generals have conceded to the demands for democracy. Slorc will only enter into a dialogue to buy more time. Therefore, the pressure cannot be let up.

Recommendations:

To achieve the objectives that will bring about a dialogue which, in turn, will facilitate the process of democratization in Burma, the following possibilities are outlined for each objective:

For the first objective of Increased Personal Safety and freedom for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, it is proposed that:

(a) There be a De Facto Recognition of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as head of state-

- by ensuring that ambassadors accredited to Burma visit her regularly,
- by ensuring that official delegations visit her as a matter of routine and
- by ensuring that visits of eminent persons are arranged at regular intervals.

(b) There be Widespread Dissemination of news and views of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi-

- by increasing coverage of Burma in the mainstream media,
- by increasing support for the Democratic Voice of Burma in Norway and
- by increasing support for other media in Burmese and ethnic languages.

(c) There be increased support for organizing

work at the grass-roots level-

- by trying to assist non-Slorc political parties in Burma,
- by supporting the democracy movement's political defiance program, and
- by supporting seminars and/ or disseminating information on democracy.

For the second objective of Increase Cost for Slorc of Not Entering into a Dialogue, it is proposed that:

(a) Support for the Burmese democracy movement be increased-

- by increasing support for the NCGUB's lobbying campaign,
- by facilitating the development of a forum for ethnic leaders,
- by facilitating the development of a future constitution,
- by facilitating the development of a future economic plan.

(b) Support be given to the UN Secretary-General's mediation efforts-

- by ensuring strong resolution are passed at the United Nations General Assembly and Human Rights Commission.
- by ensuring own governments fully back the UN Secretary-General,
- by ensuring all private mediation efforts complement the UN's and
- by lobbying on behalf of the Burmese people and the UN.

(c) Punitive economic measures against Slorc are increased-

- by lobbying own governments to enact and economic embargoes,
- by lobbying the business and tourist community to refrain from supporting Slorc
- by continuing to encourage boycotts and corporate withdrawal campaigns.

The above recommendations are by no means exhaustive are only given to facilitate further discussion.

(The author is an editor of Burma Alert and member of the board of director.)

This is where the role of the international community becomes critical if it is serious about facilitating a dialogue between Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Slorc.

Burmese Women's voices are heard in Beijing



*Our voices
will be heard,
Our plight
will be seen*

The pursuit of equality and freedom for Burmese women is inextricably intertwined with the on-going struggle for democracy and peace in Burma. Burmese women are at the forefront of this political struggle as eminently illustrated by the leadership and vision of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. The release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from a six-year house arrest has brought great joy and hope to the women and men fighting for freedom in Burma. The release, however, only signals the beginning of a new round of struggle, because nothing else has changed in the country.

Violence against girls and women is pervasive under the command of State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc): rape during military offensives against ethnic nationalities; rape of female porters who are forced to serve as human mine-sweepers and to carry arms and ammunition for the Slorc's army; and trafficking of girls and women into prostitution.

Women in Burma also bear the brunt of SLORC's policies of forced relocation, where

families are expelled from their homes to new satellite towns which lack electricity, clean water, and access to transportation. Being the primary caretaker of most families, women face great difficulties meeting the most basic needs of the household. In preparation for the 1996 "Visit Myanmar Year", many women, including pregnant, are among the hundreds of thousands of people being forced to work as slave laborers in "beautification" projects and construction of railways, roads, bridges, and airports.

The United Nations held its Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China from September 4-15. The gathering of women however occurred a week prior to the official conference at the NGO Forum which opened on August 31 in Hoirou, a hour and a half drive outside Beijing. An 11-day UN World Conference on Women, aimed at resolving key problems for women, ranging from birth control and violence to education and discrimination against women. Despite the differences of race, language, and culture, the majority of the participants managed

to bridge these gaps and achieve mutual understanding. As the plight of Burmese people continues to be obscured in the world's eyes, the Women Conference provided a critical opportunity to highlight the abuses against women perpetrated by the Burmese military junta.

"This is a long awaited day, a milestone in the continuing struggle for women's liberation, empowerment, dignity and equality, a moment to affirm that the power, rights and contributions of women can no longer be denied," Gertrude Mongella, the conference's secretary-general, said at the opening ceremony in Beijing's Olympic Stadium on August 30, 1995.

The NGO Forum officially opened on August 31 with a message from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, whose courage and unwavering commitment to human rights and nonviolent discipline are an inspiration to all women throughout the world. The speech by Aung San Suu Kyi could draw more than 3,000 cheering, applauding women that made jam inside a cinema hall and left thousands fuming outside. In her speech, she devoted much of her 15-minute speech to women's role as peace-makers. The plan to record the keynote speech of the Burmese main opposition leader by the Forum Convener Supatra Masdit in person was thwarted when the Slorc Embassy in Bangkok did not issue an entry visa for her and her crew members. Supatra Masdit who is also a democrat MP in Thai parliament visited Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in early August after her release from almost six year house arrest and conveyed the invitation her to attend the Forum. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi declined an invitation saying she was not yet accepting invitations to travel abroad. But she agreed to make a speech via videotape. Her video tape was smuggled out to Beijing later.

"Look at the world through women's eyes" was the overall theme of the more than 3,000 activities at the NGO Forum. The broad range of activities had three major aims: to set the agenda for the global women's movement, to network and to influence the United Nations con-

ference in Beijing.

Representing the Burmese Women Union, (BWU), Thin Myat Thu and Hnin Hnin Pyne attended both the Forum and the Conference. They were joined by other women activists from Thailand and Norway. The main objectives were to inform the press and the public about the situation in Burma, to rally support for the pro-democracy movement, to establish networks with NGOs and individual women from other parts of the world, and to counter Slorc's attempts to distort the ugly reality faced by Burmese girls and women under the regime.

In order to achieve these objectives, they set up an exhibition booth, held two workshops, participated in demonstrations on Ending Violence Against Women, and established contacts and networks with other NGOs and with individual women interested in working for democracy and human rights in Burma. The exhibition booth displayed posters that informed the public about the history of Burma's democratic movement, human rights abuses in the country, in particular violence against women and girls, and the vision of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. They also disseminated booklets and publications on the plight of Burmese women and on the Burmese Women Union, and distributed buttons showing support for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and for democratic Burma.

September 3 and 8 were designated as "Burma Days" and extensive campaign on release of all political prisoners in Burma and support Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were launched. BWU collected signatures from thousands of participants for the petition letter to Slorc. The letter demanded the Slorc to release all political prisoners, including Dr. Ma Thida who has been sentenced to twenty years for her political activities in Burma.

Posters and buttons with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and "Support Aung San Suu Kyi for a democratic Burma" title were seen everywhere in the site of forum. Many representatives of forum including Rigoberta Menchu, 1992 Nobel Peace

Laureate and Winnie Mandela, wife of 1993 Nobel Peace Laureate Nelson Mandela put on the buttons with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's photo.

Attended by more than fifty people, the first workshop presented two videos. The first video, filmed by Lyndal Barry of Images Asia, focused on the human rights abuses perpetrated by the Burmese military along the Thai-Burma border, whereas the second by Hseng NOUNG Lintner, depicted the plight of girls and women who are trafficked from Burma into Thai brothels. These poignant documentaries led to fervent discussions and keen interest among the audience. In this session, the plight of Burmese women and children who are trafficked into Thailand and abused by pimps, procurers, and corrupt officials were revealed. Forum participants discussed that the Thai government and those of other countries involved in trafficking in women take more responsibility for these victimized women by relaxing their immigration laws to accommodate them. Forced prostitutes, it was emphasized, are victims in need of protection- not criminals. During the second workshop, they showed Aung San Suu Kyi's video presentation at the opening of the NGO Forum and discussed what the international community can do to support the democratization of Burma. Women from Thailand, Japan, the USA, India, and Norway presented their work of promoting democracy in Burma. Despite the rain and being on the last day of forum, this workshop was attended by more than 150 women and men.

Hnin Hnin Pyne revealed that she has found herself at risk because of their campaign for the plight of Burmese women. The BWU representatives were constantly followed and photographed by unknown people when they were being interviewed with the media and in their campaign activities. She also said that during the forum, her group made an effort to discuss women's issues with delegates from the Burmese SLORC military regime. "But they refused to talk to us," she said perplexed.

Among the almost 30,000 participants who came from around the world, man-led delega-

tion of SLORC was headed by Maj-Gen Soe Myint, Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. Before leaving for Beijing, the delegation was briefed by SLORC Secretary-1 Lt-Gen Khin Nyunt. They have been asked to explain to the meeting how Burmese women are already equal to men and so have no need to demand more equality. He told the Burmese delegation it does not need to demand the rights and equality called for any other women at the conference. The Burmese representation at the Beijing conference is not to make demands for Burmese women, but to present objective conditions of the rights they enjoy. If there were any accusations laid against Burma at the conference, the delegates need to explain the rights of Burmese women enjoy and refute any accusations most firmly, he said.

The Burmese Women Union and the Norwegian Burma Council agreed with SLORC that in Burma today there is no discrimination against Burmese women, as they are treated equally to their fellow Burmese men. They too are subjected to summary executions, arbitrary arrest, forced labor, forced portering, denial of participation in the political process, religious persecution, and forced relocation and displacement. In addition, girls and women in Burma, especially those who are ethnic minorities, receive unique treatment from SLORC: rape during military offensive, rape during portering, and trafficking into prostitution.

During the SLORC speech on September 11, a banner spelling out "Free the People of Burma" was dropped from the balcony of the auditorium. Although the demonstration was almost immediately ceased by the UN Security, members of the SLORC delegation were reminded that the world knows the truth about Burma.

The Beijing Conference provided an invaluable opportunity for Burmese pro-democracy activists to network and strategize with women from all over the world in order to halt and deter the human rights abuses committed against girls and women by the Burmese military and support Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the process of national reconciliation through constructive dialogue.

MUTUAL RESPECT NEEDED BETWEEN THE SEXES

Opening keynote address by Aung San Suu Kyi read on video to the NGO Forum on women in Beijing on August 31, 1995

It is a wonderful but daunting task that has fallen on me to say a few words by way of opening this Forum, the greatest concourse of women (joined by a few brave men!) that has ever gathered on our planet. I want to try and voice some of the common hopes which firmly unite us in all our splendid diversity.

But first I would like to explain why I cannot be with you in person today. Last month I was released from almost six years of house arrest. The regaining of my freedom has in turn imposed a duty on me to work for the freedom of other women and men in my country who have suffered far more- and who continue to suffer far more- than I have. It is this duty which prevents me from joining you today. Even sending this message to you has not been without difficulties. But the help of those who believe in international cooperation and freedom of expression has enabled me to overcome the obstacles. They made it possible for me to this great celebration of the struggle of women to mould their own destiny and to influence



BWU representatives at the UN Convention on Women Beijing

the fate of our global village.

The opening plenary of this Forum will be presenting an overview of the global forces affecting the quality of the human community and the challenges they pose for the global community as a whole and for women in particular as we approach the twenty-first century. However, with the womanly understanding the Convener of this Forum suggested that among these global forces and challenges, I might wish to concentrate on those matters which occupy all my waking thought these days: peace, security, human rights and democracy. I would like to discuss these issues particularly in the context of the participation of women in politics and governance.

For millennia women have dedicated themselves almost exclusively to the task of nurturing, protecting and caring for the young and the old, striving for the conditions of peace that favor life as a whole. To this can be added the fact that, to the best of my knowledge, no war was ever started by women. But it is women and children who have always suffered most in situations of conflict. Now that we are gaining control of the primary historical role imposed on us of sustaining life in the context of

The struggle for democracy and human rights in Burma is a struggle for life and dignity. It is a struggle that encompasses our political, social and economic aspirations.

the home and family, it is time to apply in the arena of the world the wisdom and experience thus gained in activities of peace over so many thousands of years. The education and empowerment of women throughout the world cannot fail to result in a more caring, tolerant, just and peace life for all.

If to these universal benefits of the growing emancipation of women can be added the "peace dividend" for human development offered by the end of the Cold War, spending less on the war toys of grown men and much more on the urgent needs of humanity as a whole, then truly the next millennia will be an age the like of which has never been seen in human history. But there still remain many obstacles to be overcome before we can achieve this goal. And not least among these obstacles are intolerance and insecurity.

This year is the International Year for Tolerance. The United Nations has recognized that "tolerance, human rights, democracy and peace are closely related. Without tolerance, the foundations for democracy and respect for human rights cannot be strengthened, and the achievement of peace will remain elusive." My own experience during the years I have been engaged in the democracy movement of Burma has convinced me of the need to emphasize the positive aspect of tolerance. It is not enough simply to "live and let live": genuine tolerance requires an active effort to try to understand the point of view of others; it implies broad-mindedness and vision, as well as confidence in one's own ability to meet new challenges without resorting to intransigence or violence. In societies where men are truly confident of their own worth women are not merely "tolerated," they are valued. Their opinions are listened to with respect, they are given their rightful place in shaping the society in which they live.

There is an outmoded Burmese proverb still recited by men who wish to deny that women too can play a part in bringing necessary change and progress to their society: "The dawn rises only when the rooster crows." But Burmese people today are well aware of the scientific reasons behind the rising of dawn and the falling of dusk. And the intelligent rooster surely realizes that it is because dawn comes that it crows and not the other way round. It crows to welcome the light that has come to relieve the darkness of night. It is not the prerogative of men alone to bring light to this world: women with their capacity for compassion and self-sacrifice, their courage and perseverance, have done much to dissipate the darkness of intolerance and hate, suffering and despair.

Often the other side of the coin of intolerance is insecurity. Insecure people tend to be intolerant, and their intolerance unleashes forces that threaten the security of others. And where there is no security of others. And where there is no security there can be no lasting peace. In its Human Development Report for last year the UNDP noted that human security "is not a concern with weapons- it is a concern with human life and dignity."

The struggle for democracy and human rights in Burma is a struggle for life and dignity. It is a struggle that encompasses our political, social and economic aspirations. the people of my country want the two freedoms that spell security: freedom from want and freedom from fear. It is want that has driven so many of our young girls across our borders to a life of sexual slavery where they are subject to constant humiliation and ill-treatment. it is fear of persecution for their political beliefs that have made so many of our people feel that even in their own homes they cannot live in dignity and security.

Traditionally the home is the domain of the women. But there has never been a guarantee that she can lead her life there safe and unmolested. There are countless women who are subjected to serve cruelty within the heart of the family which should be their haven. And in times of crisis when

intelligent human beings to resolve conflicting interests through exchange and dialogue. It also represents the conviction that governments alone resolve all the problems of their countries. The watchfulness and active cooperation of organizations outside the spheres of officialdom are necessary to ensure the four essential components of the human development paradigm as identified by the UNDP: productivity, equality, sustainability and empowerment. The last is particularly relevant. It required that "development must be by people, not only for them. People must participate fully in the decisions and processes that shape their lives." In other words people must be allowed to play a significant role in the governance of their country. And "people" include women who make up at least half of the world's population.

The last six years afforded me much time and food for thought. I came to the conclusion that the human race is not divided into two opposing camps of good and evil. It is made of those who are capable of learning and those who are incapable of doing so. Here I am not talking of learning in the narrow sense of acquiring an academic education, but of learning as the process of absorbing those lessons of life that enable us to increase peace and happiness in our world.

Women in their roles as mothers have traditionally assumed the responsibility of teaching children values that will guide them throughout their lives. It is time we were given the full opportunity to use our natural teaching skills to contribute towards building a modern world that can withstand the tremendous challenges of the technological revolution which has in turn brought revolutionary changes in social values.

As we strive to teach others we must have the humility to acknowledge that we too still have much to learn. And we must have the flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of the world around us. Women who have been taught that modesty and pliancy are among the prized virtues of our gender are marvelously equipped for the learning process. But they must be given the opportunity to turn these often merely passive virtues into positive assets for the society in which they live.

***"development must be by
people, not only for them.***

***People must participate fully in
the decisions and processes that
shape their lives."***

These, then, are our common hopes that unite us - that as the shackles of prejudice and intolerance fall from our own limbs we can together strive to identify and remove the impediments to human development everywhere. The mechanisms by which this great task is to be achieved provided the proper focus of this great Forum. I feel sure that women throughout the world who, like me, cannot be with you join me now in sending you all our prayers and good wishes for a joyful and productive meeting.

More attack by DKBA

A group of approximately 25 DKBA soldiers went into Shoklo refugee camp in Tha Son Yang district, Thailand on October 6, 1995 and killed two Karen refugees. The DKBA entered the camp in plain-clothes with weapon concealed under their clothes. There were no Thai soldiers in the camp to provide security or the refugees but few local policemen at the checkpoint in front of the camp. Nobody intervene the attack. Two Karen refugees, named Ga Duh Baw, 58, section leader, father of seven children and Ga Lah, 25, father of two children were reportedly killed. One other Karen man was also wounded and he and his family were taken back across the river by the DKBA. On September 22, the DKBA kidnapped two refugees from Shoklo but those have now returned. The refugees in Shoklo are living under constant fear and the refugees in Bae Glaw (Mae La) camp are now facing similar fear.

BurmaNet

It is not the time to rush

The unexpected release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from her six-year house arrest on 10th July was a welcome move on the part of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc). While western countries were quick to send messages applauding the release in a spirit of "cautious optimism"- as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi herself put it- and Asian governments including Japan welcomed the move as "substantive progress". Apparently some in Japan are very anxious significant indication that Burma is "moving towards democracy." To date, unfortunately, all evidence points to the opposite conclusion. Slorc's behavior since the release of Aung San Suu Kyi indicates it has no intention of moving towards democracy, and in fact, the evidence indicates that Slorc intends to use the release of Aung San Suu Kyi as part of its on-going campaign to maintain indefinite military rule in Burma.

After the Second World War, the diplomatic relationship between Japan and Burma can be characterized as that of the donor of the Official Development Aid (ODA), including war compensation, and the recipient of that aid. Burma was the first one to receive the Japan war compensation in 1955 among the Asian nations. From 1955 through 1965, the Japanese government paid 72 billion yen (200 million US\$) in goods and services. A major portion of these funds were used for the construction of Baluchaung Dam in Karen State and four major industrialization projects; light vehicle production, heavy vehicle production, farming machinery production, and electrical machinery production. These compensation ended in 1977 and Japan began promoting Official Development Aid (ODA) from 1975.

The total amount of Japanese ODA to Burma

that includes loan aid, grant aid and technical cooperation from the time Japan began funding until 1988 amounted to 511.7 billion yen. Burma was the number one recipient of Japanese aid. For example, Burma received 332.71 million dollar in bilateral aid in 1988, of which 78 per cent of this amount was from Japan.

Japan suspended all new ODA to Burma following the 1988 brutal suppression on the democracy uprising. It was later resumed but limited to parts of on-going projects, technical cooperation, and emergency humanitarian assistance. A freeze was put on new aid and even for those projects that were resumed, they were based on the principles of starting with "problem-free projects", "gradually", "destructively" and "cautiously".

Japan has been behaving itself as "a good friend", persuading Slorc to open up Burma's economy as well as to move towards democracy and stop human rights violation. The Japanese government expects the Burmese military regime to change on its own, even though sometimes it has been irritated by Slorc's stubbornness.

But pressure from the Japanese business community has been growing to resume ODA and now that Aung San Suu Kyi has been released, that pressure is likely to increase. China's increasing influence in Burma not only economically but also militarily since 1989 has made Japan nervous. The Japanese government began to urge Burma more strongly to enter the international community and to decisively adopt the market-oriented economic policy. This position is basically shared by the members of ASEAN and India; the countries that must fear China's penetration into Southeast Asia and the India Ocean.

The powerful Japanese business organization Keidanren (Federation of Economic Organization) set up a "study group" in January 1995 to examine aid policies and assess the prospects for economic cooperation with Burma, following a trade mission it sent to Burma in June 1994. A number of Japanese trading and construction companies have sent their own mission to Burma. In February 1995, Marubeni became the first Japanese trading company to sign a broad agreement with Slorc to promote joint ventures, act as a coordinator for various Burmese infrastructure projects, and assist with development of the oil, steel and gas industries.

Japan announced an agreement to give Burma an US\$ 11 million grant for "agricultural development". Japanese justified the decision on the grounds that the funds were to be used for humanitarian purposes to increase food production; also that was intended as a positive signal to "help promote the country's pro-democracy movement and human rights improvement efforts." At the same time, Japan also granted Burma debt relief worth \$ 4 million. US government officials denounced the move, calling it "a mistake."

The release of Aung San Suu Kyi was immediately welcomed by Japanese Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama, who added, "I hope democratization with proceed further." Foreign Minister Yohei Kono announced the Tokyo was eager to begin discussions with Slorc regarding resumption of ODA "once they (Burma) are ready to do so," and later said he would visit Burma soon — the highest ranking Japanese official to go to Rangoon since 1988. Foreign Ministry officials indicated that high priority ODA projects being considered include a \$287 million expansion of the Rangoon airport and aid to Burma's telecommunications system. It is also considering giving grants of 1.5-2 billion yen to repair nursing schools in Rangoon, a foreign ministry official said in September. The final decision on the grant is expected in October, following the visit to Rangoon by foreign ministry study missions in June and in late August-early Septem-

ber. Lt-Gen. Khin Nyunt also announced Japan will donate US\$ 400,000 to Burma to build schools in border areas.

For the Burmese people and democratic forces, the resuming of Japanese ODA in not an appropriate time for Burma. Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi said her release from house arrest is no indication of change in Burma and that it should not result in an torrent of foreign investment and aid for the current military regime. She urged foreign countries as soon as she was released, not to rush to improve relations with Burma following her release because "nothing else" has changed under military rule.

The guide line for the ODA require that those funds be used only if the recipient country, "is moving towards democracy." But the is no points saying that Burma and Slorc is moving towards democracy. Evidence of this fact can clearly be seen by contrasting the release from prison of Nelson Mandela in South Africa and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. In South Africa, soon after Nelson Mandela was released, the white apartheid government entered into a serious dialogue with him as head of the African National Congress to discuss and negotiate the conditions for the transition to democracy in that country. It was not the release of Nelson Mandela that showed the sincerity of the apartheid government, it was the beginning of the dialogue after the release that indicated the apartheid government wanted to move in the direction of democracy. In contract, In Burma, the Slorc military dictatorship reportedly said it would not discuss political reforms with Aung San Suu Kyi, according to U Tin Win, Rangoon's ambassador to Thailand.

Slorc, therefore, has given every indication that it intends to contain and silence Aung San Suu Kyi, not enter into any type of dialogue with her, and in this regard, the release of Nelson Mandela and the release of Aung San Suu Kyi could not be more different from each other. The South African government released Mandela as a signal that it was now ready to begin the dialogue

over the transition to democracy. The Slorc military dictatorship released Aung San Suu Kyi to lower the level of international pressure, with no sign of any intention of opening a dialogue or taking any steps to transition towards democracy.

Further evidence of Slorc's true attitude towards "moving towards democracy" can be seen by the fact that since the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, Burmese opposition activists U Thu Wai, U Tun Shwe and Htwe Myint were all rearrested and sentenced to seven years in Rangoon's dreaded Insein prison with no reason for their rearrest being given. More recently, Ye Htut, a Burmese student was arrested on September 27, 1995 for sending "incriminating documents" to opposition news groups in Thailand. The arrest was solely for having sent information to friends and contacts abroad. Under international law, this cannot be characterized as criminal behavior.

Slorc continues its military offensives against minority ethnic groups like Karen and Karenni forcing thousands of refugees over the border into Thailand. The barbaric system of using forced human labor on Slorc infrastructure construction projects and forced human porters on Slorc military campaigns continues unabated, also the other serious categories of human rights abuses such as torture, rape and killing documented by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch/ Asia as well as United Nations. None of these human rights abuses have abated in the least since the release of Aung San Suu Kyi. Japanese government should answer this question: what evidence can be pointed to that the Slorc military dictatorship is "moving towards democracy?" Releasing the leader of opposition from illegal arrest and then refusing to talk to her about democracy is certainly not an indication of a government moving towards democracy. On the contrary, it is an indication of an international public relations ploy devoid of any political substance whatsoever.

The full extent of Slorc's strategy to avoid democratization and to institutionalize long term military rule in Burma can only be understood by

understanding the role of Slorc's so-called National Convention plays in the strategy. In May 1990, Aung San Suu Kyi's political party, National League for Democracy won 80 per cent of the seats at stake in the election. Even though Slorc refused to hand over power, the military dictatorship was faced with a long term problem because by refusing to honor the will of the people clearly expressed in a free election. The military dictatorship was illegal under the new emerging standards of international law. Slorc's attempted solution to this problem was to call a so-called "National Convention" to write a new constitution for Burma. Actually the term National Convention is a complete misnomer. It is really not a "National" Convention at all; it is a "Military" Convention. It was called by the military; all of the delegates were handpicked by the military; its day-to-day deliberations are supervised by the military; and even more outrageously, the military has given a written order to the convention instructing it turn out a constitution that guarantee the military the leading role in the national politics in the future of Burma. This so-called National Convention is nothing more than a transparent farce designed to permanently institutionalize military rule in Burma. UN Special Rapporteur on Burma, Mr. Yozo Yokota said in last year "It is difficult to assume that, in the National Convention, open and free exchange of views and opinions are taking place in order to produce a truly democratic constitution." Despite repeated calls in UN resolutions for the Slorc to give a timetable for the convention, there is still no sign of the convention coming to an end two and half years after the process began. The last session on April 8, 1995 was adjourned until October 24. But again it was adjourned another month.

Japan has a very special responsibility when it comes to helping prevent this planned institutionalization of military rule from suffering in Burma. Japan knows full well the evils, the horror and the death that can befall a nation politically controlled by its own armed forces. The

period of military domination of Japanese political life in the 1930s and 1940s brought death, destruction and defeat upon the Japanese nation. Additionally, a conquering Japanese soldiers, under the control of these military dictators, brought killing, rape, torture and destruction to many conquered lands including Burma, which suffered greatly in World War II. For Japan, a country that has suffered grievously at the hands of its previous military rulers, it would be unconscionable to now help and assist Burma's military rulers to solidify their control over Burma. Japan should remember that Burma is completely unique in Southeast Asia. Burma is the only country in the entire region that is still a military dictatorship. Japan, therefore has a special responsibility to move cautiously in Burma. To assist Slorc to institutionalize long term military control in Burma by giving ODA to Slorc would be a complete betrayal of Japan's own history. The Burmese people appreciate the recent apology of the Japanese Prime Minister concerning certain measures taken by Japan's military rulers in the Second World War. Now the Burmese people ask that the Japanese government does not assist Burma's military rulers to solidify their long term control of Burma by giving those military rulers direct development aids.

In trying to decide what course of action to take in regards the release of Aung San Suu Kyi,

Japanese government must turn to the words of Aung San Suu Kyi herself, given during a recent taped interview:

"..... During this wait-and-see period, where we want to see in which way the (Slorc) authorities wish to move and where we want to give them every opportunity to be able to come to the negotiation table with a clear conscience, and with the best will possible. I think this is something we wait and see. I have said that this is not the time to rush in with investment, please wait and see, that I said from the very first week, please wait and see before rushing in with new investment..."

If during this wait and see period Slorc were unexpectedly to begin a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi; if Slorc were to release all political prisoners; if Slorc were to announce a policy of discontinuing human rights abuses, particularly in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities; if Slorc were to dissolve bogus National Convention, then it would be time for the Japanese government to reexamine the situation and see if one or more of these Slorc actions satisfied the "moving towards democracy" requirement contained in the ODA guidelines. But until the Slorc military dictatorship make such genuine and sincere moves, Japanese government should heed the urgent words of Aung San Suu Kyi: "Please wait."



“ **THIN BAW THA**”, the Burmese word literally means the “Sailor or seafarer”, but in Burmese meaning, it means greatly wider; a person who fortunately gets the job on the foreign flagships, earns a big money and has the chance to go and see the outside world that is a common dream of almost all Burmese who are locked up inside their homeland. More importantly, they are the one who can leave legally the country in despair or fear. But

LACK OF TRADE UNION, FULL OF LABOR RIGHTS VIOLATION

very few people know the hardships and problems of the Burmese seafarers how they are working below the standards recognized by the international labor organization. Their plights are unseen and their voice are unheard inside Burma due to the banning of trade union. Moreover, it is a grievous fact the how the Burmese authorities has committed flagrant violations of human rights and trade union rights through its oppression of Burmese seafarers serving on foreign flagships. Instead of protection the Burmese seafarers’ rights, the Burmese authorities has being collaborating with the immoral shipping companies and manning agents in the labor rights violation.

Burma is legally bounded in ILO Convention. Burma has ratified the ILO Convention No. 87 concerning freedom of association and protection of the right to organized adopted on 9 July 1948 at ILO’s thirty-first session. Its article 2 mentions “*Workers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have the right to establish and , subject only to the rules of the organization concerned, to join organizations of their own choosing without previous authorization.*”. But in reality, like other laborers, the seafarers are not allowed to establish the trade union that can work for their own welfare and voice their words.

In Burma, Seaman Employment Control Division (SECD) which operates under the auspices of the Department of Marine Administration works for the placement of all Burmese seafarers. This agency in turn comes under the responsibility of the Ministry of Transport and communications. No single representative of seafarer includes and it is totally controlled by the Burmese government over the placement of all Burmese seafarers. Likewise other departments, since military has lunched a systematically militarization by replacing almost all the intellectual civilian posts

with the officers in uniform, most of the senior official in SECD are ex-military officers. Burmese seafarers have to work with whatever pay and conditions the flags of convenience ships they work for offer. That would be no surprise to see the actual wage they receive is much less than the international labor organization's recommended minimum wage.

Burmese seafarers are in good demand by the shipping companies for their hard working and good technical experience compare to the others from other Asian countries. But lack of the trade union that can bargain the minimum wage with the company, the Burmese are paid less than the other crew. There would be a unseen reason of good demand since the Burmese seafarers have no voice of complain for this discrimination. They cannot claim their rights or accept assistance from international labor organizations which fight for the rights of laborers to improve their wages and working condition that result a abuse and intimidation by both their government and shipping company. Many unethical shipping companies are taking advantage on this point and exploiting to the Burmese seafarers. One Burmese middle-age seafarer said with depressed eyes while he was talking about their plight "we are hard working, intelligent and more experienced than other nationalities, but we are paid the lowest and the most humiliated."

Addition to the lack of their own voice in the placement, the Burmese seafarers are bound in the agreements they are required to sign with SECD. Before boarding a ship, they are required to sign a contract stating that they will not contact the international labor organizations like International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF). This federation has over 400 transport workers' trade unions in more than 100 countries. It was founded in 1896 and intervenes directly in the industrial relations of Flag of Convenience (foc) vessels, fighting for minimum wages and trade union agreements. Besides the contract, Burmese seafarers have to sign the affidavit promising that they would return the back pay money promptly

and in full to the owner in case of ITF intervention on low wage or unpaid labor. Also they have to promise in their affidavits that they would agree to sign every month a "double payroll" if required by the owner and agree to be legally liable for persecution in case they break that personal agreement.

In the event that Burmese crew members received an ITF settlement, they are required to pay the money back to the SECD in Burma even if the ITF's intervention was requested by Non-Burmese members of the crews. If they refuse, their registration in SECD is revoked, passports confiscated and they face the threat of imprisonment. In at least one case of ITF intervention, the Burmese crew of a flag-of-convenience ship were told that their families would be in trouble if the action was not called off.

Since Burmese authorities take a very few action for the rights and welfare of its seafarers on the ship, the plight and working condition of the Burmese seafarers on the board are appalling. The salaries are paid in line with the agreement SECD or manning agents in Burma has signed with the company which is much less than the ILO and ITF recommended minimum wage. The ILO recommended minimum scale is 1,100 US\$ but varies depending on the workers' condition. But the actual scale for the Burmese Able Seaman (AB) is not more than 300 US\$ plus overtime. To avoid the ITF intervention, some companies with an ITF collective agreement use the "double bookkeeping," a common phenomenon on flag of convenience ships. In this system crews members are given two lists to sign in each payday, an official ITF salary list, and the SECD "ITF" salary list which is considerably lower. In case of ITF inspection, the company shows the official ITF salary list and Burmese seafarers in fear of persecution by their authorities and are bounded with the agreement, do not dare to express or complain their truth. In some cases, they are provided with the barest minimum of food to survive and lack of safety in breach of international standards.

Burmese authorities does not take any program for the welfare of the seafarers even though they earn big foreign exchange for the country. Burmese seafarer have to send fifty per cent of his salary back to his family prior to 1989. Beginning from 1989-90, this allotment was reduced to 25 per cent. Not surprisingly, the allotment as well as ten per cent for tax need to be exchanged in official foreign exchange rate. (Official rate of exchange is 6 kyats while black market rate is 110-120 kyats).

Very few cases of Burmese seafarers are reportedly found having contact with ITF and taking against their companies. Because of the fear of retaliation by the Burmese authorities, they scare to fight for their legitimate rights with the assistance of ITF. Those who have contacted the ITF in the past regarding the noncompliance with collective agreements by foreign shipping companies and their working conditions generally have been subjected to retaliation by the Burmese authorities. This retaliation has included the confiscation of passports, seamen's record books and qualifications that hinders them not to work as seafarer again in their entire life.

One seaman revealed his story how he has fought for his legitimate rights against his shipping company on 29 September 1988 in Sundvall, Sweden. Altogether fourteen Burmese seafarers working on board the Liberian-flag *Trans Dignity* contacted the ITF-affiliated Swedish Seamen's Union (SSU) requesting their help in improving their working and living conditions on board ship. They were not provided sufficient food, lack of working utilities and safety system. The fire fighting machine was broken down on board and they are not provided gloves and warm clothes for working outside in cold weather. A local SSU representative went on board and listened to the crew's complaints. The *Tran Dignity* was technically covered by an ITF agreement but the crew were not being paid in accordance with it. The SSU representative found evidence of the usual system of evasion- the crew were signing on two sets of ships articles and dual

wage accounts were in operation. The SSU decided to seek and termination of the existing agreement. When the owners refused to agree to this demand, the unions boycotted the vessel for a period of six days until the owner's representative, flying in from Hong Kong, eventually agreed to sign the new agreement, and to pay the crew their back-pay entitlement under it. As part of the agreement, the owners gave an undertaking that they would not subsequently victimize the seamen by withdrawing their seamen's passports or registration or attempting to claim back the payments obtained for them by the Swedish unions action.

The new agreement awarded a total of US\$ 176,845 in back-pay to the fourteen Burmese crew. When the claims had all been settled, the crew who at their own insistence had already received part of their back-pay in cash, prepare to leave Sweden on a flight to Bangkok. Their money and passports were confiscated on arrival by the Burmese authorities, prompting the Thai authorities to declare them illegal immigrants and to request that they be returned to Burma as soon as practicable. Their passports were subsequently returned but only after the ITF lawyers in Thailand had intervened on their behalf. A campaign was then launched designed to make an example of the crew so as to ensure that no other Burmese would ever accept assistance from the ITF or any of its affiliates. Later financial hardship forced all but three of the former crew of the *Trans Dignity* to return home to Burma where their passports and seamen's books were confiscated by the Burmese authorities as punishment for accepting the help of the ITF. The Burmese authorities also confiscated all the back-pay and for one seafarer who had no money left, the Burmese authorities confiscated his property even though all of them had notary saying that these money were rightful compensation for their back-pay by the company.

There are some other cases similar with this case. 3 June 1993, eleven Burmese former crew members of the Greek-flag *Angelic Faith* were



***JIANDA, a
miserable ship
abandoned at
the Philippines
harbor.***

kidnapped by Burmese government officials whilst in transit through Singapore airport bound for Bangkok. These seafarers had received a back-pay settlement of nearly US\$ 100,000 assisted by ITF. They were effectively kidnapped and returned forcibly to Burma.

Most recently, Soe Win (not his real name) from *Jianda* owned by the Topco Shipping Co. Ltd. died on July 1995 while it was harboring in the Philippines. Sixteen Burmese including him have been ended up in Philippines since December 1994. They have not received the pay since then. They contacted to their agent based in Hong Kong and SECD was in vain with no response. They also contacted to the Burmese Embassy in Manila to get help for them but no action was taken. Finally they got assistance from Stella Mars Apostleship, a missionary organization base in Manila. That organization took care of all of them and filed a legal lawsuit against the shipping company for the unpaid wages of the Burmese seafarers on behalf of them. While the case was pending, Soe Win died of drown and no body took care of his funeral. Finally with the assistance of other organizations, his remain ashes was brought back to his family in Burma. He was a father of three and was a former government servant who had quit his job hoping to get a bet-

ter job to catch up with the sky-high prices in Burma. He had paid 200,000 kyat to manning agent in Rangoon for his employment on this ship and his family is still in debt. Their remaining family do not know how to get the compensation or get back his back-pay from the company since neither SECD or manning agent was taking care of this matter.

Though the intimidation and threat by the Burmese authorities, some Burmese seafarers began to speak out for their rights to organize their labor union and fight for their rights. The idea of seeking the assistance of an international trade union organization is considered to be fundamental aspect of freedom of association. A group of Burmese seafarers have established an ITF affiliated Seafarers' Union of Burma (SUB) based in Thailand. With their regular contact with the ITF, they are working for the rights of their colleagues. They became affiliated with ITF in 1992 and authorized to sign a collective agreement with the shipping companies on behalf of the Burmese seafarers. According to the agreement, SUB is taking care of the facts and condition of the seafarers signed in the agreement. SUB grantees to enjoy the full rights of the seafarers and to protect the violations against the seafarers. It became the member of Asia-Pacific Regional Steering

In the ILO Convention concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Rights to Organize which Burma has ratified, the article two mentions “workers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have to rights to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organization concerned, to join organizations of their own choosing without previous authorization.” It is important and essential to guarantee and respect the rights of seafarers to form an independent trade union in Burma for the defense of their basic rights and interests if they so wish. The seafarers should be able to form and join organizations of their own choice in full freedom.

Burmese authorities also have to stop the victimization of Burmese seafarers- such as revocation of their registration, confiscation of their passports and even the threat of imprisonment- in the event that they accept and receive an ITF settlement and they refuse to hand their back-pay settlement to the SECD. They have to stop exerting the various types of pressures on Burmese seafarers either directly or indirectly.

In Burma, the pursuit of freedom of association and formation of trade unions is inextricably intertwined with the struggle for democracy and human rights of the whole population. Without respect to the fundamental rights, the freedom of association are unattainable. Unless the democratic government is formed, Burmese people including laborers and seafarers could not exercise their basic rights. All the seafarers are obliged to fight for their legitimate rights not only for to end the discrimination against them but for the restoration of democracy and human rights in Burma.



The Burmese Junta's gas - for - gun policy



Despite a serious shortage of energy under the rule of the military junta, Burma has sold her recently found natural gas to a foreign country in a classic case of mismanagement propelled by the personal greed of the ruling elite.

News agencies report about frequent power break-downs in Rangoon, investors and industrialists complain of inadequate electricity supplies, and diplomats and tourists confirm this situation. Most buildings keep voltage regulators to offset the voltage-drop on service lines, offices and shops keep back-up generators to cope with routine black-outs in the capital, portraying a dire shortage of energy in Burma.

A vast countryside is yet to be electrified. But when natural gas was discovered in the Gulf of Martaban, the ruling junta did not give any thought of developing the natural energy resources for local use. The junta which calls itself the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc), has signed a natural gas sale contract with Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand, and a gas pipeline from Burma to Thailand is now under construction. It is a classic mismanagement of energy resources, and the question here is; should the Burmese sit in the dark while her government lights up Thai cities?

Obviously, the Slorc does not care for its own people, but thinks only of getting hard currency to strengthen its military muscle, not for national defence but for further repression of its people and accumulation of wealth for the generals.

The fact is that the Burmese need natural gas and not the military might that has impoverished the nation. The natural gas could generate electricity, promote industries, create jobs and de-

velop the economy. Pathetically, they do not have the voice to speak out under the rule of the gun. Thus the butter-or-gun economic theory ironically fits in to the present situation in Burma.

At the moment, gasoline is rationed in the country- two gallons (eight litres) a week for a new car, four gallons for an old car and some more for buses. The natural gas, if developed, could drive buses and cars on Rangoon streets, run industries and do a host of other jobs.

Look again to the kitchen fuel shortage situation. The plunder of Burmese forests by foreign logging companies has deprived the Burmese of their traditional firewood and raised charcoal prices by 300% in the last two years. Cooking gas- a novelty to most Burmese- is rationed only to the privileged class. The on-and-off electricity supply cannot be relied on for cooking of food. Clearly, the newly available natural gas should serve as a good kitchen fuel substitute. The planners are only too absurd as they are entirely obsessed with the dollar dream.

An democratically people-elected government could not sell out the natural gas to a foreign country while the energy shortage is gripping over Burma itself. The natural gas is not a surplus energy material in Burma as it is in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and OPEC countries. Yet, the junta sold it out, leaving the natives energy starved. The Burmese are also kept silent by the ruthless military terror machine which is always on the lookout to crush any dissident.

Regarding Thailand's purchase of natural gas, the Burmese take it that they are being robbed of their valuable possessions by a greedy country. It is a glaring example of an unethical country taking advantage over the Burmese who are help-

less and incapacitated under the dictatorial rule. Thailand says it is practising the constructive engagement policy toward Burma, but critics dubbed it as the policy of destructive opportunism.

The Slorc's signing of the gas sale contract with Thailand is looked upon by the Burmese as an illegal deal, the seller being an illegal government lacking the mandate of the people.

On the same line of thought, Burmese people hold that in matters needing to render support to the democratic cause, Thailand says it does not wish to interfere with the internal affairs of a neigh-

bor, in matters of taking advantage Thailand does not hesitate to delve with Burma's domestic affairs. It may be that Thai leaders are politically immature.

Really, Thailand is unethical to go to the length of looting of natural resources from the helpless people of Burma, an act that amounts to steeping on their welfare. This policy must be termed as the destructive opportunism in the words of Prof. Vitit Muntabhorn of the Faculty of Law, Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok. Thailand simply could not think about future relations with the Burmese of next generation.

ON-GOING HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION

Forced recruitment of ethnic youth into army

Slorc is expanding their military strength from 18,000 in 1988 to an estimated 400,000 in 1995. Over half of national budget are used in defence service. Many ethnic youth are forcibly recruited into army without their consent. Particularly in Sagaing Division and Chin State Slorc is now launching the forced recruitment of the indigenous youth to their army. Slorc authorities took the ethnic children from their families with promise of education opportunity in cities. Instead of sending to the school, ethnic Naga boys were directly sent to the military recruitment training school and forced to join the army.

Slorc authorities recruited 37 Naga boys from Sumra, Konkilon, Kuki, Phontharet, Nga Kyan and Nami Ubi villages in Sagaing Division with the promise of education opportunity in the cities. Some of the names of youth from Nga Kyan village, Sumra township, Sagaing Division are as followed;

Barry Saw, 14-year-old boy son, U Tha Don
Cara Phor 12-year-old boy, son of U Kyan Chi
Yin Shi, 12-year-old boy, son of U Nar Wor
Saw Htee son of U Raphan.

These 37 Naga school boys were sent to an army recruitment training school in Monywa, Sagaing Division instead of sending to school as they have been promised. They were later forced to enroll the military training for six months. Some boys had managed to escape from the training school. But unfortunately some are in the army and Barry Saw and Saw Htee are now in army service at Maw Leik, Kachin State.

ABSDF (Work group, western)

UNOCAL, TOTAL, Slorc and forced labor

Since the natural gas pipeline project is going to start soon, Slorc collaborating with Unocal and Total is taking the security measure on the proposed pipeline area. That actions include building the army base and storage for the instruments of the foreign companies in Heizel

Boke Island and constructing the motor road and mini airport in the island.

The Hiezel Boke island will become the important base both for the military security forces and companies' base. It is situated between the Yedana gas field and Phaung Daw, Kan Bauk township. The construction and forced labor have been started since March 1994. Each Village from the Kan Bauk township is summoned to send ten persons to the Boke island for forced labor. If fail to do so, villager has to pay from 8,000 kyat to 10,000 kyat that amount is so high for the rural people in that area. Each time lasts one month duration. As soon as they arrive in the working site, their rice and food are confiscated by the Slorc troop and they are given two tin of rice every day. The works are so hard that no body want to work there. They are ordered to cut the trees and saw it into pieces for building the military barracks and gush house for the officers from the gaspipe project. They also have to build a helicopter field there. There are many other people from other villages and some prisoners working forced conscription.

Local people are also forced to work for the construction of LIR 267 and LIR 273 which are taking security responsibilities for Total field office in Kan Bauk. One person from each household has to work for cleaning the surface, digging the ditches and building up the military barracks. In addition to that forced labor, local people are levied numerous tax such as porter fee, railway fee, Heizel Boke island fee, military troop fee and emergency porter fee that forced many people to abandon their homes in Burma and leave for Thailand.

From another source, TOTAL is paying 400,000 kyats to Slorc for using helicopter in the region a day, it is learnt.

ABSDF (South)

More than 200 villages in Thantaung township relocated for resort village plan for "Visit Myanmar Year"

Slorc is relocating the local people from more than 200 villages in Thantaung township Karen State where the military is planning to set up a resort village for "Visit Myanmar Year"

There have been a series of forced relocation ordered by the Slorc but the ethnic people were resisting the order to move and had fled into the forest as the internally displaced person in the deep forest instead. Most of the ethnic groups in this region are Karen and Padaung. (known as long-necked hill tribe ethnic whose women put metal rings around their necks giving them a long-necked look). They have been ordered to leave their homes by November 10, 1995. The order was issued after the recent trip of Lt-Gen. Khin Nyunt, secretary-1 of Slorc to Thantaung township in last month.

In preparing for the "Visit Myanmar Year 1996", Slorc is planning to construct ethnic races villages near Syriam bridge in Rangoon as a tourist attraction. The villages will be displayed according to the habitat and culture of the ethnic races and the tourist will have to pay toll for entering to the village. In order to accomplish the villages, the Padaung people are forced to live in these "ethnic human zoo". Similarly, a small group of Padaung women was taken from Burma to live in northwestern Thailand where tourists are charged money to take pictures of them.

Slorc is expecting about 500,000 visitors will be coming to Burma in 1996. Thousands of Burmese have been conscripting as forced labor and forced relocation in preparing of beautification campaign for "Visit Myanmar Year".

ABSDF News Agency

Forced labor continues in Ye-Tavoy railways

"Labor detention camps"

Slorc has set up five labor detention camps in Yebyu district, Tenesarim Division in southern Burma and forcing about 4,000 civilians to work for the ongoing Ye-Tavoy railway construction, also known as "death railway". Civilians including women, children and elderly people are forced to work in the heavy rain to finish the construction project by 1996, "Visit Myanmar Year" designated by Slorc. About 500 civilians in the labor camps are suffering malaria and other health problems caused by the harsh working condition and heavy rain.

The forced labor detention camps are 21-mile camp, 30-mile camp, 30-mile prisoner hard labor camp, Nwe Lein camp and Zinbar camp, all of them are in Yebyu district. Among them, 30-miles prisoner hard labor camp is a camp of the prisoners from various jails and prisons across the country who have been sentenced imprisonment with hard labor. There are about 3200 civilian and 500 prisoners are consistantly working in these five labor camps, it is estimated.

People are conscripted from their villages and forcibly stay in these camps and worked for the construction. They works from 6 am to 5 pm, sometimes under heavy rain. Main work are digging ditches each of which is ten feet wide and one foot high, and building embankment for the railway tracks. One ex-laborer who recently arrived to Thai-Burma border after working a month at the labor detention camp said "local people from Yebyu, Tavoy, Launglon and Thetyet Chaung township are conscripted to work for a month in every fifteen days. The works are hard labor without any pay. The military monitors the worksite but do not provide anything. People get sick and ill frequently beacuse of the heavy rain. When they get sick, people have to buy medi-

cine from the military. People who fail to work are fined 2000 kyats to the local authorities."

Ye-Tavoy railway construction project which is 110 miles long, has been undergoing from Ye township, Mon state to Tavoy township, Tenessarim Division since November 1993. Slorc is planning to finish the entire project by 1996, "Visit Myanmar Year" and at least 20,000 local people have been conscripted to work in this project. The new working site in Tavoy-Yebyu region that covers 10.72 miles from Tavoy was open on 31, May 1995.

The embankment is 100 feet high and the foliage is 100 feet wide from either side of the railway track. The laborers are closely monitored by the soldiers from the Slorc LIR 343, 402, 403, 407 and 410. For fear of constriction in the forced labor detention camps, many people fled to Thai-Burma border. Between 50 to 100 people are arriving daily to the border.

ABSDF News Agency

Forced beautification for the "Students' Sport Festival" in Loikaw

Since Slorc is preparing the "Students' Sport Festival" in December in Loikaw, Karenni State, they have ordered that all the residents on the main roads must build the wall by 15 November to meet modernization codes. In Loikaw, 365 kms northeast of Rangoon, it will cost between 20,000 to 30,000 kyats to build the wall for each residence. Those who could not afford to build the concrete buildings Slorc ordered, had to borrow from other or sell at very low cost. Slorc is doing these

forced beautification across the country intending to show the tourists and foreign diplomats that Burma is on her way to being a developed country. Similarly, Slorc also ordered to relocate the some house for the road extention in last July. Slorc has never arranged to provide assistance for these distresses nor offered to pay compensation. Moreover, people from Loikaw including students are ordered to give some "donation" for the festival and to work forced labor at the construction of festival.

ABSDF

Human rights violations still continue in western Burma

Human rights violations including arbitrary killing, beating torture, confiscation of property and extortion by the Slorc sodiers continue in western Burma. On July 13, 1995, Nga Kyan village, a Naga village in Sumra township, Sagaing Division was raided by the Slorc platoon led by Sec.Lt. Tun Tun Oo of IB 347.

After the Slorc's soldiers reached inside the small village, without any reason they deliberately shot to the houses. Particularly two houses of U Tha Don and U Phon Mae was damaged of the shooting. After the shooting they ordered the people from he houses to come down and kicked U Tha Don. A village headman and six other villagers were also beaten up. They also taken a village headman and one other villager as the hostages back to their military base. They were reportedly turtured the whole night. The next day the villagers were ordered to give one pig and 10,000 kyats as ransom. When the village gave what they asked, the soldiers released two of them.

ABSDF (West)

NEWS FROM PRESS

Ms.Madelein Albright's press conference in Bangkok

United States Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright made a two-day visit to Burma from September 8-9 where she met both Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Burmese military regime leaders. She held a press conference at the Oriental Hotel in Bangkok on 9 September after her trip.

She said the message she delivered to the Burmese government was that the United States sees further progress on democracy, human rights and human rights for minorities as a necessary precondition for a warming of relations of any kind. She addressed in her press conference that she urged Slorc official to begin a meaningful dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and other democratic leaders for the purpose of reconciliation and broadening the scope for political discussion within the country.

Ms.Albright told Khin Nyunt that she did not accept the Slorc's characterization of the National Convention as a meaningful process for dialogue during their meeting. She said she strongly doubted whether the Burmese people were able to participate in the process of democratization in a meaningful way through the so-called National Convention, as claimed by Slorc leaders, in her press conference. She quoted Khin Nyunt as telling her that the Burmese people were smiling more. But she retorted that "dictators often dilute themselves into believing they have popular support. But people often smile not because they are happy, but because they are afraid. The future of Burma must be built on hope, not fear."

She stressed the US's concern with human

rights including the need for further release of political prisoners, and an end to the attacks on ethnic minorities. She also said she was modestly encouraged to hear that the Slorc is now considering the possibility of engaging in a political dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi. Albright also met Aung San Suu Kyi whom she described as "noble woman".

"The Slorc faces a choice between its present isolation and reintegration into the international community. As a result of my visit, the Slorc leadership can have no doubt about what it must do. The choice is theirs," she said in her conclusion at her press conference.

The Sunday Post September 10, 1995

Burma puts convention date back by one month

Burma announced on October 5, 1995 it was putting off the next session of a national convention for a month, to November 28, to avoid disrupting rice-planting and the observance of Buddhist holidays.

Analysis, however, linked the delay to the annual United Nations vote on a resolution calling for an improved human rights situation in Burma. "By delaying well past the time when the resolution will be debated, the junta can rest on the laurels its won in releasing Aung San Suu Kyi" one Burma watcher commented. "The religious holidays and the planting season can hardly have taken the Slorc by surprise, so that can't be the reason" one analyst said flatly.

Burma has been hoping to break the international consensus on a strong anti-Rangoon resolution in the UN General Assembly this year, partly in recognition of the release of Suu Kyi. But Dr. Sein Win Prime Minister of National Coalition Government of Union of Burma urged the international community to continue to look critically at Burma "The very repressive law are still there. Other political prisoners are still there" said Dr. Sein Win.

Bangkok Post & Nation October 6, 1995

Slorc "won't discuss reform with Suu Kyi"

Burma military government will not discuss political reforms with opposition leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, according to Rangoon's ambassador to Thailand. Reforms would continue to be undertaken solely by the National Convention, Tin Winn said on October 1, 1995.

The ruling Slorc would leave the future of the country to the convention that has been drafting a new constitution since 1993. "As the process is going very smoothly, we don't need dialogue with anybody" he said. Talks appeared possible when Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt told US Ambassador to the UN Madeleine Albright last month that the government was considering political dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi.

The ambassador said he would not anticipate when the task would be finished, but the next president needed military "knowledge" because his country required a strong government to unite 155 minority groups. The military would hold one of the two vice-president posts because of its right to take part in politics, although it did not have a party, he said.

Bangkok Post October 2, 1995

Mitsui to enter \$700 million in Burma gas project

Japanese Mitsui & Co Ltd. has agreed to undertake a project to utilise natural gas from the fields off Burma's southern coast, according to company spokesman. \$700 million worth project involves construction of a 200 megawatt electric power plant and a fertilizer plant near Rangoon. A 250 km (150 miles) pipeline will also be built under Mitsui's guidance between the offshore Yadana gas fields and the plant sites. Both plants are scheduled to start when natural gas production from Yadana begins in 1998, the spokesman said.

Reuter August 29, 1995.



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