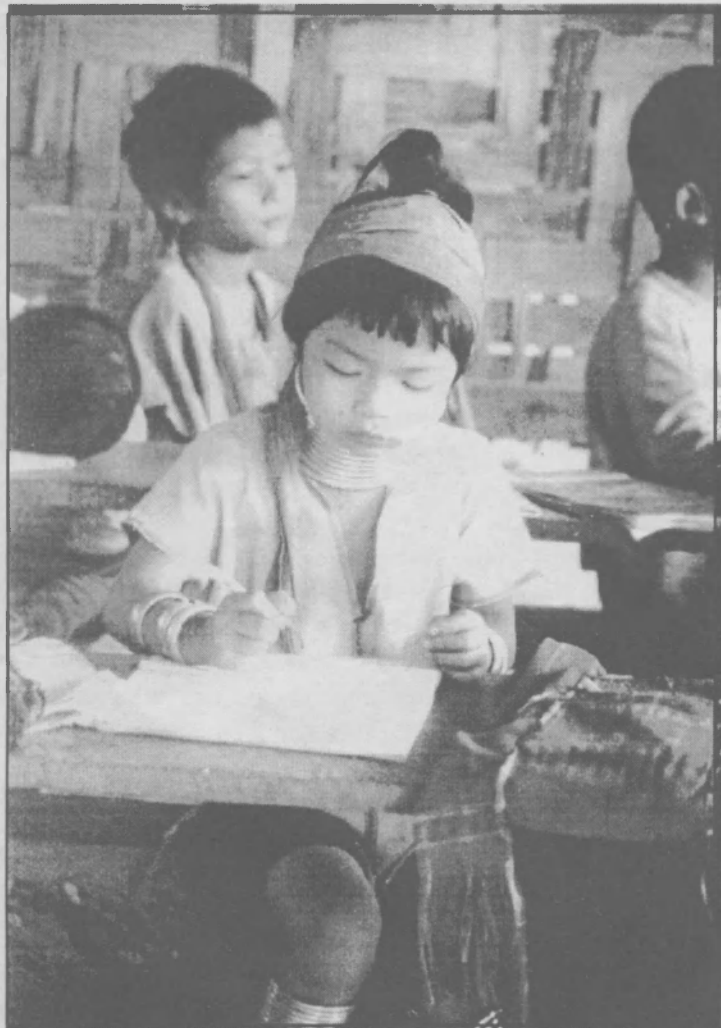


DAWN



Education in Burma.

Slorc cuts the share of the national budget for education to 16% with a mere 0.4% allocated to social welfare services compared to 38% of the military.

INDIA & BURMA
An Agonizing Relationship.

RIGHT OR WRONG?

Corporate genocide

**The AIDS epidemic
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Strong Opposition Activities Against the National Convention and the Need For International Support

After the resolute decision by the National League for Democracy to walk out of the National Convention, there are now almost no delegates attending the National Convention who were elected by the people in the May 1990 national elections. Slorc Declaration Number 1/90 issued on 27 July 1990 states that it is the duty of the elected representatives of the people to draw up a constitution. Slorc has never repealed or repudiated this Declaration. The so-called National Convention, which is being staged by the Slorc without the elected representatives in order to attempt to legitimize military rule, is a sham and is a violation of Slorc's own official Declaration.

NLD's decision to boycott the National Convention expresses its desire to do what is most beneficial for the people. Since the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, from illegal house arrest, the NLD has done its best to create conditions conducive to continue the struggle for democracy in an peaceful and effective way. Unfortunately, Slorc has continued its campaign of political repression and harassment. Since the beginning of the National Convention, all the democratic forces and the overwhelming majority of the ethnic forces have clearly opposed it. The NLD and other opposition groups have a unified view of the National Convention which was best expressed by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi when she commented that the National Convention was not heading for what the people want, and further she stated that the National Convention would not bring about national reconciliation, multi-party democracy or a constitution acceptable to the people of Burma. With no elected representatives of the people in the National Convention it can be said that opposing the National Convention is the will of the entire people of Burma.

Slorc, by ignoring the views and will of the people and attempting to continue the illegitimate National Convention without a mandate, clearly demonstrates its objective of attempting to consolidate a constitutional military dictatorship in the future politics of Burma. In order to consolidate their military rule, Slorc will keep committing various forms of oppression against the Burmese people and opposition forces. The international community must remain alert to developments in Burma, and now is the crucial time for those in the international community who wish to see democracy and human rights in Burma, who wish to see Burma gain internal peace and contribute to regional security, to express their strong and firm views opposing the so-called National Convention. This type of international support will be critical for the struggle for democracy and human rights in Burma, and for the unwavering efforts of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Not only the international community but of all those who wish to see democracy triumph in Burma must unite to dissuade Slorc from trying to consolidate a constitutional military dictatorship and at the same time give all-out support to the democratization efforts undertaken by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD. Statesmen, diplomats, and other prominent figures should go to Burma and meet with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other NLD leaders. Actions such as showing support for and maintaining contact with NLD, such as condemning the National Convention, such as suspending any assistance to Slorc, and such as asserting more pressure on Slorc to hold a tripartite dialogue between democratic forces led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, ethnic groups and Slorc, will all be necessary before national reconciliation can occur and before a truly democratic nation can be built. That goal, after all, is the real aspiration of the people of Burma.

4TH CONFERENCE OF ABSDF HELD

The fourth conference of the All Burma Students' Democratic Front was successfully held between October 5 to October 20, 1995 at the student camp in the liberated area. The 15-day conference was attended by 69 representatives from the different student camps along the border.

During the session of conference, representatives analyzed the current political situation inside Burma and also adopted the future political policy and other strategy of the ABSDF. The participants also amended and adopted the organization's constitution. The conference promulgated the following four aims and objectives.

(1) to liberate entire people of Burma from the suppression of military dictatorship.

(2) to achieve democracy and human rights.

(3) to restore internal peace.

(4) to emerge Federal Union of Burma.

The participants of the conference unanimously decided to intensify their struggle until these aims and objectives are achieved.

After the secret ballots, new Central Committee composed with 24 members and three reserved Central Committee members were elected. Dr. Naing Aung was reelected as the Chairman for new term. Kyaw Kyaw was also reelected as vice-chairman. Sai Myint Thu was elected general secretary while Dr. Myint Cho and Htay Aung were named secretary (1) and (2).

According to the ABSDF declaration of the fourth conference, ABSDF conference strongly denounced the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) for its responsibility for on-going human rights violations and lack of democracy in Burma. Also it called for the comprehensive political dialogue

between Slorc, the democratic forces led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and ethnic forces (both from the liberated areas and from inside Burma) and also believed that it is the only means of proceeding with genuine national reconciliation in Burma. The ABSDF believes that national reconciliation with full guaranty of the democratic and ethnic rights only can move towards the genuine and long-lasting peace in Burma. Its also urges to establish more unity and cooperation among the democratic forces in order to build up the solidarity. ABSDF would work with full extend of its effort for the solidarity of ABSDF, among the students and all opposition groups. To show its sincerity for national reconciliation, ABSDF said Slorc must take the following actions.

- to unconditionally release all political prisoners including Min Ko Naing.
- to stop so-called National Convention immediately.
- to abolish all unlawful acts and restrictions in Burma.
- to institute a nationwide cease-fire.
- to start meeting with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in the first stage and announcing that they would agree to hold the tripartite meeting.

New CEC members vow to continue their struggle for democracy

◀ Chairman, Dr. Naing Aung giving closing speech at the conference



NCUB delegation participated in the CALD's meeting

The Second Conference of the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD) was held between November 10 to 12, 1995 in Taipei, Taiwan. The CALD is the largest council composed with the political parties from the Asian region. The majority of its members are opposition in their respective countries and holding the some seats in their ruling governments. There are



some ruling political parties like a Malaysian People's Movement Party (GERAKAN). Some of those are main opposition parties such as Democratic Party led by former Thai Prime Minister Chuan Leepai from Thailand and Democratic Progress Party of Taiwan (DPP). DPP currently holds 40 percent of the MPs in the ruling cabinet and has the great potential in the forthcoming election, according to the Taiwan political academic.

The members of CALD are: Democratic Party (Thailand), Malaysian People's Movement Party, Singapore Democratic Party, Liberal Party of Sri Lanka, Liberal Party of the Philippines, Democrat Party of Korea, Buddhist Liberal Democrat Party of Cambodia and Democratic Progress Party of Taiwan.

As the invitation by the CALD, three-member delegation of the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB); Khun Okka (PPLO), Saw Tu Tu Lay (KNU) and U Aung Htoo (ABSDF) participated in the conference and discussed the political situation in Burma.

Opening speeches were delivered by Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, former Thai Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of PM Chuan Leepai's government, Chairman of the Thai Democratic Progress Party (DPP) and Mr. Marut Bunnag, Chairman of the Thai National Assembly.

NCUG delegations has an opportunity to meet and discuss as the legal members of CALD with other on Burma issue. "The New Democratic Constitution of Burma" a special program for Burma was organized by the CALD. During this special program, members of NCUB delegations initiated the Burma discussion on the background history and current political situation of Burma. Saw Tu Tu Lay from KNU in his presentation explained the brief background history of Burma and the reasons why the ethnic armed forces have signed cease-fire agreements with Slorc. Furthermore he emphasized the Slorc's attempt to prolong their power by holding the sham National Convention and the clear picture of Burmese politics without any improvement even though Aung San Suu Kyi has been released.

The role and structure of NCUB was presented by U Aung Htoo from ABSDF. In his presentation, he said "Constructive Engagement Policy"

by the ASEAN members should not assist to the Slorc but should help solve the political dilemma to achieve long-lasting peace in Burma. He also urged the international community to give more concrete pressure on Slorc in order to hold a tripartite meetings.

Khun Okka mentioned the process of drafting constitution since 1990. Moreover, he explained how the drafting committee is trying to frame the constitution which will gain the support of the whole Burmese people.

After the assembly, Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats adopted the resolution supporting liberal and democratic initiatives in Burma. In the resolution, the assembly noted "Affirming the need to undertake a substantive and meaningful political dialogue between the democratic forces led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, all the ethnic nationalities and the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc); We, the members of the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats (CALD), hereby resolve, in this General Assembly, to support liberal initiatives in Burma in the attainment of democracy and national reconciliation."

Drafting Future Constitution

The International Seminar for a Future Democratic Constitution on Burma held in Manila, the Philippines, from October 23 to 27, 1995 was attended by the ministers from the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), elected MPs of May 1990 elections, representatives from the Karen National Union (KNU), Karenni National Progressive Party (KNPP), the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), Arakan League of Democracy (ALD), Shan State Organization (SSO), Chin National Front (CNF), and overseas Burmese patriots, other leaders of ethnic forces and legal experts from the US, Germany, India, Norway, Australia, Thailand, Singapore, Cambodia and the Philippines.

At the seminar, the draft Constitution for Future Federal Union of Burma prepared by the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB), which is a member organization of the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB), was presented for analysis, and the work of acquiring suggestions, advice and revision were performed successfully. In addition, a critical discussion of the basic principles laid down by the SLORC's National Convention was made. The DAB started the process of drafting the basic law in 1990 and it was able to present the draft as its 1993 congress for approval. Subsequently, the NCUB held a constitution seminar in October 1994, in Manerplaw, in order to broaden the process and, advice and opinions given were collected. The protection of individual human and civil rights, the establishment of a responsible democratic government based on a multi-party system and the creation of a policy which will guarantee safeguards for the protection of minority rights were discussed at the seminar.

The civil war in Burma has been dragging on for over 40 years up to this day, primarily due to the loss of democratic rights and the rights of the indigenous nationalities, the establishment of a genuine federal union is most appropriate for the achievement of unity in diversity. Long lasting peace in the country is to be achieved by systematically safeguarding the political rights of the indigenous nationalities and the people, in accordance with the constitution, with the federalism as a basis.

The draft constitution of the Federal Union of Burma enshrines the principles and provisions:-

- to safeguard the democratic rights of all the citizens;
- to ensure the equality of all the indigenous

nationalities;

- to safeguard the basic rights of the citizens anchored in the internationally accepted norms and practices with regard to human rights;

- to ensure the undertaking of civil administration by the civil establishment without interference from the armed forces.

At the international seminar, the constitution experts made analysis and examination from different perspectives, to see whether the provisions in the draft constitution cover for the achievement of those objectives, whether they are in contradiction, whether they are in conformity with the historical experiences of the people of Burma and to point out problems and difficulties that could arise. Moreover, they extended suggestions and advice for future improvement.

On the basis of suggestions, positions and will as expressed by various organizations and the people at the seminar held in Manerplaw in October 1994, and analysis and recommendation given by legal experts at the Philippine international seminar in October 1995, the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB) is to prepare the Constitution of the Feudal Union of Burma (First Draft).

On completing, the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB) is to distribute copies of the draft by various means on wide scale so that they may reach a large number of people inside Burma for study, and the analysis, position and will resulting from the study are to be submitted to international community, and a relentless effort is to be made for the emergence of a better and improved draft constitution.

The draft constitution to be prepared under the auspices of the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB), after acquirement of various positions, aspiration, ideas and advice from different quarters as mentioned above, will be only a model federal union for a future state. It will be a proposal to be submitted by the democratic forces and forces of the indigenous nationalities for decision at the genuine national reconciliatory conference that will emerge at a time in the future.

Accordingly, the NCUB is to continue the process of drafting the constitution of the Federal Union of Burma, under its auspices, as part of its effort to resolve the political problems of Burma by political means. The democratic forces, forces of the indigenous nationalities, Burmese citizens at home and abroad and colleagues and experts from the international community are requested to participate actively in the effort.

A B S D F celebrates Kathina festival in camps

The kathina festival, a traditional religious festival was held both in Minthamee and Yaung Ni Oo camp of ABSDF. Students from the camps and friends from alliance forces celebrated the Burmese traditional way of Kathina festival. In



Minthamee camp, 25 students ordained into monkhood on October 6, 1995. Because of the generous donations for the ceremony contributed by international friends, overseas Burmese and students, the celebration resulted in an unprecedented success. The Kathina robe for the monks were offered in the morning followed by the ceremony for alms offering by the students and families in the camp. Students built a temporary ornamented small building and the image of Arhat Upagutta was put in this makeshift for three days so people could pay homage. Arhat Upagutta worshipping program was held on October 7, 1995 in the night time, the image and offertories were carried onto the bamboo raft which was built with a tiered roof in the nearby river and was floated on the current to sea, in accordance with the traditional belief.

All people in attendance enjoyed Burmese traditional food for nine days. They also enjoyed the Burmese traditional dance performance by the students from Minthamee camp and video show during the festival nights.

In the Kathina and ordination ceremony of Yaung Ni Oo camp, three students from ABSDF and one student from NLD ordained into monkhood, it is learnt. Students in the camp, offered Kathina-robe and foods to the monks who were invited from Mae Sarieng to preside over the ordination ceremony.

National Unions of Students in Europe support for Burma

Ljubljana, October 27, 1995

The 29th ESIB's seminar (the National Unions of Students in Europe) was held in Ljubljana, Solvenia in the last week of October 27, 1995. Aye Chan Naing, ABSDF representative of Europe office presented the political and human rights situation in Burma. Among the discussion of the participants, Burma and its human rights situation was discussed and the supporting actions were adopted by the members of students Union.

After the seminar, the support on National Students' Action Day on Burma, campaigning to halt foreign investment in Burma came out with the support of 24 undersigned members of the Students Union from the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Poland, Germany, Norway, Switzerland, Belgium, Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Cyprus, Luxembourg and Croatia.

In the statement undersigned by 24 students representatives, it mentioned:

"We, the undersigned participants of the 29th ESIB's seminar (The National Unions of Students in Europe) held in Ljubljana, Solvenia would like to express our full support on National Students' Action Day on Burma, campaigning to halt foreign investment in Burma.

Gross violations of human rights committed by the Burmese military junta also known as the State

Dr. I.P Singh
(Former Indian Ambassador to Burma)

INDIA AND BURMA

An Agonizing Relationship

On November 14, 1995, when the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding was conferred on Aung San Suu Kyi of Burma in the Ashoka hall of Rashtrapati Bhavan by the President of India. A friend of mine who is usually very sympathetic to the people of Burma expressed some misgiving about the timing of this recognition, keeping in view the current upward

trend in the bilateral ties of the two countries. This misgiving brought to my mind the fact that in 1990, shortly before the Iraq-Kuwait armed conflict, Rajiv Gandhi who was then leader of opposition paid a visit to Bagdad in an effort to move, calling it foolhardy. When asked for my views on this matter at informal discussions, I supported the former Prime Minister, saying that a leader of India cannot afford to make his foreign policy moves dependent solely on considerations of immediate national benefit and diplomatic rectitude. India stands for certain values which transcend immediate national interest. Indian leaders cannot afford to ignore them. In fact, upholding these values itself is a vital national interest of India.

India relations with her immediate neighbor, Burma, should also be examined from the same viewpoint. India and Burma have concluded a number of bilateral agreements during the last twelve months, the most important of these being the border trade agreement. Two-day trade by the sea route has also picked up. The military cooperation along the border has also developed in an unprecedented manner. For example, recently, a huge consignment of arms who was being clandestinely taken across Burmese territory to the separatist groups in the North-East was captured with timely assistance from Burmese Army. Ministerial visits between the two countries have also been exchanged on a scale which is not normal.

These enhanced contacts naturally raise a questions- Has the Government of India decided to normalize its relations with the military regime in Rangoon, rather than continue the policy of support to the democracy movement under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi? While in India this question is rising in the minds of people inside and outside that country, this has become a most vital issue. I have received a number of queries on this matter from various segments of Burmese population. The Burmese remind me of the statements made by Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister and several of his successors, expressing unequivocal support for the cause of democracy and the admiration which Indian Government has for Aung San Suu Kyi.

*The signals from Rangoon
are not encouraging for
the present Indian leadership
to express satisfaction with
their ties with Myanmar.*

I tell my Burmese friends that there is no conflict between having normal relations with the regime which is in real control of the administration of that country and support for democracy. But, unfortunately, the people at the helm of affairs in South Block do not seem to realize this. The result is that at international fora, India's voices is muted on the issue of restoration of democracy. On the other hand, our leaders appear apologetic while trying to

explain the growing economic and military ties between the two countries. They seem to forget that a country like the United States, while criticizing China for its suppression of human rights is having a bargaining economic relationship with that country.

It is therefore, not an anti-Burma move to welcome the prospect of democracy in that country. It has been an article of faith for every Indian Prime Minister to support the cause of democracy in every part of the globe. Seen from this angle, the signals from Rangoon are not encouraging for the present Indian leadership to express satisfaction with their ties with Burma.

Aung San Suu Kyi's release has not been followed up with release of other important leaders. Nor is there any further relaxation of control over media and other avenues of self-expression. Moreover, the Slorc is trying to keep Suu Kyi out of the political process. They have been trying not only to work

out a new constitution for Burma which gives the armed forces a permanent place in the stewardship of the country through a constitution convention which they have called without any authority under any statutory law, but have also stated publicly that Suu Kyi will not be allowed to contest elections as she is married to a foreigner. To cover this move, they are quoting none other than her own father, general Aung San.

The military regime in Rangoon is closing its eyes to the fact that 1995 is not 1948, when Burma was emerging for British colonial rule and there was a general dislike for foreigners. To expect that India which had a Prime Minister married to a foreigner

skin-deep. The economic policy of the military Government has been able to attract only some short-term and fast money-making investors. It has not been able to lure long-term investment in the manufacturing sector. The reason for this is that major investors lack the confidence to start. Labor-intensive and long-term investment in the manufacturing sector because the infrastructure in the transport, communications and energy sectors is still very poor. Moreover, the constitutional and legal framework which can ensure safe repatriation of profits and prevent expropriation is totally nonexistent. In addition, business rules and regulations are inconsistent and corruption and nepotism continue to be widespread.

Lasting economic growth

based on free enterprise

can take place under

a democratic policy

and the rest of the world where many naturalized citizens have made to the highest political offices in their countries of adoption, would accept their moth-eaten ideology is almost an affront. Not content with this, the Burmese military leaders have taken other steps to keep Burma's women of destiny out of power. It has been reported that the national League for Democracy has reinstated Aung San Suu Kyi as General Secretary of the party. But, the five-member Election Commission of Burma which has been filled with handpicked persons has refused to accept the change which is a requirement under the rules

The Burmese Government is trying to hide these developments under an open-door scheme under which foreign tourists, businessmen and media personnel are being allowed to visit the country without any hindrance and to see things with their own eyes. This change of policy in a country where maximum length of visa used to be seven days and no citizen was allowed to a foreigner as a house guest, has elated many outside visitors. A good deal of imported foodstuff and cosmetics have added to the attraction of the local markets. But, a close look would reveal that this change is barely

In a situation like this, for countries to rush to Burma to make hay, disregarding the growth of the democratic process, would not be a wise policy. Lasting economic growth based on free enterprise can take place only under a democratic polity.

In fact, what the SLORC has done so far is to use all the available resources of the country for the expansion of the armed forces. It has so far invested 1.4 billion US dollars for this purpose. The result is that the strength of the Burmese army has grown from 180,000 to 400,000 during the last half decade. Burma has purchased mostly from China fighter jets, tanks, patrol boats, anti-aircraft missiles, artillery pieces and other arms and ammunition. According to a UNICEF report, Burma's defence budget rose from 225 of its total expendi-

This history has shown,

that it is the economic

pressure of the democratic world

which results in

political wrongs beings righted

ture in 1980 to 39% in 1993. It may be recalled that on her release from house arrest, Suu Kyi has said that there was no occasion to rejoice over an

individual's freedom, as long as the Burmese people were not free to express their views and to choose their own government. In view of this, she had advised foreign governments not to rush with their investments. To do so would be to fall prey to the game they have played by releasing her.

The irony is that many countries have fallen in this trap. Japan, the country which has provided the largest amount of economic assistance to Burma, has already welcomed Suu Kyi's release as a positive gesture on the part of Slorc. The Japanese Government which had frozen ODA credits when military cracked down on the democracy movement in 1988, is seriously thinking of resuming it, to the great delight of Japanese MNC's. In fact, it is believed by many that the military authorities decided to release Suu Kyi primarily with a view to influence of Japan. If this is true, then the Slorc has really succeeded in its game. There were, however, other factors which have played a role in tilting Japanese attitude. Japan has been worried over the growing importance of China in Burma and was looking for an opportunity to rectify this tilt. In addition, Japanese diplomacy has always been hampered by US attitudes and inclinations in respect of most countries in Asia. In the case of Burma, USA has only a limited interest which does not go beyond human rights and drug smuggling. Hence, Japan could play a free hand.

The ASEAN countries have been pleading for "constructive engagement" with Burma for long and even invited a Burmese delegation at their Ministerial Meeting in 1994. But what Japan, ASEAN and the developed countries of Europe are disregarding is the recent history of the success of democracy in the world, of which the Republic of South Africa is a burning example. This history has shown that it is the economic pressure of the democratic world which results in political wrongs being righted.

The result of this misjudgment on the part of developed democratic countries is already visible. The Slorc seems to be in no mood to relax its grip. It wants the political parties, particularly the NLD to succumb to its pressure and accept a constitution which gives to the armed forces a domineering place in the governance of the country. It seems to be dead set on reconvening the so-called Constitutional Convention on 24th November at a large meeting of students in front of her residence that her party cannot wait indefinitely for the rulers to

start a dialogue to restore the democratic process. Thus, any hope that there would be a thaw in the situation in Burma has faded.

The question that rises in one's mind at this juncture is : Does the above picture of Burma have any impact on the thinking of the policy-maker in New Delhi? The answer is : "Perhaps, not". An indicator of this was the strange coincidence that at the Nehru Award ceremony for Aung San Suu Kyi at Rashtrapati Bhavan, the two persons who were conscious by their absence were the Ambassador of Burma and the Prime Minister of India. It is, therefore, safe to assume that hard ground realities do not seem to be guiding the thinking of the foreign policy makers of South Block. According to press report, even China has promised to the Thai Defence Minister Chavalit that it will cease supporting the build-up of Burmese armed forces.

It is high time that the mandarins in South Block wake up to the gong from the great golden Shwedagon Pagoda of Rangoon.

**Dear Friends of Dawn,
May that warm and joyful
spirit fill every part of your
world. Happy New year 1996
and best wishes for democracy
in Burma.**

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Corporate genocide: Multinational attempt to turn Burma into another South Africa

Why should we in the US care about corporate investment in Burma? Why should we boycott Pizza Hut and Taco Bell, and stop drinking Pepsi (the essentials of the American diets)? Why should we boycott and demand divestment from UNOCAL, [TEXACO and ARCO? Because these US corporation bankroll the illegitimate regime in Burma and directly sponsor the human rights violations, in effect, supporting one of these most brutal and pariah dictatorships in the world.

Burma renamed as Myanmar by the country's military rulers in 1989, has been under the totalitarian rule since 1962. During the past three decades, owing to the mismanagement of the economy, the political oppression, and xenophobic policies of the regime, the country, once one of the most prosperous in Asia, has been transformed into a pauper state. Further, the repressive regime in Rangoon has denied its people's fundamental human rights, such as freedom of speech, freedom of press, and freedom to move about even within the country. Virtually all aspects of the country's livelihood

are regulated and scrutinized through a pervasive network of intelligence and paid-informers. In brief, Burma has become one vast slave labor camp, and her 45 million people, prisoners of their own armed forces.

In 1988, the whole country erupted into a series of massive pro-democracy demonstrations calling for an end of totalitarian rule and the restoration of democracy and human rights. As to be expected, the military slaughtered several thousand unarmed peaceful demonstrators including students, civilians, Buddhist monks, women and children. In 1990, the military allowed democratic elections to be held for the first time since the inception of its totalitarian rule in 1962. In the elections, the military-backed National Unity Party won only a handful of seats in the parliament whereas the popular National League for Democracy won 385 seats out of 450. The regime simply nullified the election results and blatantly violated its promise to transfer power to the elected representatives to form a democratic government.

Meanwhile, the regime has stepped up its terror campaign against pro-democracy activists in particular, and the populace in general. It also incarcerated to top NLD leaders including the party's founder 1991 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi for about 6 years, her only crime being that she spoke out against the regime's injustices against its people. Despite her expected release on July 10 this year, the country's human rights situations remain virtually the same. The October 26, 1995 report by Amnesty International states that "the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 10 July 1995 was a positive and welcome step taken by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc, Myanmar's military regime). however, the human rights situation there remain critical. Thousands of political prisoners remained behind bars, among them at least 50 prisoners of conscience." Various forms of

human rights violations such as ethnic cleansing, forced labor, arbitrary arrests, torture, summary executions, gang rapes, forced relocation and displacement of its citizens, are being carried out by the regime. As a consequence of these atrocities, indigenous communities are being wiped out and hundreds of thousands of people flee the country to become refugees in neighboring Thailand, Bangladesh, and India.

While the human rights situation continues

*"Democracies should be
ashamed to encourage their
business people to be
"first in Burma,"
for this world provide
the Slorc with
the booty it need
to resist mounting
pressure for a political
opening....."*

to worsen within Burma, the military has expanded its army from China, Poland, Singapore, and Pakistan. The military expenditure amounts to 40 per cent of the national budget. the arms build-up is made possible by the fact that the regime has been selling off the country's natural resources at bargain prices after the bloody crackdown of democracy movement in 1988. Neighboring Asian countries such as Thailand, China, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea, and Brunei are taking full advantage of the so-called "constructive engagement" policies to cash in on the regime's desperate need for hard currency. Later Japan and Australia have joined the lead of the aforementioned countries in exploiting Burma's natural

resources.

While the US government along with other European countries has taken a strong stand against the regime, several major US corporations, most notably, PepsiCo and the oil giants, UNOCAL, TEXACO and ARCO are among the top investors in Burma. PepsiCo has a monopoly over soft-drinking bottling, while UNOCAL jointly with French government owned TOTAL Oil off-shore natural gas production project worth over US\$ 1 billion per year with the military regime.

The regime is also eager to bring in foreign tourists for want of their dollars and yens. To build the much-needed infrastructure for its "Visit Burma Year 1996" tourism promotion project, the regime

the leader of the democracy movement in Burma, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has put forward her conviction that economic development must not come at the expense of the people of Burma. After her release, Aung San Suu Kyi has strongly urged

South Africa
movement is in order. South Africa's Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu wrote in an article entitled "Burma as South Africa", "International pressure can change the situation in Burma. Tough sanctions, not constructive engagement, finally brought the release of Nelson Mandela and the dawn of a new

era in my country. This is the language that must be spoken with tyrants- for sadly, it is the only language they understand.”

At the US Congress level, Senator Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky) is preparing to reintroduce an economic sanction bill against the regime. City Councils across the US, including Oakland, San

continue to do business in Burma as in the case of Stanford; and (3) drop alumni tours to Burma as in the case of Yale.

A handful of US corporations including Levi Strauss, Eddie Bauer, and Liz Claiborne however pulled out of Burma citing as the main reason the impossibility of doing business in Burma without

helping perpetuate the regime's strangle hold over its people. Recently UCLA dropped its planned alumni trip as it was strongly protested by Burma activists and politically enlightened alumni.

One of the pillars of this Free Burma movement is the Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC) across the US campuses. The other two groups that participate fully in the movement are human rights and women's group. The organizers are eager to form a coalition with other activist groups with similar goals and visions. Already at places like

the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Students for a Free Tibet, East Timor Action Network, University of Washington Greens, Student Labor Action Coalition, Community Action for Latin America and Teaching Assistant Association are working together to create a social movement, the ultimate goal of which is the adoption of socially responsible investment policies on the part of the universities. ■

The author of this article is Zar Ni, co-coordinator for the Free Burma Coalition, is a Burmese political exile. He is writing Ph.D. dissertation on the politics of education under military rule in Burma (1962-88) at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He contributes this article to DAWN.



“In the US, the students activists launching grassroots movement for a Free Burma Campaign.”

Francisco, New York, Minneapolis, Chicago and Seattle are considering passing of selective purchasing ordinances modeled after South Africa resolutions. Already Berkeley (California), Madison (Wisconsin) and Santa Monica (California) passed selective purchasing ordinances this year. In the US, there is a growing grassroots movement for a Free Burma. On October 27 this year about 70 US Colleges and universities including Harvard, Stanford, Yale, Northwestern, Wisconsin, Notre Dame, Indiana, Michigan, Columbia, Berkeley and University of California (Los Angeles) participated in nation-wide protest demonstrations against US corporations that bankroll the dictatorship in Burma. These Free Burma groups at various campuses are urging university boards of regents and of trustees to: (1) sponsor shareholder resolutions at annual meetings to end corporate funding to Burma's dictators as in the case of the University of Washington; (2) divest university's money from those corporations that



UNITED NATION GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Fiftieth session (1995)

Third Committee

A/C.3/50/L.52 (as orally amended)

Agenda item 112 (c)

Human Rights Questions: Human Rights Situations and Reports of Special Rapporteurs and Representatives

Andorra, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Panama, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Situation of human rights in Myanmar

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming that all Member States have an obligation to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms as stated in the Charter of the United Nations and elaborated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, [1] the International Covenants on Human Rights [2] and other applicable human rights instruments,

Aware that, in accordance with the Charter, the Organization promotes and encourages respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all and that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government”,

Recalling its resolution 49/197 of 23 December 1994,

Recalling also Commission on Human Rights resolution 1992/58 of 3 March 1992, [3] in which the Commission, inter alia, decided to nominate a special rapporteur to establish direct contacts with the Government and with the people of Myanmar, including political leaders deprived of their liberty, their families and their lawyers, with a view to examining the situation of human rights in Myanmar and following any progress made towards the transfer of power to a civilian Government and the drafting of a new constitution, the lifting of restrictions on personal freedoms and the restoration of human rights in Myanmar,

Recalling further Commission on Human Rights resolution 1995/72 of 8 March 1995, [4] in which the Commission decided to extend for one year the mandate of the Special Rapporteur,

Gravely concerned that the Government of Myanmar still has not implemented its commitments to

take all necessary steps towards democracy in the light of the results of the elections held in 1990,

Noting recent developments regarding the composition of the National Convention,

Welcoming the release without conditions of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi on 10 July 1995, as well as of a number of other political prisoners, as called for by the General Assembly,

Gravely concerned, however, at the continued violations of human rights in Myanmar, as reported by the Special Rapporteur, including killings of civilians, arbitrary arrest and detention, restrictions on freedoms of expression and association, torture, forced labour, forced portering, human rights abuses in border areas in the course of military operations, forced relocations and development projects, abuse of women and the imposition of oppressive measures directed in particular at ethnic and religious minorities,

Welcoming the continued cooperation between the Government of Myanmar and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees on the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar,

Noting, however, that the human rights situation in Myanmar has resulted in flows of refugees to neighbouring countries, thus creating problems for the countries concerned,

1. Expresses its appreciation to the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights for his interim report on the situation of human rights in Myanmar;
2. Also expresses its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report;
3. Deplores the continued violations of human rights in Myanmar;
4. Welcomes the release without conditions of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and other prominent political leaders;
5. Strongly urges the Government of Myanmar to release immediately and unconditionally detained political leaders and all political prisoners, to ensure their physical integrity and to permit them to participate in the process of national reconciliation;
6. Urges the Government of Myanmar to engage, at the earliest possible date, in a substantive political dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and other political leaders, including representatives from ethnic groups, as the best means of promoting national reconciliation and the full and early restoration of democracy;
7. Welcomes the discussions between the Government of Myanmar and the Secretary-General, and further encourages the Government of Myanmar to continue to cooperate fully with the Secretary-General;
8. Again urges the Government of Myanmar, in conformity with its assurances given at various times, to take all necessary steps towards the restoration of democracy in accordance with the will of the people as expressed in the democratic elections held in 1990 and to ensure that political parties can function freely;
9. Expresses its concern that most of the representatives duly elected in 1990 are still excluded from participating in the meetings of the National Convention, created to prepare basic elements for the drafting

of a new constitution, and that one of its objectives is to maintain the participation of the armed forces in a leading role in the future political life of the State, and notes with concern that the working procedures of the National Convention do not permit the elected representatives of the people freely to express their views;

10. Strongly urges the Government of Myanmar to take all appropriate measures to allow all citizens to participate freely in the political process in accordance with the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to accelerate the process of transition to democracy, in particular through the transfer of power to democratically elected representatives;

11. Also strongly urges the Government of Myanmar to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and assembly, and the protection of the rights of persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities, and to put an end to violations of the right to life and integrity of the human being, to the practices of torture, abuse of women, forced labour and forced relocations, and to enforced disappearances and summary executions;

12. Appeals to the Government of Myanmar to consider becoming a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [2] and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [2] and to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment;

13. Urges the Government of Myanmar to fulfil its obligations as a State party to the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) and to the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention, 1948 (No. 87) of the International Labour Organization;

14. Stresses the importance for the Government of Myanmar to give particular attention to conditions in the country's jails and to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to communicate freely and confidentially with prisoners;

15. Calls upon the Government of Myanmar to respect fully the obligations of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949, and to make use of such services as may be offered by impartial humanitarian bodies;

16. Expresses its grave concern at the attack by Myanmar army soldiers on the Karens and Karennis during the past year, resulting in further refugee flows to a neighbouring country;

17. Welcomes the cessation of hostilities following the conclusion of cease-fire agreements between the Government of Myanmar and several ethnic groups;

18. Encourages the Government of Myanmar to create the necessary conditions to ensure an end to the flows of refugees to neighbouring countries and to create conditions conducive to their voluntary return and their full reintegration, in conditions of safety and dignity;

19. Requests the Secretary-General to continue his discussions with the Government of Myanmar in order to assist in the implementation of the present resolution and in its efforts to achieve national reconciliation, and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session and to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-second session;

20. Decides to continue its consideration of this question at its fifty-first session.

The Military regime is pulling out all the stops to encourage tourism in Burma. The visit "Myanmar Year '96" promotion is expected to attract around 500,000 visitors. But be warned. Visit Burma and you're directly profiting from slavery and helping to prop up the most

repressive regime on earth. Furthermore your trip will be against the expressed wishes of the democratically elected representatives of the Burmese people.

Accusations of slave labor may seem far fetched at this end of the 20th century but the evidence is overwhelming. The sheer scale of the misery being inflicted on the people of Burma is difficult to comprehend. SLORC talks of a "forceful drive" to promote tourism and their actions certainly show they are prepared to employ any method, no matter how ruthless, to achieve their ends. These methods include forced labor, forced resettlement and grand larceny.

Betraying a military conception of aesthetics, tens of thousands of people have been forcibly evicted in SLORC's resettlement program. The International Confederation of Trade Unions reports that half a million houses have been destroyed in Rangoon alone. Those displaced have been dumped into new "satellite towns" that are in reality malaria infested swamps devoid of basic necessities. Many day laborers cannot afford the bus fare into town to find work. It is no coincidence either that very often the inner-city neighborhood earmarked for destruction are the areas that were most active in democracy uprising of 88-89.

Similarly around 10,000 people have been evicted by the military from the prime tourist spot of Pagan where they have lived for generations. In Loikaw people living along the main street have been ordered to rebuild their houses in brick. Many have had to sell and no compensation has been offered.

Often the people are forced to contribute to their own destruction. Inle Lake, a prime tourist spot, is being dammed so that it might remain full and picturesque all year round. The ethnic Intha and Pa-O people, whose rice growing areas will be devastated by the dam are being forced by the army to labor on it's construction.

In Mandalay the army has ordered every family to provide at least 3 days labor a month to beautify the city. Professor Yozo Yokota, the UN's special rapporteur on human rights in Burma adds

in his 1995 report to the UN that "Workers must pay to rent bulldozers, buy their tools and supply their own food". Large numbers of prisoners in chains are also involved in doing arduous work such as clearing

To tour in Burma:

out the muck from the bottom of the drained moat of Mandalay Palace.

Burma's infrastructure is so poor that it threatens to undermine all of SLORC's hard pro-



DESIGN: The Baiyoke Kandawgyi Hotel, a huge, luxurious party in Rangoon

The Baiyoke Kandawgyi Hotel in Rangoon is located on Royal Lake- the city's reservoir. Floor-to-ceiling glass walls, carpeted elegant lobby, Italian marble floors and upholstered sofas do not match up with the street vendors walking across the street of the hotel to earn for their daily survival. The economy in Burma is in chaos and most people except the military clique are starving. In Hlaing Tharyar, a satellite town in Rangoon, the people cannot afford to eat rice, instead they had to buy stick water which are the residue from the cooked rice. The price of bottle was now 5 kyats. The price for all commodities are very high and a run away inflation existed.

motional work. Problems such as a lack of good quality hotels and substandard road, rail and air transport could well create a backlash against Burmese tourism. Myanmar Air's

Right or Wrong?

planes are for instance, dangerously over used, undermaintained and subject to such ad hoc methods as having their tyres filled with air. In addition to these problems Burma's hotel industry is con-

sidered by foreign experts to be overpriced and short of accommodation space. Tourists also have to contend with exorbitant visa costs and being required to exchange over \$300 US at the official exchange rate which is over 100% more expensive than the market rate.

Attempts to improve infrastructure also include the infamous 'New Death Ye-Tavoy Railway'. This project, according to the Sunday Telegraph, requires 120,000 laborers and has already cost 200-300 lives. Other projects include a six lane highway between Rangoon and Mandalay is being built by what the BBC describes as "the largest forced labor gang since the Japanese occupation". The prisoners are mostly women and children with a few prisoners in leg irons.

Notices are arbitrarily posted in villages ordering them to contribute labor. SLORC has repeatedly claimed that civilian volunteers to work on these projects. Failure to "volunteer" however, inevitably results in heavy fines or worse. "Volunteers" are always watched over by armed guards. "Invitations" often include such threats as, "If you are absent a bullet will come for you."

Another infrastructure project is the new airport at Bassein where, according to the Guardian, 30,000 unpaid laborers have been used. The BBC reports that hundreds have contracted cholera but have received no medical treatment. This is typical of the harsh work regime that SLORC enforces on its' conscript laborers. Many have to rest up for several days afterwards. They're the lucky ones. Laborers are routinely mistreated and subject to rape, beatings, torture and executions. Mass rape of women forced into portage is a common feature of army border operations. The United Nations Human Rights Special Rapporteur Yozo Yokota's 1995 UN report states that soldiers consider rape a right and are often encouraged by their officers.

Experts on Burma estimates that 50% of tourist money goes directly to the military. This is in a country that already spends half it's annual GDP on the military, has doubled it's army in five years and yet has no external enemy. It is a society that can barely provide one doctor for every 12000 citizens. The cost of living has skyrocketed and, with the exception of the military and their families, everyone in a family has to work just in order to survive. After her almost six-year term under house arrest, Aung San Suu Kyi has recently said that Burma needs hospitals, not luxury ho-



According to the UN report, three out of four children do not complete primary school; 40% of children under three years suffer from malnutrition; two out of three people drink unsafe water; and only 2% have access to electricity. As Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said in her speech after her release, "Burma needs hospitals and school not hotel."

The Slorc is going to do extraordinary lengths to make Visit Myanmar Year as pleasant for tourists as possible, but we wonder what it is doing for its own people. Forced labor, forced relocation, political repression and poverty are the only awards to ordinary Burmese people by Slorc.

tels. According to the United Nations report, three out of four children do not complete primary school; 40% of children under three years suffer from malnutrition; two out of three people drink unsafe water; and only 2% have access to electricity.

SLORC has set its' face against democratic reform and is holding a gun to the nation's head. It is waging a merciless bloody war against the ethnic minorities and the democratic opposition. Tourism is being used by the regime as a revenue generating exercise to pay for the weapons it feels it needs to survive.

Some have attempted to rationalize tourism in Burma by claiming that it exposes the people to new ideas and thus helps to usher in change. Several guidebook writers have already selflessly volunteered to shoulder this noble burden. Burma is indeed a beautiful country and its' people genuinely hospitable to visitors. The country's' long isolation means that it is as yet unspoiled by tourism. The temptation to be one of the first outsiders to explore Burma must be great.

Unfortunately such rationalizations are not supported by the facts. Not only will tourist money go either directly to the regime or to line the pockets of the military and their families, but foreigners talking to Burmese people about politics could very easily land them in serious trouble with DDSI (Military Intelligence). Most foreigners seriously underestimate the repressive capacity of SLORC. The NCGUB has made its' opposition to tourism in Burma under the present circumstances abundantly clear. In this it is supported by a host of other opposition and ethnic groups and NGOs. If democratic elections are meaningful political acts then those so nominated by the will of the people should at the very least be listened to by the world community regardless of whether they hold state power or not.

Those who are still determined to visit Burma ought to take the advice of the Burma Relief Centre Japan and avail themselves of Burma - The Alternative Guide by Burma Action Group UK.

F

Violation

Field reporters from the ABSDF had a chance to interview with two defected young soldiers from the SLORC army who joined with KNPP in August and September 1995. Their stories and experiences revealed the clear picture of corruption, its involvement in drug cultivation and many forms of power-abuses in their military mechanism.



Brief interview with a defected soldier of SLORC

Name	Naing Win (a) Naing Naing Htun
Age	22-year-old
Nationality / religion	Burmese, Christian
Serial number	862213
Duty in the army	private, medic
Battalion:	No. 250 LIB, loikaw, Karenni
Address:	Tasoe village, Nwahtogyi Township, Mandalay Division
Date of enlistment:	25/ 10/ 91
Date of desertion:	21/ 8/ 95

Reason for desertion: Because of unwillingness and depression

I am the third son of six siblings of U Pan and Daw Kaung Shein from Tasoe village, Nwahtogyi Township, Mandalay Division. My father is a medic of the Village Health Care Unit and my mother is a midwife. I had education up to fifth grade and I quit in 1987. I earned my living as a toddy-palm climber of Shwebaw Kyun village, Myangyan Township for about half a year.

I twice served in the army. The first time in 1989, I and two hundred-fifty trainees attended basic military training at No. 3 training company No.5 in Meihtila Town. After the training I was assigned at (246) LIB in Kun Hein, Shan State. Our main duty was to take the security guard on the motor road between Taunggyi and Keng Ton, and also in Mai Shu, Mai Naung, Takaw, Moe Ne and Sesai.

When I was performing my duty there, we saw poppy plantation on the hillside between Kun Hein and Ta Kaw, Kun Hein, Nan San and in some villages of Sesai, no order was given by our column commander to destroy them. There were many corruption and power abuses reportedly happened by the military officials. For example, in May 1989, about twenty five soldiers from our platoon, including company commander captain

Thein Win of company No.1, at Myae Ni Gone village stopped and searched a jeep from Pinlon bound for Mine Shu. They found about fifty packets of opium which was hid secretly under the seats. The opium was seized by captain Thein Win individually and the owner of opium and the jeep were set free. Again in 1990, we had to perform security duty at Nan San market to guard military officials who would visit there. During my sentinel, I stopped a person who was walking on his way carrying a package on his shoulder. He immediately dropped the package on the ground in fear and ran away. When we searched the package, seven visses of raw opium was found and it was entrusted to the battalion commander by captain Thein Win. the battalion commander entered this opium in a ledger less than the real amount and sold collaborating with company commander captain Thein Win. It was reportedly known that the battalion commander invested money in the poppy growing activities of villages near the battalion. His excuse was to decrease the villagers' economic hardship and to build up the good organizing activity. During my time in army, the battalion owned a two billion Kyat personal fund.

On 22 November 1990, a quarrel between four privates from my company, namely Win Soe, Soe Lwin, Than Naing, Kyi Soe and section commander corporal Aye Thaung was broke out while they were performing security duty at Taunggyi Department Store. Corporal Aye Thaung, who was drunk at the time, was shot dead and we all ran away from the scene.

I had hide with my relative' in Sinhnakhaung village near Mandalay, I rejoined the army a second time, at Meihtila recruitment center on 11 October 1991. I did not want to join the military again but the life especially daily survival was so difficult. This was only one way to join the military for poor education and no money youth like me, to get the pay and some other benefit. I enrolled military training at No.3 training school, company No.1, from 1 November 91 to 30 April 1992. My personal number is 862213. After the training twenty four private of us moved to LIB No. 250, Loikaw, Karenni State on 7 May 1995. I was assigned to the medical platoon of H.Q. company. I have been stationed at Shardaw, Htee Hta, Saw Hta and Hway Pon Long and have been given duty on operational columns at Sebu, Se Pyaung, Maw Che and Phar Saung region.

From 1992 till now, some departmental military servants, section officers and the bureau chief from the rear base of LIB No. 250 have had

to give bribes to adjutant/quarter master official Lieutenant Ko Ko to avoid going to the front line. Department are obliged to pay some amount of money for this reason monthly without fail. For example, 500 Kyat for the medical troop, 2000 Kyat for the equipment store, 200 Kyat for animal husbandry and 2000 Kyat for the battalion ration store. All of the department can earn this money in their own way. In addition to these bribe, they set up a check point on the road between Pakyal village and the battalion in loikaw, where all bullock pass-by were ordered to pay 100 kyat each time.

On 27 January 1994, temporary battalion commander Major Tin Win pocketed compensation money for two soldiers; Zaw Htun of company No. 2 and Ba Thein of company No. 5, died in action in fighting between KNPP troops and SLORC. These compensation were supposed to send their parents. But in stead of sending back the money, he informed their parents that these two had deserted from the army and took the money.

Private Win Ko of company No. 2 of LIB No. 250 went missing without leave or information in January 1993. But adjutant/quarter master Lieutenant Ko Ko reported this case to his superior officer only in December pocketing the pay of Win Ko from February till December.

Adjutant/quarter master Lieutenant Win Ko failed to distribute rations from May to December 1994 to the families in the base. In this case, the private soldiers were angry with Lieutenant Ko Ko because they saw that Ko Ko sold army rations such as beans, condensed milk and sugar at the Loi Kaw people's bazaar (south). He bought three boxes of tined fish and fifty packages of steamed duck for battalion commander major Win Tin in order not to take any action. He resumed the ration in January 1995 but no explain for the last three months' ration.

Lieutenant Ko Ko had the relation with Ma Ye Win, 22, daughter of U Ba Win and Daw Ngwe Ye from Loi Kaw Town, claiming that he was single. Actually he was married with one child. When she became pregnant in January 1995, she asked Ko Ko to marry her in accordance with his promise. Ko Ko asked her to have an abortion and let her down. Having learned the whole story about Ko Ko, she hung herself at her home.

In January 1995, every soldiers from LIB No. 250 had to save 100 Kyat through their salary corporals. Some soldiers, angry with salary corporal Win Aung, from company No. 2, for embezzling the money saved by others for his own interest, killed the corporal near Pa Kyal village and disposed of his corpse. No-one has been arrested yet.



Violations

*Interview with
Slorc's private
soldier "Zin Min
Thein"*

*Following is the
interview with the
defected soldier
who defected on the
September 17, 1995*

with one G-3 rifle, 48 rounds and one magazine.



Name-	Zin Min Thein
Age-	19 years old
Nationality-	Buddhist Burmese
Serial Number-	963956
Position-	Private
Regiment-	Law-pee-ta based No.72 Light Infantry Battalion
Parents' Name-	U Hla Myint and Daw Thein Han
Address-	Kyee Phaya Road, Min Yat Quarter, Pan-daung Township.
Date of enlistment -	17/6/94
Reason for enlistment-	being conscripted
Date of desertion-	17/9/95
Reason for desertion-	low morale and did not want to continue in the armed service.

I am the fifth son of U Hla Myint and Daw Thein Han, living at Kyee Phaya Road, Min Yat Quarter, Pan-daung Township of Pegu Division. At the age of eleven, when I was in my third standard in High School No (3) in Pan-daung Township I quitted my education. From 3/10/90 to 5/4/91, the group of 250 recruits including me, attended to six months basic military training at Nam-ma-tu based Company No(4) of Training Base No(8) in Northern Shan State. It was my first experience in the military service. On 7/4/94, after the trainign course, the sixteen private soldiers including myself, were assigned at Battalion No.(323) in Thein-di Township in Shan State. During my time in Company (2) of

LIB No(323), I sent off to the villages in Thein-di, Nam-ma-tu, Tant-yan, and Kwan-Lon Townships in Shan State. Since I returned back on 8/3/93 to see my parents on my leave, I never went back to my battalion, and I was posted as a deserter by army.

As the Township authority compulsorily summoned recruits throughout the quarters and villages where I lived, I had to enlist to be a soldier as second time. At that time, 250 recruits including myself, had to attend four months basic military training at Company No(2) of Training Base No(4) in Pin Laung Township, Southern Shan State. Then, on 5/11/94, we, 21 private soldiers who had just finished training, assigned to LIB No(72) based in Law-pee-ta, Loikaw, Karenni State. When I was in Company No (2) of LIB No(72), I was assigned as a guard on the hills surrounding the Hydro-electric power plant No(2) for security reasons, and sometimes in Company No(1) and (2), I had to patrol around Loi Kaw and Shadaw Township.

In July, 1991, while I was in Company No(2) of LIB No(323), our troops comprising of 65 private soldiers led by Capt. Aung San Chit, Company No(2) leader, escorted a convey of small vehicles number ranged 94 to 130 from Lashio to Musel-Nam Khan on the China Border. The vehicles were Volkswagens and others with the CRAB brand. I had been escorted for seven times like that. We saw that these vehicles were driven by Chinese drivers, drove into China via Lashio-Musel-Nam Khan.

At the end of July 1991, our troops escorted a convoy of the twelve military vechicles which covered up completely, driven by Chinese, from China via Musel-Nam Khan to Lashio. We were told that these trucks were carrying the wepons such as cannon and other heavy artillery from China, according to our sergeants. And we also obviously

saw the wheels of the cannons embarked on some vehicles. But, the models and quantities were unknown. We later knew that LIB No(41) escorted these twelve army vehicles from Lashio to Kyauk Mae, LIB No(22) escorted from Kyauk Mae to Mandalay. In August, 1991, our company No(2) went to front-line, therefore we no longer knew that how many more vehicles and ammunitions were imported from China to Burma.

While I was on duty at Company No(2) of LIB (323) in Thein-di, Nam-ma-tu, Tant-yan and Kwon-lon Townships, I saw poppy fields in somewhere, grown by Chinese, Shan-Chinese and Wa; however, the commander of our column just took a blind eyes. They did not order to destroy them. In October, 1991, a column included Company No(1) and (2), led by Col. Aung Min of LIB No(323), captured eight viss of raw poppy at a unknown Chinese village in Kwon-lon Township, but only two viss of poppy were entrusted at his Battalion. And furthermore, in November, eight viss of raw poppy were captured at Ho Tone village in Thein-di Township, but no amount were entrusted to authority. It was obvious that the officers resold those which captured, to make their own money.

At the end of 1994, when I was in LIB No(72), Capt. Htay Win, Capt. Wai Zin Htun, Capt.

Nyan Htun and Capt. Myint Lwin cooperated with venerable U Thaw Pe Ta, a Buddhist mission from Pa Laung village monastery in Loi Kaw Township, who was sent by Lt-Gen. Myo Nyunt, Minister of Religious Affairs did some corruption for their own business. They collected the 200 Kyats and three logs of teak or hard wood of two feet in diameter and 18 feet in length by force, from each house in Daw Tago, Daw Khe, Daw Kheraw, Lein Ein Su and Pa Laung village in Pa Laung Township for the reason of building of monasteries and schools in the region. The teaks were extracted and sold, and the profits were benefited by U Thaw Pe Ta and the commanders.

I did not want to work in the military service anymore because of hardship and brutality by the officials towards the private. Most of the privates were very young and they did not dare to speak out. We were told that we would be killed brutally if we were caught or defected to the opposition armed groups. They officials also told us we can do whatever we want when we arrive to the civilian villages and they would not take any action or that. I feel very sorry for the civilian and other hardship directed me to join the KNPP. I brought my G.3 with me and fled to the KNPP region on September 17, 1995 while I was on duty in the KNPP region. ■

Excerpts from a message relayed to the Asahi Shimbun and Wiesel Foundation International Conference from Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, December 6, 1995.

○ **“Hope is the prerogative of those who strive continuously to go beyond the barriers of complacency and ignorance, of hate and fear, of resignation and apathy. Those who have lived under long years of authoritarian rule understand best the unquenchable spirit that insists on the sacred nature of human dignity in the face of brutal repression. It is because there are always great minds and hearts which hold out hope for the downtrodden and oppressed that the world has turned again and again from the brink of disaster, that humanity has again and again risen, phoenix-like from man-made holocausts.**

The hope of the great majority of people in Burma today is a very simple one- We want a secure, dignified existence, protected by the rule of just laws and a political system that guarantees the basic human rights recognized by the United Nations as indispensable if the future is to be free of “barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind”. As the party which received the mandate of the people through free and fair elections, the National League for Democracy of which I am the general secretary has the duty to work for national reconciliation and the restoration of Burma to full and early democracy, guided by the will of the people and the dictates of the highest political and humanitarian values.” ■

Unpaid labor at the military bases in Thetyetchaung, Tavoy district

Daily unpaid labor is being summoned by the 13 Battalions based in four Tavoy townships. All the villages are ordered to send the daily laborers to the bases to work various jobs for the military such as building up the army barracks and fences, digging the trench and toilets, cultivating the vegetables, helping in animal husbandry, taking security guards and giving massage service to the army officers in the camp.

Villagers are summoned to go and work at the military bases daily. Anyone fail to do will be arrested and used as the porters or ordered to pay 100 kyats per day for fine. Additionally, the villages closed to the bases are ordered to provide two pigs and ten chickens per week regularly.

The worst villages for this kind of forced labor overtly military purpose are Kyauk Hlaykha, Saw Pyar, Padak Chaung, Kyauk Pyu and Thaung Zin village in Tayetchaung Township. Twenty laborers from every each village have to work at Battalion No(403) base and also have to supply the bamboo and thatch for the barracks. If they fail, these villages would be relocated in the concentration village, near Saw Pyar village as the punishment, according to the letter issued by the Slorc. These villages faced the forced relocation previously to this concentration camp in June 1991 until the beginning of 1995 for accusing having contact with KNU and ABSDF forces.

Similarly, ten villages from Taung Pyauk district, Thetyetchaung township were ordered to work for the construction of military parade field and training center near Than Chaung Gyi village for LIB 405, 404, 403 of Slorc army. Local villagers have to go and work without pay once a week starting from September 4, 1995. The main works are cut the trees and bamboo, and make the ground level.

Rape and beating

On October 28, 1995, warrant officer Aung Gyi from LIB(103) based in Palaw township, tenessarim Division raped Ma San from Kyauk Taung Talai Taik village. The village LORC was ordered to send Ma San to Thara Bwin village by warrant officer Aung Gyi for interrogation. When she arrived there, she was ordered to come to Ko Aung Tin's house and was raped by warrant officer

Aung Gyi. She is 35-year-old and married with three children. This rape case spread in the next day among the local people so that warrant officer Aung Gyi got angry. He came on October 28 at night and beat Ma San with bamboo stick in front of the mini video theater. He accused Ma San was making up a false story to defame him.

More forced labor in Mergui motor road projects

Slorc has resumed the motor road construction projects since after the end of raining season. In Mergui, Tenessarim Division, three motor road projects are underway and local people are being conscripted as the unpaid labors for these projects. These motor road constructions are; between Kaw Thaung and Mergui, between Maw Taung (closed to Thai-Burmese border) and Mergui, and between Theindaw diamond mine and Tenessarim town.

Local people from Palaw, Mergui, Tenessarim, Boke Pyin and Kaw Thaung were conscripted for these constructions without any pay. Like other forced labor projects, they had to bring their instruments and food to the work-site and work at least fifteen day in one time. 1500 people from each townships in Mergui and Kaw Thaung district are summoned to these three construction projects and about 10,000 people are currently working. Every person are subject for forced labor and many types of taxation except the USDA (Union Solidarity and Development Association) members. Anyone those fails to work has to pay 100 kyats per day for fine. In addition to these three major projects, all the roads and streets in downtown Mergui are being renovated with forced laborers. Another motor road project of Mergui-Kyel Ku road is also underway with about 300 prison laborers.

As the result of constructions, many lands and farms were confiscated and some faced forced relocation at Takyat, Taru, Talabwin, Ban Pweit, Thein Taw, Sin Din, Zawel, Maw Tong, Nyaung Pin Kwin and Ta Baw Late village in Mergui district.

All of these projects are monitored by the Tenessarim Division Law and Order Restoration Council and Infantry Division 17, 101, 103, 224 and Light Infantry Battalion 433, 442, 358, 343 are taking security duty.

Among the three motor road, the Maw Taung - Mergui road is likely to be used for the another natural gas pipe from Ye Dagon off-shore field by Texaco giant American Oil Company.

Deteriorating life of Burmese fishermen in Tenassarim Coast

Since Slorc began to sell the fishing licenses to the Thai fishing company in the Burmese water territory, the life of Burmese traditional fishermen is deteriorating in Tenassarim coast. Many Thai fishing vessels fish close to the coast in shallow waters, and exploit the areas traditionally fished by the local people. The Burmese fishing community in Tenassarim Coast who have relied on local fishing resources for generations are now literally facing starvation, many of these villagers, displaced by the activities of the Thai fishing boats, have been forced to move inland to seek a new livelihood. Many fishermen could not meet their daily need so they moved to other places working all odd jobs. Compared to the small vessels and locally produced fishing gear, used by the local fishing community, the Thai vessels with their modern sonar and radar equipment and electronic communications facilities completely change the nature of catching fish. Heavy mining of the seas has been reported killing all species in the area, and destroying the ecosystem for years to come.

After the brutal murder of Burmese fishermen by the Thai counterparts on the vessel, Burmese authorities has stopped issuing new contract or extend their licenses to the Thai fishing companies. But the recently resumed the fishing licenses in the beginning of November with some restrictions. Previously Thai fishing vessels could fish and sell without any restriction after the pay tax to the Burmese fishing authority. According to the new regulation, all foreign fishing vessels operating in Burmese waters have to be scrutinized one by one and have to sell the fishes to the Burmese fish buying centers designated by the authorities. Any vessels found beyond the permitted waters would be shot, the new regulations detailed.

In reality, none of these regulations are adhered to. Hundreds of Thai fishing vessels are using one official license and duplicate to other vessel numbering from 6 to 10 vessels with same size and same name. Many are working illegally in Burmese waters and sometimes reach as far as Mon State. They sell very small amount of fishes to the Burmese authorities as mentioned in the regulation. Large amount of fishes are smuggled out by the Thai illegal vessels and sold in Ranong.

Two forced laborers drown in Hein Zel camp

Two laborers were drown in Hein Zel stream because of the force order by the Slorc army to swim across the stream as the punishment for taking rest during the working hour. According to the civilians

returned back from the Hein Zel forced labor camp, which is one of the forced labor camps in the Ye-Tavoy railway construction project, three male laborers were punished to cross the stream for taking unauthorized rest during the working hour. The order was conducted by army official LIB (410) and occurred on September 22, 1995. Fortunately one man could managed to swim across but the other two were drown in the stream.

KNU Information sub-department, Mergui-Tavoy district.

Update on the forced labor detention camps in Ye-Tavoy railway construction

According to the civilians returned back from the forced labor detention camp, the railway project has been resumed and every four townships from Tavoy district has to send 2500-3000 laborers for the construction in rotating system.

Currently there are eleven labor detention camps and the estimate numbers of laborers in the camps as of October 3rd, 1995 are ;

- | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| (1) 21-mile labor camp | 2000 laborers |
| (2) 27-mile labor camp | 3000 laborers |
| (3) 30-mile labor camp | 1000 laborers and 500 prisoners |
| (4) 36-mile labor camp | 900 laborers |
| (5) Hein Zel labor camp | 1700 laborers |
| (6) Nhine Kyel labor camp | 1000 laborers |
| (7) Nwe Lein labor camp | 1200 laborers |
| (8) Zin Bar labor camp | 1200 laborers and 300 prisoners |
| (9) Yar Phu labor camp | 1000 laborers |
| (10) Kyauk Kadin labor camp | 1200 laborers |
| (11) Ye Bone labor camp | 500 laborers (newly established) |

In 30-mile labor camp which is the labor camp of approximately 500 prison laborers, the working and living situation are severely bad. Between June and October 1995, about 40 prison laborers were killed for the hard working condition. Other 30 prison laborers attempted to escape and at least five were shot down and killed by the LIB 406 which is taking security guard in that camp. On October 21, 1995, four prison laborers from same camp fled from the camp. One prisoner was shot down and three escaped.

Similarly, on October 4, 1995, some civilians from 21-mile labor detention camp escaped from the camp to their villages in Thetyetchaung township. The Slorc army issued a warrant for the

escapees and searching for them.

25 out of 27 forced laborers from Hein Zel labor camp escaped in Tavoy while they were being taken to Tavoy for carrying some materials to the camp. All of these were originally from Laung Lon township. they were searched for and arrested by the Slorc and now they have been sentenced to six months imprisonment with hard labor.

KNU Information sub-department, Mergui-Tavoy district.

Forced conscription in the labor camps

The military recruitment division based in Tavoy district went to the forced labor camps in its region and recruited the youth aged between 16 to 22 years whose term are almost finished to join the army. Six youths from 36-mile camp, eight youths from Nwe Lein camp and 15 youths and inmates from 21-mile camp were forcibly conscripted.

KNU Information sub-department, Mergui-Tavoy district

More new forms of taxation in Shan State

All people from the whole Phae Khone Township of Shan State were forced to buy 90 horses, November 1995 as the deadline, according to the order by local SLORC's army. People were ordered to collect money that is equal to the prices of 90 horses. In order to do the order, all households from every wards Phae Khone Town are subject to pay at least 350 Kyats. Some households in the low populated wards had to pay more.

Similarly, the people of Phae Khone Township must pay 300,000 kyats for the benefit of Students' Sports Festival as well. The people from five quarters of Phae Khone Township including Nyaung Gon quarter, in spite of poor living, were subject to pay against their will both porter fees and sports festival fees.

Escape of female porters from Slorc's military column

SLORC's troops have been conscripting not only men but women to use as porters during the military operation in Karen State. Military column of LIB No. 340 based in Pa Pon Township headed for the KNU's Kyauk Nyat area on November 9, 1995, 60 male porters and 40 female porters have been conscripted for military purposes. During their

time as porters, female porters were forced to carry 10 Pyi of rice (about 13 Kilogram).

Four male porters and ten female porters from that column escaped while they took a rest at Perhike camp and arrived liberated area. Naw Htoo Chel (a)Ma Aye Aye Cho, 16-year-old, schoolgirl of eight standard, is one of the escapees. Her brother is a medic from DKBO and currently staying in the monastery compound of Myaing Gyi Ngu abbot who is believed, according to her, a leader of DKBO. She said that she was caught by LIB 340 on her trip despite she had the travel document issued by DKBO. Five men and fifteen women were also arrested along with her and conscripted as the porter for the military column.

SLORC's student sports festival and atmospheres of Loikaw

It is reportedly known that sixth anniversary of student sports festival will be held between 5 to 14 December 1995, in Loikaw, Karenni State. The students from High Schools and Middle Schools of Loikaw Town were selected for the opening and closing ceremonies of student sports festival since first week of September. They had to rehearse for festival that caused their absence at their school. It is warned by local SLORC authorities that the students those who failed to do this assigned duties shall not be allowed to enter the final examination and their parents will be punished

Moreover, government servants, students and civilians from village had to share cash or crops so that the festival will be accomplished. As for the beautification purpose for the festival, the people were forced to contribute their labor everyday in cleaning, painting, building fences and extending the roads. Under the name of self-help program, they collected money only from the public by force from 250 Kyats to 350 per household, without spending any government budget for the cost of repair and beautification of the city. As the result of forced contribution and labor for the beautification, on 3 November 1995, opening sessions of self-help road construction programs in Min Su, Shan Su, Daw Notu and Daw Tama, Damayone ward were held.

Slorc also took the security measure for the Student Sport Festival by reinforcing their military strength in Loikaw and arrested some youth. Now Slorc has reinforced five battalions in Loikaw and arrested about 50 youth and students. Among the arrested persons, Maung Taw, high school student

DKBA raid refugee camp across border

The attack on the Shoklo camp, 400 kilometers northeast of Bangkok was carried out on December 2, 1995 night by about 60 members of the DKBA, a rival faction to the KNU. The attackers robbed the refugees, taking an estimated 10,000 baht, and seized three KNU officials, said camp officials. The raiders also threatened to burn down the camp before they fled. More than 10,000 people live at the site, which has been in existence for ten years.

On November 26, 1995, the tour van driver was killed instantly and ten tourists injured when the DKBA fired rifle rounds and hurled a grenade. The party was ambushed along the 150km scenic road along the Moei river from Tha Song Yang, Tak to Mae Sariang, Mae Hong Son. Since September, seven attacks along the road have been blamed on DKBA.

Human Rights Watch / Asia reports "UN Action on Burma"

Human Rights Watch/ Asia, US-based human rights organization released "UN Action on Burma: Government Should Press for Implementation" on December 12, 1995. In its report, Human Rights Watch/ Asia welcomed the strong resolution on Burma adopted by consensus by the United Nation General Assembly today. However, the General Assembly once again failed to recommend or commit member states to adopt any particular actions to press for implementation of the resolution, though it did call for the Secretary General to continue his discussions with the SLORC. "For the fourth year in row, the UN has condemned the continuing human rights abuses in Burma and lack of freedom for its citizens to participate in the political process" said Zuneeta Liddell, Human Rights Watch/Asia researcher. "But unless governments act soon, the confrontation over the National Convention may lead to a renewed crackdown by the military government" she added.

Human Rights Watch/ Asia recommends the following measures to ensure that the resolution is

implemented: Emergency efforts to establish an ongoing human rights monitoring presence in Rangoon, reporting directly to the UN's Special Rapporteur to Burma, Prof. Yozo Yokota; Suspension of any government-supported efforts to entice or stimulate trade and investment in Burma; No bilateral or multilateral loans to Burma until key provisions of the UN's resolutions are fulfilled; Japan, in particular, should refrain from restoring Official Development Assistance (ODA) yen loan for major infrastructure projects suspended since 1988 until there is substantial human rights progress and steps to exert pressure on Burma to end the massive use of forced labor.

AI's Urgent Action on Burmese Detainees

In the Urgent action of Amnesty International released on December 5, 1995, AI expressed its serious concern for the health of Daw Khin Hlaing who has been in detention with her husband, U Ye Gaung, in Bangkok since 29 November 1995. She is said to be suffering from a heart condition which may be exacerbated by their detention. Both of them are Burmese asylum-seekers, were taken from their home in Bangkok in the early morning of 29 November and have since been held without charge or trial at the Immigration Detention Center (IDC). U Ye Gaung is senior writer for the New Era Journal, a Burmese opposition newspaper published in Thailand. AI believes the couple may have been arrested for the peaceful expression of their political views. Police also arrested 23 other Burmese student asylum-seekers on 28 and 29 November in Bangkok, in what AI believes is an effort to prevent public protests about the Burmese military-convened National Convention in Rangoon.

Statement by Nicolas Burns, spokesman of US Department of States on NLD stance

US Department of State, office of the Spokesman issued a strong statement dated November 30, 1995 regarding Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's party NLD withdraws from Nation Convention. The full text is as followed.

"Delegates from Aung San Suu Kyi's party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), withdrew from the Burmese military authorities' National CONvention on November 28. The NLD concluded that given the refusal of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to address concerns about the conduct of the National Convention, it could not continue to participate in the process."

"The United States strongly supports Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD in the quest to begin a direct dialogue with the SLORC about the political future of the country. We strongly encourage the SLORC, as we have done in the past, to enter into such a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi, other democratic leaders and the ethnic minorities. We believe this is key to political reconciliation in Burma."

Bereuter:

US-Burma ties depend on narcotics control rights

Cooperative ties between the United States and Burma are possible only if Burma's military rulers take concrete steps to control narcotics production and to improve the country's human rights situation, according to Douglas Bereuter (Republican of Nebraska), chairman of the House international Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific.

"The Congress of the United States wants to cooperate and promote cooperative ties between our two countries, but that will only be possible if they take effective action to expend human rights and democracy in Burma and to clamp down on Burma's massive opium production," Bereuter said at a December 6 subcommittee make-up of House Resolution (H. Res) 274.

The resolution calls for dialogue between Burma's government and its opposition ; the release of political prisoners; the repeal of laws prohibiting freedom of association and expression; access to prisoners by the international committee of the Red Cross; and increased efforts to control the narcotics flow from Burma. It also calls upon the President, Senator resolution at the upcoming session of the United Nations General Assembly. Bereuter said that the resolution was "both important and timely" in

light of recent developments in Burma.

"Last week Burma democratic opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi announced that she and her party, the NLD, would boycott the National Constitution Convention organised by Burma's military leaders, the SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council)," Bereuter said. "SLORC respond by expelling the NLD from the convention, foreclosing any chance for a dialogue between the government and the opposition. Without dialogue between the democratic opposition and the SLORC, the prospects for democracy and stability in Burma are bleak. Two technical amendments which did not effect the substance of the resolution were considered and approved without objection.

USIS Wireless file

Albright joins queue to rap Burma on rights

The US Ambassador to the United Nations blasted the Burmese regime on December 11, 1995 as a UN committee passed a resolution deploring the human rights situation in that country for the fourth year in a row. The US ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, said Burma's Slorc was operating outside of the law and internationally recognized standards of human rights. She warned that "the Slorc should have no doubt that it will be held responsible for any actions that result in physical harm or unjust punishment against those who have simply engaged in the peaceful exercise of internationally recognized rights." Albright said Washinton supported but did not sponsor the draft resolution because the language was too weak on the military's human rights violations and other provisions.

Nation December 13, 1995

Suu Kyi vows to continue fight

Burmese democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi vowed to continue her struggle for a popular political system in military-ruled Burma and rejected government suggestions she was inciting the people to take to the streets. Suu Kyi, speaking to a crowd of some 3,000 people outside her Rangoon home late on December 2, 1995 afternoon, said if anyone

would suffer in the fight for democracy in Burma it would be her and other leaders of her group, not the ordinary people. "Since the founding of the NLS we decided to strive in a dignified and just way by making sacrifices for the emergence of an administration and political system as desired by the people. We will keep on working according to the decisions," she said.

Apparently referring to articles in state-run newspapers suggesting she was trying to incite the people to take to the streets Suu Kyi said she would never use such a tactic.

Nation December 4, 1995

Japan Government postpones yen loans to Myanmar til next year

The government has decided to postpone scheduled yen loans to Myanmar until 1996 because of stalled efforts to democratize the country, a government source said Monday. However, a grant to expand a nursing college in Yangon will still be provided because a contract for the work was already signed, the source said. Moreover, additional official

development assistance (ODA) grants that directly affect the daily lives of the Myanmar people will not be frozen, he said.

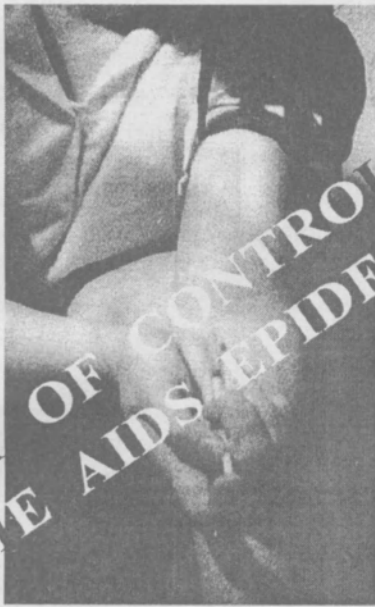
According to the source, the Japanese government was preparing to resume yen loans for eight projects that it suddenly pulled out of in 1988 when Myanmar underwent a military coup. The eight projects include a 4.87 billion yen plan to upgrade electrical supply to infrastructure in Yangon. The yen loans have been called off a second time because it has become unclear when the military junta ruling Myanmar will hold direct talks with the country's top dissident, pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Suu Kyi's political group, the National League for Democracy, boycotted a national convention late last month, saying the event was to be strictly controlled by Myanmar's military leaders. Because the boycott has cast doubt on the future of democratic reform in Myanmar, the Japanese government has decided not to resume yen loans within this year, the source said.

Yomiuri Shimbun

December 12, 1995





A report from Rangoon

The Southeast Asian Information Network (SAIN)

The last thing the embattled people of Burma need is more bad news. Seven years after a brutal military crackdown on their mass movement for democracy and five year after their resounding choice of a democratic system in national elections, they still live under a brutally repressive military regime, and they are still among the poorest people in Asia. But there have indeed in the tables and figures compiled by the country's National AIDS Program in their cramped and dusty offices in Rangoon. Burma, one of Asia's poorest and most isolated countries, is undergoing a devastating epidemic of HIV/AIDS.

“backward medical conditions, an ongoing political crisis, mass unemployment, and a flood of cheap heroin h

There are many talented and dedicated physicians, nurses and public health workers in Burma, and many are committed to HIV prevention and AIDS care, but resources are scarce, and the political situation and the isolation of their country makes their efforts all the more difficult.

HIV was first detected in Burma in the late 1980's. In 1989-90, significant rates were identified

in injecting drug users. Just three years later, in 1993, the virus was being found wherever testing could be done, in the big cities of the Irrawaddy delta, in towns and villages in the far north, in the deep south, on the Thai border to the east and on the India border to the west. In Kachin state, a remote mountainous province bordering China, 93% of several hundred addicts tested in a 1994 survey were HIV infected the highest rate reported among injecting drugs in the world. Wandering the battered pavements of Rangoon, of Mandalay, it's hard to imagine that as many as 400,000 of the gracious and long-suffering people one sees are carrying a fatal virus; but they are. And, given the state of Burma's public health system and the political and social realities of life under the countries' military dictatorship, the Burmese AIDS epidemic is just getting started.

The global HIV/AIDS epidemic has taken a new turn the 1990's.. The World Health Organization estimates that HIV virus is currently spreading faster in Asia than in any other part of the world. The worst hit countries in the region thus far are India, with more than one and two million infections; Thailand with at least 800,000; Burma, with perhaps 400,000 and Cam-bodia with close to 200,000 of a relatively small po-pulation of less

than seven million. While these figures are disturbing, is not the absolute

numbers of people infected that have caused such concern in the international public health community but the unprecedented speed with which HIV is spreading in these densely populated Asian nations. This is nowhere more evident than in the case of Burma, where backward medical conditions, poverty, the country's ongoing political crisis, mass

afford.

While sexual transmission and unsafe medical practices are compelling problems, the most significant route of HIV spread in Burma is through sharing of injection equipment by addicts. Western government, and in particular the Clinton administration, have long pointed to Burma as one of the major opium growing and heroin exporting countries of the world. Estimates vary, but even the lowest suggest that Burma produces some 40% of the world's heroin. What is less known is that

Burma has also become a heroin consumer. The junta currently admits that as many as one in a hundred adult men is an active heroin addict, though an earlier (unpublished) report suggested that the percentage may be closer to one in 25 men. Possession of drugs and syringes is illegal, and carrying syringes can lead to long

incarceration. Syringes are also in desperately short supply. As a result, addicts go to "tea stalls" shooting galleries behind shops and tea houses where professional injectors give them their doses. Up to 40 people may be injected with the same needle, efficiently spreading not only HIV but other blood borne infection including Hepatitis B and C, syphilis and malaria. HIV rates among these addicts in 1994-95 were over 80% in Rangoon, Mandalay and other cities and towns where tests were done. Most of these addicts are young men, so sex spread to other groups, including wives and girlfriends is likely. Not surprisingly, HIV rates among pregnant women are rising rapidly as well.

Burma poses special challenges to HIV researchers, donor agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations and bodies like UNICEF and the WHO, all of which have active AIDS programs in neighboring countries including Thailand and India. While it is clear that Burma will need international support to attempt to control HIV and to cope with the large number of AIDS patients, it is also clear that working under the generals in charge of Burma's ruling junta is both difficult and ethically problematic. The Burmese junta is notoriously one

**The regime is feared
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may actually be facilitating
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of the worst human rights abusers in the world. The regime is feared and widely mistrusted by the people, and many of their policies and law may actually be facilitating the spread of HIV. The best example of such policies is Burma's extensive prison system. All educational materials (indeed all reading materials) are banned in Slorc's jails, making education of prisoners next to impossible. Condoms are not available, ensuring that what sex does occur is unsafe. But more importantly, prisoners are still used for collection of blood products, and collection equipment is often reused, making even donation of blood unsafe. A refusal on the part of the junta to monitor conditions in these prisons recently caused to the International Committee of the Red Cross to pull out of Burma. Burma activists, meanwhile, fear that AIDS control programs are unlikely to reach the people who need help the most, that accountability of funds is virtually impossible to assure, and the regime, which craves international recognition, will attempt to use high profile AIDS programs to seek legitimacy.

While the UN and indeed the US Congress, have condemned the regime and called for the restoration of democracy in

Burma, many major corporations, including publicly owned UNOCAL of California, continue to do business with the junta.

The Slorc have allowed some HIV programs to function, and sanctioned the National AIDS Program, these steps may mask another, deeper reality of the AIDS situation under the regime. Conversations with health professionals point to 1988 as the year heroin use became widespread among Burma's youth. Before 1988 there had been scattered addicts, and traditional use of smoked opium was common among some ethnic groups, but no Burmese could remember rampant and widespread use of heroin until 1988-1989. The heroin epidemic coincides with the suppression of the mass movement of 1988, when millions of Burma's people rose up against years of military misrule and demanded democracy in the non-violent uprising that swept Aung San Suu Kyi to national prominence. Following the violent crackdown by

the junta, elections were held under UN auspices in 1990, and the Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won an overwhelming victory, but the military refused to step aside. The rise in domestic heroin use in Burma closely followed the junta's consolidation of power. In 1995, their control of the country is close to absolute. They have remained in power through a combination of brutal repression, attraction of foreign investment capital, and high levels of military spending. The one sector of the economy they deny involvement in is the drug business, though heroin is easily Burma's most lucrative cash crop. Is the military directly involved? One student of the 1988 movement had this to say "if you put up a poster about democracy at Rangoon University, you get 15 years in jail, if you hold a meeting to discuss human rights, you get 15 years in jail, but you can sell heroin in the college dormitory and nobody will bother you."

The Burmese democracy movement has called for economic sanctions against the junta, and these are currently being debated in the US, at UN

The tragedy of Burma may be that without a political solution to the countries' current crisis, HIV will be impossible to control. and by governments worldwide. The dilemma for the Burmese people is that HIV will not wait for the restoration for democracy.

However, should the junta remain in power, the political and social realities of their rule may frustrate any attempt to control HIV, even with donor agency involvement and international participation. Perhaps the position of Archbishop Desmond Tutu during the apartheid struggle best illustrates where AIDS researchers and organizations eager to help the Burmese people now find themselves. Tutu opposed the immunization programs UNICEF wanted to mount in the old South Africa. UNICEF's position was that "children are above politics." Tutu's position was that it was the apartheid system, not lack of vaccines, at the root of the disproportionate mortality among black children. Since UNICEF's involvement would give legitimacy to the Apartheid government's claims to be "helping" blacks, it had to be resisted. The tragedy of Burma may be that without a political solution to the countries' current crisis, HIV will be impossible to control. But unless the generals step aside soon, Burma will be devastated by AIDS.



Following is the full text of the statement delivered by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at her press conference on 22, November 1995.

The Observations of the National League for Democracy on the National Convention

A state constitution is a contract between the people and the government of a nation. Only a constitution that is willingly accepted by the people will endure the test of time. The National League for Democracy believes that if genuine multi-party democracy is to be established in Burma a constitution based firmly on democratic principles is an absolute necessity. The NLD was founded with the aim of achieving a genuine democratic system which accords with the will of the people, and of constructing a strong and lasting Union of Burma. It believes that the ultimate power of State derives from the people and that in a democratic nation there should be rule of

law and a constitution that guarantees basic human rights, including freedom of worship, freedom of speech and expression and freedom of association. Further, as stated in its election manifesto, the NLD believes that the foundation for a strong, lasting and prosperous union has to be laid through a National Convention where all the ethnic groups of Burma can jointly decide the future course of the nation.

The overwhelming success of the NLD in the elections of 1990 was an endorsement by the people of its principles and policies.

The State law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) has said it wishes to establish multi-party democracy in Burma and to return power to the people as soon as possible.

Slorc declaration number 1/90 of 27 July 1990 states that it is the duty of the elected representatives of the people to draw up a constitution.

On 18 October 1990, Slorc secretary (1) confirmed in a speech at the Kyunchaung fertilizer plant that it was the duty of political parties and elected representatives to draw up the state constitution. During the preliminary discussions on the National Convention the Chairman of the National Convention Convening Committee also stated that the elected representatives would be responsible for drawing up the constitution and that decisions based on the presentations of delegates would be arrived at through a democratic process.

Political parties were made to sign an undertaking to abide by the terms of declaration 1/90 which remains valid to this day. However the National Convention has not been conducted in accordance with the terms of the declaration. The role of political parties, clearly delineated in the declaration, has been obfuscated.

An examination of actual conditions within the National Convention reveals that there has been a shift away from its original declared aims. The following are some of the features of the present Convention:

The elected representatives of the people constitute only 15.24 per cent of the delegates and thus are permanently in the minority.

Neither the objectives of the Convention nor its working procedures were drawn up in consultation with delegates.



Papers to be presented at the Convention are censored and have to be corrected in accordance with the wishes of the authorities.

Decision are laid down before an issue has been fully discussed.

the Convention is making decisions not only on broad principles for the proposed constitution but also on its details.

There is no fixed timetable for the Convention.

The NLD as the political party that has received the mandate of the people has a duty to point out that its expectations with regard to the National Convention have not been realized. The work procedures of the Convention are not democratic and the basic principles for the proposed constitution includes some which are not consonant with a truly democratic state. These problems can only be resolved through dialogue. The NLD invites all concerned to join together in mutual trust and goodwill to work towards building up a genuinely democratic nation in accordance with the wishes of the people.

If the National Convention continues in its present form cannot assist in achieving national reconciliation. Genuine multi-party democracy, or a state constitution that enjoys the support and confidence of the people. These aims can only be achieved through discussion and dialogue.

Concluding Statement

The National Convention in its present form is not acceptable to the people of Burma and because it not acceptable to the majority of our people it is not acceptable to the National League for Democracy. And a constitution that is drawn up by a National Convention that does not enjoy the confidence of the people will itself not get the support of the people. And a constitution that is not supported by the people will be nothing more than a piece of paper.

So we call upon all those concerned to discuss the matter of bringing about a National Convention that is truly acceptable to the people and that will be able to draw up a constitution that will create a lasting democratic Union of Burma. It is for this reason that we have now put out this statement because the National League for Democracy has a duty to proclaim its position to the people who voted for it in 1990. We believe that our statement, our stance will be supported by the great majority of the people of Burma and it is our intention to continue along a path that is always consonant of the will of the people. Thank you.



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