

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS

Notes: Names of people and places have, in some cases, been withheld or changed when deemed necessary to protect the victims, their families, or our information sources; however, the original source documentation contains complete and accurate information. Most of the events described took place in 1996, however, some events occurred in early 1997.

The following keywords describing human rights violations (HRV) have been used to index and cross-reference the report; the keywords appear at the beginning of each interview.

Assembly:	Freedom of assembly and association
Child:	Rights of child
Detention:	Arbitrary detention and enforced or involuntary disappearances
Displacement:	Internally displaced persons
Execution, Killing:	Extra-judicial, summary, or arbitrary executions
Expression:	Freedom of opinion and expression
Forced labor:	Forced labor and slavery
Judicial:	Judicial system and unfair trial
Livelihood:	Rights of livelihood (i.e., pillaging, extortion)
Minorities:	Protection of minorities
Movement:	Freedom of movement
Refugee:	Situation of refugees
Religion:	Freedom of belief
Relocation:	Forced relocation
Repatriation:	Forced repatriation
Slavery:	Forced labor and slavery (i.e., portering)
Torture:	Torture and other cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment or punishment
Women:	Discrimination and violations against women

Interview 1: HRV: Forced Labor, Livelihood, Torture

Name: Nai Ohn Myaing
Sex: Male
Age: 52 years
Nationality/ Religion: Mon/ Christian
Occupation: Carpenter
Native Place: Sin Ku Village, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division.
Interview Date: January 1, 1996
Source: HRFOM

When did you arrive here (Payaw Mon refugee camp) and why?

I arrived here just two days ago. It took me five days to get here through Alesakan village. I fled from my village because I had no choice; I could not move to other places and had no more money for food or for payment to the military. I had worked (as a carpenter) mostly in several villages of Ye township, building houses there and I sent back cash to my family so they could survive. In this year [1995] I could not work smoothly as a carpenter in Ye, because we have to provide manual labor [as per SLORC requirements] nearly for the whole year on the railway construction. In my work to complete a house (some were big), it would take more than two weeks. For the railway construction we have to work for at least two weeks in every month and I have to take one day to travel to Ye and I have to find jobs of building houses for at least for two days. I could not work on many houses in my home village or villages nearby. When the [LORC] village leaders made us work continuously on the railway, you see, it was impossible to seek a job in Ye township, and then my family was finding it hard to survive.

My main occupation is as a carpenter and I have helped my family for many years. Since the Burmese soldiers started this railway construction, we have had many difficulties to find income, we had nothing left after we sold all of our belongings. Now, I have already sold my house to my younger brother and I decided to stay here.

Can you tell me who was responsible for conscripting villagers for the railway construction? Please explain to me what you know.

Sin Ku village is a small village (with about 100 households), even we have to provide laborers from nearly 50 houses every two-weeks. The number of laborers depended on the amount of assigned work. The military came to the village only sometimes. But, whenever they came, they asked for chicken and

other food. I think when they came, they would give orders to the village [LORC] leaders. When they left, the village leaders told us how many holes or trenches we were assigned to dig at the construction site. Then, the village leaders made assignments to individual village families.

The military has not directly ordered and instructed the villagers, but when the group of villagers arrived at the assigned construction site, they had to inform the military officers and the railway authorities (officials of Myanmar railway project) there. As soon as we arrived at the construction site, we had to work in earnest, because the work-duty for our village was too much. Almost all the able-bodied persons in the village had to go to complete the village assignment.

When did you start to work in the construction? What kinds of work?

I have a son about 16 years old, and recently he had to work on the construction instead of me, as I was working away from home. Actually, the work was too hard for my son and later I had to go in his place as my wife asked me. The villagers were conscripted on this project almost all of 1995. I started working on the construction in the third week of August. The village leader explained to the villagers that the military asked for about 10 laborers from our village. We thought we would have to work on building the embankment somewhere. But we had to travel to Min Tha village. When we arrived there, the military and railway authorities explained to us we had to clear foliage for the new railway route. In our worksite near Le Gyi Village, there were more than 100 villagers from several villages.

In our work, we had to clear foliage and cut down the trees such as rubber which were owned by the villagers nearby. Before we arrived at the worksite, the soldiers told us we would have to clear and cut everything that lie on the railway route. This route was a new one. Along the new route, we cleared foliage about 50 feet in width along the way. Before our arrival, the engineers and the railway authorities had already lined the route with poles and small flags -- we had to clear foliage between those poles. The route passed through rubber plantations and we had to cut down rubber trees. We did not always know who owned those plantations but most of the owners were from Le Gyi village. I do not know for sure that the railway authorities paid compensation to those plantation owners. I do not think so. Since they started the construction they confiscated many plantations and rice fields by force and without any compensation. This kind of confiscation is like normal in our area.

How many times have you worked in the railway construction and can you

describe me the working conditions?

I had to work on the construction project four times since August of 1995, including the first time clearing foliage near Le Gyi. In comparison with other worksites, my first worksite's working conditions were the best. When we worked there, we had to work while it was raining and it was not so hot. In some places we had to work under shady trees or on rubber plantations and the work was not so hard just clearing foliage and cutting down trees. At other times, working conditions were terrible. The work assigned to us was much too much, such as to complete the digging of 10 ditches in the ground, sometimes up to 15 ditches, and had to carry dirt to build the embankment. It was hard work for me as I never did this type of labor before. Almost all of my life I have been working as a carpenter leader in building houses in Ye Township. I never worked hard like farming or fishing. At the time the rainy season had already ended and we had to work regardless of the beating sun. We had to build up the unfinished embankment to make it larger and higher. If I was alone, I could not finish digging and carrying dirt for 10 ditches and my son had to help me every time.

Immediately upon arrival at the worksite, we had to find a suitable place to build a small temporary shelter which was close to the stream and also shady. We had no time to build a proper toilet. After building the shelter, we started digging the ground. Sometime we had to go to the worksite from the shelter about 15 minutes. Normally, all along the small stream, there were over-crowded villagers from several villages making many shelters. Surely, after we stayed for five days, we got a bad smell from that surrounding area.

If one family was unable to work or someone could not work, for example if he became sick, on the worksite, what was the treatment by soldiers or railway authorities?

Normally, for nearly two years, after the military started building Ye-Tavoy railway, if some families or someone could not work on the defined time and to do the work-duty, they had to pay to the SLORC through their village headmen, with explanation to hire a substitute. But in most cases, the military or railway authorities took such cash without hiring someone for replacement. In my first time of work clearing foliage at the new route, two of our villagers could not go to worksite and they had to pay 2000 kyats each to the village headman; he gave that cash to the Burmese military officer, maybe LIB No. 409, in Min Tha village. When we arrived at the worksite and started clearing foliage for the new route, I found out that there was no extra laborer hired by the military. Before we left for the worksite, the village headman told us that

the military would hire two more villagers for substitution. Nobody came to work with us, then we had to complete work on the defined distance of the route by ourselves.

The soldiers did not stay with us all the time and watch us, but they came about two or three times in a week to check how much of the job we had completed. As soon as they arrived, they shouted at us to frighten us and to ensure we would complete the jobs, so we had to be careful and worked hard. If they saw someone taking a rest when they arrived, they would beat the person. I was an eyewitness of two Burmese soldiers beating an old man. The old man was about 65-years-old and he was too weak to work. So we allowed him to work as he could and to take a rest any time he needed. One day, when he took a rest under a big shady tree beside the embankment we built, a small force of soldiers sent in advance by a company of Burmese troops appeared at our worksite and saw that old man taking a rest. The soldiers took him to the commander. The commander ordered two soldiers including one sergeant to beat the old man. They beat the old man with rifle butts, fists, and army boots. The man was not one of our villagers. The village headman of his village approached the commander and explained his situation, and then they stopped beating the old man. The commander then shouted and warned villagers not to bring disabled and unhealthy villagers to the worksite. Instead of bringing such men, they should collect cash for those families to hire a substitute. Later, we knew that the old man was from The Chaung village and he knew he was weak because of sickness but he had nothing to pay for substitute. He had to come to the worksite afbecause he had no choice. All villagers sympathised with him.

Did the railway authorities pay any villager for the labor contribution and were the villagers treated by the military or government clinics or hospitals when they got sick or suffered injuries at the worksites?

Never. I never heard the railway authorities pay the villagers for their manual labors. Nothing was provided by them. When we came to the worksite, we had to spend our own travelling money. We had to bring our own food, especially rice and our own tools. I brought some cash to buy palm oil, vegetables, and medicines at the worksite. There were small shops at each worksite run by villagers nearby, but for medicine we had to buy from the military medic or at a village such as Kalein Aung. I was lucky as I never suffered from sickness at the worksites. For a patient who was sick in the worksite, the military never treated them and if he/she was very seriously ill, the concerned villagers had to send her/him to clinics or hospitals in Tavoy or KaleinAung. He/she had to pay for their own treatement at a private clinic. Even in Tavoy or Ye town hospital you had to buy the medicines. Additionally, the patient had to pay the

military to hire the substitute to complete pieces of work assigned to him/her. As long as you worked at the worksite, you had to take care yourself and try not to become sick. At every worksite, many villagers were getting sick because of surroundings, but they tried to complete their work because they could not afford to hire a substitute.

How much money did you lose due to your labor contribution on this construction?

Recently, instead of me, my son had to work on the construction as I had to make an income for my family's survival. But my income could not cover expenses at home or the many kinds of taxes we had to provide to the SLORC. Sometimes, when my son could not go to the worksite, we had to pay the military. My wife sold everything that belonged to her, including her gold necklace and ring. My income could not cover all of our expenses for a long time. Last year in June, I sold my five acres of rice fields and then I spent that cash to pay to the military and for family survival. In October I had nothing left in my rice barn. When I worked on the construction, I had to buy rice at a very high price. When I abandoned my village, I left only one small. My wife and I sold everything that belonged to us.

Will you hope to return back again to your native village?

At the moment it is impossible to return. If the military stops conscripting laborers and collection of so many taxes, maybe, I will return back.

Interview 2: HRV: Women, Forced Labor

Name: Mi Aye Yin
 Sex/Age: Female/ 41 years
 Nationality/ Religion: Mon/ Buddhist
 Occupation: Farmer
 Native Place: Hamaw Gyi village, Yebyu Township.
 Interviewed: January 14, 1996
 Source: HRFOM

I always meet pregnant women working on [railway] construction whenever I worked there. The pregnant women had to work because their husbands were away working for an income or working on their own farms and plantations. At every worksite, Nwe Lein, or Ye Bone or Kalein Aung, I met many pregnant women working there. From our village alone, among 30 villagers who

had to work for 2 weeks every month on a rotating basis, there were at least two pregnant women.

Some women were between three and six months pregnant. Most villagers at the worksites helped the pregnant women as much as possible, such as digging ditches, carrying dirt, and letting them take a rest. Some women even gave birth at the worksite.

Did you meet the women who gave birth at the worksites? And when? Did the railway authorities take care of them?

Yes, I met a women who gave birth at the Kalein Aung worksite in third week of October, 1995. She came to worksite with her 11-year-old son. After she stayed and worked for one week carrying dirt for the embankment, she gave birth. The women villagers from her village helped to facilitate the birth. Her baby was a girl. Her village headman brought her back to village. I think she came from the area of Chat Taw or Mae Daw villages. Maybe, her husband was a fisherman or day-worker and away from home when she left from village or they have nothing to pay to the military to hire a substitute worker.

No special attention or care was provided by railway authorities or the military for women giving birth at the construction site. They just shouted at village headmen for bringing such women to the site and warned they they had to find a substitute for that woman. After the village headmen guaranteed to find out a substitute, then the military agreed to allow her to return to her village.

Other kinds of inhumane treatment by the military or railway authorities include forcing women with babies or small children to work on the construction. Those women and their children face terrible conditions at the construction sites.

And, did you meet women with babies who worked on the construction? How did they take care of their babies while they were working?

Yes, I met them. Many women came with babies. They had no more choice as they could not provide payment to the military or village headmen. The railway authorities or the military in the construction site never told villagers not to bring mothers of small babies. All they said was that one family member from each household had to report for duty. If not, those families had to hire a substitute or provide payment to the authorities. You know, most villagers in any village are very poor and cannot provide payment, so they have to work even if they have a small child.

There were three women with babies from our village alone, when we left to the worksite in November to Kalein Aung. At night time, we slept at the labor camp of Kalein Aung -- about one kilometer from the worksite. The women also brought their babies with them and walked to worksite everyday and returned back to camp again in evening. When they reached the worksite, we also helped such women to find a good shady tree to hang a hammock. Sometimes we found one easily. but, if we were far from the worksite, we had to make temporary shelters with bamboo, leaves, and clothes, and put the baby inside the shelter after they were breast-fed. The reason those women have to come to worksite was the same as with other women -- their husbands had to find income and had no time to work on the construction or they were away while the military or village headmen instructed the villagers.

Did the women and children become sick at the construction sites and did the authorities provide medicine and treatment?

It depended on the worksite. When we were working in Kalein Aung, if someone got sick, we just brought them to the military medic and he was treated for free. But sometimes, the military medic made you buy medicines from a private shop. At the beginning of the dry season in October and December, many villagers on worksites, mostly women and children became sick because the weather was changing. It was too hot during the day and it became difficult to get pure water after no more rain. Anyhow, we had to maintain our health as long as we were working so we could finish our assignments. We had to treat ourselves in traditional ways by taking medicines taken from home and betel-nut leaves to reduce our fever. When we worked in Ye Bone worksite in October, the patients who were down with fever could not go to Kalein Aung because it was too far from the worksite.

Can you estimate how many women there are among every ten villagers (the percentage) who had worked on the construction? Not exactly, please provide a rough estimation.

There were more women than men on every construction site I ever worked on. There were approximately six women in every ten villagers (about 60%) who worked on the construction sites. The women range in ages -- some girls were only 10 years old, while some women were sixty years old; they all worked together.

Why did your husband always let you work on the construction projects and he did not go and work?

He was always busy with work on our farm and he knew better than me how to cultivate rice. In the past I could not work on farming cultivation and I just have taken care of my home. In extra time, my husband also went to the sea for fishing to seek more income. Most of his work is very difficult, I can not do it. But, I can work on the construction, such as digging ground and carrying dirt. The construction work was very difficult, but we have no payment and no extra family member to provide a substitute worker for me. That was why I always had to work there.

How did you know this refugee camp and when do you think you can return back to your home?

We knew this camp for about three years. Recently, we knew this village as a Mon soldier village and later, we knew that this village is a camp that receives people who fled from their villages and provides assistance, especially food. Then, we decided to come here and, besides, we don't know how to go to Kaw Thaug or Ranong, because we have no experience to work in Thailand.

I think when the military finishes the railway construction we will return back, but we are not sure. Besides the railway project, we had to pay them many other kinds of taxes and maybe it may not be so safe to return back.

Interview 3: HRV: Porter, Torture, Refugee

Name:	Saw Kyaw Lay
Sex:	Male
Age:	36 years
Nationality:	Karen
Religion:	Christian
Occupation:	Farmer
Native Place:	Law Thaing Village, Yebyu Township
Interview Date:	January 24, 1996.
Source:	HRFOM

The cease fire agreement between the NMSP and the SLORC did not bring the betterment of human rights in most areas where the Mon and Karens are staying. Continuing human rights abuses force the local villagers to abandon the villages and become displaced persons.

When did you arrive at this refugee camp? Why did you decide to stay here?

I arrived here just three days ago. I came from Lae Thaing village just two days walk. Fortunately, I had no trouble on the way. I have come here several times over the last two years to sell or carry some products from Burma. Now I decide to stay for only this year. Maybe, if the situation is better next year, I will return back. But I can not predict what the situation is.

I knew I couldn't continue to provide them [SLORC] the labor they required and cash as well. When we were in villages we were constantly arrested to be porters or had to work in the military barracks. We had to carry the military logistics on a rotating basis very often .

How many times you have to go with military operation as porter since September of 1995? What logistics did you have to carry?

I have been a porter three times since September 1996. My last time as a porter for Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) No. 407 was on December 23. The last time I left here, on the same day, all male villagers had to go with a military operation according to arrangement of village leaders. Recently, we resorted to the trick of fleeing the village to the forest nearby. When the Burmese soldiers returned to their base or left the village, we returned. But, villagers who were found fleeing were severely beaten by the soldiers. Later, SLORC commanders issued orders and instructed every village leader in area that if they [soldiers] came to the village, they would not rashly arrest the villagers. They said they would kindly ask them to provide the needed porters. If the village disagreed with their instructions, their villages would be burned down. In our village, the village leaders have to give the local military battalion a register of households including the names of family members. The SLORC warned that if you fled, you would be accused of giving information to Karen troops and would be severely punished.

I was a porter for LIBs 407, 410, 104, respectively. Normally, we have to march with the military outpost for at least three days. However, the last time I portered starting on December 23 we asked to return back for the Christmas festival on December 25.

We have to carry several kinds of supplies for SLORC , including ammunition and food. The first time I had to carry six big shells of ammunition that weighed about 30 kilograms. On that trip we did not encounter any fighting. With me there were four other villagers and 23 villagers from another village. We had to carry ammunition and food for the troops for three days. I think the troops were from LIB 410. I don't know the name of the commander, but they have about 50 soldiers in that military operation. We had to walk Alesakan

village. The second time I had portering duty I had to carry the soldier's rice and belongings, including their military bags and boots. The last time I portered, I carried rice and vegetables, weighing about 25 kilograms. We only had to walk for one day but then we had to work for a day in the barracks.

How was the soldiers' treatment of villager porters? Was anyone hurt as a result of the portering?

We always became weak after we returned from portering. The soldiers only fed us one meal a day consisting of a small amount of rice and bean curry. The soldiers ate two meals a day. It was better when we passed through a village; the villagers knew how poorly the soldiers fed us. They sympathized and gave us some food. We could not ever stop for a rest without express orders from the commander. If you asked for a rest, the soldiers would shout at you and kick you with their boots. They always shouted, "this is the army, you must follow orders." Some men were also beaten behind with soldiers' boots or rifle butts, if they walked too slowly. Such treatment is normal during portering for Burmese troops.

You said they released you to celebrate the Christmas festival. Do you think the military commander had respect for religious rights of your community?

Maybe. Colonel Thaung Yaza is of Chin nationality. I think he is a Christian like us. Maybe, he sympathized with us. They released us, but they made us promise to do work after we left.

Besides the portering, the villagers also had to provide the facilities for the military's use. In every community, villagers have to find out facilities and they have to work in the military barracks.

What kind of work did they order you to do before you returned back for the Christmas Festival?

Captain Kyaw Myint told us that "if you would like to return back to your village for the Christmas festival, you have to cut trees to send them to us when you are through," we agreed. He told us to cut down small trees from the forest, one foot in diameter and cut them into 100 pieces, 5 feet in length. Then he told us to send the wood pieces to them. After the festival we went into the forest in the east of the village, even though the military had ordered villagers not to travel to the east side of the motorway. We had no choice, we could not get trees around our village and plantations nearby.

Four of us travelled to the east side of the village. We had to go about 5 miles from our village and it took us four days to get all 100 pieces of one foot dimension wood. We were lucky because there was no activity of Burmese troops at that time. We brought the wood to the village and then to the military base with five bullock-carts from the village. Totally, we had to spend one week cutting wood and bringing it to military base.

I think the soldiers will use the wood to build their barracks, bunker, and trenches with the wood. They also made fences with the wood. Other villagers also provide such kind of wood and bamboo. Some of them also worked on the construction of the military barracks and all jobs at the military base.

Besides the facilities, what kind of other material do your villagers have to provide to the base?

Several things. Besides wood for the construction, the villagers also had to provide them with firewood. Before I left, another villager and I had to collect firewood from every house in the village and then, send the soldiers two bullock-carts full of firewood. We gave the firewood to Captain Kyaw Myint.

Sometimes, the commanders sent letters to village leaders and asked for vegetables or meat. Then, we had to send them vegetables and pigs from the village. If they asked for chicken, we had to give them at least ten chickens. If they asked for a pig, at least we have to give them one pig, they did not accept one or two kilograms of pork. During the Christmas festival, they also asked for one pig, and we gave it to them.

You said the military barred the villagers not to travel on Ye-O-Tavoy motorway. Why?

Because of fighting between Karen and Burmese troops. In October and November when the Burmese troops from LIB 407, 410, and IB 104 launched patrols and military offensives, they were ambushed by Karen guerrillas several times. Some of their officers were killed, which angered them very much.

On December 10, there fighting occurred in the southeast of our village, about 6 kilometers away. The Burmese troops were IB 104 at Kyaukadin. According to Yabu and Kyaukadin villagers, many Burmese soldiers sustained many injuries. The troops took out their anger on Karen villagers. After battle was over, some rice plantation were burned down by the SLORC troops. Then, they issued the order to every village not to move east of the motorway as I mentioned. The soldiers were still fighting when I left. The village leaders

warned us not to go east of village. If they (the soldiers met us on the way they will kill us for sure). They also ordered the farmers who were on plantations to stay in the village.

On December 12 Captain Kyaw Myint himself came to villages and arrested about 20 villagers including women and village leaders. He brought them to Kyaukadin. The soldiers accused those villagers of being the relatives of Karen guerrillas. The guerrilla leader is Dar Lace. They said those villagers are relatives of Dar Lace troops and sometimes they returned back to the villages. The village leaders cannot bar them. Actually, not all of the arrested villagers are relatives of the rebels, but some of them are. They detained them for 15 days in Kyaukadin military detention center. Some of the villagers were severely tortured and I don't know if they raped girls or not. They were put under the burning hot sun in mid-day and poured water over their heads. Sometimes, they covered the faces of villagers and beat them. Next time they wanted to launch a military operation, they also used the village leaders of every Karen village as guides to show the troops where the KNU had taken bases.

The situation is very serious. After the SLORC soldiers died, they always beat any Karen person they saw. The Karen men who travelled to Kalein Aung or Alesakan described that they were always beat by Burmese soldiers at military checkpoints on the way or when they met a soldier mid-way or sometimes, even on the truck.

The restriction of movement of local villagers has affected the rice production of that area and as a result, those local inhabitants have to abandon their native villages and become displaced persons.

Why did you decide to come here (Payaw refugee camp)? What is the difference between here and your village?

I also have a small highland rice plantation east of my village near Kin Chaung (river). After the fighting began, I had no opportunity to have a look at the plantation and to harvest. I didn't know what happened to my plantation. I would like to go, but my wife stopped me. She said it was too dangerous, she worried that the soldiers would kill me. After they were ambushed, the Burmese soldiers launched patrols around the area to catch the Karen rebels. But the Karen troops had disappeared.

I left with nothing. Our family was totally dependant on that plantation and we had no more rice even for the Christmas festival. We had to borrow sticky rice from other houses to make food. I also grew sticky rice on the plantation, but I

lost all of it. Nobody in our village dared to go to their plantations and you had to sell belongings to buy rice. I have no more belongings to sell so I decided to come here.

Another difference between here and my native village is that here I do not have to worry about food, portering, working for military, or being tortured by the soldiers. But I get very small house, I would like to return back again when the situation is better.

Interview 4: HRV: Porter, Forced Labor, Arrest, Detention

Name:	Tar Lae
Sex:	Male
Age:	43 years
Nationality:	Karen
Religion:	Christian
Occupation:	Farmer
Native Place:	Ye Bu Village, Yebu Township
Interview Date:	January 29, 1996.
Source:	HRFOM

By using guerrilla warfare tactics, the ethnic nationalities of Burma have struggled for autonomy and the establishment of a democratic federal union since Burma's independence. The central successive Rangoon government could not defeat those opposition groups even though they consistently increased their forces, and they used inhumane tactics of discrimination against ethnic communities. The interviewees explained the experiences of his community.

Why did you flee from your village to here (a place near border area under the control of NMSP) and how often did Burmese troops come into your village?

I came here because I don't want to stay in the village anymore. All our villagers have provide to the Burmese soldiers with porters or cash, and they always beat villagers when they dissatisfied. They came into our village very often -- at least two times in one month. I don't know how many times they sent letters to village leaders within a month. But every time, when the Burmese officer sent a letter, the village leaders would ask for a meeting and then we had to provide laborers for railway construction, motorway construction, or portering. Every time the Burmese soldiers came into our village they always asked for porters. I have had to go as a porter several times.

According to the villagers from Law Thaing, there was a lot of fighting occurring in the Ya Bu-Law Thaing area. Do you know about those fights and how has it affected your village?

I knew about them very well because I was a porter when the fighting happened in the third week of November. We were taken as porters by LIB 407. The day before I left, the village leaders had to provide 7 villagers for them. Then we moved to the east side of the (Ye-Tavoy) motorway along the Kin Chaung River. We left in the early morning on that day. I had to carry rice and ammunition for them. The SLORC troops were led by Colonel Hla Htun and they had about 60 soldiers and about 30 porters including us.

At mid-day, the Karen soldiers shot at us. I think the Karen forces had only ten people. I didn't know how to flee. The bullets came at us very fast and the Burmese commanders shouted at us to lay down. We laid down on the ground and the officer ordered soldiers to advance and shoot. Some very young soldiers (children soldiers) were scared to advance, but they had to follow their orders. One corporal took ammunition from me brusquely and shouted at me not to flee.

Three Burmese officers died and other three were severely injured during the fighting. The three included one Corporal, one Sergeant, and one Lieutenant. The fighting took place just for 15 minutes and then the Karen soldiers fled away from the site. One rice plantation nearby was also burned down as a result of the fighting. I don't know who owned that plantation. When we returned that way, we had to carry the dead bodies up to Ye Bu and then to Kyaukadin. The soldiers shouted at us along the way to hurry up.

Two days later, the Burmese troops travelled to east of the motorway again and burned down the rice plantations and farm-huts in the area. When they returned, they also ordered villagers not to go to the east side of the village. This order had a terrible impact upon us because many villagers were preparing to harvest their rice on the east side. We had no opportunity this year to harvest rice and we lost all of our crops. Many villagers lost all of their rice, just like me.

Some of our villagers were also arrested for allegedly being rebel-supporters. They were detained in Kyaukadin military detention center. From then on, whenever the military launched an operation, they asked village leaders, not as porters, to follow them and show them the base of the Karen soldiers. The soldiers also burned the rice plantation of the Ya Bu and other villagers in front of village leaders, but they could not stop the soldiers.

What did the army do if you could not fulfill SLORC's portering requirement?

If we could not go for portering for some reason, we had to inform the village leaders and pay at least 2000 kyats to the military. Every time we were taken as porters we had to spend one full week with the troops. If the troops were not going on an offensive then we had to work in the military barracks. Most of our villagers are poor and cannot pay the fee. In some cases, when a father is busy, the boys had to go with the troops as porters instead.

Can you give me some background on your village?

Our village had about 50 households with a population of nearly 300. Recently, our villages have only about 100 households because many families have moved to refugee camps or joined the Ya Bu big village. Our village is small Ya Bu and most people call it Ya Bu Ywa Thit (new village). Another village is Ya Bu Ywa Ma (big village) and our village is under the administration of Ya Bu village group. Really our village is situated beside Kin Chaung River. About four years ago when the military launched its "four cut campaigns," our village was relocated to this place. (Four cut campaign is the attempt of the Burmese Army to cut off information, recruitment, logistics, and tax from civilians to limit their assistance to the ethnic armed opposition). All the time our villagers were accused of being rebel-supporters by the soldiers.

What other violations by Burmese soldiers occurred in your village?

Normally, we also have to work on the railway and motorway construction like other villagers.

Interview 5: HRV: Refugees, Women, and Rape

Name:	Daw Ma Shin
Age:	54 years
Sex:	Female
Nationality:	Karen
Religion:	Christian
Occupation:	refugee
Native Place:	Law Thaing Village, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division
Interview Date:	January 10, 1996
Source:	HRFOM

Traditionally, the ethnic communities in Burma who believe in Christianity celebrate Christmas Day on December 25. On the eve of Christmas Day, the Christians must prepare for the celebration.

Why did you return back to your native village (from Payaw refugee camp)? For what purpose? When did you leave from the village?

I returned back to Law Thaing village to buy pigs for the celebration of Christmas Day. We could not get pigs here (in Payaw refugee camp) and it may be expensive in Sangkhalaburi (Thai border town). So I decided to return back to Low Thaing village. I have relatives there and I thought I could get a low price if I went there. I first left there on November 28 with two of my grandchildren, a girl Naw Maw Nee and a young man, Mem Kow Htaing.

How many days you did spend in your native village and when did you return back again?

We had to walk for two days to reach Law Thaing village and I arrived on November 29. We stayed there for three days and returned to Payaw village on December 3. On those days we stayed there, we visited to our relatives' houses and bought two pigs. Then, we tied the pigs to a leash and pulled them along the way back.

The local SLORC troops always accuse the innocent local ethnic population of being supporters of the armed ethnic opposition and are often terribly treated by soldiers.

When did you meet up with Burmese soldiers (the most local villagers refer to the SLORC troops as Burmese soldiers) and what did they ask you?

We left Law Thaing village on the morning of December 3. My grandchildren pulled the pigs and we walked along the way of Kin Chaung River. At about 6:00 p.m. when we arrived in a place Naw Gyar Ai (Ai Shay in Burmese), we met three Burmese soldiers; we had no time to flee as I am an old woman and we had two pigs with us. The Burmese soldiers shouted at us not to flee and if we did flee, they would shoot. They arrested all of us and brought us to the place where they made a temporary camp. We had to walk there for one hour.

As soon as we arrived at their outpost, they tied my grandson up with ropes. I saw there were about 30 soldiers and 11 porters at the camp. All of them were taking a rest and they prepared a shelter to sleep. Then, the Captain ordered his men to bring me to meet him.

He asked me many questions such as where I was staying, about the fighting, and the background of our family. I answered that I recently stayed in Law Thaing village and now I stayed in Payaw refugee camp and I was a Christian. He also asked me did I know the fighting happened just previously between Dar Lace-led Karen rebels and Burmese soldiers and made sure he knew the location of the base of Dar Lace group. I told him I did not know the happened fighting as I was in Payaw. I also did not know who were "Dar Lace" and his base.

He asked who was the young girl accompanied with me and how she was related with the young man. I told him that the young girl and man were my grandchildren. When he asked me the young girl was already married or not, and I told him the truth that she was not married yet. After her parents died, she had come to the refugee camp with me.

The sexual abuse always occurs by the soldiers. Mostly, three Burmese soldiers, including senior officers always threaten to kill the victims if they tell anyone about their rapes.

Then, how did he threaten or violate you?

He did not make any problem with me, he just threatened me that I bought pigs from the village illegally (without informing the military) and he can confiscate pigs, arrest me and send me to Ya Bu military detention center. I told him that I bought pigs just to use for Christmas Day and to sympathize with me not to confiscate. Then, he let me go back to the place where the soldiers had put up to stay that night.

Later, what was the treatment of the commanders and soldiers?

About 9:00 p.m., the soldiers who got the order from that officer, came and took my granddaughter to the Captain. After one hour, my granddaughter screamed "grand-ma, please help me," "please come here." All of us, including porters, soldiers nearby heard her loud voice, but nobody dared to help her. Nobody could sleep. The rape of my granddaughter took place only about 15 meters from us. After a while, she came back, crying, and told me that the officer had raped her. While she was telling me about the incident, one soldier shouted at us to sleep and stay quietly. Maybe, other porters and soldiers slept well, but my granddaughter and I could not sleep for the whole night.

How did the soldiers treat you?

About 4:00 a.m. in the morning on the next day, one warrant officer came and told me that the officer agreed to release all of us, but he would confiscate the pigs. And, I told him it was very important for me to get the pig back to the camp and please give one pig and confiscate another one. He said he needed to ask the officer. He told me he would bring me to him and would explain about the pig. I agreed and followed behind him to meet the officer again. On the way, before we reached the officer's tent, we arrived under a cluster of bamboo, he gripped me with his hands tightly and tried to push me down to the ground. I tried to stop him from raping me, but he threatened kill me with his knife. Then he raped me.

Interview 6: HRV: Refugee, Rape, Women

Name	Naw Maw Nee
Sex:	Female
Age:	17 years
Nationality:	Karen
Religion:	Christian
Native Place	Thaing Village, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim Division
Interview Date:	January 10, 1996
Source:	HRFOM

Most of the ethnic civilians cannot speak Burmese -- it is a weak point for them in communicating with Burmese soldiers and they have always been looked down upon and mistreated by the soldiers.

When you were taken to the military officer , Bo Gyi (Captain), what did he say to you?

As soon as I arrived, he asked if I could speak Burmese. I said, "no, I can't speak Burmese. He said he could speak Karen. Repeatedly, he asked me how I was related to the old woman and man who accompanied with me along the trip. I told him the man was my cousin and the old woman was my grandmother.

When he asked me if I knew Karen rebel leader Dar Lace, I answered that I did not. He said, "why not, he is a Karen and you are a Karen, so you must know him. ar I told him I really did not know.

Did they ask you why you stayed at the refugee camp?

Yes, he asked me. I told him my parents died and then I stayed with grandmother as I have no other relatives. And I did not know how to work to get income. He also asked me what kind of assistance we received at the camp. I explained to him that we received rice, fish paste, and salt. He also asked our occupation at the camp and I answered we cultivated rice in a hilly area close to the camp.

How did he force himself upon you?

He said that he sympathized with me and told me he would like me to stay with him. He told me he loved me. He said it might be too tiring for me to work in cultivation and that he could create a better life for me. I refused to stay with him. He forcibly embraced me and kissed me. I shouted, then he gripped me tightly with his hands and showed me a hoe, with which he threatened to kill me if I was not quiet. He shouted at me that I shouldn't make him angry. Then he raped me.

Interview 7: HRV: Forced Labor, Child, Women

Name:	Hla Hla Aye
Age:	14-year-old
Sex:	Female
Ethnicity:	Mon
Religion:	Buddhist
Native:	Mayan Chaung village, Yebyu township, Tenasserim Division
Place of interview:	Payaw refugee camp in Mon region
Date of interview:	Feb 4, 1996
Source:	ABSDF

I first went to work at the Ye-Tavoy railway project last September. I was 14 years old at the time. My family was ordered to provide one laborer. My parents were old and my brother was already performing forced labor for the military outpost in my village. So, I had to go to fulfill my family quota.

The village LORC knew my age but they did not say anything about being too young. I was the youngest among all the villagers in my group. There were 15 people from my village. Most were women because it was harvest time and their husbands could not go. Among them, five were my friends, the same age as me.

I took rice, salt, oil, and a bamboo basket with me. Also I took 800 kyats for expenses because some people told me that we had to pay for our own transportation. We left our village at 4:00 a.m. by truck. The truck came from Ya-phu village, already loaded with 25 villagers. I later learned that they were all going to work with us. I noticed that among the people from Ya-phu village, some were only 12-13 year-old girls. Later we had to pay 100 kyats each at the 42-mile camp.

We all got off the truck when we arrived 42-mile camp. We arrived there at noon. I saw many people had arrived before us. There were about 1,500 people from other villages already there. The local authorities ordered us to stay in the barracks. Everyone from my group stayed in one barrack. There were many barracks where people from other villages were living.

We all were woken up at 4:00am the next day and we walked to worksite at 6:00 a.m.. Everyone had to go to the worksite. It took half an hour to reach to the work-site. Villagers from Ya-phy and from my village were grouped together and shared the work place. Then we all were made into five-member-groups. Normally three women and two men were in each group. However, as the number of men was less than the number of female workers, some groups consisted five women in their group. In that case, women had to dig and carry too. In my group, two men dug for us and three women carried the dirt to the designated place. Each group had to finish two pits of 10 x 1 x 10 feet each day. Sometimes as the ground was so hard, it was impossible to finish our quota. So we had to work and we got back to barracks very late. The working hours were from 6-11 a.m. in the morning and from 11-5 p.m. We could not take rest while we were working. The work was so hard for the young girls.

I worked 15 days there and rested at home 15 days. The next time when my family was assigned, I had to go again for the same reason. I did not want to work because it was so hard. However, if I did not go my family would be in grave trouble.

Interview 8: HRV: Forced Labor, Killing, Torture, Refugee

Name:	San Nam Si
Age:	52-years-old
Sex:	Male
Ethnicity:	Karen
Religion:	Christian
Marital status:	married with 2 year-old child

Native: Ya -Phu village, Yebyu township, Tanessarim Division
Place of interview: Payaw refugee camp in Mon region
Date of interview: February 4, 1996

We have to pay porter fees is one of the taxes we are required to pay regularly. Our village had about 40 households and was divided into four groups consisting of 10 households each. There was a rotating system among the four groups in the village. Every two months, each household in one group was required to pay 3,000 kyats (for 10 households) or provide 15 people for two weeks labor. If we could not pay on time, extra fees were added. Our villagers always paid for that because we were afraid to be arrested. Some villagers from Nat Kyi Zin village, nearby ours, were arrested July last year for failing to do so. They all were taken to the military barracks in chains. They worked for one month there for the soldiers and officers.

I have had to worked as a porter over 20 times because I was often too poor to pay money for a substitute. Let me tell only one story of my porter experience. I was conscripted as a porter in February two years ago, even though I paid the porter fees that time. It was an emergency order for the mobile column. Altogether 18 men from my village and 4 from Nat Kyi Zin were conscripted. The military column was from LIB 409 based in Klaing Aung village. All 22 of us were forced to carry bomb shells, ammunition boxes, food, and other supplies. I had to carry two 60mm shells and also two vises of oil. The column toured in Tuang Khun, Min Zun, Kyauk Kayen, Maiya, Dani Chaung, Metha Taung, Kyel Thone Nyima, Kan Bauk, Mi Chaung Ain, Pay Chaung, Yea Nge, Taung Man Pyaung, Wartaw Chaungpya, Letwell Kyaung; all in Yebyu township. Sometimes we did not stop to sleep for four days at a time, except to cook rice and eat for a few minutes.

When we arrived in Wartaw Chaungpya, Than Lwin, a 35-year-old villager from Nat Kyi Zin, could no longer climb up the mountain. He was quite sick and too weak after nonstop walking for four days. I got malaria four days before and was not allowed to take a rest. Nat Kyi Zin had to carry a rice sack and he was shivering with the chills. He asked the soldiers to let him rest. But the soldier said, "You are lying. You're always lazy and never work hard. I'll kill you so that we don't have to give you more food." Then three soldiers beat him up with a wooden stick. He walked just behind me so that I saw it all very clearly. He was beaten up until his head was bloody. The soldiers checked his pulse rate and announced that he was dead. They shouted, "See this as your lesson. I will beat like this anyone who does not work hard." We worked for two months like that.

I also had to perform another type of forced labor starting three years ago. Like a slave, I had no choice but to go and work. One time, I was conscripted as a porter for two weeks and another two weeks for the Ye-Tavoy railway project. I did not have a single day to work for my own family. My wife with our very young baby had to work for our survival. Even though she worked hard, it was hardly enough to provide for the family. We had to sell our buffalos first and then later our cattle.

For the forced labor in Ye-Tavoy railway, I worked several times at Yabu camp. I cannot recount how many times I worked there, it was so many. It was like my second home. The camp was not so far from my village, only 7 miles away, but all of us were required to sleep there. We worked one time for 15 people from my village and 30 people from Yapu (Mon)village for fifteen days. These 45 people were assigned to finish digging 250 ditches of 30 x 30 x 3 feet within two weeks. Then we had to build up the railway embarkment. There were about 14,000 people from other villages in Yebyu township and I also saw about 500 prisoners in chains at the camp. They were closely watched by the police. We were guarded by the local LORC.

In late May 95, the working site was changed. The authorities said the previous route was wrong. It had been built in the wrong way. So they ordered the people to go and work in Klaing Aung (also in Yebyu township). We had to start from the beginning again, cutting trees and bushes in the area and burning them, then making the route clear of foliage. The same duty (digging 250 ditches for 45 people) was ordered. People from Yebyu, Long Lon, and Kan Bauk township were there, totaling about 8,000 forced laborers. Some were very young children because their parents were unable to come and work; the children had to work for them.

Before we started to build up the railway embarkment, new army bases were moved to Klaing Aung. They were LIB 407, 408, 409, 410. All villages in Yebyu township were ordered to work for the establishment of the new army barracks in Klaing Aung in October 94. It was during the harvest time so many people had to leave their farms behind. We were ordered to cut the rubber trees and bamboo and then build up the new barracks. We also had to dig the army trenches in the area. People were ordered to work for a month during the harvest time so that they could not work on their farm. As a result, many faced poor production on their farms.

In addition to building the army bases, we were again forced to provide security by guarding the motor bridges in Yebyu township. Five people from each village were summoned to guard 24 hours a day near the bridge for at least one

week at a time.

In December 1995, a new forced labor project was introduced. It was an extension of the road from Ye to Tavoy. My village had to take care of that extension between 51 and 52 milestones (between Yapu Karen village and Mon). Every family was required to dig two ditches of rock and take it to the road. If they failed, 1,500 kyats per ditch was required.

The KNU troops came to my village on December 1, 1996. The fighting occurred on the next day between the KNU and SLORC. It was between King Chaung village and Nat Ein village near my village. I heard that four SLORC soldiers were killed and three wounded seriously. Major Htaung Zar Lian from LIB 409 was angry at the KNU. Another attack by the KNU was launched near Loh Thaing village that caused one soldier to be wounded. The SLORC column retreated to our village. They accused our village of supporting the KNU. We really did not know where the KNU troops came from and had no communication with them at all. Major Htaung Zar Lian told us that nobody was allowed to go to the east side of Tavoy stream nearby our village, the place most of our farms were situated. "Anyone found in that region will be killed without any question," he said.

He furthermore said, "You Christian Karen are trouble-makers. Only you are left to make the destructive things to the State. All other ethnic groups have returned to legal-fold -- even the Buddhist Karen. You Christians and students are minions of the colony. I will kill all Christians and students for the sake of our State."

He also said all Christian Karen could go anywhere they wanted during the next two weeks, including moving to another village or the border refugee camps. He said the remaining villagers would be his own and would have to obey all his orders. As most of our villagers were Christian Karen, we were scared to stay in the village. We thought he might take revenge on us for the KNU attack. So I decided to go to the refugee camp here. Many other villagers also did. They will be arriving very soon. I arrived only two days ago.

Interview 9: HRV: Child, Torture, Detention

Name:	Tin Win
Age:	24-years-old
Position:	Private, motor maintenance section Headquarters, LIB 343

Serial number:	BC. 820304
Education:	7th standard
Place of birth:	Thingangyun township, Rangoon.
Interviewed:	January 1996
Source:	ABSDF

I joined the army in March 1992. I went to school until 1989 when I was in my seventh standard. I also took part in the demonstrations as a high school student in Thingangyun township. When the school reopened, I had a problem with my principal, Daw Thein Yin. She had a photo of me taken during the 1988 uprising. She asked me to sign a bond stating that I would obey all the regulations of the school and that I was not allowed to engage in any political activities. On the same day, I had a fight with her son who was in the 9th standard. She scolded me and ordered me to bring my parents. I had only a father with his second wife and I stayed with my grandmother. I returned back home and told my grandmother that I did not want to go to school anymore. She did not say anything. So, I quit school.

My grandmother died in December 1991. I worked at the motor care workshop until 1992. My father and my stepmother moved into my grandmother's house. I had a big problem with my stepmother so I decided to join the army to get out of the house. Everybody in my quarter looked down upon me. However, joining the army was the only way to escape from my daily pressures. To join the army was also very easy. I noticed the soldiers enjoyed many privileges, especially the officers. I thought everyone would respect me in an army uniform.

I joined No. 1 headquarter of army new recruitment at Mingladon in March 1991. The official checked my health, and gave me a blood test and heart test. I submitted a short biography of myself in which I wrote my name, address, criminal record, etc. Also I was required to sign a bond attesting to the fact that I would serve 5 years in the army. There were two kinds of time: one was 5 years service and another was ten years. I chose five years. Actually, nobody gets pension pay after serving only 5 or 10 years in service. You usually have to stay in the army for 20 years. I was asked if I participated in the 1988 uprising and if I belonged to any political organization. I replied no. They also asked me if I had any relatives in the army. After this whole procedure, I had to take an oath saying, "I will keep my faith to the State as I am given food by the State." Then they took me to the barrack .

Around 6:00 a.m. the official ordered all new recruits to gather in the big parade ground. There were about 4,000 new recruits from all across the country.

We were divided into groups by our hometowns (e.g. Mandalay division, Rangoon division, etc.) The new recruits were sent to their respective headquarters. I was in the Rangoon group of about 500 recruits. I saw some boys as young as 13 or 14 years old. The officials from the recruitment center did not make restrictions on the age of recruits because they desperately needed the new recruits. Only those who failed the medical test were rejected.

I was sent to Division Training School No.4. At 10:00 p.m. 250 new recruits were sent to the rail station to leave for No. 4 School. The next day at 4:00 a.m. we left for Moulmein by train. While the train was stopping at Wan railway station, about 50 new recruits jumped off of the train and ran away. Later I learned that they got frustrated after spending over one month in the recruitment center in Rangoon. We slept over night at Moulmein recruitment center and then the next day we took the train again to Thanbyuzeyat from Mupon station. Then we took buses to Welgali village where the No. 4 Training School was situated. It was a 25-minute drive from village to the school. We all were given military equipment such as blankets, mosquito-nets, uniforms, and a military bag. Then the official divided us into five groups in which I was assigned as the group leader.

My training was 2/92 Intake and took six months. The basic military training was so hard that many young recruits attempted to run away. I think about 20 people made attempts. However, only six of them successfully managed to escape because the neighborhood of the school was very isolated and surrounded by the mountains. If somebody was missing from the group, the remainder of the group was ordered to gather on the main grounds. Then they were ordered to stand naked and then beaten up, one by one with canes by the trainers. They beat 15 strokes for the privates and 30 strokes for the group leaders like me. I was beaten like that three times because three privates from my group attempted to escape.

When the trainers could rearrest the escapees, the treatment was inhumane. About ten trainers from the school beat up the attempted escapee with military equipment belts and punched and kicked him all over his body until he became unconscious. I saw some unfortunate boys vomit blood from their mouths due to the beating. After the beating, it did not stop. The trainers ordered all remaining people in the school (199 trainees) to beat five strokes of cane each to the escapee. If you did not beat harsh enough, you would be beaten instead. Then the escapees were forcibly ordered to continue with their training. I felt bad for them and upset with the treatment by the officials, but I did not dare say anything or attempt to run away.

Apart from our training tasks, we were ordered to cut the trees, cultivate the paddy and sugar cane for the school and so many other tasks every weekend. All the money the officers earned by selling paddy, sugar cane, and logs were taken by the training officials, nothing was given to us. I did not get any money. In addition, we were not permitted any out-passes. Officially we got 400 kyats during the training time but actually not more than 100 kyats were left after the training officials deducted some taxes and fees.

I finished my training on September 12, 1992. I was assigned to LIB 343 in Ye township. After three months there, I was selected to attend the Intelligence Training in Kan Thone Kan, Moulmein. It was 5/92 Intelligence Training intake. About 70 privates from all the battalions in Mon State, Karen State, and Tenasserim Division under the command of southeastern military command participated in the training.

At the training, various subjects relating to intelligence were given such as: the method of interrogation of the POWs, how to use the map and campus, demolition, counterintelligence, 10 characters of the interrogator, method of reporting, how to interrogate the suspects, how to interrogate the enemies found in the battle field, how to interrogate the counterintelligence, how to interrogate the enemy found with documents, and how to interrogate the political prisoners. Captain Win Swe (Training section, Southeastern commander) was in charge of the training and the instructors were Corporal Htay Aung and Corporal Maung Maung.

In the lectures, we were told that the way to get information from the suspects or enemies was to torture them. We learned the various methods of torture. We were told that if we arrested a suspect or soldiers from the other side, we were allowed to use any brutal torture method in order to get the name of the leaders, the strength of the outfit, his position, future military strategy, and whether there were any problems among the troops. After that we were ordered to kill the person immediately if he was not a high official. If he was in a high position on his side, we had to transfer him back to the headquarters for further interrogation. We were given authority to torture or kill the suspects having communication with insurgents. Our unit was not involved with political prisoners, only the Special Intelligent Unit or the Military Intelligence Service took care of those cases. But in general, for this subject, we were told to arrest political prisoners as secretly as possible and if the political prisoners died, we had to blackout the news.

We went on a field trip to the Special Interrogation Section in the Intelligence Division No. 5 headquarters in Moulmein. All the trainees were told about the

interrogation methods. We were taken into the building which was 20 x 30 feet wide. There were many instruments such as video cameras, reorders, typewriters, and underground celsl. The lecturer explained the various methods of torture to us. One instrument was an iron stick about 3 feet long, with a battery attached to it. When you turned it on and touched the victim, he got an electric shock. It was made in China. Another one was an electric shock machine. It was like a motor cycle helmet with wire. When the victim put on the helmet and turned on the power, he got shocked. We were told that the electric shock machine could not be used for more than 2 seconds per each human being. In the underground cell, we found out that there was a closed room with air-conditioning. The temperature could be dropped down to freezing level. The instructor told us that a cup of water would become ice within half an hour. The temperature was controlled from another control room. There were other buildings in the Intelligence Division 5 compound. All were surrounded by three rolls of barbed wire and one mine field. I saw one inmate in the building, but he was being tortured at that time.

I returned back to my battalion after the training. I was assigned to the Intelligence Unit of LIB 343. There were three privates, two Intelligence Corporals and one Sergeant in my group. Our main task was to go to Ye and nearby villages in order to get information about the activities of the insurgents. Then we were to write an intelligence report to the Commander of Southeastern command. We also had to collect porter fees from the villages and taxes from the trading boats going from Ye to Kawthaung. We taxed 10,000 kyats, two tanks of petrol oil, and 20 zinc sheets from each trading boat. We also got taxes from the logging and other businesses. When we got all the money, we put half of it aside for our battalion's fund. The remaining half we shared among the rank and file. In every month one private got 2-3,000 kyats from these taxes. For the Commander of battalion, he got over 200,000 kyats and other officials received 50,000 kyats per month.

I was on the military column in November 1994. We went to Kyeik Mayaw to Chaung Hnagwa. We took twenty porters from Mae Khlo, Kyeik Mayaw, and other villages. We we arrived Pha Thin pier, where we were attacked by the KNU troops. After 10 minutes of fighting, they retreated back to U-Lay village. We followed after them. The KNU soldiers fired from the house and retreated again. When we got to the house, we found one Karen old women and one gun left by KNU soldier. She was so scared and crying. Corporal Kyi Maung pointed the gun to her head and was about to shoot. I intervened and told him the old Karen woman was same age with my grandmother. I believed she was innocent of supporting the KNU as well. My intelligence Sergeant Nyi Nyi Moe slashed my face and accused me of supporting enemy. I could

not say anything because he was my superior. When we arrived to Chaung Hnagwa, he put me in the police station and the column kept going on. I spent two weeks in jail as a criminal. When the column returned, Captain Htein Lin released me and took me back to the base. I was transferred to the signal unit after that.

In April 1995, I was on the column in Taung Kalay. The column commander assigned three privates including myself and Sergeant Nyi Nyi Moe to stay in one house. At night, Nyi Nyi Moe entered the girl's room in the house and attempted to rape her. I heard everything. I could not tolerate anymore. I shot a gun into air. Other officers came to the house where we were staying and asked me the reason I shot the gun. I could not explain the true story so that they beat me up. The next day I was sent back to the base with the supporting column.

I was sentenced to a week in a detention cell with hard labor. Also, my salary was cut off for three months. I explained to the commander of our battalion that I was trying to prevent a rape, but no action was taken. I was transferred again to the motor maintenance unit.

On Christmas night in 1995, the battalion had a farewell party for our Commander. He had gotten a promotion to headquarters. All privates were ordered to serve drinks and food for the visiting army officers. One officer ordered me to bring him a cup of whiskey. He was drunk. I accidentally spilled the drink on his uniform. He got mad at me and punched me in the face several times. I could not bear anymore so I fought back. We were fighting in a small separate room so not many people were there. I stabbed the officer in the stomach with the broken bottle and ran away. I did not bring anything with me. I ran to Ye and hid one night and then took a bus to Ale Sakhan and stayed three days. I then walked to the border and arrived at Paraw camp. I arrived here on January 29, 1996.

Interview 10: HRV: Refugee, Forced Labor, Porter, Torture, Arrest, Killing

Name:	Ma Sein Aye
Age:	25-year-old
Sex:	female
Ethnicity:	Mon
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital status:	married with two children

Native: Mintha village, Kanbauk twnshp, Tenassarim Division
 Place of interview: Payaw refugee camp in Mon region
 Date of interview: Feb 3, 1996
 Source: ABSDF

I just wanted to add to what my my husband said. My cousin Ah Htun, 30-years-old and married with three children, was arrested by the LORC soldiers from LIB 406 on January 25 for failing to give 2,000 kyats for the porter fees. Five soldiers who were stationed in our village went to his house, along with the LORC authorities. The five soldiers beat him about his head with their rifle butts right in front of his house with his wife and children watching. Then they took him away. His wife asked to borrow some money from me to get her husband released. Our relatives and I gathered money together for her. Her husband was released immediately after the soldiers got the money. I heard that he was on the way to Payaw refugee camp at the time.

My brother, Ah Pu, 30-years-old, was killed when he stepped on a land mine while he was portering for the military mobile column at Nat Ein Daung in 1992. At that time there was a major offensive attack to the KNU base in Nat Ein Daung. Seven men from my native village -- Moe Gyi village -- were conscripted as porters for the military column in December 1992. They were forced to carry food and ammunition for the army to Chaung Son. All six escaped from the portering slavery, but unfortunately my brother did not. It is reported that he was killed when he stepped on the land mine. No medical help was given by the army.

Interview 11: HRV: Refugee, Forced Labor

Name: U Ba Yin
 Age: 57-year-old
 Sex: Male
 Ethnicity: Mon
 Religion: Buddhist
 Marital status: married with five daughters (13, 15 and 17-year-old)
 Native: Moe Gyi village, Kanbauk township, Tanessarim Division
 Place of interview: Payaw refugee camp in Mon region
 Date of interview: Feb 3, 1996
 Source: ABSDF

I was 57-years-old and could not work very hard. However, I was not spared

from forced labor. I fell under SLORC's category of "under 60" so I was on the list for forced labor. My wife was the same age as me but she was in ailing health. I had to provide forced labor to replace my wife as well. My three daughters were not on the list but sometimes they had to go to replace me when I had to work for family income or when I was sick.

Since 1993, we were ordered to report for work at Nat-Kyi-Zin, but recently we have been ordered to work at Ye-bon. The last time the orders were different from previous orders. According to previous orders, one person from each household had to work. This time, all people between 16 and 60 years old (except for one person who could stay behind to do household duties) had to report for work. This order was a great burden for the farmers because it was harvest season. Some farmers had to hire substitute laborers because they had to stay to harvest their crops. The price of hiring people went up during that time as everybody was busy with their own work. Previously, it cost 2,000 to 2,500 kyats, but during the harvest time it cost over 3,000 kyats for a replacement worker. But, we knew we could not ignore the order. The local LORC threatened that if we failed to do as they ordered, they would inform the army and we would be punished harshly. We did dare not ignore it.

On December 15, 1995, 12 people of my yard who did not have money for substitute workers, reported for duty at Ye-bon, in Yebyu township. Other people paid bribe money to the LORC so they did not have to go. We had to bring our own food and instruments to the work site. We took a boat from our village to Kanbawk and paid with our own money. It cost 60 kyats each for transportation. The village LORC ordered us to wait at the Independence Monument at Kanbawk. When we arrived, we saw over 500 people from Maung Ngo, Kan taing, Thingan Taw, Sin-gu, Payat, Zardi, Sel-chaung, in Phaungdaw township and Kaw Mo, Lai-Hmaw, Kyel-gone in Kan Bauk township. When all the people arrived, we were all taken by trucks to the Ye-Bon worksite. Again, we had to pay 60 kyats for transportation.

At the site, we had to cut all bushes and trees within 25 feet to prepare for the proposed railway route. There were about 1,000 people working at the Ye-bon camp. Soldiers from a military outpost in Klaing Aung monitored the workers. Besides the two weeks work for railway construction, sometimes people were conscripted as porters for military purposes. When fighting between KNU and SLORC occurred between Klaing Aung and Ye-bon, some laborers from the Ye-bon labor camp were immediately conscripted by the military column. During this slavery duty, one laborer from Kyel-gone was killed by a landmine.

The army came to our village in the third week of December 1995 and told us that we had to work as they ordered, as long as we stay in our village. Thus many villagers fled to the border or went to work in Thailand. Some moved out of the village to Moulmein, Tavoy, and Mergui. Those who have a business such as a farm and land could not do so. They remained in the village and paid many forms of taxes to the SLORC and continued to do forced labor.

For myself, as an ordinary poor civilian, I paid a minimum of 2,000 kyats per month in taxes and fees and provided unpaid labor. If I failed to provide my labor, I had to pay 7,000 kyats. The people who had their own land and a good business had to pay more. Just before I came here [the refugee camp], the village LORC ordered us to contribute 600 kyats for the establishment of a new military base and barracks in Ohn-pin-gwin in Kanbaw township. It is the same place where the natural gas pipeline construction is underway.

Many local people applied to be daily wage workers at TOTAL, but nobody from my village got it. I heard TOTAL pays 200 kyats per day for their workers.

Interview 12: HRV: Forced labor, Child, Refugee

Name:	Myo Thet
Age:	17-year-old
Sex:	Male
Ethnicity:	Tavoyan
Religion:	Buddhist
Marital status:	single
Native:	Singu village, Kanbaw township, Tanessarim Division
Place of interview:	Payaw refugee camp in Mon region
Date of interview:	Feb 4, 1996
Source:	ABSDF

I am the second son in my family. I quit school when I was in third standard. Both of my parents were old and it was impossible for them to go and work as forced laborers. Since October 1995, all villagers between the ages of 16 and 60 were ordered to work at the labor camp every two weeks, fifteen days each time. If they failed to do so, people had to pay 3,000 kyats for each person. The military ordered the village LORC to conscript the laborers from the village. They threatened the villagers to go or otherwise face arrest by the military. Nobody dared to say "no." Many people went even if they were sick. I heard that some people died due to the hard working conditions and

malnutrition during their time of working.

I first went to work in October 1995 when I was 16-years old. Our family had three adults between 16 and 60 years old, so they all had to report for work. According to the regulation, my father, mother, and brother were supposed to go to work there. As both my parents were ill, I had to work for them. My brother also came with me. He was 20-years old at that time. To replace my parents, I had to work a month at Nat-kyi-zin (the quota for one person is two weeks, so by myself, I needed to work four weeks to replace my parents)

Altogether 50 people from my village went to Nat-kyi-zin on foot. It was a whole day-long walk from my village. Among the 50, ten were as young as me. Some were younger than me. They were among us because their parents were not able to work like my parents. They were Kyaw Naing Oo, Ah Naing, Soe Naing, Saw Mon, Than Lwin, Myint Thein, and Soe Aung. They had been schoolmates of mine when I was in school. We were all between 15 and 16 years old; none of us was currently going to school.

When we got to Nat-kyi-zin, we were assigned to dig 50 pits each day. That meant one person had to dig one pit daily. The pits were 10 x 10 x 1' pits. During fifteen days there, everyone must finish fifteen pits. For young people like us, it was hard to finish one every day. My villagers helped us. Some people were not feeling well or were ill. They also could not finish, but nobody dared to take a rest. When we took a rest, the soldiers came and scolded us. Even going to the toilet, we had to ask permission from the soldiers. They were from LIB 410 Klaing Aung. When we could not finish our daily quota, we had to work overtime until we finished. Sometimes we finished our quota, but some girls could not finish their quota, so we had to help them. Some women brought their infants along with them to the worksite because there was nobody left at their home. They put their babies in cradles while they were working. At night, we all slept in the temporary bamboo hut without cover. I worked 30 days plus I spent two days traveling.

In this way, since 1995, I worked fifteen days every month, and sometimes I had to work the whole month, until I fled here [the refugee camp]. All the young people have left their villages because they are fed up with the unpaid labor-duties. Even whole families moved to other places or left for the border. At first, because of the increasing taxation, we paid the taxes by selling our property, such as cows and farms, but now we have nothing left. The only way to survive is to flee somewhere. So I decided to come here, and when I am settled here, my family will follow.

Interview 13: HRV: Livelihood, Killing, Forced Labor, Looting

Name: Pu Tee Ku
Sex: Male
Age: 60-year-old
Ethnicity: Karen, farmer/pastor
Religion: RC Christian
Marital status: Married, 6 children aged 5-25
Address: Toh Wih Der village, Bu Tho Twp., Papun Dist.
Interviewed: February 14, 1996
Source: KHRG

I've been here about one month, because of SLORC soldiers' demands. They ordered us to be their porters, and some villagers died from landmines when they went as porters. People who didn't go had to hire someone to go in their place. First they would order us to go for 5 days, but then they didn't release us. Sometimes it was 10 days, or sometimes they only released us when they got someone to replace us. The SLORC stays at Ka Hee Kyo [northeast of Par Haik camp]. It is 2 hours [walking] from our village.

They are LIB 434. Sometimes there are 80 to 100 soldiers there, sometimes 300 to 400. They also made us work on the roads, like Papun to Bilin and Kaw Boke to Par Haik. We have to go by turns, one group every 5 days until the road is finished [these roads have to be rebuilt every year in November through February, after every rainy season]. At least 5 people have to go each time, everybody including women, children 10 years old, and old men 70 or 80 years old. When I was there I had to go, and now my brother still has to go -- he's only one year older than me. We have to take our own food and sleep at the workplace. This year they started on January 1st, on the Kaw Boke to Par Haik road. It is an existing road and they are rebuilding it. They do it every year. They also demanded 5 baskets of rice from Toh Wih Der, and money for porters ["porter fees," which are not given to porters.]

They sent letters 3 times ordering us to move. They sent a letter along with a chillie and a bullet [a standard SLORC message meaning we will kill you and burn your village if you don't obey]. It ordered us to move to Par Haik, near their military camp. Some villages have to move to Papun and some to Kaw Boke, around their army camps, and after that they will burn and destroy all the villages. That letter came one month and 10 days ago. It said that within 10 days we had to arrive at Par Haik military camp, even that we should arrive tomorrow if possible. But before that 10 days was up we came to Thailand. After 5 days, we left our village.

There are 50 houses in Toh Wih Der. We all left the village, but some ran into the forest and some came to Thailand. About 30 families arrived in Thailand. As for the people in the forest, they hide and some still try to tend their fields and animals. If SLORC leaves the village the villagers go and tend their farms, but if SLORC stays around they have to cut new fields and plant in the hills. They don't know where else to go. Nobody went to the SLORC place. We asked the SLORC, "If we go to Par Haik will you give us food?" and they said we have to take our own food to the camp. We know that if we stay there they will demand everything from us that they want at any time. SLORC will take people as porters, and they will order them to show where other villagers are hiding. If SLORC finds people hiding in the forest they will arrest them. All the villages around us have been ordered to move. Toh Wih Der and Baw Khaw Der were ordered to move to Par Haik, and Saw Bweh Der village was ordered to move to Kaw Boke village.

Before this year, they only asked us for labor. Last year they killed two villagers from Toh Wih Der: Pa Tweh, 60 years old, and Kyaw Dee, 40 years old. Also, one man from Toh Wih Der died as a porter last year, Klo Htoo Mu. He was 40 years old, married with 4 children. He died in the fighting. Now his family lives in the forest. In our village they always took the headman away and asked him questions before releasing him. Other villages like Baw Khaw Der, Saw Bweh Der and Kaw Wih promised to do everything SLORC wants, so their people didn't suffer as much. [Note: these villages have also now been ordered to move.] In our village, after they killed people and took all our animals last year we asked permission to work with them [they promised to do everything as demanded], but then they started ill-treating us again. The situation just got worse and worse until we had to flee to Thailand.

I have seen DKBA in the village. They came at night and killed the village tract headman last year. His name was Pa Maw Heh, he was 50 years old with 4 children. I don't know why they killed him, maybe they didn't like him. He was a Christian. In Toh Wih Der 10 households are Baptist, 10 are RC [Roman Catholic] and the other 30 are Buddhist. Now there are only SLORC around [no DKBA], and they stay in their camp not far from the village.

It took us 2 days to walk here. It was not easy -- we had to come secretly at night. They are trying to stop people from coming to Thailand. But if the situation keeps getting worse, I think everyone will come here. If you go back there, you have to do everything for SLORC. I know that they won't ever stop giving trouble to villagers, so I won't ever go back to my village.

They ordered it last dry season, and this year too. They said if people don't

move they will come themselves and move us by force, so we were afraid and some villagers ran to hide in the forest and some came to Thailand like me. There are 10 houses in the village, but no villagers because they are hiding in the jungle. Six families arrived here. If we go to Khaw Taw they won't allow us to do farming. They will give rice, but not enough. People don't want to go because they'll have to work for SLORC and there's not enough food. Ko Per Baw are Karen people, but they give trouble the same as SLORC. When I was a porter there were Ko Per Baw soldiers as well in the column. They are travelling together [DKBA and SLORC].

We had to walk just one day to get here. We went at night, or else SLORC soldiers would see us. They would arrest us and torture us, because they don't allow us to come to the refugee camps. Along the way I saw only deserted villages. All the other villages were ordered to move too - Saw Bweh Der, Dee Taw Kee, May Say Kee, Kyo Ko Der, Meh Wah Ler and Oo Thu Kloh villages. Now we can't go back, because they already said if they see us and arrest us they will kill us on the spot. [This was written in the relocation order, that anyone found after the relocation deadline would be considered as enemy rebel soldiers.]

Interview 14: HRV: Livelihood, Killing, Refugee

Name: Saw Lay Htoo
Sex: Male
Age: 35, Karen Christian farmer
Family: Married, 5 children aged 22 months to 13 years
Address: Ler Wah Ko Der village, Lu Thaw Twp., Papun Dist.
Interviewed: February 14, 1996
Source: KHRG

We have been here one month and 15 days, because SLORC burned and destroyed 4 houses in our village on December 29, 1995. SLORC sent their informer into the village and found out that these were the houses where Karen soldiers slept, stayed and cooked their rice when they come to the village. So when the Karen soldiers left the village, SLORC came to the house owners, beat them, hit them, and burned their houses down. There were about 400 soldiers. They took all the rice from every house and our storehouses and threw it on the ground, they burned the rice storehouses and they stole all the pots, machetes, and things from the villagers. They did that to every house. There are 28 houses in the village. When they saw rice stored in safe places outside the village they burned that too. They saw rice already harvested and

not yet in the rice barns [i.e., still stacked on the threshing floor] and they burned that too. Then they slept one night in the village and went up the hill in the morning. Those SLORC were from Papun, one day's walk from our village. When they came into the village we didn't dare stay, because we knew they would kill anyone they saw. I had to run carrying my child, my 13 year old son -- he can't walk and can't talk. Whenever SLORC comes to the village I have to carry him, and he's very heavy! It's not easy.

Then when we knew they were going back to Papun some people went back into the village, but some still stayed in the forest. I didn't go back, I followed some other people from another village to Thailand. I had no food, and I had to carry my son on my back. It took us 5 days. Only my family arrived here from our village. The villagers who are still hiding in the forest, they go secretly to the village to get food, but they can't dare go when SLORC is around the village. It's not easy to stay like that for long. They may all come to Thailand if the situation stays this bad. If SLORC finds them in the forest they will kill them. They try to stay in the forest, but they say if SLORC comes around the village they will all have to come to Thailand. As for us, we had to come first because I have to carry my son, and if SLORC blocks the path it would not be easy for us.

In the other villages it's the same, people have to run just the same. They burn houses, and they burn the rice stores that people have hidden in the forest, and everyone has to run. In Baw Kwa they burned some houses. They burned the rice barns in Lay Po Khaw Tee. Other villages haven't been burned because SLORC hasn't arrived there yet, maybe they'll burn them later. DKBA is afraid to come to our village, because it's a bit far for them to come. As for the SLORC, when they were in our village they said, "We will destroy all the Karen people!" so I have no affection for them. In December they killed a village elder from our village. We called him Yweh Htoo Pa. He was 50 years old, a widower. He has 2 daughters, both already married. He lived in a different section of the village than me. He came to his nephew's house, and his nephew told him the Burmese were coming so he head home. On the way he saw SLORC and they shot him dead. They put his body on top of a bush and laid a bag [probably a cloth Karen bag] on it. So his children didn't dare go and get their father's body, because they were afraid there was a mine or a bomb [hidden in the bag - they may have been right, as it is very unusual for SLORC to treat a body like this].

Interview 15: HRV: Forced Labor, Relocation, Livelihood, Refugee

Name: Saw Tee Wah
Sex: Male
Age: 38, Karen Christian farmer
Family: Married, 5 children aged 3 months to 15 years
Address: Meh Law Kee village, Bu Tho Twp., Papun Dist.
Interviewed: February 15, 1996
Source: KHRG

I arrived here in January. I didn't want to carry the loads of SLORC and DKBA any more. Also, we got the same order to move as Saw Bweh Der village [to move to Khaw Taw]. We saw that if we were going to stay in our village we would be in trouble, so we came here. They said we had to move by January 15, so we left before that day. They said if we didn't move they would come and force us, and they said if that happened we wouldn't even have time to carry our shoes. There are twenty families in the village. Fifteen arrived here, and only five families stayed behind in the jungle. No one is staying in the village now.

Even before they ordered us to move we had to go and work in their camp carrying water, digging trenches, carrying logs, making fences and doing other labor. We could only work for ourselves 2 or 3 days in a row, then we'd have to go to their camp again. Three people had to go at a time. Whenever they went to the frontline we had to follow them as porters. And one time every year [after rainy season] we had to build their car road. We had no time to breathe, we always had to be their slaves. They always said we could go home as soon as replacements arrive, but then they wouldn't allow us and we had to keep working for a long time. Moreover, they demand money.

Ko Per Baw never came to our village alone, but we met them whenever we were porters because they are working with SLORC. When SLORC and DKBA came to the village they took our animals, clothing, pots, and everything they saw. Nobody around my village joined DKBA. We don't like them, they are bad and short-tempered people.

All the villages around ours are in the same situation. Saw Bweh Der, Kyo Ko Der, Tee Po Der and Oo Thu Kloh, all were ordered to move by January 15, all the same. It is a day's walk from our village to here. Our village is close to the Salween River [the border], but the problem is that we had to come in between two SLORC military camps. We were afraid of SLORC or DKBA along the

way. If they saw us on the way they would kill us. I know, because they already told us that if they see anybody on the way to Thailand they will kill them.

Interview 16: HRV: Forced Labor, Slavery, Livelihood, Extortion, Refugee

Name: Pu Tha Muh
Sex: M
Age: 58, Karen Christian (RC) farmer
Family: Married, 3 children aged 6-25
Address: Wah Mi Day village, Dweh Loh Twp., Papun Dist.
Interviewed: February 16, 1996
Source: KHRG

I came here over a month ago because of SLORC. They ordered us to do a lot of work, and they ordered some to move to Papun and others to move to Khaw Taw. They ordered our village that we must all arrive at Papun by January 13. They ordered this at the end of December. By January 13, I had left already. There are 14 houses in our village. Three families arrived here, and some arrived in xxxx refugee camp. Only 4 families stayed in the village, and I don't know what has happened to them. They tried to stay in the village, but I worry that maybe SLORC forced them to move to Papun after we left. At Papun they have a special place to keep people, and if the jungle villages go they will keep us there. They won't let us go back to our fields, and as for food, they would never give us food in a million years. Even when we go as porters we have to take our own food.

All the villages around our village must move to Papun: Kler Pu Der, Maw Thay Der, Klaw Hta, Plaw Oo Aw, and Thu Kay Hta. If we refuse they will move us by force, because the village headman couldn't get permission from them to stay this time. It took us 3 days to come here. We had to cross the road by night and we couldn't see anything, but we couldn't dare cross in daylight. It was the Kaw Boke - Par Haik car road. Along the way we only saw a few villagers. Some joined us and came together, from Thay Taw Kee and Kaw Meh Law villages.

If you stay in your village, you must always pay and go as porters. They [SLORC] order it by turns, and if you can't go you must pay. It's been like this for the last 10 years in our village. We have to pay 1,400 kyats per month [100 kyats per house] as porter fees and we have no money to pay this. If we

manage to get any money we can't dare use it to buy any clothing, because we must always be ready to pay any fees or taxes they demand. As for Ko Per Baw [DKBA], sometimes we see them in the village, but most of the time they come along with SLORC and almost all the soldiers are SLORC army.

Interview 17: HRV: Slavery, Forced Labor, Women, Child, Refugee, Livelihood

Name: Saw Lah
Sex: Male
Age: 31, Karen Buddhist farmer
Family: Married, 2 children aged 3 days and 5 years
Address: Kyo Ko Der village, Bu Tho Twp., Papun Dist.
Interviewed: February 14, 1996
Source: KHRG

I've been here about one month, because SLORC was forcing us to another place. First they said they wouldn't take porters from the village, but later they ordered us to give porters and porter fees. Whenever they saw us in the forest they would take us for more than 10 days. I had to carry ricepots and ammunition, about 20 viss [32 kg.]. We had to carry to Kyauk Nyat, then in the camp there we had to carry water and find firewood for them. Their soldiers are moving around Kyauk Nyat, Par Haik, Kaw Boke and Papun area, so people in this area have a lot of trouble and have to leave their villages. We have to be porters and work in their camp, and we have to cut trees and clear the way for the car road from Papun to Kyauk Nyat. Two people have to go from my village, sometimes for 10 days and sometimes 15 days. People from every village have to go. When I went I saw 20 or 30 people there, and soldiers. The soldiers did nothing. Women go, and both children and old people have to go, from 14 or 15 years old up to 60 or 70 years old.

Now SLORC has ordered villagers to move to Papun and Kaw Boke. We said to them, "Let us stay in our own houses and we will do everything for you," but they said "You must move right now," so we all left our village. First the DKBA ordered us to move to Khaw Taw [last year], but then the SLORC staying near our village told us we could still stay in our village for a short time. Then the headman came back from a meeting in Papun in rainy season and said we were ordered to move to Papun. Now they have ordered us again.

We had no more money or strength for SLORC, so we came here. Very few families are still in our village. I hope to go back to my village sometime, if the

situation gets better.

Interview 18: HRV: Killing, Forced Labor, Livelihood, Refugee

Name: Saw Thu Meh
Sex: Male
Age: 46, Karen Christian farmer
Family: Married, 6 children aged 2-20
Address: Baw Bo Kyo village, Bu Tho Twp., Papun Dist.
Interviewed: February 16, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Saw Thu Meh used to be a village headman, and fled to a refugee camp a year ago. His daughter arrived at the same camp on February 6, 1996 but was too shy to speak, so he spoke for her.]

I left my village after SLORC and DKBA killed two of my villagers in May last year. First SLORC killed Saw Bu Poh on May 15. He was 63. They killed him because he ran away, and SLORC saw him in the jungle so they shot him without asking any questions. On May 28 they killed Kyaw Aye, who was 26 years old. DKBA and SLORC killed him. He was in his house, and when he saw SLORC coming he tried to run away and they shot him. Then I left my village, and my villagers moved to other villages or hid in the jungle because they didn't dare stay in the village anymore. But later they did the same as me and came here. In October 1995 they killed another villager there, he was 18 years old and his name was Win Mya Htoo. He had already been to the refugee camp, then when he went back to his village SLORC and DKBA were there looking for animals like pigs, chickens, and goats and burning some houses. He was unlucky, and when he arrived SLORC killed him in the village. They arrested him, tied up his hands and shot him. I'm not sure of their battalion number - I think the battalions there are LIB 311 and 340.

People in the village still have to go work at the camp, build roads, and also pay porter fees. Now they [SLORC] sent a letter ordering them to move. It said, "If you don't go, your whole village and all your rice will be burned." So people don't dare stay in the village anymore. They were ordered to move near the military camp of LIB 341. They received this letter in January, so a lot of people rushed to go to Thailand. Dee Taw Kee, Saw Bweh Der, Hee Ko Der, and Kyo Ko Der also have to move to the army camp. All the people must go by January 18, 1996. But nobody is going there, everybody is arriving here. Now our whole village has been burned down by SLORC, and they have eaten

all our coconuts and destroyed all our coconut trees. If we go back they will kill us. The situation is really bad now - if it was good, you surely wouldn't see our faces here in Thailand!

Interview 19: HRV: Killing, Torture, Arrest, Slavery, Forced Labor, Religious Persecution

Name: Pi Tha Htoo Paw
Sex: Female
Age: 56, Karen Christian farmer
Family: Married, 1 daughter
Address: Peh Kru village, Hlaing Bwe Township
Interviewed: February 1996
Source: KHRG

I came here on January 2, because of Ko Per Baw and SLORC. In rainy season [July-Oct/95] SLORC arrested me, tied me up, and covered my head and eyes with plastic. They beat and kicked me, and put me in water. Then in dry season Ko Per Baw [DKBA] arrested me. They said they suspected me of working for the KNU, but I'm just a villager. When SLORC arrested me they came at night and I couldn't see clearly, and they tied me with a rope. They held me in the village for a night, and they punched me a lot, they hit me on the head with a torchlight and they hit my back with a gun. They twisted my hair around my head and sank my head underwater. They told me to give them guns and show them where I keep guns. But I have no guns, because I'm a farmer. It was raining and I was wet, and that night I had to sleep in my wet clothes. Then they took me to the monastery in the morning. Then they took me to their camp over a mile away and put me in the lockup for 3 days and 3 nights. They gave me some food in there, but I didn't want to eat because I was afraid and I hate them. They kept asking me to find guns for them, and I told them I'd pay them money if they would release me. Nobody dared come to help me. Finally they released me after considering my story. That was Battalion 25. They often come to the village.

The second time was in January [1996]. The Ko Per Baw [DKBA] came and took me into the village for a meeting. They said they would let me go, but after the meeting they tied me with rope. They arrested me because of my religion - that day they arrested two Christians, and the other was killed. They took me to the monastery, and they told me, "If you know or see KNU are coming to the village you must inform us immediately, and you must not have any contact with them." I had to stay together with a nun in the monastery.

They kept me tied up except when they fed me. They didn't beat me, but at first one of them said they would kill me. Then another one of them said "If you kill this woman, where will you hide your wife and family?" [Referring to the fear of revenge by the KNU.] So instead they made me drink promissory water, and then they released me. The man they killed that day was Thra Shee ['Teacher' Shee]. He was about 36 or 40 years old. They took him to the monastery together with me, but then they gave him to the SLORC soldiers. They took him outside. I don't know how they killed him, I think they killed him in Pway Taw Roh village. I think Ko Per Baw [DKBA] had him killed because of his religion, because they say "We want to kill all Christians." After I was released I saw six people who'd had their earlobes cut off by SLORC and Ko Per Baw. Some people were hanging under the monastery on ropes [the ropes were slung around their chests and under their arms]. In the daytime they put them in the lockup, and at night they left them hanging. One person died from the hanging. I don't know why they were arrested, but I think they were held for 3 or 4 months. As for the man who died, he didn't belong to any organization. This was all done by Ko Per Baw [DKBA], at Peh Kru monastery. I heard that some other people were also killed.

Peh Kru village has about 60 or 100 houses. Only 10 houses are Christian. The Ko Per Baw are Peh Kru villagers. I don't know why they join. Sometimes they come together with SLORC, sometimes not. We have to do whatever they ask and go wherever they go as porters. I am alone, so I have to hire someone else to go instead of me. I have to pay 25, 45, 100 or 150 kyats -- they ask for porters many times, all the time. They are also building a road near our village. It is going to Paw Yin Pyu [army] camp, and maybe to Myawaddy or Kawkareik. Every day 10 people from the village have to go. We have to carry sand and everything else they want. We also have to go and clean and carry water in their camp. We have to do everything they order. It is the same for Buddhists and Christians. People don't want to stay any longer in the village, under the thumb of SLORC. Many families are leaving. It took me 3 days to come here by myself -- my daughter stays at her husband's village, and my husband was already here. I had to come secretly. Some families want to come to the refugee camp but they have a lot of children, so it is not easy for them to come. They have so many problems, but they can only fear and cry their tears. Some families have no rice to eat, we have to give so much. We have to pay porter fees and taxes so many times, and we have to give 4 big tins of paddy [over 60 kg.] to SLORC for every acre. They don't pay us anything for it. They also ordered me to give them rice for people who are blind and lame, but I don't know whether they give this rice to the blind and the lame. I don't know who ordered this, I just have to do everything they order. We've been suffering since I was young. Now even here [at the refugee camp] I don't

know if it's safe, I can only stay quietly and worry every night. Every night I hear rumours.

**Interview 20: HRV: Torture, Arrest, Slavery, Forced Labor,
Refugee, Religious Persecution, Livelihood,
Child, Women**

Name: Naw Sah Ghay
Sex: Female
Age: 38, Karen Christian farmer
Family: Married, 4 children aged 5-13
Address: Bee T'Ka village, Hlaing Bwe Township
Interview: February 1996
Source: KHRG

I arrived here on January 20, because we had no money to pay the fees and taxes. We had to pay at least 700 kyats per month, sometimes 1,000 kyats, for porter fees. Even if we don't have any money we must pay -- they [SLORC] tell us to borrow it from other people, and we have to give it to them. On top of that, we also have to send porters. The money is for Ko Per Baw [DKBA] and SLORC. They stay together. There are more SLORC than Ko Per Baw. They come and stay for a day, then they move from one village to another. The Ko Per Baw stay in people's houses, and the SLORC stay in the monastery. In October they made us move near the Church. They said they were searching for guns but they couldn't find them so all the houses had to move near the road. They separated the Buddhists and Christians. I have a garden where I plant many things like oranges and lemons, but after they made us move near the Church the Ko Per Baw destroyed my garden. I used to get 700 to 1,000 kyats per month from that, but now nothing. From other people's houses, they steal so much chicken and fruit. The Ko Per Baw also stole one of my sister's cattle. They don't eat the meat, they just steal it for SLORC.

Since they started coming to our village [last year] we have to go as porters for 5 days every month. I was called to go, because after paddy planting time my husband was never home [he was staying in his field], and because even though we aren't KNLA soldiers they always arrest the men and ask them to find bullets and guns. I hired people to go instead of me, because if we go we have to carry everything for them. This is not a duty for women -- it is so heavy to carry. The men who go have to carry bullets and rice up and down the mountains, and do everything that SLORC or Ko Per Baw orders. Sometimes we have to go for a day to carry their food, one person from each house, 100

people or more. Some women take along their babies, and 10 or 12 year old children have to go because their parents can't go. We have to carry for about one and a half hours' walk. We have to carry one basket of rice between 3 women, or one basket between 2 men. We also have to cut and send them bamboo, usually 20 or 30 bamboos per section. There are 10 sections in Bee T'Ka. They use it to make fences for their yellow bean garden. They were not building a road yet when I left, but they are going to build one. They allow us to go to Pa'an or to other villages, but not to the [Thai] border. If we try to come to the border they say we belong to KNU. Some people who went to the refugee camps and then came back have been arrested by Ko Per Baw, so people who have been to the refugee camps are very worried. The Ko Per Baw accuse them of having guns and ask them for money. They ask 1,000 or 2,000 kyats to release them. Many people are beaten. One man named Ta Dah Pee, when the Ko Per Baw arrested him they dug a hole for his grave and said, "Do you dare to die?" But they didn't kill him, they were just threatening. Because of all this, when Ko Per Baw went to Paw Ler village some of the villagers who had come back fled to xxxx refugee camp again.

None of the Christians join Ko Per Baw, but some of the Buddhists. There are two brothers from Bee T'Ka who are their officers, Kyaw Tha Dah and Kyaw Nu Poh. They are really cruel and do mean things to people. They used to be villagers and earned their living by farming. Before I came here, Ko Per Baw demanded 15 tins [over 200 kg.] of paddy from each section of the village. They don't get their rice from SLORC anymore so they take it from the villagers. They also ask money -- Buddhists and Christians both have to pay the same. Ko Per Baw are a small group, so they always follow with SLORC. When they stay in the village at night, they always order villagers to stay together with them.

Interview 21: HRV: Killing, Arrest, Slavery, Forced Labor, Livelihood

Name: Naw Muh Muh
 Sex: Female
 Age: 38, Karen Christian farmer
 Family: Married, 4 children aged 7-14
 Address: Ler Dah village, Hlaing Bwe Township
 Interviewed: February, 1996

We came here two months ago because SLORC and Ko Per Baw [DKBA] make trouble in our village. My husband is in the resistance[KNU], so they

always came to our house and told me to give them guns. My husband was not staying there, they only suspected that I kept his gun at home so they gave trouble to my family. One day they came to my house and arrested me, but when the SLORC soldiers were taking me, I collapsed along the way because I suffer from thwe toh [very high blood pressure]. Then they released me. Another time they sent me an order to come, and I had to go and meet with the Battalion Commander. That was 2 months ago. He asked me when my husband left home and he said my husband should join with them, but my husband has no desire to join SLORC. The Commander said if my husband comes back home I have to report it to them, and he threatened that if I didn't he would burn down my house. He also said if he saw me become pregnant he would take serious action against me. SLORC and Ko Per Baw came to my house one after the other, again and again, saying "Your husband must keep some guns at home -- show them to us," and "Why don't you convince your husband to join with us."

Our village only has 16 or 17 houses. Most of the Ko Per Baw stay in Kaw Paw section of the village. Some people joined because the monk [U Thuzana, patron of DKBA] told them that the Buddhists will get their own country. Some people didn't want to join them but the others arrested them and told them, "You must join us or you won't be in this world any longer." Mostly the Ko Per Baw make trouble for people whose husbands or sons are in KNU. I've only got 3 cattle but they told me to give them, so I said, "My husband was your friend and worked with you for many years, and he never stole from villagers, but go ahead and take them if you want." So then they didn't take my cattle, but they take things from other people. We also have to send porters and pay porter fees for both SLORC and DKBA. Each family has to pay 50 or 100 kyats per month porter fees, depending on how rich you are. We also have to go and plant vegetables like carrots and yellow beans in the SLORC army camp.

Now everyone is even more afraid of SLORC because of DKBA. The DKBA knows all about everyone, so when they tell SLORC we get more trouble than ever. SLORC gives the orders. Last summer [April-May] SLORC killed a man in the village, because all the villagers had convinced him to be KNU headman for the village. But SLORC found out because of DKBA, so they arrested him and killed him. As for me, my husband is in the KNU, so I can't dare stay in my village anymore.

**Interview 22: HRV: Torture, Arrest, Religious Persecution,
Livelihood**

Name: Saw Tee Ler
Sex: Male
Age: 46, Karen Christian farmer
Family: Married, 5 children aged 5-22
Address: Bee T’Ka village, Hlaing Bwe Township
Interviewed: February 7, 1996
Source: KHRG

I just arrived here today. I left the village on December 25th, but I have been staying in different places. I left because just within the last year I’ve been seized and bound 8 times by the DKBA, between June and December. The first time was July 14, and the last time was December 20. It’s because I’m an ex-KNU soldier and now my son is a KNU soldier. Sometimes they came and arrested me in the daytime, and sometimes they came at night when I was asleep, aimed their guns at me and tied me up. When they arrested me they bound my hands and feet, they put iron handcuffs on me and took me to their office. I couldn’t do anything bound like that, and it was not easy to sleep at night. When the village headman found out, he had to come and give them 10,000 kyats to release me. Usually it was the DKBA leader who arrested me, Pa Bu Lah, who comes from #1 Brigade area [Thaton District]. The real reason they arrested me is because some people told them I had plenty of money. They thought they would get plenty of money if they arrested me. They already took five cattle, one bicycle, and my household belongings from me. They can’t take away my farmland, so they said I have to pay them twenty thousand kyats for my three plots of land. I also had to give 1,600 kyats every month to SLORC and DKBA.

The DKBA seized a student from Bee T’Ka village school and asked him whether he has sympathy for Kaw Thoo Lei [KNU]. When he said yes, they beat him up even though he is just a schoolboy. They also seized and bound the pastor of the village. His name is xxxx. People had to vouch for him, and then they released him. That was in August. The DKBA are staying in Bee T’Ka village, sometimes 8 of them and sometimes as many as 30. They tried to get people to destroy the Church by telling them that if they dig up the Church compound they’ll find a relic of the Buddha. They lighted candles around the place and they made incantations. We told them there is no relic there, but they insisted that there is. Our Church building cost us 700,000 kyats. So we told them to go ahead and dig it up if they like, and if they find the relic that is good and fair and we won’t ask any compensation - but if they don’t find

anything, they will have to pay us 700,000 kyats to rebuild the Church. When they heard that, they changed their minds and didn't dismantle the Church.

Interview 23: HRV: Forced Labor, Torture, Livelihood, Refugee

Name: Saw Simon
Sex: Male
Age: 45, Karen Christian teacher
Family: Married, 5 children aged 12-23
Address: Po Yin village, Kawkareik Township
Interviewed: February 2, 1996
Source: KHRG

I arrived here [in the refugee camp] yesterday evening. I came because there's trouble around our village. For now we could still stay there, but there will soon be troubles. In the other villages they have troubles -- SLORC is forcing villagers to move and arresting people, so some villagers have already fled to be Baw Naw Hta. I know this will happen in every village, so I moved here with my family. We know that SLORC will give trouble to all the villages where they arrive. If they come, they'll burn down all the houses like they did before. Some villages where they are already staying, they order people to join them [probably as People's Militia], they steal chickens and they force people to carry water for them at their camp and cook for them. It's at Ka Dee Kee camp. There are two camps, Ku Doh and Ka Dee Kee, Battalions 62 and 32. The people have to go for a few days. If the village head can replace them after a few days, they can come home. If he can't they have to stay and work a long time. Just two weeks ago one of the village leaders from Ka Dee Kee village was beaten. His villagers ran away from them, so SLORC got angry and came and beat the headman.

There are about 100 houses in my village. Now some of the families have moved here, and some families are moving to other camps. Three or four families already arrived here. People from other villages are also leaving, but some are also staying in their villages. Our village is about 10 miles from their camp, so if the soldiers want to come [on offensive] it will only take them a few hours to walk.

Interview 24: HRV: Child Soldier, Killing, Forced Labor, Slavery, Freedom of Expression

Name: Aung Myint
Sex: Male
Age: 29, Karen Buddhist
Address: Pantanaw, Irrawaddy Delta

Name: Zaw Oo
Sex: Male
Age: 18, Burman Buddhist
Address: Hmawbi, Rangoon Division

Name: Maung Nyunt
Sex: Male
Age: 16, Burman Buddhist
Address: Daik Oo, Pegu Division
Interviewed: March 24, 1996
Source: KHRG

[All 3 were Privates with LIB 547 in Pa-an District. They escaped to Thailand in March 1996.]

Aung Myint: I was in the army for about one year. I gave my name to the army recruiting officers who arrived at my village. Out of about 50 houses [his section of town], 5 to 10 people must be recruited. They recruited about twice a year. [Actually this is forced conscription by quota; section leaders face arrest if the quota is not met.] Then, I had training in Weigali, Than Byu Zayat, at Division Headquarters No. 10 [Training Centre]. After the training, I was stationed in Nabu [north of Kawkareik in Pa'an District] where our headquarters were.

We mostly worked doing fatigue [army term for soldiers' labor], building barracks and baking bricks. We needed more bricks, so later we hired civilians to work, and we gave money to them. For those who carried the earth, 70 kyats per day and for those who dug the ground, 110 kyats. This is the fixed amount, but they [the officers] cut some of it for the battalion funds. So, that's why if the civilians rest, we had to bake bricks, alternating -- civilians 10 days, soldiers 10 days, and so on. We had to bake 2,500 bricks a day, starting from 6 a.m. until 11.30 a.m., then 12.30 p.m. until 6 p.m. [Rank and file soldiers throughout Burma are being forced to bake bricks for the profit of their officers. Villagers from Nabu area say they are constantly forced to provide wood

fuel for LIB 547's brick kilns and that this has wiped out most of the forest in the area. They also say that they are not paid when forced to bake bricks. The officers may be claiming salaries for villagers from SLORC authorities, then pocketing the money.

We were moved [from the camp] to the brick kiln site. The food was bad. Sometimes the beans were unavailable. And beef -- according to the rules we should get 3 pieces of beef [per issue] but actually, we received 3 beef bones - - we could not eat them. Two meals per day, lunch after 11 a.m. We always rushed to have lunch and dinner. We never received tinned meat from the battalion [the officers sell it]. We could still have accepted this if an effort was made to do the best possible. As soldiers we had to follow orders and sometimes finished our duties late -- we came back, and without time to have a bath, packed our dinners, took our guns and went to sentry duty. But when we would open our dinner, we despaired because of the food. On patrol, not much was different. If we asked the villagers, we could get vegetables, and we usually sold condensed milk [to the villagers, to get extra money] but this was not sufficient. We could not carry enough rice, so we had to ask the villagers [for rice]. At the brickworks site we received 5 kyats per day for food, plus money from sales of condensed milk, so our food was so poor and so bad that dogs could not eat it, and we had to work very hard.

We had to make 2,500 bricks [per day] and we used a cow on a rotating beam mechanism to grind the mortar. There were three shifts, so the total number of bricks to be completed per day was 7,500. If we did not finish, we were beaten. Those who beat us were also soldiers, the same as me but a different section, and some were younger than me. So once I told them, "My younger brothers, don't beat us. Look at that cow, we are the same as that cow. Willingly or unwillingly, we must work."

Our commander was Major Sein Win. He was just promoted and receives a major's salary. Our battalion also does other activities, like bean plantations, and pig and duck rearing. They are using soldiers for this work too. There are not so many soldiers in the battalion. After those who are on leave, in training, and who have run away, now our battalion has only 504 soldiers [technically, a full Battalion should have close to 1,000, but 500 is more common in the SLORC Army].

Our company stationed at the headquarters of the battalion worked in brick production. The other companies did other duties. I went to the frontline for two months, for mobilization in Myatpadine [southeast of Naba towards Kawkaik]. There is a new road from Myatpadine to Kyone Doh. The

battalion called villagers as porters. If the column arrived to a village, we changed porters. Some villagers could not go as porters, so sometimes old women had to attend as porters, they couldn't carry things. The battalion gave no money to the porters. Each group of porters had to serve for at least a week. If we went to rest in a village we changed the porters, and collected new porters and new carts. If the porters didn't bring food with them we shared food with them, but I didn't see any special arrangement of food for the porters.

The villagers have to send logs for the battalion sawmill. The villagers must cut the trees and send them to the battalion. We used them for buildings and bridges. [In Nabu] there are quite a lot of Muslims, but now some ran away and some moved because LIB 547 took exactly half of the village. The only Indian [Muslim] part remaining is right around the mosque. The road cut the village down the middle, and one side became the LIB 547 compound. Many good houses were demolished. The Army also took the ricefields for their own bean plantations, 'bocate' and 'mart' beans. Nabu village has about 700 families, and about 300 families lost their land. The situation of the Muslims there is pitiful. The Nabu villagers lost their homes, farms, even their ricefields, so now they do not want to see the soldiers anymore.

As for road construction, from Nabu there is one main road headed to Kyone Doh and Kawkareik [actually this is 2 roads], and another headed to the DKBA monk's place [Myaing Gyi Ngu -- he may mean via Pa'an or via Pain Kyone]. That one starts at the Nabu mosque. The roads are about 40 feet wide. I myself didn't have to call the villagers, but a lot of villages have to work on that: Myatpadine, Nan Kaw Tay, Mon Su, Kalah Gone, In Chay, Da Way Hta, Tone Poh and so on. Sometimes 80 to 100 people per village. They had to sleep around the ricefields, and we [soldiers] also lived without shelter at the brickmaking site. Neither group had any decent shelter. We [soldiers] also had to volunteer to work on the road, but just for show, just for a very short time, together with policewomen and other soldiers. That day the TV reporters recorded it. They wanted to show that the Army served and worked for the people, but actually the people did the whole thing. About 40 policewomen came. They also helped to build army barracks. The battalion has many buildings yet to build.

I don't want to be a soldier, because we didn't have our basic living requirements met, especially for food, and they did not instruct us as human beings or treat us as human beings. If we are tired, they beat us like dogs and cows. They should speak encouragingly and gently, especially because there are many young guys in the battalion. The higher ranks usually say, "Stay if you can, and if you can't, you can run." Saya Tin Ngwe said that. He is a

quartermaster. But if we were caught [running], they would detain us. When they detain us, each time we come in or out of the cell they beat us five times - 5 times going in, 5 times coming out. They beat with a stick, not by hand. Sometimes they order the prisoner to fill a bag with sand and stones and run for 3 hours [carrying it].

There are few Karen soldiers [in 547 battalion], and only two soldiers understand the Karen language. The DKBA soldiers, we called them "yellow headbands," and we use them only as guides, and to get information about the situation in the villages and the region. I know about them and their places because I am from headquarters, and we provided rations [to them], the same as our own, and we supported them with arms and ammunition. Before operations, they asked us for a number of weapons. The battalion provided them G-3 and G-4 [assault rifles], the same as ours. We also use Uzis, carbines, machine guns, 81mm and 82mm [Chinese manufactured] mortars and also RPG's [rocket-propelled grenades]. The Uzis are used by patrol leaders, assistant patrol leaders, medics, signals men. Yes, also medics.

I don't know the names or units of DKBA soldiers and leaders, because they seldom came to the battalion compound. The deal between us and them was for guidance on routes. Sometimes, they guarded the [SLORC army] compound. But I didn't deal with them myself. We did not trust them, because they have no clear policy or aims and no good leadership. What I heard is that they just demand paddy totalling 10 to 15 baskets from each family in the villages.

We also had other duties, but brick production was very hard and the reason we ran away is because of the brick production work. We could not eat well, and at night time, we had to carry timber for fuel. After that, for those who had sentry duties that night, they could not have a bath, only rush dinner and go away again. Sentry duty lasts for two hours per person per night, and I managed to escape when I was on sentry duty. I woke them [the two other interviewees] and we ran together. Then I gave my gun to one of my friends, who remained behind, and first we travelled towards xxxx village, but we could not find it and we lost our way. So we slept the night near a stream and we got up early and reached a village in early morning. We arrived at a house and begged for rice, had breakfast, then continued. But we did not know the way, we lost our way, and we had only one fork and three plates, but we decided to throw them away because they were army issue. We reached xxxx. We all had some money, totalling 350 kyats. On the way, we saw a rice stall, selling plates of rice and curry for 50 kyats, and we ate two plates of rice and curry costing 65 kyats each. Then, after that, we met some Karen adolescents and I

talked to them. They explained that they were going to the hills [this is often used to refer to crossing over the Dawna Range, into Thailand] so we joined with them. Later, the boys asked me about where we wanted to go, so we replied that we wanted to go to Thailand, and then the boys suggested that we go to a monk, and advised us to follow him, pointing him out to us along the way. The next morning, the monk woke us up and we travelled again. Close to Thailand, we reached a village, which we did not enter. We crossed a stream a short distance away. At that point, we saw a group of DKBA or militia, who asked us where we were from. We said nothing, but continued to follow the monk. We slept that night at a house not far from that village. At that house, we said to the monk that we wanted to find jobs. The monk said he knew a place where there was a stone mill and brick factory!

Later we saw a group of either DKBA or militia following us, and they asked us to stop, including the monk. We stopped, and we were all afraid. They said every person travelling along that road had to pay 200 kyats to them. I think they were DKBA. One of them explained that the money was for the village, the monastery and them. I had only 75 kyats, and they [the other interviewees] had no money, so I asked them to please accept 75 kyats. I begged to them and they agreed and gave permission to continue. After that, the monk said, "You were lucky because of me. If I were not with you, maybe it would have been dangerous for you." So, we all agreed and we all gave our thanks to the monk, but we didn't explain about ourselves. He didn't ask, but I think he knew something about us. He was a Karen monk. Then we continued, and we arrived at xxxx. I heard that SLORC soldiers were there. There, the water in the river [Moei River, which is the Thai border] was about the height of our necks, so because of the monk we went to find a shallower place to cross. Then we planned to cross when we met an old Indian man, who asked us where we were going. We answered that we were going to cross the river and he said, "This is the direction to jail. You will be arrested [by the Thais]". He showed another direction to cross the river. On the other side of the river, there were trucks and people carrying timber, so I said nothing, just lowered my head and crossed the river. We slept the night there. The monk had his acolyte, who had previously worked at the brick mill, and the next day he returned to say that there were no jobs available there, but there were some other jobs, such as making charcoal. He took us to a man who works baking charcoal, but he explained that we all were newly arrived, so we ought to rest a few days. Then he wanted to accept me only, because the other two are quite young. So I decided to work, to follow him. At that time, we had 55 kyats [that was evidently hidden from the DKBA] and I gave 50 kyats to them and followed him. But it is difficult for one to work and three to eat.

There are many soldiers who want to run away, and before there were many who ran, prior to us. Also some of the higher ranks like Saya San Myunt, and other sergeants. I heard they went to the hills. I hope I will see many ex-soldiers in Thailand! At least 6 to 8 soldiers wanted to join with us, but we didn't have enough time to call them. Also, I thought we could not all manage to escape. We reached here because of the monk. As for me, I don't have any good vocational training. In my village, I was a local farmer of betel leaves. It was not so bad, but because of inflation it is hard to live. The paddy farmers too have many difficulties. About four or five years ago, farmers had to give, for a reduced special price, about 12 baskets of unhusked rice per acre. Now they have increased it to 18 baskets per acre. Their price is less than half the value of the local market price. For those who have to borrow money from the government, they suffer the most. Some have no money at the start of the paddy season, so they take loans. Most of the farmers take loans.

On the way, we had one pair of clothes each, and now some people helped us for some more. He ["Zaw Oo"] had no sandals on the journey. As a soldier, it is very difficult to buy a longyi. My salary was 600 kyats [per month], but each month, I put 50 kyats into a savings account [the usual advice of army officers], plus had to give some for social welfare and we did not receive our full kit, so they cut our salaries in order to buy equipment. For example, we had no boots, belts or shoulder straps,...

Zaw Oo: These were never reissued since we were first stationed, after training.

Aung Myint: These things were excluded from the 1025 form [some kind of army issue document], so we had to pay out of our own salaries, as it was necessary to have them for patrols. So the battalion issued these things and cut the costs from our salaries. I received 600 kyats, but this was not sufficient for my expenses for the whole month, and they ["Zaw Oo" and "Maung Nyunt"] received 450 kyats, so it was very hard for them.

Zaw Oo: We only received between 360-390 [in the hand]. Before, I worked in a shop selling dry goods [chillies, onions, spices, etc.] in Hmawbi. I didn't do any regular school study. I joined the army in April 1995 in Mingaladon. I met some soldiers who encouraged me to enlist. My younger brother followed me and tried it also. He was placed with another battalion. I had training for 4 months at Training Centre No. 9 in Thaton. After the training, I was sent to LIB 547.

Maung Nyunt: I was a student. I attended 7th Standard, then I left school. I

am the eldest of six, my brothers and sisters are in Standard 7, Standard 5, and some do not attend school. My family has a lot of problems, I did not want to stay at my house. I was not good in education, and my parents beat me. So my friends and I enrolled in the army, but my parents came to the Nyaunglebin recruiting camp and took me back home. My friends and I, the four of us enlisted together there. All of our parents and sisters came to take us back home, so they let us go back home. I was about 15. After that, I left school and I stayed with my grandmother, then I joined the army again with my friend. His name is xxxx. He was appointed to the same battalion, but on the night we escaped he was on patrol, not in the battalion compound. That is why he could not join with us. We had planned to run together. He is the same age as me.

Aung Myint: In the battalion there are many young soldiers, younger than him.

Maung Nyunt: They are about 13 or 14 years old. During the training, out of 250, there were about 8 or 9 soldiers who were around 13 or 14 years old. I don't know exactly for the whole 547 battalion, but in my company about four were younger than me.

Aung Myint: Now the blind or cross-eyed are accepted too.

Maung Nyunt: During the nighttime they cannot see, so they bump into people and things.

Aung Myint: My experience during training was that before I thought I would be the oldest, but I saw that grey- and white-haired people without teeth also had joined. They were older than me, so I had to lower my head to them. They were about 45 to 50. Now they are still in the battalion. They also work but at light jobs.

They ["Zaw Oo" and "Maung Nyunt"] both finished the same training course and arrived at the same time.

Zaw Oo: About three weeks were for basic military training, and after that fatigue, such as carrying stones from the stream to the training compound, and constructing roads and bridges. Sometimes, finding and collecting wood for fuel. We went to Ngamoeyaik Hill to collect wood. Usually, morning was for drill practice, and afternoons for fatigue. We had to work even if it was raining. We were beaten, at least three slaps per day.

Maung Nyunt: We were kicked.

Zaw Oo: We had to jump like frogs too. Put your hands on your head and jump up and down for quite a long distance, and sometimes we had to jump across the drilling practice field. It was so tiring that we could not eat sometimes. The field was quite wide, and we had to go back and forth sometimes three times.

Maung Nyunt: After the training I never shot a gun, but during the training I did. About 3 or 4 times. Firstly, we practiced shooting from 100 yards at a 4 foot square target. Then, using a submachine gun, shooting mobile targets from 50 yards. Then, we practiced shooting water pots and bottles. I hit the pot from a distance of 100 yards. I used 5 rounds, with a G-3. And I shot ten rounds of a G-4 also.

Zaw Oo: I had to try two times, but hit nothing. And then I shot 22 rounds and hit only once. We did not receive enough practice. We had to spend most of the time on road construction, and clearing scrub. Even then we were not finished. We had to go to the top of the mountain and build a pagoda. We carried sand and stones to the hill.

Q: What did you do at #547 battalion?

Maung Nyunt: Mostly fatigue. Before working at the brick site, we had to carry bricks to the battalion compound, and clear scrub around the perimeter. They did not provide enough equipment, such as machetes, to clear the thick bushes.

Zaw Oo: Our company commander was Major Tin Win Kyi. We worked for the battalion funds. Actually, to carry 1,000 bricks we should get 600 kyats. One time, we took 3,000 bricks, and we did that three times in one day.

Aung Myint: The army battalion commander kept that money, for the battalion funds.

Q: Why did you escape?

Maung Nyunt: We could not persevere.

Q: Persevere... Don't you know about our 3 causes? [The "3 National Causes" constantly trumpeted by SLORC: Non-disintegration of the Union, Non-disintegration of National Solidarity and Consolidation of National Sovereignty]

Maung Nyunt: Yes, I know of them.

Zaw Oo: We don't want to go back.

Aung Myint: The army's administration is not fair. Officers and privates; his men and my men [gesturing to indicate different places for each]. Privates are treated as cows, that is why many soldiers try to escape. Some try to go to Thailand and some try to return home. It is very dangerous, and we are very lucky. Many soldiers will try to escape in the near future, because they suffer a lot and there is inequality. For those who run to their homes, they are mostly rearrested and the army forces them to serve again. I didn't want to be rearrested. I prefer to choose between death or freedom. Before leaving, we discussed about what the Karen soldiers would do to us [if they surrendered], that we would explain the truth and let them decide, because we had only one chance to be free. If there is equality, we could serve. If a soldier accidentally fires a round, he is punished. When the same thing happened to an officer, he was promoted. An officer misfired his pistol and he was not punished, but got a promotion a month later. But if this happened to a private, he would be punished. And officers are very proud -- they never treat the lower ranks as human beings, so most of the privates suffer a lot and then despair. My experience with an officer was with Captain Aung Nyo Thein, who slapped me because I had put only a small amount of Ajinomoto [Japanese MSG seasoning] in his curry, which was not sufficient for him. Then he clicked his tongue, and I was slapped again. The army considers only rank, not right or wrong. This is injustice. Maybe this is the higher ranks' mistake or the lower ranks' mistake, I don't know, but there is injustice.

Q: What is the soldiers' opinion of the NLD?

Aung Myint: As for the soldiers, we can see Aung San Suu Kyi and NLD are not a problem. I don't know about my officers' opinions, but I know they listen to BBC and VOA. We could not because we had no radio, as they are very expensive and very hard to buy. [Even if they can get a radio, soldiers are generally strictly prohibited from listening to foreign broadcasts.]

Interview 25: HRV: Forced Labor, Killing, Livelihood, Detention, Torture

Source: FTUB

The DKBA soldiers in Ger Ghaw demand a tax of 15,000 kyats per month for every saw mill operating in the region. They use this money only for their own benefit. The villagers receive no benefit. These soldiers order the villagers to

construct places for them to stay in that are of a very good standard. The villagers in Meh Pleh Toh area [the area around Ger Ghaw] must always help them. This DKBA group is 'a lawless band' which wants to catch and kill people who have done nothing wrong. They do this because the SLORC is behind, supporting them. Many DKBA are now always taking "kyaw law dee" and other drugs. [Kyaw law dee means 'cockroach eggs', more commonly known as 'myin say', or 'horse medicine' -- a strong amphetamine which is smoked and can be fatal if swallowed. It makes the user sleepless and aggressive for about a day. It is common in Thailand, where possession is punishable by imprisonment. It sells for US\$ 3-5 per tablet depending on quality.]

On February 6, 1996, DKBA soldiers executed Htoo Nu (male, 35, Karen Buddhist farmer from Tee Sah Ra village). Htoo Nu was single and had been staying in Thailand for some time. He returned to Tee Sah Ra for his engagement ceremony on February 2, as he was to be married. On February 6, at about 10 a.m., DKBA soldiers Kyu Wah, Twee Maw, Blar Kay, Plah Wah, Par Klaw, Thaw Kya, and Ka Lu entered Tee Sah Ra village and arrested Htoo Nu. Kyu Wah, Twee Maw, and Blar Kay had previously been KNLA soldiers at Kawmoora and had known Htoo Nu for a long time. Htoo Nu was not a KNU member, though in the past he had some contact with them because Tee Sah Ra used to be a strongly KNU-held village. He may have been arrested simply because he had been in the refugee camps. Witnesses say that Htoo Nu could have fled at the time of his arrest but chose not to. The armed DKBA tied his hands behind his back and took him to the village elder's house. His relatives begged for his release and testified to his innocence, but this was not accepted and the DKBA warned everyone not to follow them, threatening to kill anybody who did.

Htoo Nu was taken to Ger Ghaw T'la Aw Kla, their camp near Ger Ghaw, where he was beaten and tortured severely. Finally, his hands were tied to his waist and he was hung from a tree by his midriff until his death, which occurred in the afternoon of the same day (February 6). His death was witnessed by monks in the nearby monastery. All seven soldiers involved in his arrest also participated in his execution, however it is not clear if others were also involved. The execution was ordered by Thein Shwe, an officer of DKBA #333 Brigade.

On February 27, 1996, some time before 4 a.m., KNLA soldiers launched an attack on the DKBA unit stationed near the monastery in Ger Ghaw village commanded by Yay Naun Keh, commander of DKBA #4 Battalion, #999 Brigade. The battle lasted for approximately one to two hours. Of the 20-30 DKBA present at the time, 8 DKBA soldiers were killed and their camp was

destroyed. One villager and two white-robed lay monastery attendants were also killed. In withdrawing, the DKBA left some wounded behind in the ruins, but the KNLA did not have sufficient time available to safely enter the location and capture them. After the 1-2 hours of combat, SLORC and some DKBA troops approached and shelled the KNLA, and pursued them as they withdrew.

Subsequent to the attack, about six SLORC Battalions, including Light Infantry Battalions (LIB) #355 and #357, Infantry Battalion (IB) #230, and battalions from #88 Light Infantry Division (LID) formed a combined column of over 1,000 soldiers commanded by Colonel Kyi Thein in order to pursue the KNLA soldiers. On 28 February more than 30 SLORC army trucks arrived in Tee Sah Ra village, loaded with these fully equipped SLORC troops and supplies. Their officers went to the village elders to demand an adequate number of carts from the village in order to transport the equipment and supplies in pursuit of the KNLA soldiers. From February 28 through March 7 the column moved through the area, taking civilians as porters along the way. Although the purpose of the column was supposed to be to seek out and destroy the KNLA force, the primary activity of the troops throughout that time was looting of villages. Many villages suffered heavy losses. For example, Lo Baw village was looted on 5 March by soldiers of LIB 355 and 357 and IB 230, led by Maj. Aung Kyaw and Maj. Than Soe; Day Law Pya village was looted by LID 88 troops led by Lt. Col. Aung San Chit on March 5; and Meh Bleh Wah Kee village was looted on March 7 by troops from LID 88 led by Major Ye Tun. These 3 villages alone reported losses in rice, oxen, cattle, goats, pigs, and chickens worth about 350,000 kyats in value. Villagers reported that all their personal and household belongings were also looted, even items as small as spoons. SLORC soldiers returning from sorties into the villages were seen using 15 bullock carts at a time to transport their loot. Given their focus on these activities, after an entire week they were still completely unsuccessful in finding the KNLA force.

At the same time, the DKBA ordered each village in the Ger Ghaw area to pay 10,000 kyats toward the funerals of the dead DKBA soldiers. Villages which had to pay included Ker Ghaw, Sgaw Ko, Kwee Lay, Pah Klu, Taw Oot, Tee Sah Ra, Tee Wah Blaw, Tee Law Thee, Paw Baw Ko, B'Naw Kleh Kee, Way Hsah, and Meh Bleh. On March 7 the village elders paid the money.

After the KNLA attack, the DKBA proceeded to intensify their efforts to go in search of villagers who had made "mistakes" [against them]. In retaliation for the KNLA attack, the DKBA arrested Tee Sah Ra villagers Tee Kler (male, age 20, Karen Buddhist farmer, married) and Dee Heh (male, age 35, Karen Buddhist, married with 5 children, used to be village secretary) on 3 March.

At the time Tee Kler and Dee Heh were attending the annual temple festival just outside the village. At about 1 a.m. they were at a betting stall at the festival, when DKBA soldiers Po Law and Kyu Wah (a former KNLA soldier who joined DKBA in July 1995; he is from Tee Sah Ra and knew the 2 men) approached with their weapons. Dee Heh's wife told him to run, but he said, "I have made no mistakes, if they want to kill me they can do so." Tee Kler and Dee Heh bought food for the two DKBA soldiers. Then Po Law and Kyu Wah arrested them and took them into the village together with 5 or 6 other DKBA soldiers who had been waiting just outside the festival. In the village they tied the men's hands behind their backs, put them inside a cattle corral and guarded them there until daybreak.

In the morning, Tee Kler and Dee Heh's relatives came and begged the DKBA soldiers to release them, but they did not. At around 7 a.m. they loaded Tee Kler and Dee Heh into a car and the two victims' relatives begged the DKBA soldiers to permit them to go with them, but the DKBA refused. After they boarded the car and left the village they traveled only about 50 yards, then dismounted the car and took Tee Kler and Dee Heh across the fields, by another route back to their camp at Ger Ghaw T'la Aw Kla. The victims' relatives followed them a short time later, and along the way at Paw T'Lu Noh Pa Doh they saw blood on the ground and the earth was disturbed from the apparent beating that had taken place. The victims' parents arrived at Ger Ghaw on the same day but did not get permission to meet with their sons. When Dee Heh's wife went to Ger Ghaw and asked Kyu Wah, "Son, where is your father?" [Here "Son" and "Father" are used as terms for age, "Father" meaning Dee Heh], Kyu Wah replied, "Didn't my father go back already?" and Po Law said, "If you want to see Dee Heh, go to T'la Aw Kla." At that time on 3 March, nobody knew if Tee Kler and Dee Heh were alive or dead.

On March 7, DKBA soldiers in Ger Ghaw called for the village elders from Tee Sah Ra to go and meet with them regarding Tee Kler and Dee Heh. On 8 March the DKBA soldiers called Tee Kler and Dee Heh's relatives to go and meet with them at Ger Ghaw. On 9 March, people learned that Tee Kler had been released and Dee Heh had been shot twice and executed in the afternoon of 7 or 8 March by the DKBA soldiers. Tee Kler did not see the execution because his face was covered at the time, but he heard the shots. Tee Kler had also been seriously beaten. Regarding the execution of Dee Heh, the DKBA said that he had "made a mistake", and regarding the arrest of Tee Kler, the DKBA soldiers said that he was "a leader of Kawthoolei [KNU] spies". DKBA held Dee Heh responsible for guiding the KNLA forces who attacked them, but at the time of the attack Dee Heh was in Thailand trading goods. He didn't know anything.

In Tee Sah Ra, almost all of the villagers are now afraid because of the DKBA murders. DKBA get their power from SLORC in order to seize members of KNU or people who sometimes help KNU. Thus, some of the men in the village who are under surveillance of DKBA are not at ease. Some of the elders in the village are not trusted by the people because many villagers think that they are working together with the Burmese military. So now villagers feel unable to trust each other, because some DKBA soldiers have relatives and family in the village and they are always watching and listening.

DKBA members from Tee Sah Ra are involved in the use of drugs, especially Twee Maw, Kyu Wah, Po Law, Pah Klaw, Plah Wah, Kah Lu, Blah Kay, and Thaw Kya. One myin say ["horse medicine"] tablet costs 500 kyats, or 100 Thai baht [US\$4], or less for people who buy a lot. They are readily available at Way Sha village south of Tee Sah Ra, and the Burmese soldiers and leaders do not prevent it or enforce the laws. They are also available in Thailand. The effect lasts for about a day, so some DKBA try to use one every day [it is unlikely that many of them could get enough money by extorting it from villagers; there is a good chance the SLORC is supplying at least some of the drug, especially further north and at DKBA headquarters in Myaing Gyi Ngu.].

So the situation now in Tee Sah Ra village is not peaceful, and it is as if every person is against the others, not like before. Some villagers say that they have no hope that the situation will become better in the future and believe that the village could be destroyed again [the village was previously razed to the ground by the Burmese military in 1984]. The villagers do not trust between one another any longer. Everybody is always under surveillance. The average number of SLORC soldiers in the village at any one time is 50-60. The DKBA have no fixed presence, but they are not far away and can come quickly and easily. They frequently come to visit their families.

On December 22, 1995, the Township LORC and Customs and Timber officials from Myawaddy held a meeting in Tee Sah Ra monastery and told village elders and the public that the villages in the area would begin working together and that they would improve life in the area. The Township LORC leader said that they would develop good administration for the village and make a complete registration of the village members in order to decrease their demands upon the villagers. Regarding education and health, he said that they would choose people who had a certificate of passing of Standard 8, 9, or 10 at a Burmese school for teacher training or nursing training. They promised to make new laws limiting tree cutting and unsound forestry practices. But the situation has not in the slightest developed as LORC leaders had said. The DKBA soldiers have been given power over the villages by SLORC and they

control the villages as they like. The SLORC has said to DKBA, "Your work is to rule with the villagers, and we will not interfere in the matter; you yourselves do as you please." There is no good administration, as they said there would be. As for the registration, most villagers do not want to be involved in this, only the few villagers who travel back and forth to other places in Burma. [The registration is most likely to determine the size of forced labor, extortion and rice quotas.]

As the Township and Village LORC leaders instructed at the meeting, the fence along the road to Meh Bleh to be constructed by the villagers is now complete, however it is not very good and serves no benefit [this fence of several kilometers was built entirely with forced labor and materials from the villagers]. It was only done because they ordered it. As for forestry, there are still no laws. To cut down trees to sell, all that's needed is to give money to SLORC soldiers and then loggers can cut as many trees as they like. A new clinic has been constructed and some nurses have been selected according to qualifications, but the clinic has still not opened and not all the staff have been chosen.

In August 1995, Township LORC leaders ordered construction of a school at Tee Sah Ra village. They refer to this as a Border Area Development school [part of the SLORC BAD programme]. For the construction of this school, they needed timber and the Township LORC took this timber from the monastery, totaling 170 planks [other sources say the planks on the monastery average about 8-10 feet long by about 10 inches wide; apparently the planks were actually ripped from the existing monastery building]. They did not want to give these planks, but because the Township LORC leaders have the power and the soldiers have the power, the people had to give them. The money given amounted to only half the worth of the planks, and until now they have not received the other half. Also, the Christian Church had to give planks and did not receive any money for them. Additionally, one villager named -- had wood and the Township LORC took all of his wood, although they did reimburse him for the cost of the wood. The Township LORC said the total cost of the school was 600,000 kyats, and they made the village pay them 300,000 of this [actually the whole school probably cost less than 300,000]. It took a great effort of the villagers to raise the money. The village community also had to work hard on the construction of the school, but did not receive any pay. As a result of having to do this work, the villagers are not free to do their own work. So the rice fields were neglected and ruined. Many of the villagers did not have enough food and some of them have serious illnesses. The people do not have anything coming to them, but they have to give away all the time. These villagers cannot live stay happily and contentedly.

Now the school is finished as ordered. There was already a school there, but the old one was demolished to make way for the new one. The old primary school had 5 teachers whose upkeep was taken care of by the villagers, but they have all now lost their positions because they do not have the formal qualifications demanded by the Township LORC. [The former teachers probably graduated from KNU schools and taught in Karen, whereas SLORC enforces a Burmese-only curriculum.] Many people are now in debt because of the cost of the school. The Township LORC has given not a single kyats for the upkeep of the new teachers, so the villagers will have to provide that as well.

The SLORC soldiers also always take the domestic animals from the villagers all the time and pay only half the worth of the animals. This is the situation all through out Meh Bleh Doh area. Each group of SLORC soldiers take animals like this 3 times every month, and there are so many groups of soldiers that it is a great burden for the villagers.

Interview 26: HRV: Forced Labor, Portage, Livelihood, Religious Persecution

Name: Ma Chit
Sex: Female
Age: 37
Nationality: Karen
Religion: Indian Muslim
Family: Married, 4 children
Address: xxxx village, Hlaing Bwe Township
Interviewed: March, 1996
Source: KHRG

Way Sha (also known as Quay Sha) village is about 10 miles north of Thingan Nyi Naung, in Kawkareik Township near Myawaddy. Than Ma Ya Taung mountain is about 4 miles west of Way Sha. On the hilltop there is a pagoda built on a boulder on the hill outcrop. There is also a holy Buddha's footprint about 18 inches long in the rock and a pleasant waterfall. The Myawaddy District LORC Chairman, Colonel Maung Maung Naing, ordered the development of the location as a tourist site, probably to attract Thai weekend tourists once the Myawaddy - Mae Sot bridge is opened. He also ordered development of the waterfall to supply hydroelectricity to Myawaddy town and Thingan Nyi Naung military base.

Villagers were ordered to begin constructing a road from Way Sha to Than Ma Ya Taung in January 1996. Thousands of villagers are involved. The military are not directly supervising the work, but are giving work assignments to village heads assigning each of their villages a portion of road which they must complete. They have not specified what punishments will follow if the assignment is not completed. Each family is required to send one person, both to construct the road and to do sentry duty along the road route at night. The villagers receive no money, and no medical assistance if they suffer an accident. The embankment for the road, about 2 feet high by 30 feet wide, is now nearing completion. Villages involved are Tee Wah Blaw, Than Ba Ya, Ger Ghaw, Kyaw Ko, Lo Baw, Kwee Lay, Toh Thu Kee, Thay K'Tay, and Wah K'Lu.

I left my village in February [1996] because of the hardship and the loss of rights, especially because of the very bad economic situation. We were legally issued ID cards years ago. The SLORC changed to new ID cards in 1989 and 1990, and they refused to issue us [the Muslim community] new cards. So we are not able to travel and are not looked on as Burmese citizens.

We have to serve for three days each week at different kinds of "voluntary" work, such as repairing the roads, cleaning the clinic in the village, and serving as [military] porters. At night, our village has a duty to act as sentries guarding the road, one person every 20 feet [along the roadside]. This duty is rotated through every family, so we had to go once every 5 days. Sometimes I had to send my daughter, who is only 11 years old. Porter duty comes around to our [family's] turn once or twice each month. Every time we have to carry to Ta Le camp [about 30 km. to the east across the Dawna Mountains] carrying supplies and ammunition. It is a must for each family to provide one person when called, so if people can't go they have to hire someone else to go for them at 150 kyats per day. Last year some people tried to refuse to go for this duty, and they were locked in wooden stocks [mediaeval-European style leg stocks] and placed in a pit in the ground 5 plah [8 feet] deep, though I didn't see this myself.

Porter fees of 50 kyats per month [per family] must be paid, "volunteer labor" fees of 150 kyats per month, and many other fees, such as "road repair" fees. [All of these are just extortion by military commanders.] Also for the USDA fund, even though I am not a USDA member. [USDA = Union Solidarity Development Association, SLORC's "mass support" organization formed in 1993 by threatening and coercing people into joining; non-members get nowhere under SLORC.] If they have [USDA] activities in our area we have to give money for the cost of their food, travel expenses, etc.

In early 1995, the DKBA led by Saw Nyunt Tin and Ye Nan Geh arrested 3 Muslims and 3 Christians in our village. One of the Christians, Saw Ni, was badly beaten and secretly executed. His relatives heard about this and reported it to a SLORC officer, hoping that they would take action against DKBA. Then the SLORC came and checked the place where Saw Ni had been buried. They saw that he had been badly beaten and killed with his hands tied behind his back, but instead of taking any action against DKBA they just took the other 5 prisoners away with them. They were finally released in December (1995).

So the villagers are not happy to live in our village, especially the Muslims and Christians. Now almost all of the Christians have already left, and only one third of the Muslims are still living there, about 45 Muslims families.

Interview 27: HRV: Forced Labor, Torture, Livelihood, Women

Name: Nai Myint Naing
Sex: Male
Age: 23
Nationality: Mon, fisherman
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 2 children aged 3 and 6
Address: Taung Kun village, Ye Township
Interviewed: March 20, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Nai Myint Naing did forced labor on the Ye-Tavoy railway and as a porter.]

I arrived here 6 days ago because of the railway line. They asked for people to work every week. If we can't go, we have to pay 3,000 kyats per family. We also have to pay porter fees. Even if we go, we have to pay 4,500 kyats. And we have to carry our own food. If we don't go, we have to pay 3,000 kyats more. SLORC first told us that if we pay the 4,500 kyats and come to work once, then for one year they won't call us anymore and won't ask any more money. But that was not true. They call us all the time. After they finish the rotation among all the houses, they call us again. But not next year, the same year!

I worked on the railway in September, after the harvest. I had to work between Nat Gyi Zin and Pya Thon Zu [Three Pagodas village in Ye Pyu Township, not Three Pagodas Pass] to build a new embankment along the old Japanese telegraph route. It is all new. Last year during rainy season they stopped the work, and this year they started a new route. I had to work for 15 days. We also had

to bring food with us, and 1,500 kyats per person to buy food [they carry only rice with them and they have to buy vegetables and other things at the worksite, which are very expensive].

This year, some people from our village and a nearby village have to work in the Kalein Aung/Kyaun Sone area. We don't have to walk there. They take us by truck but we have to pay for the truck.

I was a porter 15 days ago. At first, the headman asked me for porter fees to give to SLORC but I couldn't give. I had no money left, and not even enough food to eat at home. That's why I couldn't pay. So I stayed at home and SLORC soldiers from #409 Battalion came and arrested me. "Why didn't you pay the money?" they said. And they kicked me with their big army boots in my back. Until now, I cough with blood. Then they took me to carry heavy things. They arrested me in the village. Many people were sleeping outside the village [in field huts or in hiding], so they only arrested two men. The SLORC said: "If you don't come as a porter, we will consider you as a rebel!" I was a porter for 15 days but they didn't let me go. I ran away.

After we ran away, the SLORC came back to our village and asked the women: "Where are your husbands?" They questioned them and beat them too. Sometimes they called the women on various days [to the Army camp] and some had to stay for the night. Some were forced to sleep with them.

Interview 28: HRV: Forced Labor, Livelihood, Women

Name: Mi Pan
 Sex: Female
 Age: 45
 Nationality: Mon, daily wages
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, 4 children
 Address: Proh village, Thanbyuzayat Township, Mon State
 Interviewed: March 20, 1996
 Source: KHRG

[Mi Pan fled because of extortion and forced labor on the Ye-Tavoy railway and the Thanbyuzayat-Proh road. Thanbyuzayat is 80 km. north of Ye, far from the railway.]

I arrived in Plat Hon Pai about one month ago. In my village, we are working

[for SLORC] all the time and we can't get enough food to feed our family because we have to pay too many taxes like porter fees, fees for the car road and for the railway. That is why I left. We had to pay 100 kyats for general work, and for porter fees 50 kyats every month for each family. The people from Thanbyuzayat township have had to work on the railway since last year. Last year I had to work on the railway. Not this year, because we left just before they called for people again.

The railway goes from Ye to Tavoy through Kalein Aung. People from Thanbyuzayat township have to work near Ye. Other people work in other sections. Our village has to work in Kaloh village, about 2 miles south of Ye, in Ye township. One person from every family in the whole village has to go. I had to dig and cut through the mountain. They are repairing the railway from Kaloh village to Kalein Aung. They stopped the work last year and started building a new embankment which is going in a straight line. The old embankment had many curves. Now they are building in a straight line.

We also have to work on the road from Thanbyuzayat to Proh village. This is a new road. The road is passing through six villages: Pa Nga, Krok Pi, Ah Khong, Ang Kae, Koh Lee and Proh villages. The people from these villages have to work on the car road. They started building this road this year but I don't exactly when [they started in October 1995]. They are working on several parts of that road.

Interview 29: HRV: Forced Labor, Portage

Name: Nai Kyin
Sex: Male
Age: 50
Nationality: Mon, rubber planter
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 4 children
Address: Thaung Bauk village, Kya In Seik Gyi Township
Interviewed: March 20, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Nai Kyin did forced labor on the road from Thaung Bauk (30 km. east of Thanbyuzayat) to Kya In Seik Gyi, 20 km. to the north on the Ataran River. He was also a porter.]

I arrived here 10 days ago because of the car road from Thaung Bauk to Kya In

Seik Gyi. It is a new road. They started it in October 1995. Our headman called every section to work there. Later, the SLORC kept ordering him all the time to get workers for the road. Our headman doesn't like to call the villagers so often, who have no more time for their own jobs. So the headman told the SLORC, "If you want people, take them yourself". Now the SLORC come and arrest people all the time to work. We have no time to find money for our family.

In Thaung Bauk, there are five "islands" [before there were islands; now there is no more water in between, but the villagers still call the 5 parts "islands"]. On each "island", there are about 100 houses. Every day, the headman called 40 people from one "island" to go. First one "island", then the next one, etc. Then they took 40 people from the first "island" again [by rotation]. We had no time to rest. I worked on that road 3 days every week. No pay. We could not go home at night. We had to stay at the worksite. Now the headman doesn't select like before, and the SLORC themselves arrest people to work. Now, it is no longer 40 people per "island", it is as many as they can grab. When they catch people, they order them to work much more than 3 days. If the villager doesn't want to go, he has to pay money.

They also take porters. If the villager doesn't want to go, he has to pay money. They catch porters themselves. In January this year SLORC arrested me to go as a porter. I was on the way back from my garden to my house. They tied me up with a rope. I had to carry army things, like guns and bullets. I was a porter for 17 days. They didn't release me but I ran away.

Interview 30: HRV: Forced labor, Extortion, Portage

Name: Nai Maung Hla
 Sex: Male
 Age: 25
 Nationality: Mon, trader/labor
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, no children
 Address: Ye town, Ye township
 Interviewed: March 19, 1996
 Source: KHRG

[Nai Maung Hla is a trader from Ye town who tells of the curfews and extortion being imposed on the citizens of Ye. He has also done railway labor.]

I arrived here four days ago, but I am used to coming here and going back to Ye. I have relatives here but I am a trader. I came here with goods from Burma to sell here.

The situation in Ye is hard. People to pay a lot of taxes and also the cost of living, like the rice price, is very expensive. So most of the people, mainly the teenagers, would like to try to go to Thailand to seek jobs. Also the SLORC have made a curfew in Ye, so after 10 p.m, nobody can leave their houses and go on the streets. if someone is caught on the streets after 10 p.m., he will be arrested and put in jail for one day. This curfew is because many SLORC leaders come often to the area to deal and discuss about the gas pipeline project. They always have meetings and get-together in Ye and SLORC is afraid that they can be a target and these leaders are in danger, or that the people could start demonstrations like in 1988. So to prevent this from happening, they impose a curfew for ten days or 15 days at a time. When they have leaders in Ye, they impose curfew. When the leaders leave and they see everything is okay, then they lift the curfew. The curfews started a long time ago. Before 1988, we also had curfews but with the SLORC it is much stricter.

Before Ye was a happy place. Many people were walking around the streets. In the night, we had movies and a lot of businesses were going on. But now, Ye is so quiet. Now we have a very big cinema hall but we don't have enough electrical power. This oil lamp here gives more light than the lamps in the cinema. And after 8 p.m., there is no more power supply at all. This means no more movies. At night time, nobody walks in the streets. It is quiet and the business is not so good. Ye now is not so happy.

[He drew up the following list of taxes that people in Ye have to pay:]

Normal Tax:	200 kyats/month
Porter fees:	300 kyats/month
Railway protection fee:	40 kyats/month
Fire guard:	6 kyats/month
Section fire protection:	20 kyats/month
Railway construction fee:	
minimum (for poor families):	3,000 kyats
maximum (for richer families):	7,000 kyats
House tax for the poor:	22 kyats/year for a bamboo house

For others, tax on the value of the house, which is half the price of the house. For example, if your house is worth 50,000 kyats, you have to pay 25,000 kyats per year.

Farm tax per acre:	1,000 kyats/year
Paddy tax per acre:	3 baskets of paddy/year

The porter fees are collected by the section leaders. After collecting this money they find people to hire as porters and they pay them with that money. But for example, if they collect a total of 30,000 kyats and need to hire 5 people as porters, they just pay each porter 3,000 kyats. In total, they pay 15,000 kyats to the porters. The section leaders keep the rest of the money for themselves. They are corrupt. They are appointed by SLORC. If the people are unable to pay this tax, they have to go as porter without any pay.

Even if you pay the porter fees, sometimes the soldiers see you in the street and arrest you. Then your family has to go with money, 5,000 kyats to pay to the SLORC and after that you can go back home. If you don't pay, you have to go as a porter. Yes, they are doing this in Ye now.

Q: The 3,000 kyats as a minimum for railway construction fee, is that per year?

A: No, not per month or per year. It depends on the project needs. If the work is not completed, people have to pay another round. Just this year [1996] I've had to pay this three times already. Each family has to pay this - and 3,000 kyats is only for poor families. If the family is wealthy, they have to pay 7,000 kyats. The people who cannot afford to pay all that money have to go and work on the railway. A lot of people from Ye have to go. Five months ago people from Ye went to work on the railway. Two people were just taking a rest on the side of the railway. The ground collapsed and these two people died.

At present, people from Ye township have to work on different stretches between the border of Tenasserim Division and Ye. Some people have to go to some stretches and others on other stretches, far from Ye. At this moment, people from Ye don't have to work on the Ye-Tavoy car road, only on the railway. But before, they used to go to repair that road. Now they are only enlarging small parts of that road. Near Ye as well.

Also at army camps. Before, the people had to build for Battalion 61. Now, they have to build for 343 Battalion. It is a new battalion, so they need a new army camp close to Ye town. People have to pay for camp construction fees. And after they have already paid, people have to go and work there. They have to do construction work. They have to build bunkers too. Everything! 343 battalion seems good [not too bad], better than 61. 61 Battalion always steals

chickens, pigs. They shoot them and eat them. When they see women, they call them and rape them. When they see men, they catch them to be porters. 343 is better. They don't take people's chickens and don't rape women. 61 is still in Ye. These two battalions do not cooperate well together.

I bring dried fish, books, chilly powder, thanaka [makeup], and cigarettes to sell here. I carry nothing back to sell in Ye. As a trader, I earn sometimes 1,500 kyats, sometimes 1,800 or 2,000 per month.

Q: How can you afford to pay the railway construction fees?

A: I had to go and work there twice. The first time for 10 days in October 1995 near Bauk Pin Gwin and the second time for 6 days in January 1996 at the "12-mile" site. These sections were not completed last year yet. There were many prisoners there too. I had to dig the ground and carry the earth to the embankment. No salary. I had to bring food and rice from my house in Ye. At the worksite, villagers sell food but it is very expensive. For example, two cigarettes cost 5 kyats in Ye and at the worksite, you get only one cigarette for 5 kyats. At night, I just slept in the forest.

Interview 31: HRV: Forced labor, Porterage, Women

Name: Ma Tin
 Sex: Female
 Age: 35
 Nationality: Mon, farmer/trader
 Religion: Indian Muslim
 Family: Married, 3 children
 Address: Yah Pu village, Ye Township
 Interviewed: March 17, 1996
 Source: KHRG

[Ma Tin has done 45 days of forced labor on the Ye-Tavoy railway since last November's harvest.]

I have a slash-and-burn field. It is very small. We grow paddy and we get between 15 and 25 tins a year. We don't have to give any to SLORC. It is not enough to feed our family. We can only eat a few months with that. We have to buy rice from other people. It costs 60 kyats for one pyi [about 2 kg.] of rice. We have to work as day laborers in other people's gardens. I am also trading. I brought some dry fish, dried chilies and cooking oil to sell here. I will buy

and carry back 10 pyi of rice. The rice price is different between here and there. In Yah Pu, it is very difficult to get. We have to go and buy it in Ye. Here, we use the barter system.

I had to work on the railway in Nwe Lay for 45 days after the harvest. First time, 15 days. After 15 days, I could go home and rest for 15 days. But the next time, I worked for 30 days without stopping. Altogether 45 days. I didn't get any money. I had to work there for my family [as the one person demanded from each family]. Now I have finished the work on the railway for my family and I am crushing stones. For this job, I get money.

On the railway I had to dig holes to get earth. A work assignment is given to each village. We had to buy food ourselves. At night we slept in a labor camp, in a place like a barracks for the workers. We had a roof and walls. Fifty villagers had to sleep in one barrack and there were more than 10 barracks. It is near Nwe Lay. All of the villagers had to build the camp themselves. There were no soldiers there. Some of the headmen worked with us and were in charge. The headmen had to go together with the workers but they only watched them. They had to stay there all the time. One of the villagers was sick at the time and she was given medicine, but as soon as she returned home she died. I think that woman was about 30 years old and she had two children. There were men too. But if a woman has no husband, she has to go herself.

Yah Pu villagers have to crush stones and do the railway construction. Sometimes the army also orders porters, each time for 5 days. Whenever the soldiers go, the villagers have to follow them. My husband has to be a porter twice a year. He went to Kywetalin and Kyauk Taung, not so far. Four months ago he was a porter for 5 days, then they replaced him. They are still calling porters since the Mon cease-fire, and they will call us again for the railway construction.

Interview 32: HRV: Forced Labor, Women

Name:	Ma Nyi Nyi
Sex:	Female
Age:	32
Nationality:	Burmese, trader
Religion:	Muslim
Family:	Married, 3 children
Address:	Yah Pu village, Ye Township
Interviewed:	March 17, 1996

Source: KHRG

[Ma Nyi Nyi's husband does forced labor on the Ye-Tavoy railway and crushing stone for the Ye-Tavoy car road. As a trader, she comments on the growing number of SLORC posts which are making it harder to travel.]

I've just come from Yah Pu but my home village is Chaung Daw. I sold my house in Ye three years ago and moved to Yah Pu. Now I live in Yah Pu. I am usually trading with my husband. Now he is sick and that is why he couldn't come with me.

I only know a few things about the situation in Yah Pu because I am so busy with my business. There are about 500 soldiers there. We have to be "voluntary laborers". My husband had to work on the railway construction. The SLORC never gives food to the "voluntary laborers", so all the villagers have to take their own food and cook it themselves. They have to wake up early in the morning at about 4 a.m. and they come back in the evening at dusk. Some villagers got sick. Last year, so many people died of fever. Before he was sick, my husband had to go. All the villagers have to work, one person per family. He worked three times, each time for 15 days. Altogether 45 days. He worked at Nwe Lay, near Kyaun Sone. Nwe Lay is too far - we have to go by motorcar and we have to pay the transport ourselves. A return trip is 250 kyats. We had just finished Yah Pu's "voluntary labor" for one and a half months. The headman said that we'd already completed our work for this year. He signed for it, but then he called people again. At the time my husband was ill, so I had to hire another person for 2,500 kyats. One of the rocky mountains is very difficult to cut, even with dynamite. The villagers had to go and hit it with pickaxes. Then after they didn't order villagers for that anymore. I don't know exactly how the headman complained to the SLORC about it.

Now they don't order people anymore for the railway. They order the villagers to crush stones in small pieces for the car road. The road goes from Rangoon to Tavoy, passing through Ye. We get the rocks from anywhere. Wherever we can find rocks, we have to crush them and inform the SLORC. Then we have to carry them ourselves by truck to the car road, in order to widen the road. They have no machine to load the truck, so they use manpower, same as for crushing the stones. They pay 300 kyats for each kyin [10'x10'x1' of stones]. They lay a bamboo [cut to length] for measurement and the people have to pile the small stones there. We have to carry them ourselves by truck. This truck belongs to the villagers.

They have already started laying stones on the road from Yah Pu to Kywetalin.

We are responsible for the part between Kywetalin and Ma Hla Weh Taung. Other villages from Ye township worked at other places but that doesn't concern us. They called other villagers to work building the car road, not us, but the stones we have to crush are for the car road. Each family has to do two kyin, volumes of 10'x10'x1'. My husband is alone, that is why he can't finish in one day. He has to spend three days for each kyin.

They formed different groups. For example, 10 villagers have to be porters and 80 have to do "voluntary labor" and go to Tavoy. Now they can't do it anymore because it is too difficult. We always have to hire labor to do the "voluntary labor". My husband also had to be a porter because of the rotation system.

Last time when we came here we didn't meet any soldiers on the way. But yesterday on our way here a Captain called us to their camp between Yah Pu and Kwan Kyauk Dan and asked some questions like "Where are you going to?" I answered, "I am going to the refugee camp to sell things". He allowed us to go. I don't know what news they heard and why they have put an outpost here. I come here to sell cooking oil, coconut oil, onions, liquor and children's medicine and buy paddy to sell in Burma. I cannot say whether I will face problems coming back here next time.

Interview 33: HRV: Forced labor, Child

Name: Nai Tint Win
 Sex: Male
 Age: 44
 Nationality: Mon, daily wages
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, 6 children
 Address: Talaing Myaw village, Ye Pyu Township
 Interviewed: March 15, 1996
 Source: KHRG

[Nai Tint Win has done forced labor building an army camp on the pipeline route, and had to pay or send his son for other labor.]

I arrived this morning. I have no field for my family. I am working on other people's farms. We had to give money for the railway construction even if we had no money to eat in my family. Before I left my village I had to give 800 kyats. If I need to hire someone else to go instead, I have to pay more money:

2,000 or 5,000 kyats, for the railway and for porter fees. If we don't have money to hire someone else, we have to go ourselves. I had to work on the railway construction.

I was a porter once, at the beginning of the rainy season last year, but I always try to find money to hire someone else. After that, I didn't go but I had to give money. Before we left our village in the month of Na Daw [Nov. 22 - Dec. 20/95], they asked for porters again. I paid 700 kyats to the headman and then he hired someone else. They asked for porters once or twice a month, 2 or 3 villagers each time. There are at least 40 houses in our village. The army stay near our village but I don't know which battalion.

They are still calling people now for the railway to work between Ye Pyu and Kalein Aung. My son worked there 15 days in the month of Thadin Kyut [Sept. 24 - Oct. 22/95], before the harvest. After that, they called again but I moved out of my village. I went to stay in Kyauk Daw near Yah Pu for three months before I went back to Talaing Myaw. I went there to work in a paddy field. After my job was finished, the owner of the field gave me some paddy. Then I went back to my village and stayed there for one month. Then I left to come here as they were asking again for people to work on the railway. I didn't go myself but I always sent my son to work there. He went more than 10 times. I didn't hear that he had problems with the soldiers.

They didn't call people for car road labor but we had to go and build the army camp between On Bin Kwin and Kanbauk. I heard about the pipeline but I have never been there.

It took me 6 days to come here because we rested along the way, we had no problem. I feel better staying here, although everything depends on fate. I have to stay like other people - I can't predict the future. I am going to stay here. I won't go to Thailand. But it is too late now to clear the mountain to do slash-and-burn for this year.

Interview 34: HRV: Forced labor, Women, Gas Pipe

Name:	Nai Tin Aung
Sex:	Male
Age:	27
Nationality:	Mon, farmer
Religion:	Buddhist
Family:	Married, 2 children aged 3 and 7

Address: Mayan Chaung village, Ye Pyu Township
Interviewed: March 14, 1996

Name: Mi Sein
Sex: Female
Age: 36
Nationality: Mon, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 4 children and pregnant with a fifth
Address: Mayan Chaung village, Ye Pyu Township
Interviewed: March 14, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Nai Tin Aung and Mi Sein fled their village due to forced labor on the Ye-Tavoy railway, Ye-Tavoy road, as porters, and on gas pipeline infrastructure.

Nai Tin Aung: I arrived here [Mon area near the Thai border] one month ago. I came with all my family and it took us 3 days. We had to work on the railway and on the road. Every month, we have to pay so much money to SLORC. We are a poor family. We could not provide for ourselves any more. We had to come here. That is why we came here.

I was growing rice. With one basket of seed paddy, you can grow 100 baskets. Out of 100 baskets, you have to give 8 or 10 to SLORC and they pay nothing for these. The rest was not enough, because we had to sell some to get money to pay the taxes to SLORC. For porter fees, we had to pay 2,500 kyats for two months to hire other people. Because there are a lot of people in our village, our turn comes up less often [each family's turn to work or pay is once per 2 months instead of once per month as in most villages]. Every time SLORC come unexpectedly to our village, they even catch people. Whenever they come they ask for things like chickens, pigs, meat. If the people don't give or if anyone says something, they are beaten up. They come all the time. When a group arrives, they stay for three days. When one group leaves, another one arrives. The troops are from LIB 404, 410, 415. LIB 410 ask for the porter fees. I had to sell my rice to pay these. After all my rice was sold, I had no more provision for my family and we came here. I know I can get rice here. If you don't pay, they will beat you, arrest you and put you in jail. Sometimes they tell you that they will take you to the battalion [camp] or the worksite. If you can't pay anymore, you have to flee.

Sometimes they don't care who pays or doesn't pay porter fees, they just come and catch porters. SLORC came when they wanted and caught people. But if

it is by turn, the headman will go and collect people for SLORC. I had to go for 7 days. I had to go to Nat Ein Taung [the remote area at the Thai border where the pipeline is to cross - SLORC has been mounting offensives there to secure the pipeline route]. At the time, I was working around my house, making bamboo ropes. Three people were arrested with me. I couldn't give money. They didn't take money. There was some fighting in the area between SLORC and KNU [Karen National Union]. I was a porter 4 or 5 times. Sometimes I was a porter for 15 days. I had to carry bullets. The last time I was a porter, I ran away and came here. Then I went back to my village to call the whole family, and we came here. When I left, the army was around the village and I had to call my family to get out of the village.

I was beaten once, with a rifle butt in my waist because I couldn't carry the bullets. It was too heavy when I climbed the mountain. It was 2 or 3 years ago, during the rainy season, when I was a porter. I couldn't carry well and they beat me in my back with their gun.

I had to work on the Ye-Tavoy car road, between Mayan Chaung and Yah Pu. They are widening the old road. During the first week of February this year, I worked there for 4 days. After I finished the work on the car road, I had to be a porter and then I escaped. There are about 60 families in Mayan Chaung. One person from every family had to go for 4 days. Each village had a work assignment. When I finish, I can go home. If not finished, I can't go back home. People had to dig and place a volume of rocks of one kyin [10' x10' x 1']. Each two men had to do 5 arm lengths [15 feet] wide and one falong [220 yards] long [of embankment].

Mi Sein: We worked together on the railway in September. When he came back from the railway, he was a porter then he worked on the car road, then porter again.

Nai Tin Aung: From my family, only I myself went to the railway. It was near Kyaun Sone. We traveled one day in a passenger car and then we worked there for 15 days. The car costs 50 kyats. We didn't receive any food or any pay. I worked on the railway three times. September was the first time. Then the second time was in October, and the last time in November, everybody from the village went for 15 days. After the railway, they called people for the car road and for the helipad. The helipad is for SLORC at "52-Mile", near Mi Kyaun Laun.

Interview 35: HRV: Forced labor, Extortion, Gas Pipe

Name: Nai Kyaw
Sex: Male
Age: 50
Nationality: Mon, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 6 children aged 6-25
Address: Kywe Thone Nyi Ma village, Ye Pyu Township
Interviewed: March 15, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Nai Kyaw fled because he could no longer pay the extortion. His daughter also had to do railway labor, and he did pipeline and portering labor.]

I arrived here yesterday together with five families from Kywe Thone Nyi Ma. SLORC asked for porter fees and money for the road. We couldn't give any more. It took us 5 days to get here. Our group had no trouble coming but we heard from some traders that other people after us ran into troubles. SLORC stopped them on the way. They were traveling from Kywe Thone Nyi Ma to Yah Pu and then to Kin Chaung to come here. Three days ago, when they arrived at Kin Chaung, the SLORC stopped them. There were about 100 people. The SLORC don't want people to come to Pa Yaw, and sent them back. I also passed near Kin Chaung but I made my way around. In Kywe Thone Nyi Ma, there were about 500 families. I don't know how many left, but about 30 families already arrived here.

In our village, SLORC ask for porters but people are afraid to go so they have to give money. We have to pay 1,000 kyats regularly every month. Sometimes, we have to pay special porter fees in addition to that. It depends on the number of porters that they want. We have to give this money directly to the army. In Kywe Thone Nyi Ma there is an army camp for battalion #273. Some people have to go as porters if they don't have money, for one month, sometimes more. My family and I didn't go because I gave money.

I had a field of 3 acres. Sometimes we got 100 tins of paddy, sometimes 70 or 80. For the last harvest, I got 60. We had to sell 24 tins to SLORC for 90 kyats/tin when the market price is 370 kyats. I only grew rice. To get money to pay the fees to SLORC, I worked for other people cutting bamboo and trees. They paid me about 100 kyats per day. We had some gold and we sold it all. Now, we have no more gold and we can't pay any longer. We also sold our pots, our jars and all our belongings. I had to borrow money from other

villagers. So when I left, I sold my field to pay them back. Now, we have nothing left.

People from Kywe Thone Nyi Ma have to go to the railway too. I couldn't go, so my 25 year old daughter went last December. She worked for one month near Kyaun Sone digging the ground and carrying stones. She went by boat to Kanbauk, and from Kanbauk she walked. She had to pay 45 kyats for the boat. When the laborers arrived in Kyaun Sone, they were given an area to finish. If they didn't finish after one month they had to stay on until it was completed, but if they finished early they were given more work to make them stay for the whole month.

We had to do railway labor, labor to clear the pipeline route, clearing ground for pipeline buildings and portering. I know of the pipeline. They call for people to clear the road, cut the bamboo and trees and build things near the pipeline road. This construction work is to protect the pipeline. They are building buildings for the army, buildings for the soldiers to do the protection on the pipeline. For #408 battalion. Sometimes, my child went. But when they were sick and couldn't go, I had to pay 2,000 or 3,000 kyats. It depends on the number of people they need. The people usually worked there for one month. I had to clear the place to build a building.

Interview 36: HRV: Forced Labor, Gas Pipe, Porterage, Women, Prison Labor

Name: Nai Sein Hla
 Sex: Male
 Age: 42
 Nationality: Mon, farmer/sawyer
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, 6 children
 Address: Yah Pu village, Ye Pyu Township
 Interviewed: March 17, 1996
 Source: KHRG

[Nai Sein Hla has done forced labor on the gas pipeline infrastructure, the Ye-Tavoy railway, the Ye-Tavoy motor road, at army camps and as a porter.]

I left Yah Pu one month ago because I was really afraid to work on the railway construction. I am a slash-and-burn farmer and I have been working in a saw-mill for 8 years. Since the beginning of Taw Tha Lin month [Aug. 25/95], I've

worked on the railway near Kyaun Sone over a 3-month period. I worked for 15 days each month, altogether for 45 days. Prisoners, police and villagers were there but they were staying separately. The prisoners all had shackles. I saw them working. The soldiers used to come and check twice a day where we were working. There were 2 policemen and one soldier, and also a group of 5 prisoners and 3 soldiers. I saw their beatings and killings. When someone tried to escape, they shot him with a gun. They didn't give enough food to the prisoners, so how can they work? They didn't beat the villagers. If someone was sick, they never gave treatment but they allowed them to go home.

I also worked on the Ye-Tavoy car road. First I had to crush stones, then load and unload them from trucks. Then I had to carry and put the stones on the road, and the steamroller passed over them. Afterwards, I had to melt the tar and pour it on the road. My duty was finished by then. They only use manpower to crush and load stones and the steamroller is the only machine they use on the road. Now, SLORC is still working on that road. I had to work there since a long time ago, since my son was a child. He has a baby now. Now a bus is running. I also worked there after the SLORC took power. The last time was 4 years ago. Now this road is damaged and they called people again but I didn't go. They are widening the road to 50 feet.

I also worked building army buildings near the pipeline at On Bin Kwin and also in Ka Daik harbour. In On Bin Kwin, it is a new building for the army. I don't know for which battalion. I worked there in Taw Tha Lin month [Aug. 25 - Sept. 23/95]. I worked twice in Ka Daik and once in On Bin Kwin in Thadin Kyut month [Sept. 24 - Oct. 22/95]. Twice two days in Ka Daik and three times 5 days in On Bin Kwin. I had to cut trees and clear bushes for the road.

I had no time to work for myself. That's why I left my village. I had to do so much "loke ar pay work" [forced labor] for SLORC. Sometimes I had also to go as a porter and I had to weave bamboo and build walls for the soldiers' buildings. Just before I came here, I had to follow the soldiers as a porter for 5 days. I carried bullets from Yah Pu to Kin Chaung, and to Kywetalin. Also to Mayan Chaung.

Now, NMSP and SLORC have made a cease-fire for almost one year. I can't count how many times I have been a porter since then. When I was a porter in Nat Ein Taung and Kyauk Tha Yan, near Ma Yen, they took all the belongings of the villagers and raped the girls. At the time, I was with them [this is on the offensives to secure the eastern end of the pipeline route]. There was a battle between SLORC and revolution groups, probably MNLA, for 6 hours. This

happened about one year ago, before the cease-fire. The woman was from Ma Yen and after raping her, they released her.

Q: In Yah Pu, did SLORC ask for taxes?

A: Yes. Why Not? They always take money from the villagers. They didn't take the money directly themselves, they always ordered the money from the headman. 30 or 40 kyats per family for their eating and their drinking.

It is better to stay here. I lost 3 bulls this year. When I couldn't go to work on the railway construction, I had to hire someone and pay 2,500 kyats. Also I had to pay 3,000 kyats for porter fees. I had to sell my bulls to pay this money.

Interview 37: HRV: Livelihood, Extortion, Women, Gas Pipe

Name: Nai Tin Shein
Sex: Male
Age: 48
Nationality: Mon, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 5 daughters
Address: San Ngan Taw village, Ye Pyu Township
Interviewed: March 20, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Nai Tin Shein's village is near Kanbauk, which is right on the pipeline route. He had to sell his field so his daughters wouldn't have to go work on the pipeline supply road from Ka Daik, and says his girls are no longer safe in Kanbauk because of all the pipeline security troops.]

I arrived here about 10 days ago. I have a farm and a boat but my 5 children are all girls, no boys. When they ask for porters and workers for the railway, I am too old to go, so my daughters have to go instead of me and SLORC insulted them. I heard that and I worried for them because they could be raped. Also, before we can go out in our boat we have to give money, and when we come back we have to give money to SLORC again. We had to stop traveling with the boat. Our family decided together that we had to leave to another place. Now we feel safer here.

In our village, people have to work on the railway and on the car road. In February, my daughter had to go to work on the railway, from San Ngan Taw

to Kalein Aung. Two of my daughters had to go - one each time. For 15 days each. They had to dig the ground to make a new embankment. Also, in our village SLORC called everyday for 3 people to stay at their camp to carry water, clean the compound, bring firewood for them. For my family, it is very difficult because I have no man at home. When they call us, I have to send one of my daughters to stay with them. That is not good. I worry for them.

The “pipeline road” has two parts. One is from Hpaungdaw to Kanbawk, that is the pipeline road. At another part, near the sea [at Ka Daik], other laborers have to go from other villages but we have to pay money for that part too. The road goes from Ka Daik to Hpaungdaw [actually the road goes from Ka Daik to On Bin Kwin, where it joins the road going west to Hpaungdaw and south-east to Kanbawk], from Hpaungdaw to Kanbawk and from Kanbawk to Nat Ein Taung. It was too far to send my daughters to the Ka Daik road [for forced labor as ordered], so I had to hire another man to go. To get the money, I had to sell my field.

It is a big road. The pipeline will go from the sea to Kanbawk and from Kanbawk to Nat Ein Taung. I didn’t see but that is how they planned it. The road is near the pipeline, from Hpaungdaw to Ain Da Ya Za and it crosses Mi Kyaun Ain. They have not laid any pipes yet. People say that. The Germans at first gave compensation to the landowners like 100,000 kyats, but SLORC said that the value of the land was not that much. “In Burma, no need to pay compensation”, they said. That was from Hpaungdaw to Mi Kyaun Ain. From Hpaungdaw on, they started giving compensation then they stopped. The first group of people got high compensation because they had a lot of cashew nut trees. The Germans knew that cashew nut trees can be used for the fruit, the leaves, the nuts and to make oil. But later, SLORC talked to them and nobody got compensation. Before, some did. Not now.

Q: Who gave the compensation?

A: The German company.

Q: Which company?

A: I don’t know. We just call them “the Germans.” [This is almost certainly TOTAL, but someone in the area may have encountered a German - hence the name.]

Q: Who called the people to work on the road?

A: The SLORC. At first, when the Germans called people for work, they wanted to pay money. But SLORC said no. The Germans started the road construction, but at that time SLORC took over for security reasons. The Germans brought their own trucks and bulldozers. I think the Germans gave money for that but SLORC took it. SLORC doesn't want to pay. The SLORC said it is voluntary work.

Q: Do foreigners travel on that road?

A: Yes, they are traveling a lot. Each truck with foreigners is accompanied by three trucks of SLORC soldiers. Now in Kanbauk there are 8 battalions to give security to the Germans. Battalions 104, 408, 409, 410. KNU attacked them once.

Q: Have they build new army camps along the pipeline recently?

A: In Ka Daik, one camp. In Ka Daik harbour, ships come and big bulldozers to make the road come often. More bulldozers to make the road, more [forced labor] work for the villagers. They never get to stop working.

Q: Are there any benefits to your village because of the pipeline?

A: No benefit. Some people work for the company and earn 200 kyats per day. Only the people who work for the company can go into their area. The others can't go.

Q: Do people from your village get jobs at TOTAL headquarters?

A: No, they just want people they like. They only choose a few people who can read and write English.

Q: What changes has the pipeline brought to Kanbauk area?

A: The place has changed a lot compared to before. Now, there are a lot of soldiers in Kanbauk. Now, it is not safe for the girls. They can't go everywhere as before.

Q: Did you hear about a Karen attack on the pipeline in February?

A: Yes. The shelling was in On Bin Kwin - between Kanbauk and On Bin Kwin, but closer to On Bin Kwin. Now they [SLORC] have declared martial law in every village after the Karen attack. If there is fighting in a village, this

village will be destroyed and burnt down. Some village elders moved here [Mon area near the Thai border] because they were afraid. After the attack, two elders from Nat Kyin Pyan village were killed [east of Mi Kyaun Ain]. I only know about these two elders. SLORC said to them, “Why did KNU come and you didn’t inform us?” and they killed them. They said the two headmen fed the KNU troops before they shelled the pipeline.

Often, beside the railway line, near the forest, I heard mines exploding. KNU or SLORC mines, I don’t know. Part of the railway line built by the villagers was bombed by them [KNU]. Some people died, villagers who were working to build the railway line. Two villagers died. No SLORC soldiers were wounded. These two villagers were looking for food in the forest. The mines exploded and killed Ye them. That was two months ago, on the railway line southeast of Kanbauk, between Ye Phyu and Kalein Aung. So now the SLORC doesn’t allow people to sleep just anywhere, they have to sleep and stay together with the soldiers. And if KNU comes to attack them, they use the forced laborers as porters.

Now nobody can go in that area, nobody can go near the pipeline route except on the big road.

Interview 38: HRV: Forced Labor, Gas Pipeline

Name: Nai Kror
 Sex: Male
 Age: 43
 Nationality: Mon, farmer, village elder
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, 8 children aged 2-22
 Address: Kywe Gone village, Ye Pyu Township
 Interviewed: March 15, 1996
 Source: KHRG

[As village secretary, “Nai Kror” had to respond to SLORC orders demanding labor clearing the “pipeline road” near On Bin Kwin and building an army headquarters building in On Bin Kwin near the TOTAL camp. He also comments on SLORC’s retaliation for the February attack against the pipeline.]

I was the Secretary of the village Council for four years. I was chosen by SLORC. In Kywe Gone, there are 40 houses. My family left alone 5 days ago and we arrived yesterday with the families from Kywe Thone Nyi Ma. If I stay

in my village, I have to pay money for porter fees. Sometimes, I have no money to feed my family. Even though I am a village leader, I have to go and do “voluntary labor”. I have no time to work for my family. That is why I left.

When SLORC calls for people from our village, we have to send 10 people. They send a written order, on average about 5 times a month - sometimes once a week, sometimes twice a week. Sometimes once in two weeks. These orders call for voluntary laborers, porters. Also for money for sports competitions and railway construction. Sometimes we have to send food like chicken or fish for the army officers. The orders are sent from Kanbawk to Thet Chaung and from there to our village. They come from Ya Wa Ta [Village LORC, local-level SLORC administration] and also from the Army, but Ya Wa Ta and the Army are the same. Actually, all these letters come from the battalion. The messenger brings the letters to Ya Wa Ta. A soldier is sent to Ya Wa Ta to write the orders for them. They are from #273 battalion in Kanbawk and from #408 battalion in Kanbawk. #408 is there for road security.

For the pipeline they don't demand money, they demand people. One village has the responsibility for one building. Now we have just finished and it is the turn of another village. All the villagers from Kanbawk village group, like Thet Chaung, Tha Put Chaung, Tha Ngan Thote, Kin Tha, Talai Kyon, Mone Tha, and other villages, all had to go and work on that building. It is a building for the army in On Bin Kwin [where TOTAL's base camp is located]. These buildings are new ones. SLORC is building new army places in On Bin Kwin, Thet Chaung, Hpaungdaw, Min Saing, Maung Ngan, Lay Myaw, and so on. They started in the month of Thadin Kyut [Sept. 24 -Oct. 22/95]. We had to send 4 people three or four times a month for one week.

We have to do things according to their orders, between On Bin Kwin and Mi Kyaun Ain. It is along an existing road. The other pipeline road is between Pyin Gyi, Mi Kyaun Ain and Sat Kone.

They haven't started the pipeline [i.e. actually laying the pipe] yet, but the army officers ordered us to do “voluntary labor” on the pipeline project in On Bin Kwin. Some other villagers also told me about that, that they had to work on the pipeline. All the villagers in my village have been there. I had to send two people for one week, or sometimes 7 people. We had to clear the bushes between On Bin Kwin and Mi Kyaun Ain. When the work is completed, the villagers can go home. They have to stay one week or more on the pipeline road. There is no pay. SLORC only gave money to some people, those who are permanent workers. We saw some foreigners. They were just walking around that place, and they took pictures in order to get the news. When we

were working, they took pictures of us. They always came with guards.

Q: Did you hear about an attack on the pipeline?

A: I don't know exactly but some people told me about that. It was near Ka Daik, on the 14th day of Da Bo Dweh month [February 2, 1996].

Q: What happened there? Were some people wounded or not?

A: No.

Q: What was the reaction of SLORC?

A: They didn't respond. Karen shelled 4 times but only one shell exploded. Nobody was hurt. Afterwards, SLORC captured Karen villagers from Ain Da Ya Za. They killed 7 villagers and they increased their troops near On Bin Kwin.

Q: Did the shell explode near TOTAL?

A: Yes, near there.

Most of our villagers in Kywe Gone are farmers. SLORC demanded 10 tins [of paddy] per acre this year, in 1996. In 1995, the farmers who had their own paddy field had to give 10 tins for the year and those who had a government paddy field had to give 8 tins to SLORC. This year, it is the reverse. This year, there was a problem with the irrigation system. The paddy fields were flooded and the harvest was not good. SLORC didn't increase the quota.

I had no chance to do my own work as long as I stayed there. When SLORC called the villagers to work I had to go with them, because I was more responsible than the villagers. I was in charge. If I didn't want to go and work there, I also had to give money. I have so many children. I could not go every time. If I stayed in my house, they could come and call me to do something. As long as I stay in my village, I would have to stay with them [SLORC]. I was really upset about that situation, so I left.

Interview 39: HRV: Forced Labor, Gas Pipe, Extortion, Women

Name: Mi Aye
Sex: Female
Age: 34
Nationality: Mon, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 7 children aged 2-16
Address: Maw Kyi village, Ye Pyu Township
Interviewed: March 14, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Mi Aye's village is near Kywe Thone Nyi Ma, just north of the western half of the pipeline route. While doing forced labor on the railway near Kyaun Sone, she witnessed a car of "French people" stop to take a 15 year old girl who had been gang-raped by soldiers to hospital, but the girl died.]

Before we had a field, but one month ago we had to sell it to pay all the taxes to SLORC. Now, we have no field anymore. So I arrived here one week ago with my family. It took us 3 days to come here. We feel safer here. They were asking for porter fees twice a month. Each time 2,400 kyats, to get another person to go instead of us. If we don't go, we must give this money to the headman. The army orders the headman and he asks the villagers. If he doesn't give, they will beat him.

I didn't go and I paid. SLORC don't need people to go as porters, they only want the money. When we had no more money, my husband was not well but he told the SLORC that we could not pay so he would go as a porter. "We have no money to pay. I am sick but I will go even if I have to die", he told them. And they beat him up. They slapped him hard. They called him to the army camp. He was there for 3 days. They slapped him twice on his ear and now he can't hear from his right ear anymore. His face was swollen too. They also hit his ribs and his feet once, and he became unconscious. They wanted to kick him down into the river which is near the army camp but the headman went and requested the soldiers not to push him. "He is really a poor man. He has no money to pay", he said. The village headman had to vouch for him. He brought money to the camp and my husband was released. Another man was also beaten with a gun butt.

They also called villagers to do forced labor on the railway between Kalein Aung and Kyaun Sone. Even if the villagers go, they have to pay 400 kyats. If they don't go, they have to pay 2,400 kyats. Go or not go, we have to pay. The

400 kyats are for the army. I had to pay this at home while my husband was working on the railway. We have been working there many times. Twice in a month. I have been there three times but my husband countless times!

When my husband came back after 15 days, I had to go. It was by turn. If some families have more people, they all have to go. My village has the worst conditions in Ye Township area. In my family, 4 of us went separately, each time for 15 days: my husband, myself and my two sons aged 16 and 15. When I have to go, my old parents are looking after the children. I worked there last month, in February. After we came back from the railway, they called my husband to be a porter. He was sick and they slapped him. Then we came here.

There were many soldiers on the railway. They were not working, but if you are not able to work they will beat you. It was hard work to dig very deep and carry the earth. I had to do that. They didn't give us any food. We slept under a shelter that we built ourselves. Sometimes when it was raining, we couldn't even eat rice. More than one hundred people were there. For the people who left [fled] the village, SLORC said that they will try to get them back. About 60 people from four villages wanted to come to Pa Yaw [refugee camp]. SLORC said: "If we meet you on the car road, we will rape the women and kill them." So when we villagers crossed the road without problem, we were very happy.

[At the railway worksite] They point their guns at women and rape them. The next day, they let them go. I saw many women that the soldiers took away. When they see a beautiful girl, they call her and rape her. They raped many women but one of the girls died. She was 15 years old. She was raped so many times and she died. Her name was Mi Thein, she was from Kywe Thone Nyi Ma. It was in February when I was on the railway. I didn't see the soldiers taking her but the next day, I saw that she was taken to hospital with a French car. The French people from the car felt great pity for the young girl. She was unconscious. They tried to take her to Tavoy hospital but she died on the way. Many girls were raped but didn't die. Only this one died.

We also had to carry for the army, and when they come to our village they take our chickens, pigs, cows and they do as they want. We usually harvest 160 tins of paddy and we have to give 28 tins. They don't pay anything for this paddy, and we had to carry it ourselves to the army in Kywe Thone Nyi Ma.

Interview 40: HRV: Forced labor, Women, Child, Religious Persecution

Name: Maung Win
Sex: Male
Age: 35
Nationality: Burmese, daily wages
Religion: Muslim
Family: Single
Address: Pata village, Hlaing Bwe Township, Pa'an District

Name: Daw Hla
Sex: Male
Age: 33
Nationality: Burmese, daily wages
Religion: Muslim
Family: Widow, 6 children
Address: Pata village, Hlaing Bwe Township, Pa'an District

[These two newly arrived refugees were interviewed together on 6 April, 1996 by the Hsaw Wah Deh human rights monitoring group.]

Our village has Karen, Burmese and Muslims living together. Now there are about 200 families living there. Last year about 100 Muslim families lived there, but now there are only 50. About 50 families fled to refugee camps because of hardship and oppression of the Muslim community.

We had to work on the Nabu - Daw Lan road, which is about 7 miles long and wide enough to drive two cars parallel. Every day each family had to dig an area of earth totalling 4 feet by 12 feet by 12 feet deep, then move the earth to the road site. Now [in hot season] it is very hot, so it was very tiring work. If we couldn't go, we had to hire a person by giving 200 kyats per day. Porter fees are 100 kyats per family every month. Moreover, SLORC soldiers take porters to carry supplies every month, and if a person can't go for that he has to hire another person for 200 kyats per day. Villagers are always forced to work for SLORC and DKBA and also have to give them at least 1,000 kyats per month in total.

We had to support DKBA members' families by giving rice and money, and by building houses for their families. We were also called by LIB 547 [SLORC Light Infantry Battalion] to cut bamboo, clear their compound and build barracks for them. There, we were beaten often. If a villager resists, he or she is

beaten and fined 3,000 kyats for this behaviour. The work orders come from LIB 547 at Taung Zun camp, and from Captain Meh Bya of DKBA. For road construction and building barracks for LIB 547, everybody has to go, men and women, young and old. About half of the workers are women and children. Even the widows have to pay for their funds and fees, except porter fees. Not only in Pata village - other villages are also suffering the same, so many villagers have fled to refugee camps.

Interview 41: HRV: Forced labor, Women, Killing

Name: Saw Hla Say
Sex: Male
Age: 25
Nationality: Karen, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 2 children
Address: Kawpalan village, Kawkareik Township, Pa'an Dist.
Interviewed: April 1996
Source: KHRG

I left my village during Water Festival [mid-April] and reached this [refugee] camp on 20 April. Since January this year, my village has had to work on many road construction projects without a rest. First the Nabu - Myatpadine road, then the Daw Lan - Nabu road, then other construction projects. Now it is very hot, and villagers have already been working on road construction for about 4 months, so everyone is talking about going to Thailand. We heard that there are many more construction projects that we will have to do soon. We have to dig the earth and carry it to the embankment to build the roads. Men usually dig the earth and the women carry it. There is no machinery. There are no stones covering the roads and some parts are just made of sand, so when it rains these roads will collapse. There were some accidents while we were working. In March at the Kyone Pine worksite on the Tu Kaw Koh - Nabu road, a hoe accidentally broke and the blade hit a girl in the neck while she was scooping up the earth. She died on the spot. The boy who caused the accident was in shock - he ran back to his village and committed suicide by drinking insecticide. In the first week of April, also at Kyone Pine, a man about 40 years old died when he was working [probably from heart attack]. The weather is too hot for this work. There are many children at the worksite too.

If a person cannot go for the work, he or she has to hire someone to go by paying them 150 kyats per day plus rice and fishpaste. SLORC and DKBA

soldiers control the construction. They say the roads are just for us to travel on, but I don't know about that. These roads are not strong enough to last the rainy season, so everyone is planning to leave the village [because they know they'll be forced to build the roads over again next season]. Some flee to Tha Menya monastery, but I heard that many from Tha Menya are leaving for Thailand also. I do not know why.

Interview 42: HRV: Forced Labor, Livelihood

Name: Saw Tha Pwee
Sex: Male
Age: 33
Nationality: Karen, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 2 children
Address: xxxx village, T'Nay Cha tract, Pa'an Township
Interviewed: April 4, 1996
Source: KHRG

I went home in T'boh Tweh month [about September 1995], to visit my parents. I saw that the Burmese are forcing people to labor, such as hauling timber. I stayed for 2 months. We had to work for the Burmese, road work, hauling timber. When they demand something to be done, so must it be done. They demand it all the time. Road works, hauling timber, everything. Children as young as 13, everybody, by rotation. For example, if a village has 60 houses, they go and register with the Burmese as having 30 houses [they give false information], and then they must send 30 people for 3 or 4 days at a time, and when they return another 30 people must go again, rotating like that, always. Each village gets a designated length of road. For example, a village of 50 houses gets given a length for 50 people, and a village of 100 houses is also given a length as registered. If your people are too few for your length and you don't finish you cannot go back home [until it's done].

The road is about 3 kilometres from our village. It is 2 cars wide. It's not done yet, but should soon be finished. Cars can go from Nabu to Kawkareik. Our village has 30 houses. We had to build 1 kilometre, 10 feet wide, elevation less than the head height of some people. 15 or 20 people had to go from the village. We have to walk there, have to take our own tools, machetes, and our own food. They [soldiers] don't feed us and don't eat amongst us. They watch over, with some guns. In the hot season the workers can work at their own pace, because we must do the work until it is finished. So some people come

very early, pre-dawn, work until it becomes hot, and then they rest. The work is not finished in T'Nay Cha District, and also there's a bridge to be made. The villagers are making it, from timber. Now they are also putting earth and grasses along the middle of the road in order to make it stronger.

Most of the people are farmers. If two people are in one house, one goes [to the road] and the other works [growing food]. People also have to cut timber and take it near T'lah Aw Kla, about half a mile from our village, or to T'Nay Cha, and some to Ku Lah Kaun. They have to go until the ordered timber is cut. I myself didn't do this. With the wood the Burmese are constructing some houses, and constructing a bridge on the car road that can be used if the water rises. They started cutting timber at the start of the cold season [November-December]. They get carts from the villages. For example, if there are 20 carts, 10 carts must go on rotation. Really, how long before this timber hauling will cease, I have no idea! Before, there were a great number of trees, now they have become scarce. When the Karen soldiers [KNU] stayed there before they didn't like people to cut the trees. [It was a KNU forest preserve.]

They [soldiers] never come for labor, it is the responsibility of the village elders to get people. It is said that if you are not free to go you must send another person in your place, and give a wage. The wage costs 50-100 kyats per day.

Ko Per Baw stay at Ku Lah Kaun, 3 kilometers away. They don't force people to construct roads, but they do force us to haul timber. There are 30-40 of them in the area. We must work for them in the same way as we do for the Burmese. Now they are working very hard at sawmilling timber at T'lah Aw Kla. The wood is T'la Aw, there is no teak. They get carts from Bat Dat and other villages like K'Nee Bu, Kyeh Baw, and Lah L'Maw. We have to saw the timber, and for example, if they require us, we must construct houses for them. We must do that. If they require us to construct a camp, we must do that. They've established a battalion there. Before Indian-Burmese [Muslims] were staying there, but now there are no longer Indians there. I don't know where they might be now. Only Ko Per Baw, their wives and children stay there now. Their leader is Meh Bya. The Burmese are at T'Nay Cha, about 20-30 together with wives and children. Before that was an Indian [Muslim] village, but the Indians' houses were destroyed in order to make the new road.

Q: Can people get permission from the Burmese to go to Thailand?

A: No. Not the Burmese. Not Ko Per Baw. They don't really like it. For example, when there are full moon celebrations you could say you are taking a car to Kawkaareik to participate in the religious activities. You must use your

brain like this. If you tell them where you are really going, they won't like it. I said I was going to Tee Sah Ra. At xxxx I said I was coming to visit my uncle and aunt. I also said like this to Ko Per Baw on the riverbank at xxxx. I saw Burmese at xxxx and had to give them 100 kyats and again at the river bank at xxxx I had to give 50.

Interview 43: HRV: Forced Labor

Name: Naw Lay Htoo
Sex: Female
Age: 16
Nationality: Karen
Religion: Buddhist

Name: Naw K'Paw
Sex: Female
Age: 21
Nationality: Karen
Religion: Buddhist
Address: Ko Lone Sein village, Pa'an Township
Interviewed: April 29, 1996
Source: KHRG

Naw K'Paw: We arrived here [the refugee camp] three days ago. We were very tired of working at new road construction, that's why we left our village. One person from each family has to work on road construction. Anyone who can't go has to hire another person by giving 100 kyats per day. The work site is near Shwe Taw, close to our village. That construction started in November 1995 and has not finished yet. We heard that this is part of the "Union Road" and they plan to finish it within 3 years. The road starts from Pa'an and goes to Shwe Taw, Kaw Palaung, Maw Maw Ler, Bena Ay Per Ko, and then will go to Three Pagodas Pass. The height of the road is about 10 feet and it is wide enough to drive 2 cars parallel. Some ricefields were destroyed for the road, and at that time farmers had not finished their harvest so they lost some crops.

We have to start work at 8 a.m. and work until noon. Then we start again at 1 p.m. and work until 3 p.m. Then we go back home. People whose villages are far from the road have to sleep there. We have to form groups of 3 people each, and each group has to finish a piece of road 6 yards long. Children about 10 years old and people over 60 years old have to work with us. There are some bulldozers and loaders, but they only work if villagers give money. There

is no clinic. A young man named A'Pway from Ko Lone Sein village got fever, but he continued to work and later he died.

Ko Per Baw soldiers supervise the villagers at work. They scold the villagers who try to rest. The Ko Per Baw soldiers always stay in a group, about 10 of them on the road. They all call themselves 'officers', none of them are Privates.

Interview 44: HRV: Forced Labor, Killing

Name: Saw Eh Say
Sex: Male
Age: 20
Nationality: Karen, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Single
Address: Myatpadine village, Kawkareik Township
Interviewed: April 29, 1996
Source: KHRG

I arrived here [the refugee camp] on April 27. Now on the Nabu-Myatpadine road they have finished the earth work. Now we have to lay the road with damaged bricks. The road is about 10 feet high, and wide enough for two trucks to drive aside. SLORC trucks bring damaged bricks from the brick kilns to the road site. Then villagers have to arrange the bricks on the road. There are about 500 people there from Myatpadine village tract, which includes 5 villages. We have to work for about 15 days. We start work early in the morning and work until noon, then we rest for about 2 hours. It is very hot. Then we continue to work from 2 p.m., sometimes until 9 p.m. if the moon is shining.

There are soldiers watching along the road, and they scold people when people rest. Sometimes the young soldiers let the villagers rest for a while. There are some Burmese who give orders to us through the village heads. Children about 11 years old and old people with no teeth have to work there. In March 1996 an old man 60 or 70 years old who had already worked there nearly a month died of exhaustion at the road. He was from Naung K'Loung village. His body was taken to his village. A week later, a Sergeant shot his Lieutenant at the Naung K'Loung worksite. The Sergeant let the villagers rest, so the Lieutenant scold him and then the Sergeant killed him with a gun. I don't know what happened later to that Sergeant.

I always have to do the road construction, and my father also does forced labor for them. He is called to grow rice, then reap the harvest, and then to carry the harvested paddy to the Army compound. Now he also has to carry wood for the bridges along the road in his cart.

Interview 45: HRV: Forced labor, Child

Name: Naw Myint
Sex: Female
Age: 20
Nationality: Karen, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married
Address: Noh Play village, Pa'an Township
Interviewed: April 30, 1996
Source: KHRG

I came [to the refugee camp] 2 days ago, together with 4 girls from Naw Wah Pone village. Noh Play village has about 300 families and Naw Wah Pone village has over 500 families. Our village was called by SLORC and DKBA soldiers to cut down and carry trees and bamboo, so the villagers had to go about 15 miles with our carts to cut trees. Each log had to be 15 plah [22 feet] long. Then we had to carry them to two Army camps. I don't know the Battalion number, they are from Pa'an. Then we had to build camps and barracks for SLORC soldiers and their families.

Since March 1996, Noh Play and surrounding villages have received orders to work on road construction at Kaw Tho village. The villagers took food, supplies and tools with them and went to Kaw Tho. They had to work and stay there for 15 days. The road starts from Pa'an and goes to Shwe Bo, Kaw Palaung, Mu Ka Wah, Kaw Tho, Meh Tha Laung and on towards Three Pagodas Pass. The height is about double a person's height, and the width is about 30 feet. Children about 11 or 12 and also people in their 50's have to work there. If people get sick the soldiers allow them to go home, but there is no clinic. Some villagers hired people from Pa'an to go for road construction work by paying them 1,000 to 2,000 kyats. There are about 100 soldiers along the road to watch the villagers. The soldiers are from Shwe Pyi Taung camp, and they often scold the villagers.

Interview 46: HRV: Forced Labor, Torture, Killing

Name: Tha Muh
Sex: Male
Age: 19
Nationality: Karen, farmer
Religion: Christian
Family: Widower
Address: Bee T’Ka village, Kawkareik Township
Interviewed: April 1996
Source: KHRG

I left because the Ko Per Baw and Burmese troops make so many problems and fees in our village. They do to you as they like - even though you aren’t guilty of anything they can make up things, say you have weapons and torture you. They do it for money. If they beat you, they will ask you only a few questions about your weapons and then they’ll surely start asking for money to release you. Mostly they do it to people who have some money or animals with them. If people don’t have money to pay then they have to give half of their animals. If you try to complain then they say, “I’ll kill you without a single drop of your blood coming out”. [A Karen expression meaning to kill someone especially brutally and painfully.] They did that to a Pa’O man whose village is not far from mine. His name was Maung Khin Kyi. He was 49, with 3 children - 2 sons and 1 daughter. His son told us about it. He owed some money to a Karen, and the Karen asked for rice instead of money. Maung Khin Kyi agreed, and when he was coming along to the Karen village with the rice in his bullock cart, unluckily he met with Ko Per Baw and Burmese troops. They said to him, “We know you’re taking this rice to KNU soldiers. We are very sorry we have to kill you, but don’t you know we have to kill all Ta Bee Met [“Closed Eyes”, DKBA’s name for KNU] and everyone who helps Ta Bee Met?” They killed Maung Khin Kyi by stabbing him in the throat 3 times, but first they burned him with fire. His son xxxx was with him in the bullock cart. They didn’t kill his son, I guess they didn’t want to. If they’d wanted to kill his son, his son would also be dead. That happened on March 14th.

These Burmese troops and the Ko Per Baw, if they want your ear to eat with their whisky then you have to chop off your ear and give it to them, or you’ll be killed. They say, “The ear is very delicious to eat, when you chew it it goes ‘kyet-kyet-kyet’ and it is very pleasing”. They did that to Tee Paw Bu Say, he is 47 and already married 16 years but he has no children. The Ko Per Baw and the Burmese ordered him to get them a chicken to eat with their whisky, but he couldn’t find a chicken. When he got back to them, they said, “Where is the

chicken?" He said, "I couldn't find any". The SLORC were drunk, they said "Come here", and then they chopped off his ears. There was so much blood. He asked the Ko Per Baw to release him to go and get treatment, but he had to stay with them the whole night with no treatment. He nearly died because he bled so much. Early in the morning he was very angry, and he said, "I'm going to get traditional medicine even if you don't release me. If you kill me, I dare to die." But the Ko Per Baw didn't do anything, and he went to Kyet Tu Ray village and got traditional medicine. The old man gave him a cup of water to drink, and then the bleeding stopped. Ko Per Baw said they would give him an injection, but he was afraid to have an injection. Most Karen people still believe in our traditional medicine and are afraid to have injections or to drink medicine.

We also have to go as porters and carry food, bullets and weapons, about 10 viss [16 kg.] weight. Not the women and children, but they have to go for forced labor at the military camp. At the camp they have to gather bamboo to build the soldiers' fences and houses, carry water, cook and clean in the camp - but the main work there is building fences, digging trenches and building bunkers. Fifteen people have to go for 3 days and nights, then it changes to another group. They sleep at the military camp. Sometimes the soldiers sleep with them. They are afraid and dare not speak, and if they shout the soldiers will kill them. The Ko Per Baw do it too, so the Burmese have no respect for Karen girls, they copy the Ko Per Baw and do it even more. To them Karen girls are just a meal, and to Ko Per Baw they are just leftover rice. [In a Karen kitchen the leftover rice sits in a pot to be taken anytime by whoever's hungry.] Some of the Ko Per Baw soldiers travel around and get married with girls in different villages. If any villagers complain, the Ko Per Baw soldier goes to them and says, "If you complain again we'll kill you", and they have to stay quiet. Kyaw K'Htee, he is 28 and he already has 2 wives and 2 children. He is from Tawon Thee village, west of Bee T'Ka. Now he's left his new wife and gone back to his old wife. His new wife also has one child by him. She named the child "Saw Ko Per Baw", because she got the child from Ko Per Baw. She keeps it to remember her hate for Ko Per Baw.

In January [1996] Ko Per Baw arrested me. About 100 soldiers tied me up and ordered me to direct the way to where the Kaw Thoo Lei soldiers stay, and they asked me for a gun. I have no gun, I'm a civilian. It was a group from Khaw Taw [DKBA headquarters]. They took me to Meh Tah Ma village and tied my eyes tightly with a yellow scarf. They kept me under a house, tied to a post. They beat me 4 times, about 20 hits each time. They pierced my earlobes with a blunt pin, twice a day for 3 days. It was very painful. One of their leaders, Kyaw Dee, told me, "You have to give me your weapon, or you'll be killed". I

was afraid and I told him, “Don’t kill me. I’ll give you my cow”, and he agreed. They do that to so many people. First they ask for weapons, then if you don’t have any they ask for money to release you, and if you don’t have money then you must pay them your livestock. After 3 days I had to carry for them, then after 1 week and 4 days they handed me over to the Burmese troops. I was released exactly 2 weeks after I was arrested, on a Friday. After that I couldn’t work for several days because of the beatings.

When I was arrested, my wife was in the hospital. She was sick, and then after the Ko Per Baw arrested me she died. I don’t know how she died. I was being held by the Ko Per Baw, and no one told me the news. I don’t think I’ll marry again. We were married only two months.

Interview 47: HRV: Livelihood, Torture,

Name: Saw Wah Lay
 Sex: Male
 Age: 27
 Nationality: Karen, farmer
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, 1 child aged 4
 Address: Tee Per village, Hlaing Bwe Township
 Interviewed: April 1996
 Source: KHRG

I left because Ko Per Baw and the Burmese burned my house and my rice barn. They said, “You have a lot of rice, you will give it to Kaw Thoo Lei”. Once when Kaw Thoo Lei soldiers came to our village, I was kind to them and gave them some rice, so they heard about it and they came to my house and burned it. They took all my animals - 20 buffalos and 50 cows. That was at the end of March [1996]. About 20 of them came. People said his name is Kyaw Tha Da, from Bee T’Ka village. I wasn’t home, but my wife and mother-in-law were there. They slapped my wife’s face and kicked her with jungle boots, and they put my mother-in-law’s head in water for 2 or 3 minutes. She nearly died. They are a really bad group of Ko Per Baw. Now I heard that Kyaw Tha Da and Kyaw Nu Poh [Kyaw Tha Da’s brother, also notorious] lost their rank, because all their walkie-talkies and handcuffs were captured by KNU during an attack at Bee T’Ka. Pa Nwee [a senior DKBA commander who is less hard on the villagers] took away their rank, and now they are trying to get it back. Maybe that’s why they burned my house. These two brothers are very hard on the villagers. People say their parents were dogs, that they are dog children. I

think they won't quit, because if they stay at home without their weapons people will probably kill them.

We have no contact with KNU, but even so if we stay in the village, though we are born with mouths of our own we dare not speak. If we speak about Ko Per Baw we must only say good things, and if we speak about KNU the Ko Per Baw come and torture us. That's why I don't want to stay in my village anymore. There are plenty of Ko Per Baw informers in the villages. If someone leaves the village, the Ko Per Baw take his land and belongings and give them to their informers. So some of the informers plan ways to push people out of the village to Thailand. Maybe that's what they did to me. I'm not sure, because I haven't heard anything since then. When I left for Thailand, it took me 1 week because I had to avoid the Ko Per Baw. I had to hide 2 nights in the forest.

My friends go as porters, but I always hired someone to go for me. It cost 1,000 kyats each time, twice a month. The people who go have to carry weapons and food from village to village, and when they come back I've seen that there is no skin on their shoulders. Sometimes they beat them until the porter dies and then leave them there. Saw Pa Deh from Kyet Tu Ray village was sick and couldn't carry, so the Ko Per Baw beat him on his head and he died very easily. They hit him only 3 times. They beat the other people more than that, but they didn't die. Saw Pa Deh was about 35 and had no family. The headman didn't dare ask for compensation - when someone dies there is no compensation, moreover the Ko Per Baw usually ask money from the headman or the family, saying, "This person showed disrespect to us and didn't do a good job, so we killed him".

Interview 48: HRV: Arrest, Torture, Detention, Livelihood

Name: Pa Ler
Sex: Male
Age: 57
Nationality: Karen, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, children
Address: xxxx village, Pa'an District
Interviewed: April, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Pa Ler used to be head of the Karen village militia (KNDO) in his village

several years ago.]

Now I have been in Thailand 10 days, because I cannot stay there. With Ko Per Baw always trying to arrest me, I dare not stay there so I have to come here. Ko Per Baw asked me to work with them but I wasn't interested in their group. They told me to go to Myaing Gyi Ngu to drink vow water. The order came from Maung Cho, he is Ko Per Baw in Toh Kaw Ko village. I didn't go there and I avoided them, so they got very angry with me and sent me a letter in red ink. It said, "If you avoid going, we'll take serious action against you". They forced every headman to go and drink the vow water. When the headmen came back from Myaing Gyi Ngu I asked them, "Do I have to worry about it?" They said, "Don't worry about it", so I didn't take care. I thought it would be no problem. Then after one month they came and arrested me. It was in the month of the solar eclipse [October 1995].

I was alone in my field hut. I'm not sure how many of them arrested me, because it was dark. It was Burmese troops together with just 2 to 5 Ko Per Baw who showed them the way - the Ko Per Baw were Bo Sat Lat ['Officer Machine-Gun'], Kwih Lay, and Ta Muh Heh. They searched my bag and took 21,500 kyats, 2 rings, 1 stone, and my Seiko watch. After they searched my body they tied up my hands, took me to the village and handed me over to another group. They pulled me under a house and started to torture me. They kicked, punched, and poked my temple with a gun barrel. They asked me, "Where do you keep your walkie-talkie, your AR [a small version of an M16 assault rifle] and pistol?" I told them I had these things before, but I don't have them anymore. I'm not doing anything for KNU anymore so I don't have them. They asked me again for a long weapon [rifle] and told me to stop helping the Revolution. But I don't have a weapon. Then they beat me until they got tired, and they stopped.

They tied my hands to a beam [above his head] and my legs to the house post. Only my legs and my butt could touch the ground, but just barely - my body was hanging like a hammock. Then they hit my face, punched my head, kicked my back, then kicked me in the ribs and the chest and hit me in the nose with a gun. They hung me up and burned my stomach and my hands with fire. They took firewood that was really burning and put it on my stomach - until now I still have black and green marks on my stomach. When he put the firewood on my hand I pushed him, and he came back and kicked me. They asked about my weapons and walkie-talkie. I told them I've been retired 5 or 6 years already.

They kept me tied like that for one night, then they untied only my legs and

pulled me like a bull on a rope to Kaw Toh village. I asked them for a cigarette but they didn't give me one. When we arrived in Kaw Toh village I was handed over to another group. That group put me in a cattle corral, and the Burmese came and tortured me again. They kicked my head, rolled my shins with a piece of bamboo and burned me for a while. Then they asked me, "Have you eaten yet?" I said "No", and they gave me a plate of rice. After eating they moved me to Tee Klay village. They pulled me on the rope, and then to Ler Pu and Noh Baw Heh villages. At Noh Baw Heh they just tied me tightly to the post of a rice barn, and under the rice barn was all cowshit. They tied me by my legs, hands, and neck, and they kept me tied there. Altogether I was tied for 6 days. They tortured me again. They punched my face, my nose, they stabbed my hand with a knife - there's a hole right through my hand from the knife. They stabbed all over my body - the knife was blunt, and I could hear it go "kru-kru-kru" [as it cut his flesh]. My hand was really bleeding, my longyi [sarong] was dirty with my blood and I hadn't had a bath for 6 days. They did feed me though, twice a day, rice with fishpaste and chillies, or sometimes curry.

After that, my son's mother [his wife] came with the villagers to vouch for me. They took me to the Major, and he told me I would be released. He handed me over to Ko Per Baw officer Maung Cho, who took me to his house. He untied me, and I took a bath and ate. My wife gave him 70,000 kyats - that doesn't include the 21,500 kyats they'd already taken from my bag. That 70,000 was just to release me. My wife borrowed it from other people, then later we sold all our things to pay it back. The Ko Per Baw demanded that money. They got a gun and said it was my weapon. I heard it was an AR. It was like I had to pay them for this weapon. Then they gave that gun to the Burmese troops. That was at Noh Baw Heh - they didn't tie me, but it was like I was under 'house arrest' while some of my wounds healed. A Ko Per Baw Sergeant looked after me, he gave me medicine two times. Then a soldier took me to Kawkareik. There Bo xxxx said he had to go with an officer to Thingan Nyi Naung and told me to wait for him for 2 days, then he would take me for the vow water. I waited for 2 days, 3 days, and they hadn't come back. After 6 days I ran away into the jungle. Altogether they had held me for about 1 month. After I ran I didn't dare stay at home, I stayed in the forest for a month. In that one month they took my bullock cart, 11 buffalos and 20 baskets of paddy from my house. They said my children had helped me run away, and they fined them 10,000 kyats and tortured them. The Ko Per Baw said my nephew's mother was hiding my cattle and buffalos and fined her 7,000 kyats. Bo Sat Lat and Maung Nyunt Kyi did that. So I can't stay there anymore, and I had to come here.

Interview 49: HRV: Arrest, Torture, Detention

Name: Naw Ghay Muh
Sex: Female
Age: 47
Nationality: Karen, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, children
Address: xxxx village, Pa'an District
Interviewed: April 1996
Source: KHRG

[Naw Ghay Muh is the wife of Pa Ler (see interview above).]

It was 7:30 at night when they arrested my husband. I was not with him. It was mainly Burmese troops who came, with Ko Per Baw only to guide the way. The same night my children told me, "Our father was taken away by some people". They didn't know who had taken him, but when I got halfway to our field hut people told me he was arrested by the Burmese. I followed right away to the Ko Per Baw base, and they told me to find his weapon. I told them, "I can't find it. I have no weapon." They said, "You have. Your husband's weapon is with Pa Ta Roh's column. You must go and find it." [In effect ordering her to go find a Karen Army column and beg a weapon from them.] Then I left.

I tried, but you can never find them [the KNLA column] because they stay in the mountains. When I came back, my children said the Ko Per Baw told them, "I know that your mother couldn't get it. They will give us one weapon anyway, and you have to give 70,000 kyats for it urgently." I said to my children, "We will give it to them if they release your father, we will borrow the money and then sell all our things to pay it back later." The Ko Per Baw said, "Don't tell anyone that you borrowed money from people and I gave the weapon for you. That wouldn't be good." I told him, "I won't tell, I only want my husband to be released."

Then he packed up the weapon and we followed him to xxxx monastery. We sat in the corner and he talked to the officer, and then my husband appeared. They took all the rope off his hands and released him. When we got to xxxx monastery I asked my husband, "Where's your bag that I gave you?" When I looked in the bag none of the things were there - the sugar, money, torchlight, betelnut and betel leaves, they'd taken everything in the bag. I didn't want to say anything but I started crying. I told the Ko Per Baw, "You say that you do

only good things, but really all you do is steal.” My husband told me not to speak like that and to stop crying, but I was still crying. They are doing bad things, if they were doing good things I wouldn’t be crying. I told them so. But the Ko Per Baw didn’t say anything, he didn’t dare look at my face. He returned to the Burmese.

Then I tried to take my husband home but they wouldn’t allow him to go, they said he must stay with them in Noh Baw Heh village. They didn’t look after him - don’t hope for that! They came and gave him yellow medicine only two times. We ourselves had to buy the medicine to heal him. I bought the medicine and asked the village elder to give him an injection and heal him with traditional medicine like special oil and special water. We had to stay there a long time. It was like he wasn’t dead but he wasn’t alive. I asked permission to take him home, I said “If we must drink vow water we will, but if not I’ll take him home. Here we haven’t got any treatment.” I wanted to take him to Kawkareik [hospital], but Ko Per Baw told me, “If you take him there the Burmese will kill him with a poison medicine injection”. I said, “Better we go there and die from an injection than die here from no treatment. As for you, we carry your rice for you and still you call us ‘informers’. We will just kill two toads, one for him and one for me, and after we eat them we will die.” We asked permission, but they wouldn’t allow us to go. Finally people came to take him to drink vow water, or he would never have been released.

After he ran from them he stayed in the forest. It was really cold because the rain was heavy, and he was wet and sick. I was really upset and I had no strength for that. I didn’t dare stay at home, we all ran away with children and grandchildren and none of us stayed in the village. The Ko Per Baw said if they see us they’ll take off our skins and eat them, so we dare not go near them. They took all our things, our buffalos and bullock cart. They took our paddy and 11 buffalos - I’d sold the others to return the money [70,000 kyats] I’d borrowed. I don’t know what happened to our house and other things. We all left together with my husband.

Interview 50: HRV: Refugee, Arrest, Torture

Name:	Ko Thein
Sex:	Male
Age:	35
Nationality:	Burmese, refugee
Religion:	Muslim
Address:	xxxx refugee camp, Tak Province, Thailand

Interview: April 8, 1996
Source: KHRG

[This account was given by a refugee in Thailand who was arrested by SLORC when he crossed the Moei River into Burma. As the refugees are not allowed to gather building materials, etc. or do anything to supplement their meagre rations in the refugee camps, many cross the river regularly just to collect things to support themselves.

SLORC Division #88 who come to stay at the side of the Thu Mweh River [Moei River, which is the Thai border] at Tee Kaw Taw are from Ye Kyaw Camp, also called Camp 606, and Thay Ka Yah Camp, also called Camp 1153. When they first arrived they did not abuse villagers whom they saw at all. Now we have heard that the villagers must relocate to another place, and we have seen that if they see people they demand money and they force people to go and buy cheroots, oil, fish, chicken and other foods for them. Furthermore, people who went to find leaves for house roofing had to give ten baht each. So starting from then, people going to the other side of the river from Thailand all must give ten baht [Thai baht; US\$1=25 baht]. The soldiers stay in Camp 606 and come early in the morning to the riverside to demand money everyday. From 606 to the river is one and a half hours' walk.

On the morning of 3 April 1996, I went to the river with a few companions. We had to give ten baht each, and I had to speak to the SLORC officer, Sein Hla Maung. He is a Rakhine, his arm badges show 88/83 [#83 Battalion of #88 Division] and his superior officer is Ba Kyi, who stays at Ye Kyaw Camp. On 3 April, in the morning, I said, "Officer, we here, we don't have money. These married women came only to find leaves and have no money, please excuse us from having to give money." He answered me, "Don't you become an agent trying to reduce the cost for these women! Don't become a lawyer!" The next morning I went to cut bamboo again, and he arrested me and took me back to Camp 606.

Before we arrived at the camp they covered my eyes with a longyi [sarong] and took me to a cattle corral. They tied me to a post and beat me on the thighs, first one, then the other, for a while. Then they said to me, "You, before you were a Kawthoolei soldier". I said this was not so. The officer accused me of having a walkie-talkie and a gun and he beat me until I was very sore. He asked me, "Where did you put your weapon?" I said that I don't have one, that I didn't do anything. After abusing me like this for about an hour, then I was put into a bunker, and I was told, "You must be beaten three times per day".

I had to stay there with my hands, feet and neck tied until the morning of 7 April. He [Sein Hla Maung] cut a length of bamboo about as thick as a toe and beat my thighs and my back, and then stabbed my head, my back, my thighs, my shins, and my hands with a bayonet, piercing just a little bit, so that blood fell. Then he went and cut bamboo again, a short thick piece, and rolled it up and down my shins, kicked me, beat me, and punched me, and did like this three times each day. There was a lot of blood. They stabbed me all over my body 3 times per day. He accused me of being a revolutionary, then he said, "If you don't want to die then give 23,620 Thai Baht for your release." As a result of having no money, I had to suffer there until the morning of 7 April.

After they had arrested me, my mother followed after me and brought 15,000 baht she had raised in order to get me out. But because he [Sein Hla Maung] had set 23,620 baht as the value of my life this money was insufficient and thus I was not released. I heard one soldier say to me, "You, if the commander does not get the money as demanded he will kill you". This was said to me every day.

Then the officer whose name is 'Pistol' Win Maung and five of his subordinates who are SLORC soldiers staying at Camp 1153 came and asked me, "What did you do wrong?" I said to him, "Really, just staying like this". Then, he instructed one of his subordinates to come and untie the ropes from around me and they released me, demanding I go back. When I was leaving the camp I saw Officer 'Pistol' Win Maung brandishing his pistol, speaking with Officer Sein Hla Maung, standing at the main gate to the camp. I heard Sein Hla Maung say, "This matter does not concern you - don't come and interfere!" Then I heard 'Pistol' Win Maung answer him, "This activity is no good! You are demanding people's money unjustly. I will do this [i.e. release "Ko Thein"] and what do you want to do about it?" I listened and thought this conflict might involve me, and so I fled back to my home. The next day, I heard that Sein Hla Maung said he does not want to see Indians [Muslims] any more. If he sees any he will allow none to live.

Interview 51: HRV: Forced labor, Taxation, Religious Persecution

Name:	Naw G'Mwee Paw
Sex:	Female
Age:	46
Nationality:	Karen, farmer
Religion:	Christian
Family:	Married, 4 children

Address: xxxx village, Lu Bweh tract, Pa'an Township
Interviewed: April 14, 1996
Source: KHRG

There are about 200 houses in our village. The car road is more than one kilometre away to the east, by Ko Loh Kloh [Salween River]. It is now finished except for bridge construction. Starting from Pa'an, it goes to Myaing Gyi Ngu [DKBA headquarters, about 50 km. north along the Salween River]. It goes via Tee Po Kler, Noh K'mler village, Ko Wah Ker, Naw Tha Oh, Kruh Ma Ko, Byu, Shway Kaun Aung Taw, Shway Kaun, Kar Nee village, T'goo Say village, La Ka village, Say Pa Leh village, Lah T'noh village, Taw Yweh village, T'ko Po village and then Myaing Gyi Ngu.

Ko Per Baw ordered this road. Ko Per Baw said that the Myaing Gyi Ngu Abbot demanded that the road be constructed, for villagers to be able to come and go easily. As for the Burmese, they have not said anything. For one day, one person from each of five or six houses has to go, rotating houses on duty two days per turn. Also, people have to go to cook rice for the people working on the road. Ko Per Baw feed the people, but it is vegetarian food and the people cannot take meat. The people have to sleep in huts along the roadside.

Two big yellow trucks for flattening the earth [steamrollers] came, and people must follow behind them with sand and small stones for the road surface. The soldiers always watch, and with guns. People have to bring the sand from the river. Women and children as young as 12 or 13 had to carry the sand. The road has an elevation of more than one foot. If it rains, you can't use it. Although you construct it of a higher quality, if there is flooding it'll be destroyed. These roads are often destroyed. We always have to construct roads destroyed by floods on an annual basis. If you don't do like this, these car roads could not be used. For the bridges they are using timber, and also some bricks are being laid. Now they are preparing the timber at Kyaun Wine, not far from our village. They made a bridge in 1988/9 and another in 1990/1 but every year in the rainy season the bridges and the road were destroyed. Now they have started construction again, at Kyaw M'raw River which the Burmese call Than Bu Ra River. In the dry season there is no water in the river. The Ko Per Baw are constructing the bridge themselves. Each villager from Noh Kwaw must go to the construction, one person per house, for two days and one night, on rotation. I went one time. For this construction, the Ko Per Baw say that it is for religion, that people can come and go [from the labor] easily. But when we work there the Ko Per Baw carry guns and wear uniforms that are no different from the Burmese.

The Ko Per Baw come from where they stay. They constructed a camp by Bay T'ya. Burmese soldiers also stay there. The Ko Per Baw unit is maybe 555, or 999. Now they don't do much, but before they were frightening, saying that they would kill all Christians. In our village there are 3 Christian households, and a Church. Although we are Christians we had to stay and listen to this. We did not do anything, and at the very start we didn't know anything. One time, around 7 p.m., a villager who followed Ko Per Baw for a while previously, he came and called out to me, "Now we have beaten the Christians. We have beaten the Christians, and so you cannot stay here any more. The Abbot does not like it any longer." Then I suffered at the core of my heart, and my emotions rose, and I prayed that I would not give an erroneous answer. I held my tongue, and so did not answer anything. But my daughter said, "If we must bow down as Buddhists, then let us all die. We will pray to God." He immediately went away. I did not speak until daylight.

At that time the Ko Per Baw were very strong, and they trusted [worked with] the village leaders. Me, I knew this, but we stayed amongst just a few people and didn't dare to speak about anything. One time Ko Per Baw came to my house when I was not there. My daughter was there, and they said to her, "You must make a [Buddhist] shrine in your house." My daughter said, "We won't make a shrine, we won't give respect, we won't put rice [as an offering]. If the monks from the monastery demand that we leave, then we will leave." As for me, this place is our place, the ground is our ground, so we didn't go to stay in another place, but if the Abbot and others made us leave, we would leave. But now I do not hear anything.

After they made their demands that we leave, something terrible happened. People said, "Christians are coming and spraying poison in the wells." They looked me directly in the eyes and said, "If Buddhists and Christians are staying amongst one another, the Christian soldiers are going to kill all of us." The [local] Karen leader T— said, "Although people might say things to you, don't say anything to them, we should not think anything of them." I wondered if we wouldn't be able to stay there any more, if we would have to leave, or if we wouldn't be able to leave. Previously, my daughter's father [i.e. her husband] had been a [KNU] soldier, but in the midst of the problems now we just stay uselessly, we stay and listen. We heard it said again that people had come to poison, and so we had to go to make protection for the wells. My son-in-law said, "Me, I won't go with them [to make fences around the wells]. Someday something will happen and then people will blame the Christians anyway. If the wells are protected, I'll drink, and if they aren't protected I'll drink." My son-in-law said to me, "Do you dare to drink [the water]?" I said to him, "I'll drink it all. If we cannot do good things, let us not do bad things."

Nobody died, there was nothing. At night times the villagers went and guarded the wells against people who would come to put poison. I asked them if they had caught anybody yet, and they said that they had caught one person from T'kaw Po. I asked them if he was a Buddhist, and they said he was Buddhist, but the Christians made him do it. I told them, "You watch your words. One day people who have not done anything will hear and you will create problems for yourselves."

We, we did not think anything about them [Ko Per Baw]. They, if they thought things, then they had some erroneous thoughts regarding people. The village leaders came and said, "At this time, the Ko Per Baw soldiers must collect 500 kyats from each house, as they must make a road from Sah Tha Byay, and so people must give 500 kyats and 2 big tins of husked eating rice, and it must be given, it is not possible to not give it. At that time people were going to make the Karen New Year celebrations, and so I said to the leaders, "For the New Year I will donate to you 100 [kyats] and for the people who must go to labor on the car road I will give you 100 and you should accept it, as you are leaders, and so you must look and think about us." On the 22 of December they collected the money, 100 per house. People had to take their own food to work on the road. I don't know how many people went - more than 60. They went for 10 days. People who couldn't go had to give money for somebody else to go, 50 kyats per day, so for ten days, 500 kyats. Also rice for ten days amounting to one big tin for one person.

At this stage one government-appointed teacher came to stay in my house. I said, "You people, you are teaching in the government [SLORC] school and so I must accept you, but nobody looks closely at me. Because of food I can accept only one person. If you are happy with this, accept it, if you are not happy, I won't give it you." And the village elder did not say anything much but said to me, "Auntie, that's enough." And I told him, "If enough, then enough, if not enough, then enough. As for the rice, I won't give it to you, I won't do that." [Referring to the tin of rice demanded by DKBA.] Later an elder said to me, "Don't worry about it, there's no need to give it." But before that we had to give 100 kyats per week, four times per month, totalling 400 kyats per month. I said to him, "Now we cannot do that anymore, there is no more money. If people demand money such as this then we cannot give it." Previously the Ko Per Baw had arrested traders and cattle sellers at T'ree Po Kwee on the sixteenth of March [1996], and these traders had included my son-in-law and our cattle. They sent him and the cattle to Myaing Gyi Ngu, and so we lost 10,000 kyats and I told my son-in-law not to do this [sell cattle] any more. They gave no reason for the arrests, they only wanted to take the cattle to sell them to other people, and find people to work for them in Myaing Gyi

Ngu. They arrested 30 traders. Of the thirty arrested, now only one is remaining in Myaing Gyi Ngu. The other 29 escaped. They escaped while they were working. They had to make roads in between Myaing Gyi Ngu and surrounding villages.

The Ko Per Baw don't stay in the village - only the two children who joined with Ko Per Baw do. They are about 12 or 13 years old. These two children are not siblings, neither of them has a father any more, and their mothers cannot tell them anything, they don't listen to their mothers. One of the mothers told her son, "Don't you call me your mother. You don't have a mother any more. I won't call you my child any more." One of the mothers has come to Thailand and the other one is still in the village.

The Burmese camp is at Shway Kone. Now they increased their strength. The soldiers' unit number is 22/204 [Battalion 204 under #22 Division], previously it was #339. Their camp is about 3-4 kilometers from our village. We cannot do anything to get food., having to go and work on road construction. The Ko Per Baw have sufficient food. The few villagers who understand this say, "If we don't have enough food any more we'll go and become Ko Per Baw". People don't dare to trade any more. Some people go to Thailand, in the rainy season some work for daily wages planting rice for 50, 60, or 70 kyats at most per day. As for now, finding roofing leaves, 100 sheets can be sold for 250 kyats. After finding leaves, the rains will be coming and people return to working the rice paddy. The Burmese don't interfere in this.

Food is very expensive to buy. One egg is 10 kyats. One big tin of chillies is 350 kyats. People cannot afford to buy food. Husked eating rice is 70 kyats per th'lot [bowl, also known as 1 pyi, or about 2 kg.]. For my field I had to give 10 baskets of paddy to SLORC, and they pay 100 kyats per basket but the usual value is 150-200 kyats, and if somebody has to give paddy to SLORC but does not have enough they must buy it for 150-200 from somebody else and give it to SLORC for 100. Usually they have to borrow money from other villagers, bit by bit, to do this. They annually demand four baskets per acre, so if ten acres, forty baskets. It's the responsibility of the village leaders to collect this. People who work sugar cane must give 1,000 blocks of jaggary [boiled sugar-cane juice crystallized into blocks] annually to the SLORC. Since 1988 we have had to give like this every year. For the future, I think that it will not be comfortable. It looks to me that people's morale will not be strong in the way it was before. In the future it will not be at all easy to earn a living.

Interview 52: HRV: Forced Labor, Relocation

Name: Nai Dow Ye
Sex: Male
Age: 46 year
Nationality: Mon
Religion: Buddhist
Occupation: Refugees
Native Place: Ah Ruu Taung Village, Ye Township, Mon State
Current Residence: Halockhani refugee camp
Interview Date: April 28, 1996.
Source: HRFOM

Since the BSPP government intensified four cut campaign in duration 1980s to the local ethnic community which has contacts with rebel group, several local ethnic villagers abandoned their native places and took refuge in rebel control areas, after they were extremely suppressed by the Burmese Army (Tatmadaw).

When did you leave from your village and why? Before you arrived to the refugee camp, how was your family live?

I left from my village near Ye in 1984 after the Burmese Army arrested and detained me three times. They accused me as rebel-supporter. My youngest son joined the Mon army of Nai Shwe Kyin fraction in 1983 and was active around our village and the Burmese army told me to tell him to resign from Mon army and send to Ye. At that time, my wife opened a small shop and sold groceries mainly agricultural products in Ye. Before they arrested me they already arrested my wife as hostage and then I had to meet them.

Every time in detention, they accused me my son joined army because of my encouragement. I, my self have ever joined Mon army when I was young and that was why they accused me like that. Then I met them and they detained me for one week in Ye police detention and after I promised I would tell to y son to resign they released me. I contacted my son but he refused to return back and after one month the Burmese Army informed me to meet them in Ye and I was arrested and detained again. And I told my wife to close her shop in Ye and to stay in village. She returned back to village and to avoid the arrests of the Burmese Army, we stayed in farm-huts nearly for one year. I didn't return back to village and my wife brought me necessities, which I needed. While I was in farm, several letters from Ye town's council (Township level BSPP administration body) reached to me and I kept quiet and refused to meet them.

Unlucky, I was arrested in my farm. In harvest time, I was sick in hut and when the Burmese Army came close to hut I hid in a paddy warehouse nearby but my wife was in hut. As soon as they reached to hut they stole eggs and chicken that I raised. They also took some vegetables and dark toddy. My wife was afraid and did not tell them anything. Among the soldiers, a warrant officer knew my wife very well and he ever brought products in her shop in Ye. When I was arrested in Ye, he ever interrogated and beat me. He could recognize my wife and asked her where I was. My wife lied him that I left for Kanni village for trading but he threatened my wife he will kill if he met me in farm. Then he ordered to his soldiers to search me around farm-hut and a soldier met me in rice warehouse. He also ordered his men to tie me up and beat me with his jungle boots and rifle butts He said the town officials sent several letters and asked why I didn't meet them. I lied them I didn't receive letters but they didn't believe and will ask and check to village leaders. He also interrogated me that I had contacts with my son or not. He also ordered to search in the whole farm-hut to find gun. I told them I never contacted and he already moved to military headquarters. However, they didn't believe me and brought me to Ye's IB No.61 battalion headquarters. My wife also cried and asked them that as I was sick to pardon me and I will meet after recovered. But they refused.

When I reached to their battalion, they put me in a small cell with other two criminals. My fever getting serious but they never gave me any medicine. After I slept there one night, an officer brought me to a room. Ten, I think the battalion commander and two warrant officers including the one who arrested me arrived in front of me and told me if I told them true, they will release me. I agreed.

They interrogated me one by one. Firstly, the commander told me he knew I was a former Mon soldier and had contact with Mon soldiers. I told them the true, if the Mon soldiers arrived to my house or my farmland, I had to feed them, as I was afraid. He smiled and told that I knew every commander of the Mon soldiers why I has to be afraid of them. I said I knew just their names and I was not familiar with them. And a warrant officer asked the names of Mon commanders whose I knew including their ages, native places. I told them as much as I knew because I feared they beat me. After he noted he said I knew many of commanders and that made them sure I was a rebel-supporter. Moreover, he questioned why I encourage my youngest who failed Ninth Standards (Ninth Grade) examination to join the Mon insurgency. I told them that I was very unhappy for my son as he still had chance learn in school and to pass exam. They said I lied them and accused that I, by myself, sent my son to attend medical school opened in insurgent headquarters. I refused but I agreed he and me went to farm together and one night he followed with Mon troops

and then didn't return. I also found and met him in a village southern part of Ye and but he refused to return. Anyhow, they didn't believe me. The commander just bet with his fist for one time on that day.

On the next day, my fever getting worst but they didn't care. Brought me to the room again and tied me up tightly with a pole. The tow warrant officer came and asked why I didn't meet them when the township authorities sent me letters. I told I was afraid and they beat me. They didn't listen to my complaints and continued their beatings. They beat with rifle butts, jungle boots and sticks. I think they bet for one hour without rest. As I was weak and lost consciousness at the end.

On the next day, they brought me to a room and the commanders said I have only one choice to abandon my village, if not he will imprison me he said as I was unable to bring back my son, so I had guilty. As soon as he released me he said me to leave from village, if not he will arrest me and imprison me according to existed laws. I didn't know what kinds of law. As soon as I arrived at village I arranged to leave. I collected some materials and I abandoned the village on the next day with my elder son, his wife and two children. He worried for me and he also accompanied with us. We traveled up to Wengka village of Sangkhlaburi District of Thailand.

When you were in Sangkhlaburi, what was your occupation and did you take refuge in NMSP control territory?

I stayed in Sangkhlaburi for three years. I worked as a hard laborer in a Thai plantation where I had to grow banana and mango trees and took care of that plantation. After three years, when the tree grew up, the owner didn't need me and then I went to Three Pagoda Pass I stayed there and worked in a furniture factory and then, I cleared a plantation around the area and planted some vegetables and sugar cane. It could provide enough income for my family and our life was very comfortable.

How many years had you stayed in there and when the Burmese troops occupied Three Pagodas Pass how did you flee and what happened on your family?

Before the Burmese troops came into Three Pagoda Pass area, my son and I helped Mon troops in bringing some belongings to hide in Thai territory. All the people in the area helped the party (MNSP) as possible as we can. We have responsibility to prevent the Burmese troops' advance and sometime, we had to send ammunition and food to the frontline. When we knew the Burmese troops advanced to Three Pagoda Pass area, I moved our family to Thai side of

the border. I lost my wooden house and plantation in there. Firstly, I moved them to Songkhlia village in Thai territory and after the Burmese troops occupied NMSP headquarters, the Songkhlia village was very close to their outpost and then I moved them to Wengka village again. In Wengka, I had no house and very uncomfortable to stay with other family. Then when the refugee camp was opened in Krung Kung village, I moved into refugee camp.

According to Thai successive government policy, they never recognized the peoples of Burma who fled from systematic persecution by the military as “refugees” and since they have been displaced persons in Thailand, Thai authorities perpetually relocated them. How is your life in refugee camp?

We received rice, fish-paste and salt normally every month. We have to find vegetables and bamboo shoots in rainy season. We can get meat from hunter or cattle traders. In every camp, we established hospital and school. We have no problem for treatments when we were suffering from malaria. My grandchildren also can attend to primary school and they got book and other stationary with fare charge. The book price in Burma is very expensive.

Did you often to move from the refugee camp from one place to another? What arrangements of the Mon and Thai authorities?

When we were in Krung Kung, the camp committee informed us our camp and Panang Htaw have to move to Hla Brad (in 1992). The Hla Brad is about one hour walk from our camp and about one and half-hours walk from Panang Htaw. We would like to stay more in Krung Kung but anyhow we would have to follow according to camp leaders' instruction. Before we moved, the Thai officials including soldiers came to the camp very often with Mon authorities (MNRC officials) and arranged meeting with camp leaders. They arranged to move nearly for one month. The all our village moved to Hla Brad. (Later, Hla Brad camp was renamed as Loh Loe)

If you refused to move from there, what will happen for you?

The Thai police will arrest us. When we moved to Hla Brad, some villagers from Panang Htaw refused to move. The Thai militias came to Panang Htaw and threatened them to move to Hla Brad. Because of the villagers still refused, the militias arrested them and detained in Sangkhlaburi detention cell. They were put in detention cell about three days and forced them to agree to move after the release, the villagers moved to Hla Brad.

How long could you stay in on Loh Loe or Hla Brad and then how you have to

move to another area?

We stayed in Loh Loe for nearly two years. And then, at the beginning of 1994, we also had to move Payaw or Halockhani. I decided to move to Halockhani and the camp committee also explained us we can choose the place where we would like to move. At that time, we were very complicated because the camp committee said the Mon leaders (NMSP and MRC) attempted not to move from Lon Loe and not to hurry to move. But in February, the Thai military came into camp and stayed in the houses in the camp and told the refugees to move to Halockhani or Payaw. Actually, the refugees would not like to move but they were afraid of Thai soldiers. Even they did not treat badly ordinary villagers were already afraid of them. Then, they hurried to move. My family also moved to Halockhani.

When the Burmese troops attacked one section of Halockhani, what happened to your family?

We have to flee into Thai territory over the border again. Just three months after the refugees were resettled in Halockhani. Firstly, we didn't know what happened in Baleh Donephai (the section which was initially attacked by Burmese soldiers) and when the fighting occurred between Mon troops and them on the way to Halockhani, but when they returned back, they burnt down Baleh Donephai and some men were arrested and tortured.

We had to stay in muddy area near Thai border police station more than one month. The camp and main committee (MNRC) told us they requested The Thai government to allow us to resettle in Thai territory again. We agreed with leaders, because it was very dangerous for us to stay longer in Halockhani. The Burmese troops could come any time. May be they had to walk one hour from their nearest outpost to reach the camp. At that time, the party (NMSP) had no cease-fire agreement. We were waiting kind consideration of Thai authorities. We expected that they would allow us to stay. Waited and waited, at the end they didn't allow us. The Thai army came to rice warehouse of the refugees and closed it and force us to move, if we refused to return to their former campsite Halockhani, they will cut off supplies. All of us were just depend on that rice. As a result, all of us slowly moved back to dangerous place again after we have no choice. After we returned back even no more attack, we have been reluctant to move to another area.

After the party (NMSP) had cease-fire agreement with SLORC, the party planned to settle you in some area. You already knew that. If you went the resettlement area you could get wider surrounding for you. Why you don't

move there?

I don't trust the Burmese soldiers. If I moved to Baleh Donephai, the Burmese troops will pass through the village very often and will make trouble to me. Also the IB 61 always passed through the village. May be some of them will know me. I am still afraid of them and don't trust them up to now. Even I would like to visit to my native village but I don't trust them. That was why I don't want to move to Baleh Donephai. I don't want also to move to Palaing Japan village, which was newly resettled. The site is very close to Burmese military battalion of Three Pagoda Pass. And, if we stayed in Halockhani, we have been possible to attend hospital easily or they (the medic) will transfer the serious patient to treat in Christian hospital in Huai Malai (in Sankhaburi District of Thailand).

Last dry season and on the eve of rainy season, did you grow rice in the mountain? How much you re and can you estimate the amount of the products?

Yes, I grew rice. But I could not clear large area and grew only two tins of rice seed. The amount of rice production is depended on the weather. If the rain fell too much before the end of rainy season, it will destroy the crops. At the beginning of rainy season, the rain fell very little and the plants grew up very slow and weak. Estimately, we can get about 20 tins of plain rice from each one tin rice seed. Our family could have enough rice for three months. We still need the help of relief committee.

Do you have a plan to return back your native village and to work in your farm?

I already sold my farm. At the moment I don't want to return back to native village. If no Burmese army around the area I will return back. I can find out new farm and create new life.

Interview 53: HRV: Relocation, Forced Labor, Refugee, Killing, Torture

Name:	Nai Lane
Sex:	Male
Age:	52 Years
Nationality:	Mon
Religion:	Buddhist
Native Place:	Paukpingwin Village, Yebyu Township, Tenasserim

Division
Place: Payaw refugee camp
Interviewed: May 4, 1996.
Source: HRFOM

The conscription of forced labor in Ye-Tavoy railway construction other kinds of human rights abuses have created the massive influx of displaced persons and refugees. Those refugees reached to Payaw since at the end of 1993.

Why did you leave from your village and when?

I left from the village in March 1993 while the Loh Loe refugee camp was being relocating to Payaw. I also settled and built my house in Payaw. At that time, there was busy time while many refugees from Loh Loe and new arrivals reached to same camp. And the small side of camp became bigger.

We have to abandon the village because the Burmese soldiers treated us very severe. Since October 1993, we have to work in clearing foliage and cut down the trees along the planned railway route. And at the same time, the villagers also have to find facilities for the construction of military outposts. We had to cut tree and bamboo in the forest and brought it to the military outpost and then the villagers including the women and children have to build the fences, barracks and other buildings in their outposts.

At that time, the NMSP did not reach a cease-fire agreement with SLORC. Several fighting happened around our area and the military also issued the order not to move to farm or forest areas. But when they asked for tree and bamboo they said we could go to the forest but they did not provide us any insurance letter. Once when other two villagers and me went into forest to cut trees for their outposts, we were arrested by the Burmese soldiers from LIB No. 410 and they beat us very severely. We also explained them that we cut trees for LIB No. 407 but they didn't accept our complaint and at the end we were forced to be porters to carry their materials for nearly one-week. When we arrived we didn't get any materials and the soldiers from No. 407 punished us again. They never listen to us.

I ever been as porters for several times before I decided to flee. Besides the railway construction, portering, we also have to provide them several kinds of tax and later, we have been shortage of income and foods. Sometime, even our area has been farming; we have to eat rice-soup and became shortage. Every year, before the harvest time, we faced food-shortage problem.

When you escaped from village, how many families accompanied with you?

Three families. We were the poorest families in the village and we had to flee first. We could not provide them any payment or labor. If we worked for them, we left nothing to eat. We decided to escape from the village. After we escaped the army conscripted more laborers from our villagers, nearly 30 families continuously arrived to Payaw after one month we arrived. All of them are likely poor family. Among the villagers who escaped from the village, many of them left to several villages in Ye, Thanbyuzayat and Mudon townships and avoided from conscription forced labor. Some also left to Thailand by boat while some hid in the forest. Some families still left in the village and they have to permanently provide payment to the army.

Please compare me what are difference in your life when you stayed in your village and now (in refugee camp)?

When we were young, it was very nice to stay in our native village. We have our own farm and no Burmese soldiers around the village. We have to give some small tax to Mon troops and we were safe. About 10 years ago, the Burmese soldiers came into our village very often and built a small outpost and tried to control the village. And the army, themselves, selected the village leaders and adopted the administration. all villagers disliked them and informed Mon troops to drive them out. But the Mon troops sympathized on villagers never shot outside the village. The Burmese troops kept more control on villagers and treated very bad after they knew the villagers have cooperation with rebel.

Every the Burmese soldiers were attacked by Mon troops we were terribly treated by them. They checked every man and asked who keeping contact with Mon troops and firstly village leaders whose were selected by them were severely beaten. And they arrested everyone and detained him or her. Or they were forced to be porters. Some villagers also killed and one villager Nai Htawe was killed y them. It might be about 7 years ago, I could not recognize the date. he was killed in Ye IB No.61 headquarters. We didn't know what the exact accusation was put on him by army. Might be they accused him as rebel-supporter. He was arrested in his betel-nut plantation. According to one participant of Burmese soldiers, he said he gave shelters and foods to Mon troops in his plantation. It has been normal that the Mon troops always taking a rest and cooking food in plantations near village. But which the Mon troops were in his plantation the Mon troops already left and when the Burmese soldiers arrived they met such evidences and accused him as rebel-supporter without checking for the accurate information . After they severely beat him for one hour, they shot him and he died on the spot. The villagers heard the gunfire and nobody dared to go to incident place. On the next day, the villagers searched around his plantation and met the dead body. Then they brought back to the

village. After that case, when the Mon troops had activities around the area, the villager never went and worked in their plantation. We always feared the maltreatment of Burmese soldiers when we were in the village.

Anyhow , when we were staying in the native village, we could have living stacks and we have relatives to help each other. When we were young we had a better life than now in our native. After the Burmese Army deployed more troops in the area, all villagers have been unhappy and they have to provide the military for several things, which they asked. The life here is better than in our village. But if the Burmese troops retreated from the area, the life in there is better than here. Even the refugees were hoping for the international monitoring before the repatriation they were not provided.

When did you move here? Who mainly arranged to move you here?

At the beginning of cold season (in October) we were explained by the camp committee that we have to move down to Tavoy district area because the party (NMSP) already reached a cease-fire agreement. They also explained if we were moved in dry season (February -March), the English (the Mon called all Westerner or foreigner as English and in case , the camp would like to mention the international organization will provide monitoring in the repatriation) will stay along with us and arranged for the trips, sharing lands and houses for us. They will help us to build hospitals and schools in the new place. Sincerely, we would not like to return back Paukpingwin (native village), but I accepted to move down to Tavoy district area. According to the camp committee and party leaders (MRC), they explained we will have to created the plantation the in area and before our native village was safe enough to return back we will have to stay there.

Since then, the English came often and asked some questions to some villagers (refugees). But when we moved to the Tavoy Districts areas, only Mon authorities arranged for us for smooth settlement. Every family hurried up move as they were afraid of Thai soldiers. If they delayed to move, might be, Thai soldiers will came to village and threaten to move like situation when Loh Loe refugees moved to Halockhani. I was also afraid of the bad treatment of Thai soldiers and hurried up to move there. And we arrived there before others, we also more chance and time to clear house surrounding and to build house. If we have more time we can created plantation.

Did you created any space for plantation ? If you did , what you grew?

I hurried to arrive here (in the new site). I arrived here at the beginning of

March and I arranged to build house. I have to cut trees for pole and bamboo for a week. I cut in the forest nearby and brought it to village. After I collected the needed facilities, I had to build my house for another one week. Therefore, I have been delayed to clear land space to grow rice, you have to cut every things in the hill and put all foliages and things to be drought n there for nearly one month, and you have to burnt all into ashes. And you have to pock and throw every things left from the burning. It is a serious and busy job to create a rice plantation in hilly area. As I have no time, I just created a small vegetable plantation and I grew some vegetables such as green bean and plant. I sold it in the village for income.

What do you think on cease-fire? If the cease-fire is broke out , where you will flee?

We never trust the Burmese troops. According to Burmese troops in Aleskan village, they did the cease-fire agreement is a short term of them and after they finished building the railway, I think they will resume fighting to Mon troops. If the Mon and Burmese troops fought each other in this area, maybe, I will flee to former place (Payaw) again.

As you said you have no rice plantation and next year, if you could not grow what you will plan?

Surely, I could make any products this year. Some other families also have the same situation like me. They also have nothings. If the English camp committee could not provide us rice, we will face more difficulties and we don't know how to plan. We will flee to the place where we can get foods.

Q: Do you go back to your village?

No. I'm afraid of Burmese soldiers.

Interview 54: HRV: Livelihood, Taxation, Extortion

Name:	withheld upon request
Sex:	Male
Age:	19 years
Ethnic:	Karen
Religion:	Christian
Address:	Hsar Chet Village Tract, Lat Putta Township
Name:	withheld upon request

Sex: Male
Age: 22 years old
Ethnic: Karen
Religion: Christian
Address: Hsar Chet Village Tract, Lat Putta Township
Interviewed: May 19 1996
Source: FTUB

Our village population is about 80% Kaken, 70% Christian and 30% Buddhist. Hsar Chet Village Tract has 13 small villages within it, totalling about 2,000 families (approximately 160 families/village) and every villages has at least 10 SLORC soldiers stationed within. After the Bogalay Crisis our village tract was classified as a 'black' area until now.

Villagers have to build fences, clear areas of land and make bamboo spikes protruding from the ground at fence perimeters, repair roads to the army spots and keep watch as sentries for the soldiers. There are no porter fees, but we have to pay organising and administration fees to USDA (more directly translated as 'collecting' and 'managing' fees- the precise meaning is unclear) and road construction volunteer fees, also school and police station construction fees, lastly, recruitment fees. Altogether these cost one family about 2,500 kyats (for one month). Moreover, each village has to give the soldiers stationed in their village foodstuffs, chicken, pork, duck, dried shrimp, totalling 5-7 viss (8- 11.2 kg) per week, and when shrimp fishermen come back from their day's work, they must give one viss (1.6 kg) of fresh shrimp and one tin of condensed milk.

At the end of 1995, in Pyin Sa Lu village, a new police station was constructed, for which every family in the village tract was required to give 500 kyats, and had to assist in the construction. Likewise, at the beginning of 1996, a new high school building was constructed at Theik Pan Gaun Kyi village, for ninth and tenth standard and for the construction of this building, miscellaneous ('odd job') laborers had to give 500 kyats each, and the Commander of the Southwest Command, Brigadier General Nyunt Tin opened the building himself. Thus, villagers had to work at cleaning the compound starting ten days prior to the arrival of the Commander.

Actually, that school was previously a complete high school, prior to 1991 and the Bogalay Crisis. Subsequent to those events, Lat Putta Township was punished, and the school lowered to a middle school standard. Many government servants (including teachers) were forced to resign or were transferred for failing to report KNU movements. All Karen government servants were forced

to resign without and questions asked, and because of that the headmistress and the Karen teachers were all sacked.

Even though there is a high school, most of the children cannot attend, and after completion of third or fourth grades (primary school) the parents withdraw them in order to help their families.

Rice price is currently 65-70 kyats per pyi(8 condensed milk tins) and even the farmers themselves are concerned about the rice price, because they themselves are suffering rice shortages due to the many kinds of quotas imposed upon the rice they produce. The average production per acre is about 50 baskets of unhusked paddy rice. SLORC imposes quota of 12 baskets per acre, which they purchase at 70 kyats per basket, whilst the prevailing market price is about 450 kyats per basket. There are other quotas- '*Tatmadaw*' rice at basket, and sometimes provide no recompense; '*Saytanar rice*,' (in Pali, meaning 'good will') at 1 basket per acre, for which no recompense is given, and we do not know to whom or where it goes; '*Mawata*' rice, basket per acre.

There are many kinds of funds collected by Yawata (LORC), and if you fail to pay you are required to sign some kind of document, and although people do not know what will happen if you sign, every body is too afraid of this, so they always pay.

Nowadays, if a family has 5 members, they all have to work, at rice cultivation, or fishing, and road construction and other such 'volunteer' work.

This year, our villagers have to work on the Pan Tanaw - Rangoon road constructions, about 14-15 days per time, or alternately pay 1,500 kyats to Yawata. The road can accommodate two cars side by side, is about 10 feet high, and there are thousand of people on the construction. Each village is allocated a specific portion of the road for completion. The work requires digging of the ground and piling it for the road. There is no clinic or medical service, no wage is received, and we must take all of our own supplies and stay alongside the road in miserable conditions . Some people are injured whilst working, but we don't know exactly about that.

After the Bogalay Crisis, many old former Karen revolutionaries were arrested, including Pu Thar Mya, who was about 70 years old, and U Tun Shei, who was partly paralyzed, were arrested and taken away upon stretchers, and they both died in prison. Also, Chit San Maung's brother, U Tun Nay Thar, who never joined the Karen revolution, was jailed for 3 years. During the Bogalay Crisis, villagers were forced to walk ahead of the (SLORC) soldiers, shouting "Do not

shoot!" but the SLORC soldiers fired at KNLA.

In our village, there are no problems between Karen and Burmese (civilians). All are afraid of the SLORC. The Burmese villagers who also gave meals to the Karen soldiers during the Bogalay Crisis were punished also. But the SLORC is trying to divide Karen and Burmese, Christian and Buddhist. On the road constructions, the (predominantly) Karen villagers are required to work at more distant sites than the Burmese. The Burmese villagers said "You Karen always go to work at places further away. That's strange" A SLORC major went to every village (in the area) and instructed the villagers to donate money to build a pagoda in each village, and he said "Christian must disappear". Also there's a village called Padauk Kone, which is completely Christian, and there a pagoda was built just in front of the church, only about ten years from the church building. At the ceremony to mount the pagoda with the umbrella the Christian had to dance 'doan'. There is not a single Buddhist in that village. If a Christian church seek to make repairs it must ask permission from Mawata (LORC), and construction of new church buildings is not permitted. Regarding the (regional) Christian convention, previously anybody could go, but now only 5 people per village are permitted.

In Rangoon, people dare to quietly abuse even an officer of the (SLORC) army walking alone on the street, but in rural areas even privates lord over the civilians. Sometimes a person doing absolutely nothing can be slapped. The soldiers demand the villagers buy them boats and television and there are always at least three or four prostitutes staying with the soldiers stationed at the village. There are two kinds of SLORC soldiers. One is rude, and always wanting to dominate the villagers. The other polite, using family words and soft words with the villagers, but he will 'purchase' rice for an unfair price, and when he returns to his unit (headquarters- on rotation) will sell it for profit. So both types are bad. Soldiers are usually rotated every 2 months. When they are rotated, the village tract must collect 100,000 kyats for each officer (perhaps two or three per tract).

Regarding recruitment (as SLORC soldiers), our villagers have headaches about this. The soldiers come at least one time per year and demand 10 people for this purpose. Alternately, if they prefer, the villagers could give 200 kyats per houses in order to opt out of the recruitment process. Now, however, the SLORC soldiers have come to realize that they can get money this way, and so if they want to they come and demand new recruits in order to get money.

We heard that there are many problems and difficulties in coming to Thailand, but we hoped that would be better than life in our village, and so we came.

Interview 55: HRV: Livelihood, Arrest, Forced Recruitment

Name: with held upon request
Age: 30 years old
Sex: Male
Ethnic: Karen
Religion: Christian
Address: Nyaung Done Township
Interviewed: May, 1996
Source: FTUB

In May 1996, many framers from the whole of Irrawaddy Division were arrested because they could not provide ‘Saytanar’ rice to the SLORC (for difference of significance from that referred to in the previous interview please see below.) This year, the whole of Irrawaddy division was ordered to grow dry season rice. If a farmer is unable to grow it, the rice fields must be confiscated. [Note: According to laws established under BSPP and still apparently being selectively employed by SLORC, the State owns the land, water and air, therefore the State is legally entitled to confiscate the rice fields of those farmers not meeting their rice production quotas, and ‘sell’ it to others.] Thus whereas previously a farmer could possess about 30 acres of rice fields, nowadays the average is 12- 15 acres.

The name of the dry season production is “Theetatye” and the method was developed in China, and it has a production target of 100 baskets (of unhusked paddy) per acre. Farmer who had already panted and begun raising soya bean crops (after the rainy season rice crop) was forced to destroy these without compensation and grow the dry season rice crop. The time frame for this crop production is about three and a half months and the water must be pumped from the rivers (by machine). However the average production of Theetatye rice for this year was 45 baskets per acre. The reasons for the poor production figures are:

- insects (that would be more prevalent during the dry season) destroyed the paddy.
- lack of fertilizers.
- lack of fuel for pumps and farm machineries.
- lack of water pumps.

Mawata had agreed to distribute diesel fuel, fertilizer, water pumps and hoses, but only a few were received. According to the arrangement, 5 acres of fields were to be allocated 8 gallons of diesel, to be purchased (the official price of

) 28 kyats per gallon, per month and 75 kg of fertilizer per month. But in actual fact, the farmers received once only, at the beginning of the cultivation period, 7 gallons of diesel at 80 kyats per gallon. As for urea and/or phosphorous fertilizers, the farmers received nothing. On the black market, the price of urea is about 1,750 kyats per 50 kg bag, and phosphorous costs 1,200 kyats per 40 kg bag. Across the period of the dry season rice, for a five acre area approximately 5 bags of fertilizer (50% of each) is required. Water pumps are available only on the black market, and are expensive. The SLORC placed a quota of 5 baskets (of unhusked rice) per acre on Saytanar rice. For other costs, to hire a glowing machine cost the user ten baskets per acre; to hire a pair of oxen and a cart costs 200-300 kyats per day; also the farmer must put aside one basket of paddy per acre in order to grow the next seasons crop; finally, there are water pump fees, insecticide costs (to plant and reap the paddy) so there is not much left for the farmers themselves. Moreover, each farmer (as distinct from the urban residents) in Irrawaddy Division must give fees totalling about 3,000 kyats per family per month. So, some unfortunate farmers whose crops are very poor are unable to meet the Saytanar rice quota, let alone even enough for their own needs.

Saytanar rice is collected by the Agricultural Department. The farmers must transport their procured rice to the storage depots, which are guarded by soldiers, the farmers have come to understand that the Saytanar rice is to be exported to China in exchange for weapons.

The farmers unable to meet the quota requirements number around 15- 50 per village (numbering perhaps 100-400 houses per village in total). (Rice quota stocks must be received in April) and in May action is started against farmers who failed to meet the requirements of the quota system. The farmers were instructed to bring their own food supplies and were placed under detention in the police jail cells, or (in cases where these were full) school buildings, whereupon the requirements of the quota were again demanded of them, Those failing to give it continued to be held in detention. In May, at Wah Kema town, the school was filled with detained farmers, and so I saw 33 farmers, some handcuffed, the others tied with rope, and guarded by police, walking on the road, to be relocated . This was a demonstration that for anybody who failed to give rice, they would be treated thus. The same thing happened in Myaung Mya, Ein Meh and Pantanaw. I know a Karen farmer of about 50 years from Pantanaw who never been arrested or been to jail in his life, and after he was detained he felt ashamed that his hand could not grow enough rice, and putting the blame on them he slashed at his wrists, and had to be sent to hospital. Now, all of the farmer are very unhappy about Saytanar rice, and are discussing that if the same things happen again next year then everybody will refuse to give rice and

will instead go to jail.

With regards to new road constructions, some paddy fields were destroyed. I saw woman crying at Nuaung Done -She Kaw boat jetty, and then a monk asked her why she was crying, and she replied that her dry season rice was going to mature soon, but in accordance with the Nawata plan for the Nyaung Done -Pantanaw road construction progress, she had just received an order to destroy her paddy within a day, therefore she was at a loss as to what to do.

Also regarding road constructions, people from Irrawaddy Division must work on these, and people from my village must work on the Myaung Mya- Lat Putta road. Some went with their whole families, and worked for about two months. Alternately, substitutes can be hired for 100 kyats per day. The road is about 20 feet wide and 15 feet high. There is no clinic or medical assistance, and some accidents, but no deaths I know of. Last year, on the Shwe Laung - Wah Kema road construction some died as a result of cholera. There was a SLORC army officer there who rode a horse and abused the villagers. Then one day his horse slipped and the front legs went into a hole. The officer was thrown from the horse and died from a broken neck. I don't know his name, but the villagers were very glad and named him "Officer Broken Neck".

Rice plantation farmers who want to change to fish farming are not permitted to do so. If they are to dig a pond then the authorities tell them that they require Form 39 (relating to land usage) which is seldom issued to farmers.

Nowadays, the SLORC army is taking in a lot of new soldiers, and people from towns always refuse to join (by paying money instead) so the soldiers are demanding people from the rural areas join the army. For my village, soldiers from IB's 92 and 93 set up recruitment signboards and made promotions. They ordered one person from every family to attend a meeting, in my case my brother went, and then a drunken sergeant gave a speech and everybody had to listen. He said, "Join the army to protect the nation" but nobody pardoned of any criminal or civil offense, whether murder, rape, robbery or debt. For any debtor who joins, the amount of your debt must be collected and paid to the creditor by the other members of your village. All the ethnic groups have surrendered to us, so do you know why we recruit to fight? We are going to fight the Americans." But the villagers were also creative, and they replied that growing rice is also for feeding the country. Recruitment comes subsequent to the harvests. If farmers grow twice a year then they will come twice a year.

So now some villagers eat their dinner by the light of the moon because they are too poor to buy fuel for lighting. Also, some farmers have disputes with one another when after the rainy season the river levels decline and more land

is exposed (these areas being of quite substantial size) and each seeks to take control of the land, in some cases leading as far as murder. So four or five members of my village were imprisoned because of such disputes.

This last dry season, a fire burnt down many large shops along the esplanade of Kyone Ma Ngay. That place was assigned for demolition and reconstruction by the Mawata (SLORC), but the shopkeepers gave money to prevent that from happening. Subsequently, the fire started at around one a.m. close to black market fuel shop, and so people were saying that it was not an accident because now, in order to reconstruct, the shopkeepers must again give money to the Mawata.

Interview 56: HRV: Relocation, Forced labor, Livelihood

Name: Loong Seng Mong
 Sex: Male
 Age: 46
 Nationality: Shan, farmer
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, 5 children aged 2-17
 Address: Loi Yoi village, Loi Lat tract, Nam Sang township
 Interviewed: June 1, 1996
 Source: KHRG

I'm a farmer. Tis is my first time in Thailand. I got here about 20 days ago [he arrived on May 19]. My village is east of Nam Sang, one day's walk. I left because the Burmese soldiers forced us to move. They called all the headmen to Loi Lat and gave them the order to move within 5 days. Then the Burmese soldiers came to the village with the order on April 9th. #55 Battalion, from Mong Pan. Loi Yoi has about 70 households. About 300 soldiers came. I was there. At first they didn't do anything, they just came and said nicely that we had to move within 5 days, and they said "after 5 days, if you come back you'll be shot". They said they would shoot us and accuse us of giving food to the rebels. Then they shot our cattle, pigs and chickens for food.

It's true, we had given food to rebels. They [the rebels] didn't do anything to us. After the order to move, we all had to carry our things on our backs. The way is too steep for carts, and there is no road. We went to Wan Nong. And Kun Mong. It is 3 hours' walk to the west. Wan Nong is a big village. Before it was about 70 houses. Many villages had to move there Kong Tat, Loi Lai, Loi Lat, Loi Yoi, Moi Tang, Loi Un, Kung Lao, Loi Ai, Ho Derg, On Kaen,

Kong Sah, Mong Yau, and Nong Pay. That is two village tracts, Loi Lat and On Kaen. Both village tracts had to move to Wan Nong or Kun Mong. No place was prepared, it was up to us and our relatives. Those who had relatives went to stay with their relatives. Those without relatives there just spread out in different places. It's like if you let cattle loose, and they just scatter everywhere. People went to get bamboo to build huts and to collect food in the forest. They tried to get work doing day labor, but there were so many of them that it was difficult. Some people made long rows of shelters with separate rooms, all joined together. They helped each other, like they were making a hotel. There are about 7,000 people in Wan Nong village now. To survive, if we have money we buy food. We need to work for food and share with each other. We hired ourselves out to the local villagers to do farming.

Some people tried to stay in their villages, but not in our area. I heard that in another village someone refused to move and the Burmese burned her house. The Burmese soldiers burned her together with her house. That was at Wan Ko Lam village. She was an old woman. All her relatives moved but she did not want to move.

We didn't have to give our rice to the Burmese, but they took everything that was left behind in the village. They allowed us to go back and farm our fields, but you cannot take any rice with you. You must go early in the morning and come back home in the evening. You're not allowed to sleep at the farm. And it's 3 hours' walk each way. Some are going. I didn't, but some people did. You have to get permission each time to go for farming. When I was there they didn't give a paper [pass], but they said that later they will do that. The people who go have to be afraid of getting shot, but the new place is so crowded so they have no choice but to go back and work their fields [it's the only way to get food].

I stayed at the new place for about 20 days. We couldn't earn our living there, and if we stayed there we would have to work for the Burmese. As soon as they need labor they will give the order. Their base is at Nam Sang. At the new place at Wan Nong they have a temporary camp. They haven't started building their permanent camp yet, but they have a plan to. The same Battalion, #55. When I left there were about 10 [soldiers] there all the time, but the others are all out patrolling so I don't know how many exactly. We came by truck, from Nam Sang to Lang Ker, then to Mong Pan and to Thailand. Ordinary trucks can't come, it has to be 4 wheel drive. It's not surfaced. They didn't stop us. The Burmese said only when there is peace we can go back to our village. It will be a long time before we can go back. I will work as labor here. 9 of us came together. When we left we had 60,000 kyats. Now I only

have about 1,000 kyats left, and I don't have work yet.

Interview 57: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood, Killing, Women

Name: Sai Seng Wan
Sex: Male
Age: 34
Nationality: Shan, farmer
Religion: Buddhist

Name: Nang Zing
Sex: Female
Age: 32
Nationality: Shan, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, no children but "Nang Zing" is over 8 months pregnant
Address: Wan Bah San vlg., Nong Hi tract, Chiang Tong twp.
Interviewed: May 31, 1996

[Sai Seng Wan and Nang Zing are husband and wife.]

Sai Seng Wan: I was not in my house when the Burmese burned it [on Feb. 1], but my wife was. I was near the village. Then I knew that the soldiers were in the village burning houses, so I ran further away. A few hours later I went back to the village. I had to look closely for Burmese soldiers, and when I saw no Burmese soldiers there I went to my house and saw that my house had already been burned. It was a beautiful house. When I saw that my house had been burned, I still had to keep hiding from the Burmese soldiers. I was thinking about whether I should build a new house or do some farming, but I found I couldn't because then they ordered us to move to the town. I myself was not willing to stay in the town. The Burmese didn't allow us to work or do anything there, and they wouldn't let us go back to our old village to get our own food or anything. My house had been completely burned so I didn't have anything to go back to there anyway, so I came to Thailand.

Nang Zing: I was in the house with my mother, but they burned it anyway. We were just staying in the house, not doing anything special. Two soldiers came to burn the house. They started it with straw. They knew we were inside, but when they burned it they said nothing. They didn't ask anything. When they came we didn't even know. We saw the fire and ran down immediately from

the house. There was only one way out. They started to set the fire at the top of the ladder to the door, and I had to pass through the flame to run down out of the house. Not only me but my mother also. She is over 50. [Nang Zing herself was about 5 months pregnant at the time.] We went into a panic, and had to run out through the fire. While we were running we were crying and screaming.

We had nothing with us, and there was no one to stop the fire. We ran to the field, and stayed there until dawn the next day. When I went back to our house, I saw only ashes. We met my husband there. Nothing was left. We had to ask for clothes from other people. We were in the village for 3 months after that, and then we were ordered to move and we came to Thailand.

Sai Seng Wan: We left on May 6. They gave the order, saying “Within 3 days all of you must move”. By such-and-such date. They said Chiang Tong area should have only 3 villages. That’s why some went to Kun Mong, some to Waeng, some to Nong Hi. They said within 3 days people must completely move. They gave a warning, they said, “If you don’t move within 3 days, we will shoot whomever we meet”. By 6 o’clock of the third day. After that they didn’t do anything to us, but they did to other villages. They even shot dead 5 people. That was in Mong Nai [area], 5 people were killed and 2 women were wounded. The 5 who were killed were from Kung Sar village. I don’t know their names. All of them were from Kung Sar. They had already moved to Kun Mong, but it is not far, so they came back to their village to get their rice, and by that time it was too late. So they met the Burmese, and they got shot. They weren’t even going to stay in the village, they were just going back to get their rice. They had 5 bullock carts so they could carry more. They were moving things from their houses to the carts when they were shot. The two women who got wounded were also from the same village. Their wounds were not serious, they’ve recovered already. They were shot by #99 Battalion, the same ones who ordered us to move.

After the order came, within 5 days I decided to come to Thailand. We left for Thailand on the 5th or 6th of May. We had to sell our cows and ask for money from some of our relatives [for the cost of the journey], and come to Thailand as labor. Those who don’t come to Thailand stay in Ton Hoong village. There were more than 400 families in our village, and only about 30 families haven’t come to Thailand. For those who are willing to come to Thailand, the soldiers just say “Go ahead!” They don’t stop them. For the rest of the people who have no idea how to get to Thailand because they have no relatives or friends here, the soldiers take them to work in the military farm, taking care of the cattle and buffalos, etc. to provide farm products for the Army. The people

from our village can go back to the old village and get their rice and come back, but there is no work for them. On top of that, they also have to work for the Burmese. They have to take their own rice and work for the Burmese. The Burmese decided that each person can eat only 3 small tins of rice per day. For example, if I have more than 3 tins of rice with me they will take all my rice. [The villagers must hand over their rice to the soldiers, then receive 3 tins of it per person per day.] We won't go back unless the country gets better. Not unless they get democracy.

Interview 58: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood, Refugee

Name: Sai Kham Leng
 Sex: Male
 Age: 35
 Nationality: Shan, farmer
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, 1 child aged 5
 Address: Nam Wan village, Wan Lao tract, Kun Hing twp.
 Interviewed: May 31, 1996

Our village is south of Kun Hing, just on the way from Chiang Tong through Sai Khao to Kun Hing. Our village is about 3 kilometres from Sai Khao, which is close to the Chiang Tong - Kun Hing road. That road is quite big, but not paved. We are about 15 miles from Kun Hing. In the village where we live there are more than 100 houses. Our village already moved. The order came on the 15th [of May], and we left there on the 21st. It took us 3 days to come here [Thailand]. It is now 11 days since we left the village.

On the 15th the Burmese came and called the head of the village and they held a meeting. The meeting was in Sai Khao, and the soldiers came up from #518 Battalion in Chiang Tong. They called the headmen of 12 villages [all in Wan Lao village tract]: Nam Wan, Beng Kan, Nah Way, Kung Sar, Nam Tsang [not the town], Nong Kham, Wan Tsan, Kun Hsing, Khon Nah, Gong Lang, Ho Yan. On average each village has about 150 families. After the meeting with the Burmese, the village head called the villagers for a meeting. I was there. He said, "The Burmese called us to a meeting and we already had a meeting. They said we have to move. You can move to Chiang Tong or to Kun Hing or to Thailand, wherever you like. If we don't, they said they'll set fire to our houses. You can move to villages along the big road from Chiang Tong to Sai Khao and Kun Hing." Some people requested the headman if they could not be moved from the village, but he said we had to obey the order. On

the day we started to move, all the villagers started taking their belongings and some started moving to Kun Hing and Chiang Tong, but the majority of them came to Thailand. They went to Kun Hing, Chiang Tong, Sai Khao, wherever your relatives are - anywhere except Nam Wan.

We had to move to Wan Lao. Before there were 160 houses there already, now there are more. When we moved to Wan Lao, they just made us all find our own places, even in the fields. People had to clear the bushes to make a place. They said we weren't allowed to bring along our building materials, but we did. After all the villagers moved, the Burmese troops started guarding the villages, and they also used the villagers to build things for them, digging and building a camp and shelters for the guards at Wan Lao village. It is #518 Battalion. They asked for a list of names so they could recruit people for People's Militia. The reason they came and put their troops in the village is first so the Shan soldiers can't pass through, and also so the villagers can't go back to their villages.

Nobody tried to stay in the village, they didn't dare after getting the order. Only the monks in the monastery were left. Apart from the monks, just 3 or 4 families to take care of the monks and the monastery. The people who moved to Wan Lao and Sai Khao are allowed to go back and farm. For only 5 days they are allowed to be at their farm, and they can take only 3 tins per day of rice for their meals. They have to get a pass for 5 days from the Burmese along with the 3 tins of rice per day. If the pass expires, they have to get a new one. If you go to the field to farm, you must just stay in the field for 5 days and not come back. They're not allowed to go back to the village. If you're in the field you can just stay in the field, you can't go to the village. They allow just one to go from each family. They just allow the person who is really going to work, not the wife and the children. The family must stay behind.

We decided to come to Thailand, because after the order came every time they see a group of men they catch them and take them for People's Militia. We have to be their slaves. They take people by force to build fences. They ask for a name list and they collect people for People's Militia. In Chiang Tong, there is one Battalion already but they will add two more. On top of that, the Burmese planned to gather all the villagers' rice together, and then distribute only 3 milktins to the villagers each day.

They announced the order on the 15th, and we left Wan Lao for Thailand on the 21st. Just one third of the villagers are left there with the Burmese, the other two thirds have left [the area]. People won't stay in the relocation place for a long time. They are still hoping for the day when they can go back to their

home place, because they have animals and ricefields still there. If not, they will come here. I don't think I'll be going back home, unless the situation totally changes. The Burmese didn't tell us anything about when we can go home. They are letting people come to Thailand. Their aim is just to stop people from staying in the villages, to drive them out, that's all. If the villagers stay in those villages, the Shan armies will still come to stay among them. That's why they drive all the villagers out. They don't care about what the future will be, they just want to empty those villages. To those who go and farm they say "Just stay in the fields, don't go into the village". This is how they prevent the Shan soldiers from entering the villages.

Interview 59: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood

Name: Sai Gong Mon
 Sex: Male
 Age: 38
 Nationality: Shan, farmer
 Religion: Buddhist
 Family: Married, 3 children aged 7 months, 3, and 9
 Address: Nong Tong Long vlg, Wan Jit tract, Lang Ker twp
 Interviewed: June 1, 1996
 Source: KHRG

["Sai Gong Mon" was working in Thailand when he heard that villages were being moved and went back to help his wife and children still in Shan State.]

I got back there about the 3rd or 4th of April - the trip took two and a half days. That is when I arrived in Lang Ker. I got back and everything was confused, I didn't know anything. When I got to Lang Ker they [his wife and children] were already there. They said Burmese soldiers came and made them move immediately, they gave them 5 days. After 5 days, they would not be allowed to come back to the village. When I got there the 5 days was already past. I didn't get to our village.

Our village had 22 houses. It's two hours from Lang Ker, to the north. The Burmese soldiers wanted them to move to the town. It was #55 Battalion from Mong Pan. They want everybody who lives outside the town to move to Lang Ker. The Burmese said "You're living outside the town. If you stay here the insurgent groups will ask rice from you, so you've got to move to the town." The whole village and the whole village tract moved. Two village tracts - Wan

Jit and Hai Koi. In Wan Jit tract, Wan Jit, Wan Nong, Nong Oi, Nam Naw, Bung Ton, Bung Sar, Wan Mai, Wan Tung, and Nah Kah villages - 10 villages altogether [including his village and Wan Jit]. In Hai Koi tract, Hai Koi, Loi Pow, Son Oi, Nah Mai, Wan Jong, and Oo Hah - 6 villages altogether.

I heard that afterwards they burned all the houses in our village, but I didn't see it, I wasn't there. My relatives told me about it. My wife and children were staying in Wan Kaen, close to Lang Ker, with their nephew and niece. All the villagers are staying with their relatives or friends, in other people's houses. Lang Ker is crowded now. People had to bring their rice with them, the Burmese give nothing. They just give 5 days to move, and you have to take everything in that time. My wife had no idea what it was about. They just gave them 5 days to move, so as soon as the Burmese soldiers ordered them to move they were all busy moving their things. We [my family] had rice hidden in the fields. They carried what they could [to Lang Ker]. People are working as laborers to get money to eat. They work in the local sugarcane fields. If you go back and farm your own fields you'd be shot.

The Burmese didn't prepare a place, they just told everyone "Go to Lang Ker". The soldiers didn't follow people leaving the village, but they came to the village to check that they'd left. The people from the two village tracts that moved don't have to work for the soldiers now, but before moving they were forced to work at the Army camp at Nong Long. The soldiers also took their cattle, pigs, chickens and everything. If they want something, they just take it. I was there for about one month. I arrived back here about 10 days ago, with my family. I don't know what will happen to people. We don't know what to do. We can't go home.

Interview 60: HRV: Relocation, Portage, Refugee, Child

Name: Sai Hom
Sex: Male
Age: 26
Nationality: Shan, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Address: Nam Sang township
Interviewed: June 11, 1996
Source: KHRG

[“Sai Hom” works in Thailand, but went back to Shan State to see his family in May/June 1996.]

I just got back [to Thailand] 6 days ago. I went back on May 5th, and I got back here on June 3rd. I went to Mong Ton, then crossed the Salween River and went to Lang Ker, Nam Sang, Laikha, Mong Kung, and then back down to Kun Hing. While I was there I saw people moving, carrying their children, carrying their things. I saw them walking along the roads, and living along the roadsides. It makes you cry - they've lost everything, and their houses have been burned. People couldn't take much with them. You see many people carrying children, and a load on their back too. I saw it around Kun Hing ... it's everywhere! They're all over the place, I can't list all the places. They were moving close to the towns. They're just living in bamboo huts, I saw the places they're staying in. They're staying all packed together. They don't have any money to build proper houses, so they have to do that. I saw soldiers guarding some of these places. They looked like camps, many huts. I saw lots of these places. In some places the people beg along the sides of the road. They hold monk's bowls and just stand there by the roadside, all day long. They hope passersby will put some rice or money in their bowls. The children hold out their caps. I saw groups of 30 people or more standing together along the roadsides doing this. I saw it coming out of Nam Sang on the road to Kun Hing. Also near Ko Lam [halfway between Nam Sang and Kun Hing], and near Kun Hing.

In Kun Mong the Army came to collect porters and all the men ran away. So there was a family with only their daughters, and it looked like the soldiers were going to rape them. So the headman went to complain, and while he was away complaining the soldiers raped his daughter. This happened about 3 months ago. It is a famous case, everyone is talking about it and angry about it. I heard it from my friends there. Kun Mong is about 10 km. from Nam Sang.

I also saw people breaking stones for the railway. At Lai Kha, just north of Lai Kha, for the railway from Lai Kha to Mong Kung. It's obvious that it's a railway, because they're making the ground so level. It's got to be very smooth, different than a road. I've seen both road and railway construction, and I can tell this is a railway. My friends said it is a railway. Many of my friends are working on it. There's been an announcement that people have to make this railway. I'm not sure how long it's been going on now, about 3 months. Everyone in this area is being ordered to work on it. Each house has to send one person each day. Every house. There's no time limit - every day until it's finished. My friends are from Lai Kha town. People who have been ordered to move are also being forced to work on it. When I was there I saw several hundred people together, breaking rocks. Soldiers were watching them. My friends told me that there are beatings.

Q: How long until it will be finished?

A: I don't know! It's taking a long time, because it takes a long time to make it flat. It's going to go from Loi Lem to Pang Long, Lai Kha, and Mong Kung. They didn't say what it's for. In Lai Kha, in the morning and the evening, the loudspeakers announce it every day. I was in Lai Kha for 4 days. I heard it when I was there - every morning and every evening, the loudspeakers say "Make your rice ready, tomorrow morning you're going to work on the railway." They say it in Shan. I didn't have to go because I was visiting my relatives, but I had to register myself [as a house guest] and I had to pay 50 kyats to the section leader.

My uncle was chairman of xxxx village, and he had to move to Kun Hing. I visited him. He hasn't got anything now. He couldn't bring anything with him, and he had to leave all his livestock behind. His house is no good now, not like before, and he's got 4 children, 3 of them daughters. My uncle told me he wants to come to Thailand. From nearly every house there are people coming to Thailand now. He is over 40. He asked me to find him work here, but I said I couldn't promise anything. He hasn't come. When I came back it was so crowded, especially from Nam Sang to Mong Ton. There were 45 people in one truck, and there were 5 trucks coming together. Each person had to pay 4,500 kyats from Nam Sang to the border. There are at least 20 checkpoints along the way, so most of that money just goes to the soldiers.

Q: Aren't they stopping people?

A: No, they want Shan people to leave. They want Burmese people to come and occupy Shan State, because it is so rich and fertile. I just wish people in the world had a satellite camera, so they could look down and see for themselves how bad it is now around Nam Sang and Kun Hing.

Interview 61: HRV: Relocation, Torture, Rape, Women

Name: Sai Yi
Sex: Male
Age: 31
Nationality: Shan, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 4 children aged 4-13
Address: Nam Wo village, Nam Sang township
Interviewed: May 30, 1996

We left our village on March 16. Before Water Festival. All my children and my wife came along also. The soldiers ordered us to move between 16 March and 18 March. The order came on the 16th. We felt so sad, so we came to this other country. We didn't dare get our things out of our house. As soon as the soldiers ordered us to move we moved immediately. All the villagers in the 9 villages of Nong Hi village tract ran away.

The soldiers beat the headman, because the headman asked them not to force us to move from our village. There were 20 soldiers. It was #247 Battalion. They stay in Nam Sang and Mong Nai area. One of the soldiers hit the headman. They kicked him. They kicked 3 times, but one time they missed. They kicked him in the belly. They also hit him with a rifle butt. Then they beat a PNA [Pa'o National Army] member who lives in the village and said, "We will attack all the Armies, including Aung Thein!" He asked the Burmese soldiers not to force the villagers to move. He is a soldier the same as them, so they didn't listen. They beat him a lot but he wasn't hurt as badly as the headman. The PNA member said, "Before I lived in the town, now I live in the village and I understand what happens in the village [how the soldiers treat the villagers]". The headman was hurt, but he didn't die. He can still walk slowly, but he cannot run. He is 40. His name is Loong Heng Sait.

Our village had nearly 160 houses. Everyone ran into the forest that night. The next morning we went to Nam Sang and hired a car to carry our things. The same happened in Loi Kap village too, and Kun Sai. I don't know what's happened in other villages. Many people from all the villages were moving that same night at the same time. They gave the villagers only 3 days to 5 days. If the villagers couldn't move in that time, they burned all the houses in the village. Many villagers died. If they go back to get their things, the soldiers shoot them. We could not tell whose animals were whose among those left behind in the village, whose cows, whose pigs. Each family had at least 50 cattle or buffalos, and they had to leave them. If a family owned 100 cattle, at least 50 were left behind. The Burmese soldiers kill those animals for meat. We didn't see them looting, because when the soldiers were in the village we left. [Another man from the village added: "The Burmese soldiers took everything that was left in the houses."] We lost most of it. We could only take a few things. We had nothing. We moved to Nam Sang town and we couldn't work there, there was no way to make a living there so we came here.

They ordered us to move to Kai Long village in Nam Sang township, near the road. The Burmese didn't help the villagers to move. The villagers have to arrange their own way to survive. There are no fields there, just forest. It is

about 3 hours [walking] from our village, so about 8 kilometres. Some went to Kai Long, some went to Nam Sang - people went everywhere. Some went to Wan Haeng - Pa Lur [Wan Haeng, Pa Lur, and Hai Neng refer to parts of the same village]. They get no help from the Burmese soldiers. They make small huts just 1 or 2 armspans [3 yards] wide. If the Burmese soldiers want porters they come and take them. Some don't have enough food.

Even before this the Burmese soldiers made many problems. They rape the girls and they take porters. All the time. They rape all the time, everywhere. It happened to Nang Parng's sister. If they meet a girl, they rape her. The Shan armies didn't come in the village. The Pa'O soldiers [PNA, which has a ceasefire with SLORC] ask money, but just a small amount - 60 kyats per year per family, to make sure no bad people come to the village.

Q: Why is SLORC ordering the villages to move?

A: So that the Shan armies will disappear, so all the Shan armies will surrender to the Burmese. We are in the border area between PNA and the Shan armies. The Shan soldiers are nearby. They say the villagers support the Shan armies.

Q: Did the Burmese say when people could go home to the village?

A: In 3 years. I don't know why - some will take 3 years, some will take 6 months. Burmese Army said that. I have no plan to go back. If we go back it will not be easy to live. The Burmese are bad. The Burmese want to make it so the Shans cannot live there. The Burmese soldiers didn't help us. If they had given us some rice or something, we would not have come here. But we had nothing to eat, so we came here. This child is 7 years old, this one is 4 years old. Our whole family came here. Our family has 4 children. Now I work for money in other people's fields, day by day. For one day, 70 Baht. Between me and my wife, for one day we can make 140 or 150 Baht [US\$6]. In Shan State we had a field and a good house and a rice mill, altogether worth 300,000 kyats. It is still there, we could not take it with us.

Interview 62: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood, Torture

Name: Nang Parng
Sex: Female
Age: 24
Nationality: Shan, farmer

Religion: Buddhist
Family: Single, father alive, mother dead, four brothers and sisters
Address: Nam Wo village, Nam Sang township
Interviewed: May 30, 1996
Source: KHRG

I was born in Nong Kok village, Lai Kha Township. Now my father is in Lai Kha. They ordered my village [Nam Wo] to move on the 16th of March, on the English calendar. When I left it was Wednesday, three days afterwards. On the 20th. At night, at 9 o'clock. They came and shot their guns. Four Burmese soldiers came to the village. They stay in Kun Sai. They were angry, and they said, "We ordered you to move, why haven't you moved yet?" The soldiers also beat the headman without even asking him any questions.

All the villagers ran away. Some used their bullock carts and some carried their things. They took everything they could. At night we ran into the forest. We all ran. The next day we went back in the village and moved our belongings for the next 3 days. I was very sad, because I have a home but now I could not live at my home.

We started getting out of our village and carried our belongings by car, day and night. Still, the things we couldn't bring were left behind. We did not sleep for 3 days and nights. We had to search for a car to carry our things. Cars were difficult to find. In our village we had a lot of rice in our rice barn, but we could not carry it like that. We had to buy sacks to carry it. We asked the car to buy the sacks for us, but the driver was not kind to us, he charged 10,000 kyats for one trip. For three days we could not sleep because we were carrying our things. If we slept, someone else would steal our things. We went from Nam Wo to Nam Sang. My sister has a house in Nam Sang. I stayed with my sister and my brother-in-law. We could not work there because it is a new place for us. We don't know how to get work there. Some people are poor, so they came and stayed with us and we shared food with them. I stayed there and looked after the children.

I left on May 2nd. I didn't know what to do there. My older sister's friend lives here [in Thailand] sewing clothes. She is Chinese. We are five brothers and sisters. Some are in Lai Kha, some are in Nam Sang. They cannot work now. They sell their belongings to make money to live. If I had a lot of money I would go to Taunggyi and build a house and open a shop. Now I am in [northern] Thailand, I cannot work here. I will go to Bangkok to search for work. [She didn't know how to get to Bangkok, or how to get past the police.] If I had money I would go back [to Shan State], but with no money I cannot go

back. There is no way to go back to my village. My village is not like before.

Interview 63: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood

Name: Phra Wi Yaw Na
Sex: Male
Age: 47
Nationality: Shan, monk
Religion: Buddhist
Address: Nam Ho Hai village, Lai Kha township
Interviewed: May 31, 1996
Source: KHRG

Nam Ho Hai village is east of Lai Kha town, not near any road. Our temple had one monk and 20 novices. We left the village on March 4th. The Burmese soldiers came to the monastery. They said to the monks: "The village must move. If we come back again and the village hasn't moved we will burn the village and the monastery." They said this to the monks, then they went into Wan Ho Hai [i.e. into the village; the monastery is outside the village]. They said that to everyone. They [SLORC soldiers] said there are 90 MTA soldiers near the village, and if those MTA soldiers surrender then the village doesn't have to move. If the 90 MTA do not surrender, the village has to move. These MTA soldiers were near the village, out in the jungle. The Burmese gave us 8 days. If we didn't move within 8 days, the Burmese soldiers would burn the village.

Q: Did the soldiers come into the temple?

A: They did not bring their weapons inside [the temple building], but they were in the compound. Wherever the Burmese soldiers go they carry their weapons. They had them hanging from their shoulders. They had the straps over their shoulders and were holding them pointed like this. [Hanging by the strap but held pointed in firing position.] In their country they are obedient to Buddhism, but when they arrive in our villages they think we are just jungle people with no knowledge, that we are just MTA villages. So when they arrive they are afraid of Shan or MTA, and they are always on the alert.

If they see villagers running away they shoot their guns. When they came to Nam Lin village they saw villagers running and they shot their guns but they didn't hit anyone. Six villages were ordered to move, and Nam Lin was one of them. The others are Pah Mai, Bang Hsa, Nam Ho Hai, Bang Ka, Gong Mong,

all six villages in the area were ordered to move to Bang Paen village. Another one [ordered to move there] is Wan Tsee Tsoh.

First we moved to Gong Mong, the villagers were there for 15 days and made their huts, they hadn't finished their huts, and then the Burmese soldiers ordered them to move to M'Lang. They were in M'Lang just a few days, then they were ordered to move to Bang Paen. To Gong Mong is 2 kilometres. Gong Mong is not far from the car road. From Gong Mong to M'Lang is about 1 kilometre. Bang Paen is very near there, about 20 miles from Lai Kha and 10 miles west of Mong Nong. Bang Paen is not near the car road, but it is a big village. The fifty households of Gong Mong and about 50 households of M'Lang also moved to Bang Paen. They all moved together. Six other villages were moved to Bang Paen. Each village moved had about 50 households.

The Burmese soldiers are not in Bang Paen, they are in Wan Tsing. Wan Tsing, Mong Yang, and Bang Paen are all near each other. The Burmese soldiers from Wan Tsing ordered us to move. These soldiers are from Kun Hing. #524 [Battalion].

At Bang Paen the Burmese gave no place to stay, the people had to make it themselves. The Burmese soldiers don't allow them to farm. They must go to live in Bang Paen and there is no work for them. They cannot go back to their village. They eat what they brought from the village, and those who have nothing borrow food from others. When they have nothing more, I don't know what they will do. The Burmese give them nothing. For now the Burmese soldiers don't call them for work, but the soldiers are planning to rebuild the bridge at Nam Wan. The bridge is on the road from Mong Nong to Lai Kha, 2 miles from Mong Nong. It is an old bridge, but they plan to rebuild it. If they rebuild the bridge they will call the villagers for labor to do it.

No one stayed in their villages. Everyone moved. They moved to Bang Paen, Mong Yang, and Wan Tsim - the 3 villages. The 3 villages are near each other. Some didn't obey and are hiding in the forest, but not in the village. The Burmese soldiers didn't allow the villagers to take their houses apart [to re-use the building materials]. Their houses are still in the village. The Burmese soldiers said, "Just tie your 'kien ho' [Shan leaddress] on your house to mark it". Now the people just have to build huts to stay in Bang Paen or in the forest. The soldiers said, "Do not build your huts well". I don't know what is in the Burmese soldiers' hearts. They said if all the MTA surrender to them then the villagers can go back home.

We could not stay in our monastery. They ordered the monks, "Move to Bang

Paen". We share food but it is not enough. We sold everything and stayed together with the villagers in Bang Paen. I don't know how the future will be. On April 21st, at night, I came from Bang Paen to Thailand. On the way I saw people moving to stay in Hai Neng near Ko Lam, and in Ko Lam many people were moving. Ko Lam is between Nam Sang and Kun Hing, near Kun Hing.

The Burmese soldiers are just trying to make the Shan people poor. The ninety Shan soldiers [near Wan Ho Hai village] will not surrender. They are Ker Lao's group [Ker Lao is with Yord Serk].

Interview 64: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood

Name: Sai Wan Na
Sex: Male
Age: 37
Nationality: Shan, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
family: Married, 2 children aged 8 and 15
Address: Bah San village, Chiang Tong township
Interviewed: May 31, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Sai Wan Na had been working in Thailand for one year, then tried to take his family home to their village in Shan State in April 1996.]

Just two days after the water festival we left and went back [on April 17]. By the time we got to the village where I was born, we found that all the villagers were moving to different places. I had my wife and children with me, they followed with me everywhere. We came to Thailand together, we went back to our village together and we came back here again together. By the time we got to our village everyone had moved already. No one was left. I was shocked. Nobody had told me. I just arrived and it was empty. There used to be about 120 families.

When I saw that no one was left, I went right away to the temple and the monk told me "Your relatives moved already", so I followed them. They had moved to Ton Hoong village, about 2 kilometres away, on foot about 30 minutes. Most of the people had gone there. They were ordered to go there. They had 5 days to move. At the end of 5 days the soldiers came to check. If there were chickens or pigs or cattle, they took them. Including the outskirts, Ton Hoong has more than 500 houses. It is where 2 roads meet - Nam Sang to Ton Hoong

and Kun Hing to Ton Hoong, and Mong Nai to Ton Hoong - 3 roads. Ton Hoong is one of the quarters of Chiang Tong. In fact, there is no single place called 'Chiang Tong'.

All the villages had to move except for the only 3 villages that remain in Chiang Tong area: Ton Hoong, Kun Mong and Weng Kau. All the others had to move. Around Bah San, Nong Tau, Nong Un, Wan Nong Nung, Nam Un, Nam Tong, Nah Sah, Wan Tau, Wan Ka, Loi Lai, Ho Kun, and Nah Pok villages were all supposed to move to Nong Hi village tract. There are three quarters in Chiang Tong - Nong Hi, Kun Mong, and Ton Hoong. There are two Nong Hi's.

All the villagers have to find places on their own. It's up to you. Some of them stay at the monastery, or wherever they can. By the time I arrived at Ton Hoong there were many villagers there. The quarter of Ton Hoong is full of villagers, staying in every corner, everywhere. In paddy field shelters, and where the farmers pile their straw, even in the cattle corrals, people are staying everywhere. By the time I got there it was raining very heavily [throughout the region the monsoon rains began early this year, in April]. Some of the villagers tried to bring their house construction materials, but they have very few. When they get sick there is a hospital but there is no doctor there, so they have to rely on herbal medicine. Some have died. First they had coughing, like lung problems.

The Burmese take all their rice, then ration it back to them. They rotate, each time they distribute rice to 50 families for 5 days. People can go back to farm their fields, just for 5 days, one person at a time. After 5 days you need an extension. At night the villagers have to guard the town perimeter, always 2 villagers together with each Burmese soldier. The families have to rotate. There is only one Battalion in Ton Hoong - #551. Soon the villagers will also have to build guardhouses for them.

We stayed for 8 days with my older sister and her family in Ton Hoong. Five families of my relatives from Bah San were also staying in my sister's house. It is a 2 storey house. Each family has 3, 4, or 5 people. [Joking:] And in our country we have no medicine to prevent pregnancy either! There's not enough shelter or food or anything, but somehow people survive. The food in the market is brought from Nam Sang and Kun Hing by bullock cart. When they carry rice from Kun Hing to Nam Sang, each person is not allowed to carry more than 5 litres of rice. One pyi [about 2 kg.] is equal to 3 litres. One litre is 25 kyats. It's expensive. It used to be 12. In the end, no one will be left in Chiang Tong area if it goes on like this.

I intended to live there again, not just visit. But due to the situation there I decided to come back to Thailand again. I was upset that I couldn't go back and live in our old village and I had to come back here again. The rest of my relatives also want to come here, but they can't afford the expense of the journey. It costs 8,000 kyats to come from Chiang Tong to Thailand; truck fares, ferry fare to cross the Salween, and money to pass the checkpoints. We also have to pay the soldiers. Some try to come, they even carry the older people on their backs, but along the way their money runs out or they can't carry anymore, and they have to turn around and go back. Some of the rich people from the villages also can't go anywhere, because they have too many valuable properties there. They try to sell it but no one will buy it, so they cannot leave there.

Interview 65: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood, Women, Killing

Name: Phra Wi Lay Ka
 Sex: Male
 Age: 36
 Nationality: Shan, monk
 Religion: Buddhist

Name: Phra Kay Ma Sa Ra
 Sex: Male
 Age: 19
 Nationality: Shan, monk
 Religion: Buddhist
 Address: Mong Nong town, Kay See Township
 Interviewed: May 31, 1996
 Source: KHRG

“Phra Wi Lay Ka”: Eighteen village tracts around Mong Nong were forced to move. Five village tracts south of Mong Nong - Mong Song, Keng Hau, Bung Tsan, Mong Lim, and Nong Tau village tracts - had to move to Mong Hong. Two village tracts, Wan Tung and Nong Ya, had to move to Mong Nong. West of Mong Nong, King Hae and Mong Yai village tracts moved to Mong Nong. Mong Nang, Mong Bon, Wan It, and Nong Wo tracts moved to Mong Nang village. North of Mong Nong, Wan Hai and Hong Tsan village tracts moved to Wan Luoi Nam Hong. Duh Ya, Mun Kam, and Nah So tracts moved to Mwee Taw. The others I can't remember. Each village tract has many villages. Some have 5 villages, some have 2, some have 10 villages. All of them have to move.

We live in the town of Mong Nong. Two village tracts had to move there, Wan Tung and Nong Ya, on 16 March 1996. From the 16th to the 18th of March they ordered all the villages to finish moving. The villagers were all ordered to finish moving by no-moon day of the 4th Shan month [18 March]. The Burmese gave them a place to stay but they didn't give any food to eat. They gave them a place to stay in the forest outside the town. It's just an empty space. The villagers cannot go back home. If they go back the soldiers will shoot and kill them. There is no work for them.

Each village tract was moved to a different place. One near Mong Nong is 15 rai [4-5 acres], and there was also one of 5 rai [1-2 acres]. Nam Wong, Mwee Toh, Wing Kau, and Mong Nang [relocation sites] are near Mong Nong. Another is Nong Aye. The soldiers stay in Nam Wong, near Mong Nong. Sometimes they go to Wan Kai. They also stay in Muong Mae and Bang Pon. They are from Kun Hing. #524 Battalion. The soldiers who gave the orders to move stay north of Mong Nong, in Wan Ho Na. They are from Pang Long, #249 Battalion. The soldiers don't stay a long time, they are always changing. The soldiers order people to make fences for their Army camp, to clear the roadsides, to make roads for the Army and to stand sentry along the roads. The road is from Lai Kha to Mong Hsu. All of the people are used for this work, the relocated people and the people who live there have to rotate.

Q: Do the people who had to move have food to eat?

"Phra Wi Lay Ka": No, not enough. They weren't given any food, they just eat what they brought from their villages. Some have to beg for food. There is no work. Some monks came to our temple. Everyone had to leave the villages, including the monks. They are all going and staying in other temples. The Burmese soldiers said in 3 months they will let the people go back home. They say that within 3 months they will destroy all the Shan soldiers. We ran away. We didn't want to see the people being oppressed like that.

[At this point he began referring to notes he had made in his diary.] On 18 March 1996 they ordered people to guard the Mong Nong-Lai Kha road from Mong Nong to Hai Seng, about 11 kilometres going west. They ordered every household to go. If they didn't go they were punished. They ordered them to guard day and night for 5 days and nights. That was during the relocation time. They said it was to see if MTA soldiers crossed the road. They divided the people into groups of 4 or 5 to guard the road. They had to stand guard at places about one kilometre distance apart, as far as you can see - on corners, closer together. If a person guarding saw an MTA soldier cross the road they

had to report it up the line to the Burmese soldiers. There were men and women guarding the road together. Also children 10 years old guarding the road, and old men 60, 70 and 80 years old. On 18 March 1996 at night, between 7 or 8 o'clock and 6 o'clock in the morning, about 30 Burmese soldiers from Pang Long, #249 Battalion, came and shot the people who were guarding the road. Three people were wounded. The wounded people were Sai Tu, age 16, Sai Kya, age 25, and Sai Mun, age 15. One was wounded in the hand, the other two also not seriously. Later they said it was Shan soldiers who did this shooting. We know the Burmese shot, but the Burmese soldiers want to make the Shan villagers see the MTA as being very cruel. They said "Even though Khun Sa surrendered there are still Khun Sa's soldiers around, and that is why you have to guard this road." Three people were shot and wounded, but not dead. After that, the Burmese came to them and said, "See? These were shot by MTA". They went to the villagers and said, "Those who shot you were MTA. If you say you were shot by us, you'll be killed". The Burmese Army said "If the Khun Sa members don't surrender, you will always have to guard the road." They are making it so Shan people cannot live anymore and will disappear. They want to conquer Shan State.

If the MTA come and the people don't report it they'll be punished. If the dogs bark in a village, the Burmese say that the MTA soldiers have come in the village and they come in the village and kill the dogs, and then they go to the headman and say "There are MTA soldiers in your village, why didn't you report it to us?", and punish him. They make many problems for people. One man went to the forest to cut trees, and they took him and killed him. I don't remember the date.

They also order girls to go and sew their uniforms. They cannot do it in their home, they must go do it at the army camp - each day, 2 girls. That is #249 Battalion. The girls have to go from 6 o'clock in the morning until 4 o'clock in the evening, then they can come back. They sew the Burmese soldiers' uniforms. For one year already, the girls have to rotate and every day 2 girls have to go. They took a villager's sewing machine to keep in their Army camp. They also take people's video machines to watch videos. Each day one man has to take a video and TV to their camp to show videos, day and night. If they run out of [generator] fuel, they collect money from the people to buy more fuel. Also, between 8 o'clock and 12 o'clock at night the village has to supply electric power to the Army camp [from their generators, apart from the power for the TV/video]. From 8 o'clock to 12 o'clock at night, if the villagers go out they must carry an oil lamp or else they will be punished. After 10 o'clock you cannot go outside. It has been like this for one year now.

On the [Lai Kha-Mong Hsu] road, if there are no Burmese soldiers on a car the checkpoints take 250 or 270 kyats per person from the driver, and 90 kyats for motorcycles. The trucks run between Taunggyi and Mong Hsu. Mong Hsu is a place where people dig for rubies. The place where people dig for rubies is east of Mong Hsu, and there are relocations happening west of Mong Hsu. There are SSA [Shan State Army] soldiers there. I don't know why they are moving villages there. Even though SSA has a deal with the Burmese, still they are under the pressure of the Burmese. [SSA has had a ceasefire with SLORC for several years, but even so relocations are being conducted in their area to cut more of their civilian support base.] The SSA are not close to the ruby mines, they are far from where people dig. They're not close to Mong Hsu town.

They're relocating villagers in the south, but we heard they're doing relocations around Mu Seh and Nam Kham also [on Shan State's northern border with China]. They're doing relocations everywhere in Shan State, not in the towns but in the countryside. Also at Lang Ker, Mong Nong, Nong Long, west of Kun Hing, and around Nam Sang. Especially all the areas where MTA operated, they are clearing them out.

Q: Do SLORC soldiers come to your temple in Mong Nong?

Phra Wi Lay Ka: They just come and visit it. They don't come to make offerings. They go to their own temples, in Burma. They don't come to ours, except when the villagers have a celebration. If there's no specific reason, they won't come to make merit. They come in, they ask nothing and say nothing, they just look around to see if there are MTA soldiers. When the soldiers come into the countryside, they have no religion. If anything happens in the temple they don't take their boots off, they just come in and enter the temple. They take care about that only when they're in their own towns. When they go in the temple they take their weapons, without taking their boots off, and they search in the rooms. They are so rude.

Q: Do they build their own pagodas in the area?

Phra Wi Lay Ka: Yes they did, near Mong Nong and Mong Hsu. In Loi Hseng [the ruby mining area near Mong Hsu], each time a new Major comes he hangs up a sign and receives offerings [for the pagoda], whenever people are making merit he sits and accepts offerings, and then when he has enough money he goes home and uses it for himself. For 3 years this pagoda has been under construction, and it's not finished yet. It's not a big chedi either, only 10 metres high! Not even half of it has been built yet. By doing it this way they push

down the fortunes of the Shan people [by leaving it half-finished], so that the Shan people will not be prosperous and will sink down.

Interview 66: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood, Women, Children, Arrest, Torture

Name: Sai Heng
Sex: Male
Age: 35
Nationality: Shan, farmer
Religion: Buddhist

Name: Nang Kham
Sex: Female
Age: 33
Nationality: Shan, farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 2 children aged 15 months and 13 years
Address: Wan Bah San vlg, Nong Hi tract, Chiang Tong twp.
Interviewed: May 31, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Sai Heng and Nang Kham are husband and wife.]

Sai Heng: Our village used to be in Mong Nai [township], but now they've made a new township of Chiang Tong. The village is south of Chiang Tong, about 2 miles. We left on the 6th of this month [May]. The Burmese burned down our house. We couldn't stay there anymore, that's why we left. There was nothing to eat. Even clothes, we had to ask other people for clothes.

They burned our house at 6 o'clock in the evening, on February 1st. Our rice mill was a bit apart [in a separate shed], but it all got burned down too. The village has more than 400 houses, and they burned 12. The soldiers came up from Mong Pan area, and when they got to Bah San village they asked "Did the Shan [soldiers] pass by this village?" We said no, we didn't see them, and then they set fire to the houses. They came up from Mong Pan, Mong Nai, and Lang Ker - 3 towns. Battalions #99 and #520. [99 is in Lang Ker, 520 in Mong Pan.]

When the houses were burned I was not there - we had to run away all the time because they always arrest the men to use us as porters to carry their things. So

we cannot be at home all the time. But when the house was burned, my wife was still in the house. They started to set fire to the house, and she ran out and ran away. The children also were with my wife. There were 3 [people] in the house. Our daughter is 13 years old. They ran down from the house. The soldiers chose the nicest houses to burn. Only the big and beautiful houses, they know that “this house is very rich”, so they burned those houses. Ours was a wooden house, all teak. The floor and walls were made of teak, but the roof was just ordinary, made of bamboo and grass. They tied a bunch of straw, lit it and then put it on our roof.

“Nang Kham”: I was holding my baby and doing nothing, because it was 6 o’clock so all my work had been done already. They used dry straw and held it up to the roof. They said nothing, no warning. Even though they knew that we were still in the house they set it on fire. I was just holding my baby. As soon as I knew the house was on fire I just held my baby and ran out of the house. I couldn’t take anything - we just tried to escape from the fire. I got nothing out of the house with me. We ran into the field, to a field shelter. After that I didn’t go back to see, but people told me our house had burned down completely. So we just kept going, on to Wan Ton Hoong.

Sai Heng: The soldiers arrived in our village about 3 p.m. At 6 o’clock they set fire to the houses, then half an hour later they left the village. When they came only the children and women were left in the village. When they started burning the houses the soldiers were watching the stairways to the houses and the paths. The houses started to burn, and some people from the other houses not being burned also ran out from their houses, and they were stopped by the soldiers. The soldiers stopped them and took all of the belongings they had with them. Not only that, but they took everything from all the villagers’ shops in the village. They arrested the headman and they beat him up. He almost died. He was the Ya Wa Ta [Village LORC] headman, elected by the villagers. Later they released him at Ko Lam village, near Nam Sang. He was the only one arrested. They just hit him all over, in the head, in the back, ... The more you deny [seeing the opposition], the more you are beaten. I was told by the other people who were beaten by the soldiers. There were 5 people who were seriously beaten and they were badly hurt. They asked them all the same questions [about the Shan soldiers].

Sai Seng Wan: [“Sai Seng Wan” is from the same village - see his interview in this report.] They beat whomever they caught, including two of the village secretaries.

Sai Heng: I was hiding from the soldiers. I was in the fields. I met my wife there, and we went on together to Ton Hoong. We went to the town but we

could not find a place to stay, that's why we came to Thailand. When we arrived at the town we didn't know how to go on living. We left on April 26th, before they gave the order to move [their village was ordered to move on May 1]. When we thought about our future, we could not live there peacefully. The Burmese oppress us Shans very much. They don't let our people have any opportunity. Wherever they see Shan people they despise and look down on us very much. They consider us as country bumpkins and treat us very badly, like beating and other kinds of abuse. When we meet them on the road, we are caught and used as porters. As we spend our time farming we don't have time to resist them. That's why we had to flee to Thailand. After the village was burned we tried to find hope for the future but we couldn't see any hope. We won't even be able to do farming like before, or trading. We felt that there's no hope at all to live in 'Union of Myanmar'. For these reasons, whatever may come, we made our decision and left for Thailand. We do as others do. Three quarters of the villagers have come, only a quarter of the people are left behind. Some are older or not able-bodied, and some people still have many domestic animals, and some don't have enough money for the expense of the journey - if not for these 3 reasons, everyone would come.

Interview 67: HRV: Relocation, Forced labor, Refugee, Migrant worker

Name: Loong Kyong
Sex: Male
Age: 45
Nationality: Shan, planter/farmer
Religion: Buddhist
Address: From Chiang Tong area, now 12 years in Thailand
Interviewed: May 31, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Loong Kyong lives and works with many people who pass through the area when they flee Shan State. His comments are included here to help give an overview of the situation.]

I have lived in Thailand now for 12 years. I do farming growing garlic and onions. February, March, April, May, through these 4 months, each day between 50 and 200 people have come in through the Fang area [only one of at least 4 main routes]. Now it is decreasing, now only about 25 people each day coming into Fang area. Those who are able to spend money for the journey come in through Fang, but those who can't pay and those who can't walk the

distance stay in Mong Ton area or places along the way [the roads are being made impassable by the rains now]. They are still giving the [relocation] orders this month. Even right now, in Lang Ker, Mong Nai and Nam Sang areas. Lai Kha also. All of the areas in Loi Lem province. Mainly west of the Salween River - Chiang Tong area, Kun Hing, Mong Nong, Mong Kung, Lai Kha, Nam Sang, Mong Nai, and Lang Ker areas. They gather the people from all these areas for forced relocation and forced labor. The reason is because of the MTA, their soldiers pass all these villages, they rest there, etc. If the villages are small with only 15 or 20 houses, it's the kind of place where they like to stop and rest. The Shan armies also ask these villagers for rice, because they are the same race. For this reason, the Burmese troops want to cut off shelter and food from the Shan soldiers. That's why they force all the villagers to move.

All the small villages had to move. So right now, Chiang Tong is the size of 3 villages [i.e. 3 times as many people as before]. Before, there were 5 village tracts in Chiang Tong [township]: Nong Hi, Hin Long, Ton Hoong, Kun Mong, and Tambon Waeng. Now all these have been moved into just 3 villages: Kun Mong, Waeng, and Nong Hi. The main relocation place is Wan Ton Hoong. Those who cannot stay like that have moved to Mong Nai, Nam Sang, or Taunggyi. Most of them have come to Thailand.

At the relocation places they're used for forced labor on road construction between Chiang Tong and Kun Hing, and Kun Hing and Nam Sang. They're also building a new road on the east bank of the Salween River, another from Mong Hsat to Loi Lang, and another from Mong Tung to Loi Lang. They're using 500 people to build each road, still now. And they're using forced labor to extend the airfield at Mong Tung, and also for their camp because they're going to add another 2 Battalions at Mong Tung. So people are being used to clear sites for the Army camps. The people for this are being taken not only from Chiang Tong, but also from Chiang Kham and Sai Khao. They take them by truck. I know this from people who have fled from there.

In Chiang Tong area, most of the villagers have already come to Thailand. There are 2 or 3 big companies in Fang area [a Thai border district] that own orange, lychee, and longan plantations, and each of their farms has about 500 or 600 people working there. Most of the people who come to Fang area already have a relative in one of the villages around here. Those who have been in Thailand and have blue travel ID cards [Thai 'hilltribe' ID cards] earn better money. Those who don't have that card are the second class. The third class are the newcomers. Each class gets a different job and a different income. [A woman present added: The police are always trying to take advantage of the newcomers. Also the motorcycle-taxi drivers, if they see a watch, a

chain or a bracelet, they just take it from them. Life is very hard.]

Some go to Chiang Mai and work as construction labor, and some go down to Bangkok too. But it's very hard, sometimes they have to face the police and they are arrested. Some go to Bangkok and they have to be scared all the time, always hiding from the police. That man there, he used to stay in Bangkok and he's used to being arrested and sent to prison. He's not afraid of them anymore, because he knows he'll be in jail for not longer than 3 months, then released. In jail at least he can eat rice. Not like in Burma. Here is much better than life in Shan State. Before they came here, even though they had the chance to work for themselves, they had rice and crops, but in the end it was all taken by the Burmese. Over there we could barely survive. So what have we to fear from the police? We have been oppressed by the Burmese, forced to be porters. There you never know when they'll free you - 10 days, 20 days, or until they find someone else to take your place. Some just die along the way. Sometimes they suspected us of supporting the opposition groups with food, and then they beat us, sometimes even to death. In fact we just go to farm, and then they say "Where are you going? Where are you coming from?" We say "We're just coming from the farm", but they say "We don't believe you, you're taking food to the rebel groups, right?" When we say no, they start beating us. Life here is much better - even though they arrest us, later they release us so never mind, we can always find another job. At least we won't die.

There's a man named Sai xxxx from Chiang Kham, he just arrived and he said some Shan youth are being forced to work on a farm, a wheat farm. After growing the wheat, they will make the people plough the land and grow opium poppy there. Then when harvest time comes, the Burmese will buy it. Those who don't have wet paddy fields but only hillside rice fields now have to grow opium, and when the harvest comes they must sell it to the Burmese. The Burmese said "No need to grow much rice". The reason the Burmese say not to grow rice is that if you grow rice you have to give some to the rebel groups, and to others, etc., and you have to get your rice milled. So they say just grow opium and you can easily get money and buy your rice. The military will buy the opium. That area is north of Chiang Tong and south of Kun Hing. Each day they use about 150 people to work on that farm, so you can imagine the size. 150 people had to go to clear that farm for 10 days. Forced labor, they are paid nothing. This man here has been here only 3 days and he experienced it, and so did that man over there. The area of the field is about 9 or 10 rai [2-3 acres]. In Chiang Kham, about 500 rai [100-200 acres] altogether, not only in one place - different Burmese group, different area. This area 150 rai, the next area another 150 rai.

There's also a lot of forced labor in the north [of Shan State], especially on the road from Lashio to Mu Seh and Kyu Kote [trading towns on the China border]. Now they are going to pave that road, so all the way from Lashio to Kyu Kote will be paved, and the road is being widened to about 8 metres wide. The purpose of paving this road is to increase trade with China. They use forced labor of people from Lashio area. They've divided the forced labor into 2 groups, road construction and building construction. One group has to build a big warehouse and a hotel in Lashio, and another group has to do the same in Kyu Kote. The warehouse will be 2 storeys, with a zinc roof. The walls are made of wood. I heard this from a man from Mu Seh named Sai xxxx and his family, they came here from Lashio just recently but they are originally from Mu Seh. They arrived here in Thailand on May 27. Now they are staying in xxxx. He said this [Lashio-Mu Seh] road has been dirt road for years, and now it is to be paved and made wider than ever. All the way to Kyu Kote, no dirt road anymore. The wages for this labor they just collect from the people. They force people to move there too but not around the towns, just some places far from the towns. Mostly villages that only have 10 or 15 households.

Interview 68: HRV: Taxation, Livelihood, Assembly

[The following is an account of Hsipaw Town in northern Shan State, along the main road from Mandalay through Lashio to the Chinese border, given by a Shan woman from Hsipaw.] *Source: KHRG*

Hsipaw is a small town. It is divided in 13 wards with about 300 families in each. There are three SLORC army camps for battalions 23, 503, and 504 on the outskirts of the town. Outside of Hsipaw, SSA [Shan State Army] is doing the security. The SSA headquarters are 40 miles from Hsipaw. They signed a cease-fire agreement with the government. The [SLORC] Army and also SSA are using villagers for *loke ar pay* ['volunteer,' actually forced labour; this fact was confirmed by several people in Hsipaw]. The Army and SSA are also recruiting young boys as soldiers. Khun Sa also used to recruit all over Shan State. In Hsipaw itself, it is the [SLORC] Army who recruits soldiers but people can pay money to avoid entering the army.

In Bawgyoke village [5 miles east of Hsipaw town], there is a pagoda famous throughout Shan State, the Bawgyoke Pagoda. The government restored it and there was an opening ceremony on February 29 1996. In order to pay for the restoration of the pagoda, the government had to raise 8,000,000 kyats. They took out the Buddha image and took it around the townships of our State [to raise donations]. But these were forced donations. Each township was or-

dered to contribute a certain amount of money as a donation. With this money, the government made a contract with a Burmese company in Mandalay, so our Shan people didn't even benefit from getting the contract. The contractors offered a car to the commanding officer as a present. Although he got the contract, the contractor used the people from the town and the villages to do all the [forced] labour for the restoration of the pagoda. The work had to be completed for an important Buddhist festival in March 1996. For this festival, the government servants and the people had to contribute money. The government servants always have their wages cut for celebrations like that. For example, for Independence Day. But to celebrate Shan National Day, they ask just a little money. For the opening ceremony of the pagoda, a whole group of foreign Ambassadors came from Rangoon together with government officials. Just before that ceremony on February 29 1996, the people from Hsipaw had to do labour to repair the road for their visits. Also, 3 days before the ceremony, on 27, 28, and 29 February, the authorities closed all the access roads to Hsipaw. The people from the villages around couldn't reach the market to sell their products. And all the passenger cars were requisitioned for the transportation of officials and their things to Hsipaw.

The government asked for a corn tax in 1995. What really happened is that the Generals in Rangoon wanted the local battalions to plant corn to sell for export. But the battalions didn't plant, they forced the villagers to do it. The army gave them corn seeds, one milk tin of corn seeds for each family. But it was already too late for planting corn. So the villagers didn't plant the corn but they were still forced to give 16 pyi [1 basket] each of corn to the army [they had to buy it on the market] or give about 800 kyats in money. The army battalions sent the corn to Rangoon to give a good impression to the Generals.

Before there was only one army battalion just outside Hsipaw, IB 23, but in the last few years, two more battalions came, 503 and 504. They told the Gurkha villagers to leave. These Gurkha villagers usually have cattle and they stay a little outside the town. They were ordered to move further into the jungle without any compensation. They even had to move their temple which is very sacred for them. The army camps took a lot of land for their plantations and the villagers have to go and grow the corn in the camp plantations. The army rented a tractor in Kyaukme and used the tractor to harvest the corn but the villagers had to pay for the fuel. Otherwise, they would have had to come themselves with their bullock carts. The villagers have to plant the seeds and harvest the crop. Every battalion has their own field and they all do corn plantations. On the road between here and Maymyo, you see many coffee plantations. There also, the government and the army have taken the land from the people. [These plantations are all signpost as "Agricultural Project"; SLORC

shows them in the state-controlled media and seeks money for them from international agencies such as the United Nations Development Program.]

Q: Did they hold a USDA rally in Hsipaw recently?

A: The government didn't organize a USDA rally in Hsipaw but they did in Kyaukme. The people were only informed the night before that they had to go and all the schoolteachers, all the students, all the government employees and one person for every family had to go to Kyaukme for the rally. The families who couldn't go had to hire another person to go for them for 100 or 200 Kyats for the day. They also took all the cars and vehicles to carry all the people from Hsipaw to Kyaukme [Kyaukme is 1 1/2 hours by road, west towards Mandalay]. The best cars were used to carry all the officials. We heard the case of a family of three in Maymyo who had to go to the rally. The parents were both government servants so they each had to go to represent their department. Their daughter was a student, so she had to go with her school. And still this family was ordered to send someone as the 'one person per family' -- so they had to hire someone for that! All the USDA members also had to attend a ceremony to unveil a "People's Desire" billboard. This was after the MP's were arrested. [This refers to the arrest of over 200 elected National League for Democracy MPs in late May -- since then SLORC has been organizing forced-attendance rallies to "denounce destructionists" and unveiling billboards expressing the "People's Desire" to "crush all internal and external destructive elements," among other things.] Before, we only had to go to a USDA rally once a year for the USDA anniversary. Now the government organizes rallies every day somewhere throughout the country.

Q: Do they ask for porters in Hsipaw?

A: Some time ago, quite a large number of people were ordered to go as porters from Hsipaw to Nam Sang because of fighting in that area. In the villages the people said that the army was fighting against Wa women with bows, but that sounds more like a rumor to me.

Q: What was the effect of the cease-fire between SSA and the SLORC?

[This cease-fire has held for several years already]

A: Since the cease-fire the quantity of forced labour has been the same, sometimes even more than before. The SSA army also demands forced labour from the villagers. The SSA soldiers are now the same as the SLORC. They also take rice, salt, and money from the villagers. The only difference is that they

give their orders to the headmen while the SLORC soldiers just come into the villages and take whatever they like. [Note: every Saturday in Hsipaw groups of local people can be seen doing forced labour such as cutting grass with their own tools, under supervision of the town quarter chairmen.]

Q: What is the situation of teak logging in this area?

A: They have been cutting so many trees that the climate is now changing here and it has become drier, so every year the rice harvest is worse. Usually the traders hire villagers to cut the trees. They pay them 250 Kyats for a ton but then they sell the logs for 12,000 Kyats a ton. The traders get permits to cut the trees by bribing the military and also the SSA. The army makes even more money than that, because they also get the bribes at the checkpoints. [Every logging truck has to pay to pass each checkpoint, and a steady stream of trucks carrying teak logs can be seen along the road to Lashio, all going towards the Chinese border. Since SLORC took power the forests of Shan State have been irretrievably decimated and are not expected to last much longer.]

Interview 69: HRV: Livelihood, Forced Labor, Prison Labor

Name: Saw Klo Htoo
Sex: Male
Age: 29
Nationality: Karen, teacher
Religion: Christian
Family: Single
Address: Refugee in Thailand
Interview: June 17, 1996
Source: KHRG

During the summer vacation [March to start of June], I went back to my village to visit my family. [Some of the travel details must be omitted here.] There were many checkpoints on the way [along the way on the roads]. Before we left xxxx, all the vehicles and the cars were thoroughly checked by the SLORC. The battalion commander himself was there and checked around. I have no idea what he was after. On the way to xxxx, there were many checkpoints and soldiers guarding the road. The car drivers constantly have to get down and give money to the soldiers. All of them were SLORC soldiers, not DKBA [Democratic Kayin Buddhist Army]. In one place, not so far from Thaton, I saw criminals [prisoners] who were busy digging the ground. It was near Bilin.

I was in Taungoo quite often. Once a week I went to Taungoo. My village is xxxx, it is located xx miles east of Taungoo. It is in the plain area. It is a pretty big village with around 800 houses. The villagers are constantly asked by SLORC soldiers to help them in the dam construction. There is a village called Ngwe Taung Lay and the villagers there are also asked to help them, of course without any payment. They have to carry their own food ration. One person in each family has to go. If someone cannot go, he has to hire another person.

Q: How long do they have to work?

A: It depends. When I was there in the village, the people were ordered to go to a place called Say Bu Taung for one week, for the dam project. The villagers near that [dam] area were relocated. The people had to dig the ground and to make something like a wall. The work depends on the work site. Each family is ordered to finish one part. Unless the work is completed, they cannot go home. People have to go by rotation. For example, this village has to go and then next time they order another village to go. Then the first village has to go again, and so on until the work is finished. People told me that they have to go at least once every month. Not only the dam project but also for the military, they have to bring bamboo and things, to give money and go and work themselves at their camp. The soldiers are there for the security of the dam. I don't know which Battalion.

Q: How big is the dam?

A: Quite big. I saw it; it is quite big. It is on the Pa Thee river, which is smaller than the Moei river. I assume that they are going to build a power plant or something like that, for electricity. But I don't know electricity to where. [Note: there are reports that the Army plans to set up a large military training centre in this area.] They started building the dam two years ago and it is still going on now. It is supposed to be finished sometime in 1996. The river is blocked and there is a canal built below the dam. The area [above the dam] is now flooded and the village previously there was relocated. It was Ywa Gyi, a small Karen village. Now that place is full of water. The villagers lost their rice fields and some of them had rubber plantations. They couldn't do anything about it. They had to move. They receive nothing [no compensation] and they were ordered to move to a place called Pya Sakan village. They went there and rebuilt their houses. The Government didn't provide any land for them. They had to manage on their own. They were ordered to move last year, and even a village further away called Ta Thay Gone was also relocated. Two villages in that area. God knows how many villagers. Ta Thay Gone is very far from the dam site - the water will not even reach there. It is about 8 miles

south of the dam and the village is far from the river. But I think that place has become a military area, so the village had to be relocated. It is related to the dam, for security purposes. They are sending reinforcements for security. Nearby, SLORC only has temporary camps but I heard rumours that they are going to build an army camp, like a military base there. But Ywa Gyi village was exactly where the dam is and now it is flooded.

People who can't go work on the dam need 500 or 600 Kyats to hire a person. They hire someone directly themselves. 600 Kyats is for one week, 100 Kyats for one day. There are some people who go there to hire themselves out. Sometimes my relatives went and sometimes they hired another person. Officials come regularly to have a look at the dam. When they come, they ask the villagers to feed them, to serve them and they ask money from the villagers. That happens three or four times a month.

At the dam people are not beaten, but an assignment is given to each person. Unless the assignment is completed, he cannot go home. He has to complete it. No soldiers are guarding them but the village leaders have been given responsibility [the village elders and the village itself are punished if the work is not satisfactory]. Oh yes, I heard of one person who died as a result of snake bite. Nothing was done for him. Same as in the palace [see below]. It is quite a big area there, so people have to work in different places, and some parts are in the jungle.

The dam is 9 miles east of Taungoo. It is near my village, but some other worksites are quite far so the villagers have no time to come back at night. They aren't building roads in that area, but people have to go for dam construction. And in Taungoo itself, the old historical palace is being repaired, so the villagers from around Taungoo have to go there to clean the area [of grass, scrub etc.]. When I was there I heard that two people died of snake bites while clearing the palace compound. The repair work is still going on. They say our village will also have to go there but not now, later. For now, our villagers have other work to do constructing the dam. I didn't go inside the palace but I had a look from outside. I didn't see the villagers working because they are supposed to work inside. For that work they don't use people who live in Taungoo, they only use people from the villages in Taungoo township. They order the villagers to go there. The people from the city don't have to do forced labour.

I didn't talk to people in the village so much because I was scared, you know. Mostly I stayed at home. I didn't go out much. Maybe if they [SLORC] see a stranger in the village, they might ask questions around. I didn't want to cause

problems to my parents. So many people complain about the situation but they can't do anything. Everybody talks about the dam project. They complain that they don't want to go there to work. It is hard work.

They are going to widen the existing small road from Taungoo to the dam. After the dam construction is over, they will take the measurements and maybe some houses will be moved. We also have to pay porter fees but they don't come and take people by force to carry loads for them. We have to pay 20, sometimes 40 Kyats per month for every family.

Q: Did you see many DKBA there?

A: Not in Taungoo. They are in Myawaddy, Pa-an, places like that [further south].

Interview 70: HRV: Relocation, Women, Child, Killing, Refugee

Name: Khu Bu Leh
 Age: 32
 Sex: Male
 Nationality: Kayah
 Address: Daw Mu Shay village
 Interviewed: June 17, 1996

Name: Khu Law Deh
 Age: 35
 Sex: Male
 Nationality: Kayah
 Address: Daw Mu Shay village
 Interview: June 17, 1996
 Source: GN 32

[Both men are from Daw Mu Shay village and also arrived at the same time we did in a different section of camp, with all members of the village -- familial households, previously living in 22 houses.]

We all relocated to Shadaw then came after our temporary passes were issued. We had to pay 5 kyats for each pass. It took 4 days to walk from Shadaw. We were first ordered to move on the June 3 or 4. When we arrived at Shadaw, we were sent to live with other people in their houses. In the four days we stayed there, we received no food or other assistance like blankets or medicine. If anyone gets sick there, they are told to go to the hospital. Of course, at the

Loikaw hospital, a member of your family has to go to the market and buy any medicine you require, then bring it back to the hospital. It's very difficult to get water now at Loikaw. Two children about 8 or 9 years old went to the well to get water and fell in and drowned. Another two children just disappeared. No one knows what happened to them.

When the relocation order was issued, the LORC official told us we had to go immediately. We asked that we at least be allowed to harvest our paddy still in the fields, but they refused us and told us to move at once, so we couldn't collect anything. We left our buffaloes, cows, rice, everything in our houses. I left enough tins of rice behind to feed my family for 2 or 3 years. My family brought only one pot for curry and one for rice, one plate and one spoon. We are almost all farmers in my village. Everyone is in the same position. We hull our rice (pounding it in traditional rice mills, with a large, levered, foot-driven sledges) as we need it, and we only had two days to finish hulling what harvested paddy we had, so most of us didn't finish.

We heard that the authorities are trying to block the roads and routes to the border, but we didn't hear of any troops on the paths on our way here. There is heavy security now around Shadaw and especially around the new army camps at Sulah, where 10 battalions arrived in early May. People are very afraid. Although we didn't run into soldiers on the way, we had to cross the Salween river in very small wooden boats that hold about 3 or 4 people. It's raining and the river is rising now, so it's very dangerous. Many people drown there every year. I know a lot of people still want to come, but many aren't sure if they can cross the river, or get through to the border.

Our village had only one school, a primary school, and we didn't have enough teachers, so our children could only study about one week a month. Of course, now they can't study at all. Our teacher also fled with us here.

We heard at Shadaw that SLORC soldiers captured 3 or 4 Sulah villagers and jailed them, but we don't know why. Now they are arresting anyone wearing a green army-style shirt, fatigues, or an army hat as a suspected rebel.

Last year, we heard that a mother and child were shot by SLORC soldiers at Daw Miku village. LIB 72 started setting traps, supposedly for animals, outside our village two years ago. Most of the traps were just large holes. Most the animals that got caught in these traps were our domestic livestock. One man lost his leg and died. After that the villagers didn't want to go to the forest to look for vegetables. But we never saw any real reason why they set these traps.

Interview 71: HRV: Relocation, Arrest, Child, Women

Name: Aik Saik
Age: 36
Sex: Male
Marital Status: Married, with 3 children
Nationality: Shan
Religion: Buddhist
Address: Pa Bu Da
Interviewed: June 9, 1996
Interview Place: Camp 2, Karenni

We received a written order from SLORC that all of our villages should go to Ywa Thit and they would provide everything for us, food, and whatever we needed. Actually when we got there, we didn't get anything at all. We received the order 16 April. The SLORC soldiers told us to move within three days or our village would be burned down.

Some people took their buffalo with them, some took food, and some took money. But everyone left almost everything behind: everything in our houses, our personal possessions, our cooking pots and other kitchenware, and our livestock. Our village left its entire harvested paddy, over 2000 oil-tins of rice per family. There were 13 families in our village. Now we have nothing.

Everyone moved to the relocation site together, and my wife, my children, my parents and I stayed one month. Ywa Thit is only a half-day's walk from our village, which is east of the Pon River, very close to the west bank of the Salween. Only one family had decided not to move and stayed behind. The soldiers told us, "If you stay in your village, you can't grow or keep anything there. If you do, we will consider that you are encouraging the KNPP, and we will treat you as rebels and shoot you." Even though our village is all Shan people, it used to be Kayah along time ago. We all support the KNPP because the SLORC come often to the village and loot and beat people, and also take us as porters. The KNPP have never done this to us. One woman in our village married a KNPP soldier.

The SLORC often came to us and took our livestock for food, without asking us. They took porters regularly and when we served as porters we were always beaten. I had to go as a porter many times. Each rotation was 2-3 months, and we had to carry heavy loads, sometimes to the frontlines. Usually it was rice, but sometimes we carried weapons or shells. I was kicked many times when I was portering, also I saw so many others beaten badly and even killed. Al-

though they never took women, many times children and old men in their 60s and 70s were also forced to go. Two old men died at Ywa Thit last year when they were porters. Last year our village also had to pay 500 kyats per month in porter fees, so we divided this fee into 50 kyats among ten families. So we hate the SLORC for what they've done to us.

When we arrived at Ywa Thit, there were about 100 soldiers there at the site, all from 99 Division. We were not given anything in all the time we were there. We had only what we brought with us. We also weren't allowed out to get food from other places, so we depended on what we were given by the people there. Later the soldiers told us we should help the Ywa Thit villagers with their farming.

Everyone stayed in different places, at the monastery, the schools, in others' homes. We stayed at the primary school. Finally we were told that we would be allowed to build small houses, but two families would have to share a house about this size (about 1.5x 2 meters). We had water from the stream and the wells, but it wasn't clean, so a lot of people were sick with malaria and dysentery. Most couldn't get any medicine. The hospital had no medicine, there was just a small private pharmacy next to it where you could buy medicine if you had money. This medicine was brought from Loikaw.

There were a total of about 270 families in Ywa Thit when we left. Things were getting worse and worse, so finally we met very early one morning, all the people from my village, and we decided to escape. Our group of 13 families had 57 people, and 30 of them were children, so travel was very difficult, especially crossing the Salween in small boats. Each boat could take only 3 or 4 people. Most of the time we couldn't sleep, and our children were very frightened. Most of them became sick. It took us six days to get from Ywa Thit to the border, and throughout that time it was raining heavily. We finally arrived here on July 2.

On our trip we were guarded and assisted by KNPP soldiers, so we didn't meet any SLORC troops. Four men from our group are still sick now. We really don't know about our future, but I don't have much hope right now. We can't work here. How will we survive? I really want to go back, we would all like to go back, but we are afraid SLORC soldiers will shoot us.

We were just paddy farmers, although some people also tried to grow groundnuts for cooking oil. We left 100 buffalo in our village, about 15 pigs, and more than 100 chickens. We lived pretty well there: we had coconut trees and our houses were built of wood. We had 2 rice mills and 2 oil mills, both run by

hydropower from the local stream.

We know that more people from Ywa Thit would like to come here to come here to the border, but the journey is very difficult, so it's hard to say how many will make it. We heard after we left our village that the family that stayed was arrested by SLORC, a couple and their two children. They were tied up then taken and used as human minesweepers.

Interview 72: HRV: Refugee, Border Incursion, Killing

Name: Ko Aung Myint
Age: 28
Nationality: Burmese
Marital status: Married
Children: None, but wife is 6 months pregnant
Interviewed: January, 1997
Source: GN 32

It was the middle of the night, just after 2:00 am, and we were all sleeping. Suddenly we woke up to the sounds of shelling and shooting. My wife and I lay still on the floor, not moving. Bullets pierced the walls of our house and fell around it. The shooting lasted about 12 minutes. We heard some voices of the soldiers and screams of those who were hit by the shells. Finally when the shooting stopped, we got up and ran from the house. We met some others and we ran to another area where we thought we would all be safe. We tried to help the injured people -- the medics came and gave them what treatment they could.

Only after we stopped did we notice my wife had two bullet-holes through her longyi. The next morning she said to me, "Hey, what happened to your hair?" We realized one of the bullets must have nearly grazed my head because my hair had been cut off just above my ear. Seven of my chickens were also lying dead outside our house. The walls of our house are damaged and we will have to repair about half of it. The woman who died, Ei Pyin was one of my students. It makes me so sad to think how she died. She was young and very afraid, so when the shelling started instead of lying low, I heard she ran outside of her house screaming for me and her other teacher. I think that when the soldiers heard her calling out our (Burmese) names and speaking in Burmese, they thought she was a student and they shot her. I believe the soldiers were trying to attack the students' camp. Some people heard them talking on their walkie-talkies, and they knew where the monastery was, they were getting orders where to go in the student camp. They always try to attack us on New

Year's and other holidays. They think it will bring them luck for the New Year.

Interview 73: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood, Women

Name: Maw Say Mya
Sex: Female
Age: about 40
Nationality: Kayah, farmer
Religion: Christian (RC)
Family: Married, 3 children Aged 1 week to 6 years
Address: Daw Klaw Leh village, Shadaw Township
Interviewed: July 4, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Maw Say Mya gave birth during her flight to the refugee camp.]

I think it was 4 or 5 days ago that we were supposed to arrive in Shadaw by their order [SLORC's]. When we heard that all the other villages were being moved to Shadaw we sent a man to check the situation in the other villages. When he came back he said we had to move too. I heard that they sent a letter to order us to move but I don't know for sure. We were very afraid to go to Shadaw, so that night we killed a pig and made pork curry and ate, and then we left the village. We left our village at midnight and arrived at Daw Kaya in the morning.

Every village in our area was ordered to move, Daw Kraw Aw, Daw Ay Ya, Nga M'Lo Soe, all the villagers had to move. They ordered us to move one time before but that time we didn't have to go in the end. But this year they ordered us to move and we really have to move. This time the Burmese are doing it for real. They told us, "Do you want the knife or the gun?" and they said they would come and cut our throats. I think they would do this for sure if we didn't go, so we were very, very afraid and we set out to come here. We could only carry some pots, plates and rice. I inherited only one buffalo from my family but now it is left behind in the village. I don't know what's happened to our belongings left there, maybe the rats have destroyed them. Some villagers have gone back again to try to get some of their animals, but they haven't returned yet.

When we were on the way here we didn't know if we would die or not. I was with my whole family. We were very afraid and full of worry. My baby was

born in Daw Bu Loh village along the way, in the afternoon. That evening I took a bath with hot water. In the morning I had another bath, and then we resumed the journey. We arrived in the next village and I took another bath, and then that day we had to walk in the water the whole day [along a streambed]. We had to walk in the water the whole day and I got sick. Even though I had high fever I had to walk and hurry to arrive here. That night we had to sleep beside the path, and it was raining. The next day we arrived at xxxx village and ate, then we continued. We arrived here at night, about midnight. When I arrived here I had fever, and my whole body was in pain. Now I feel very cold and I have headaches. My baby has a runny nose and can't breathe, he has to breathe through his mouth. When he coughs we can hear "Krek! Krek!" When I arrived here I don't know what happened in my heart, I don't know what has happened to me.

Q: Do you know why the Burmese are doing this?

A: I don't know anything about it. We always have to suffer from what they say and what they do. When other villagers saw the Burmese they ran too, along the way we saw these others so we followed them.

Interview 74: HRV: Relocation, Torture, Forced Labor, Child, Livelihood, Refugee

Name: Koo Maw Reh
 Sex: Male
 Age: 42
 Nationality: Kayah, farmer
 Religion: Christian (RC)
 Family: Married, 8 children Aged 18 months to 25
 Address: Daw Tee Leh village, Preh Tho Leh Township
 Interview: July 3, 1996
 Source: KHRG

[“Koo Maw Reh” is a village elder.]

There are 25 families in our village. We arrived here on Sunday. It took 6 days to come here. The Burmese ordered us to go to live in Shadaw, but they didn't give any food or water when we got there and we didn't have any place to sleep there. We felt much suffering. Even if we asked they wouldn't give us any kind of food. One man asked one time and they didn't give, then he asked a second time and they still didn't give. They beat him for asking. He got

swelling on his shoulders from the beating. If you want to eat, you have to buy food.

They ordered us to move on the 1st of June. The soldiers sent a letter, from Battalion 337. I can't read, so I gave it to the teacher to read. It said in the letter that the 7th of June was the last day for us to move. It said, "All of you have to move." If we stayed in the village they would accuse us of being robbers or rebels, and if they see us they'll shoot to kill. We couldn't stay in the village, and I also felt that we couldn't go and stay in the new place. The teachers said they would follow us wherever we decided to go, even to Loikaw. I met with the villagers and we discussed what to do -- should we move down or move up? We just waited there and asked permission to stay from the Burmese. But then on the 15th [of June] we moved to Shadaw village.

They ordered us to live near the Burmese camp. They're making 2 big longhouses for everyone to stay in, like barracks, with walls of woven bamboo. Once they were finished we were going to have to stay there. The Burmese said that for 4 years we would have to obey this order. They said that for the next 4 years if they see anyone around our village they'll shoot and kill them. We couldn't take all our things with us. Some villagers have a lot of things and they had to leave a lot behind. We hid some of our things in a cave, and some things just remained in the village. We all had to move to Shadaw. If we didn't move the Army would come and kill us. They told us to take all our cattle with us. Some villagers took their cattle but some had to leave them. Other villages had to move too: Dee Leh, Daw Tu, Daw Duh, Daw Ka Soh, Daw Kaloh Ko, Daw Mi Ku, Loi Lat, Daw Tha Mer, Si Ko Leh, Teh Ti, Daw Chu Duh. For now, everyone was going to the forest around Shadaw to cut bamboo to make huts, and to make roofing. We had to hurry to build huts for ourselves, so some people got injured working. The villagers all felt very unhappy, so some of them fled back home.

In three of the areas people haven't finished huts yet, but in the other parts people have now built huts. The soldiers stay there and guard the villagers -- before it was Battalion 54, but now I'm not sure. They don't allow anyone to go out at night, and they don't allow anyone to go back to our home villages. We carried our rice from the village ourselves. The soldiers don't give any food. Sometimes they stole people's chickens. There is just a little water. When we go to fetch water we have to wait turns one by one, because it only comes out slowly. There are only 2 or 3 places to fetch water, and at one place a child fell in and died when he was getting water -- a 6 year old boy, not from my village.

People there are sick, some with malaria, some with stomach aches, and some have injuries. I heard 4 or 5 people died while I was there. There's a clinic but the nurses don't look after people very well. To go to the clinic we have to pay money to buy a ticket, 5 kyats, and then we have to take the ticket and money to buy medicine along to the clinic.

I saw a family whose children were very hungry, so their father went to the Army and asked for food, but they refused. He went home, but then he saw his children all so hungry and crying, so he went back and asked the Army again. They beat him, then they pushed him away and shouted "Go away!" That man said later, "I have to get away from here, if I stay here a long time I will die by starvation or by SLORC. After that he called his family and tried to go out and get free of the place, and his village headman saw his saliva running out because he was so hungry.

Q: Is there forced labor at Shadaw?

A: The Army said, "Now you're refugees, we don't need you to work for us for the present." But in future I'm sure they'll order us to do labour. They allowed us to go out until June 25th, but they said after that they won't allow anyone to go out -- on the 25th, everyone had to be back at the camp. If we wanted to go and get things from our village they'd write us a pass and we could go, but we were only allowed to go straight to the village to get our things, nowhere else. At first they easily gave permission, but then they would only allow one person per family to go because they were afraid people would flee here [to the refugee camp].

Before the 25th they allowed us to go to our village to pound rice. We never stopped, we just came here. We walked 6 days to arrive here. All we had was a mat and a blanket for each of us. Along the way we slept in deserted villages, and lots of mosquitos bit us. Because of the mosquitos my children got swelling on their stomachs. I felt very angry and upset, so even when we found and killed a chicken or a pig I didn't want to eat. I couldn't sleep either. We were very afraid. We saw no soldiers, no one at all.

Q: Do you think more people want to come?

A: Sure, but the Army guards them. There were 2 or 3 families who asked their permission to come here, but the township officer refused and they went away crying. The Army didn't say when we can go home. I think it will be a long time before I can go back to my own village. I don't know why they are doing this. I think it is because in the future they want to use all of us as

porters, so we escaped and came here. All the people from my village have come here now.

Interview 75: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood, Refugee

Name: Koo Nga Reh
Sex: Male
Age: 45
Nationality: Kayah, farmer
Religion: Animist
Family: Married, 5 children aged 2-13
Address: Daw Kraw Aw village, Shadaw Township
Interviewed: July 4, 1996
Source: KHRG

Our village has 105 houses. I've been here 12 days already. I left at 6 a.m. on the 13th of June. The Burmese sent a letter and threatened us that if we didn't go to Shadaw they would come and burn down our houses and torture the villagers, so we were afraid and we told them we'd come soon. The 17th was the last day when we had to go to Shadaw. Then they said if we didn't go by the 17th, the 27th would be the last day. It was ordered by Battalion 37. We were very unhappy when we got the letter. If we were to hide in the forest they could find us easily, so we had no choice but to go there. Now no families are left in the village or in the forest. We went but we couldn't carry our things because we had to carry our children. When we got there they didn't give us any food or houses, and we had to sleep on the ground. Everyone has to find their own place to stay. Some people stay in the monastery, some have to stay underneath other people's houses. After we cooked the Burmese ordered us to put out our fires. Even while we were cooking they sometimes came and put the fire out.

All the other villages received the same order - Daw Tha Dah, Daw Saw Cha, Daw Kraw Aw, Daw Mu Seh, Daw Kraw Lo, Daw Klaw Leh, Nga M'Lo Soh, Bu Law Ku, Daw Ta Ma, Daw Kloh Ku, Daw Kuh Sa, and Daw Kuh Li, all in Preh Tho Leh township. I can't count how many families were in Shadaw, there were so many. The Burmese told us we're not allowed to leave Shadaw village. They said our place would be beside the cemetery, for 100 or 200 houses. They ordered the villagers who live in Shadaw to clear the place, and the Shadaw villagers said, "We can't do that, it's too big," so they said when the other villagers flee Shadaw they will follow.

I stayed there only one day. Then the Burmese [SLORC] said, "You have to

go and get your belongings and rice from your village.” They said, “As long as you’re here we won’t give you food. If you don’t bring your food from your village you can starve and die, we don’t care.” That’s why we left. At Shadaw a lot of people were sick, but when we asked for medicine there was no medicine for us. There is a hospital in Shadaw but they asked for money, and we had no money so we received no medicine. Many people had fever. I could see that if we stayed there for long the situation would get much worse. For now they don’t make people do labour for them, but once people have finished building their houses they probably will.

They gave us a permission pass for 15 days to go and collect all our belongings. We had to pay 5 Kyat for the pass. Our whole family went, and then during those 15 days we left for Thailand. We slept in our village for 2 or 3 nights and then we left. I think that was about the 16th [of June]. Now I heard that they won’t let anyone out of Shadaw any more -- now if you ask for permission, they will only give you their fist. So people don’t dare ask permission anymore.

We had to walk 3 days to get here. It was a really hard journey and we had to rush. We had to carry our things and our children, so we got pain in our shoulders and some people got sick. About 70 families came. If we had stayed in our village the Burmese would kill us. We’re afraid of them, so we all came to the refugee camp. Each family could only carry about 10 milktins [3 kg.] of rice, and when it was not enough we asked for some from some Karenni soldiers. All of our knives, pots, cups and other possessions we hid in a cave. There is no one to look after our animals. I think altogether about one million Kyat worth of things were left behind [for the whole village]. I don’t know what will happen to them. If the Burmese destroy it we will just have to accept that.

When we got east of the Salween River we arrived at xxxx and xxxx villages but we didn’t see any people there. Then in xxxx village there were only a few people. When we saw people in xxxx village we felt a bit happier, but they told us, “We are very sad to see you like this. Soon we will follow you.” We were always worried that the Burmese would block us on the way, but our decision was to come all the way no matter what. We were lucky. If they keep forcing people to move I think most people will come here to be refugees. I don’t know when they’ll let people go back to their villages, 3 months or 3 years, but it will be a long time. I’ve never seen a situation this bad. Before we just had to run to neighboring villages to avoid them. But now it’s everywhere, and they said they’ll burn our villages and kill our animals. I’ve never faced problems this bad in my life. I cannot tell all the things that SLORC does to us.

It's not like before. Now we even have to receive our food from other people, it's not like our own food. I can't talk about it anymore.

Interview 76: Forced Labor, Child, Women

Name: Ma San San
Age: 42-year- old
Marital Status: married with two children, 12-years-old twin
Address: Kan Bauk, Kan Bauk township
Interviewed: July 5, 1996
Place of interview: Thom Pha Pum, Kanchanaburi province, Thailand
Source: ABSDF

I was a vendor when I was in Burma. While I was selling at the market, the Ward LORC ordered me to go and work without pay on the Ye-Tavoy project. That was in November 1995.

The military informed the village headman the exact number of people wanted for forced labor. Then the village headman decided how to conscript the people from the every household in the village. A wealthy family could afford to give 3,000- 3,500 kyats to get a substitute.

My husband had died in 1992 and I had to support my 10-year-old twins, my elderly mother, and my brother who was mentally ill. I was the only breadwinner for my whole family. For those of us who had hardly enough for our daily life, it was impossible to pay money for a substitute. The only thing we could do was just go and work. When we went, we needed to take some money too. That was why my mentally ill brother also had to go and work as a substitute. The only thing we could do was just go and work. When we went, we needed to take some money too. He was paid 3,000 kyats and that money was used for the remaining family in the village and also used for our own expense in the forced labor camp. First I said I could not go and explained that I had to look for the rest of my family. About 200 villagers, 12 people from my Maggin ward, including elderly and children took a bus to Nwe Lain camp. Some children went as substitutes hired by others. Some were only 12-13-years-old.

The work was terribly hard and the weather was extremely hot. Despite the heat, we were not allowed to take a rest even if we were exhausted. The only rest permitted was during the break time at midday. We worked two weeks there. We had to get up at 3:00 am and prepare to go to work site at 4:00 am. It took an hour to walk to the worksite from the place we were staying. Work was

from 11:00 to 1:00 p.m. Then the work restarted at 1:00 to 5:00 PM. Just before work was over, the authorities came and checked the work we had done. They demanded it be exactly what they had ordered. If they were not satisfied, they ordered us to do it again and would not allow us to go back to the living place. When it was getting dark, we used oil lamps until the work done. After ten days, the two of us money left, so we asked the authorities to allow us to go back and bring food supplies for the remaining days. They didn't allow that. We had to borrow from others, who also faced a shortage of rations. Even worse, my brother became sick. He went to see the medic, but they just gave him aspirin, which was not effective at all. The authorities (civilians monitoring the work-site) told all the laborers to say that all were paid when the military officers came. I was very angry with that. I did not come and work voluntarily. They forced me to work without pay and threatened me. I had to leave my family back to spend my own money while I was working here. The rest of family was starving while I was working without pay. I said I would tell truth when I was asked if we were paid or not.

Nobody was allowed to go anywhere except the place we were staying and the work site. Police and soldiers were blocking everywhere. When I did not have any food left, I decided to go back secretly to the village. So all the villagers, altogether 192 people, went back to the village at night. The next morning, the soldiers followed after us and took us back to the worksite by buses. They threaten to arrest us if we did that again. They scolded us and threatened us all the way back to work-site.

If there were some children in your group, you had to work harder because they could not work very hard. All groups were assigned the same jobs so if we could not finish within the designated time, we had to work until the work done. The work was to cut the ground from the hill, dig trenches, carry soil from place to place, and build the embankment of the railway. When the rains started, the embankment just washed away. We had to carry the dirt to make embankment again. When the embankment got high, we had to climb up it carrying heavy loads of dirt in basket and dump the dirt onto the top of embankment. I fell down sometimes while carrying dirt like that. I have never done such hard work before in my life.

When you got sick, you could go to the clinic but the medicine given by the medic was the same for all sickness and diseases. Whether you had sore eyes or malaria, the same medicine was given. The nurse working at the clinic also said there was no other medicine in the clinic and she did not want to work there either. She was just working against her will because she was assigned there, she said. Some patients were referred to Kan Bauk hospital but the LORC

in the worksite did not allow them to leave. I heard that two children, aged 12-13 years-old, died while they were working in Nwe Lein camp in November 1995. Some people were beaten up by the guards who accused them of pretending to be ill during working time.

If we were not able either to go or to pay fine to the village LORC , we were subject to arrest by the police .I was also arrested once . The village LORC ordered me again to go and work for my second time while I was preparing to sell my stuffs at the market . I said no to them. In fact, I could not go without preparing for my family. Also I was in debt. If I had to go for forced labor, it was impossible for me to pay it back. So I said “No.” Later the police came to arrest me. They attempted to handcuff me but I did not let them. I said I was not a criminal. Then the police took me to the office of village LORC. When I saw the chairman of LORC, I explained my situation. The chairman said he totally understood my situation and asked me to send my younger brother instead. I kept asking to send him and said they would take care of him. So I asked my brother to go. After ten days of work, he ran away and came back home. The policemen and village LORC came to my house and ordered me to go instead.

I have worked three times on the forced labor project. Each time took one month. The first two were in Nwe Lein and the third was in Yebon. Ye Byu township. Last April 1996, we were taken to Yebon and after seven days we were taken back to Nwe Lein again to continue to work. There were thousands of people from seven villages near our village. The military presence is much greater than before. They check everybody wherever you go. You could not leave from your home without your ID card .There were many check points every where. You would be checked just as soon as you stepped out of your home.

Unpaid labor is constantly practiced. The military orders the people to clear the land and cut bamboo for their barracks. Many more forced contributions and taxes are being levied than before. But the economy is getting worse. Sometimes, the authorities ordered us to give 500 kyats from each household for unknown reasons. They did not care whether we have money or not. We have to sell our belongings to pay for it.

Finally I decided to flee Thailand to escape from these hardships.

**Interview 77: HRV: Livelihood, Relocation, Torture, Detention,
Migrant worker**

Name: Win Ko
Age: 35
Sex: Male
Nationality: Burmese
Profession: government servant
Village: XXX, east of Mong Nai township, Shan State
Interviewed: July 20, 1996 at Chiang Mai
Source: SHRF

Win Ko used to work for the Burmese government, earning 450 kyats a month. Three months ago, 6 villages in his area (Ho Pai, Ton Jai, loi Wa, Loi Ton, Ma Lang, Wan Taunggi) were forcibly relocated by the SLORC, but since his village was near a road, it was not relocated. However, even though they were not relocated, people from his village were ordered not to go out and do any farming in their fields. Win Ko stressed that without being able to farm his fields, he could not survive on his salary.

On May 12, 1996, Win Ko found three unspent bullets at the entrance to the village and decided to hand them in to the local SLORC army camp: LIB 332 at Sai Pe. He went with four of his friends. To his shock, instead of thanking him for doing this, the SLORC soldiers seized him and his friends and accused them of not telling the truth about where he had found the bullets.

Win Ko and his friends were made to sit down and their hands were tied behind their backs. They were then tortured. Several soldiers placed plastic sheeting over Win Ko's head for several seconds so that he couldn't breathe. Then they rolled an iron rod up and down his shins, and kicked down on the rod with their boots. (The scars on Win Ko's shins are still visible.) Finally, Win Ko and his friends were released.

Ten days after this, in fear of further SLORC abuses, Win Ko decided to leave his village to come to Thailand. He travelled with a group of 20 people from his area across the border. On the day they crossed, he said there were 300 other people crossing over. They then travelled down to Chiang Mai.

In Chiang Mai, 13 of his group found work on a building site north of the town. They worked on this site for 2 months, but were not paid. (They had been promised 110 baht a day for men, and 100 baht for women.) After protesting to their employer, they were raided early one morning by the police. They were

then taken to a local police station. After two nights there, they were sent to the prison at the central police station in Chiang Mai.

Win Ko said that there were about 200 illegal immigrants from Burma at the prison, including old people, children and babies. It was so overcrowded that there was no room to lie down properly. He heard many stories of misfortune from the prison. One Shan woman had hung herself shortly before his arrival in prison. Another Shan woman who had arrived a week before him appeared to be suffering a nervous breakdown. She had journeyed from Shan State with her 3 daughters and they were travelling in a truck from the border to Chiang Mai when they were arrested by the police at Mae Rim. Her daughters, aged 12, 13, 14, were taken from her, and she now had no idea where they were, but feared they had been sold.

Luckily Win Ko was able to pay the fine of 3,500 baht and was released on July 18, but 7 of his group are still in prison and will have to stay 2 months there. He hopes he will be able to find work soon.

Interview 78: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood, Migrant Worker

Name: Sai Tu
Sex: Male
Age: 16
Village: Taung Gyi, Mong Nai township
Interviewed: August 1996 in Mae Hong Song, Thailand
Source: SHRF

I arrived in Thailand in the last week of April 1996. The SLORC military government had forced my village to move so I had no place to stay. That's why I came here. They ordered us to move within three days. There were 50 families, about 350 people. They ordered us to stay in Na Kha village of Mong Nai.

In our village circle there were 6 villages: Taung Gyi, Gong Sar, loi Ton, Wan Pwe, Wan Milin, Gong Kyaing. There were between 150-200 people in each village. When we moved we could only bring what we could carry. Everything we left behind was taken by the SLORC. But we did not dare report this to the soldiers' senior officers. If we had gone and reported it, they would not have taken action. We would just have been punished.

We are facing a lot of difficulties here in Thailand. We earn just enough to

survive each day. We gather sand. A pile of sand sells for 50 baht. It's very hard to make 2 piles a day. When we are sick, we just treat ourselves. We go and buy medicine ourselves.

Interview 79: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood, Killing

Name: Sai Nong
Sex: Male
Age: 18
Village: Wan Kha Hla, Mong Nai township
Interviewed: August 18, 1996
Source: SHRF

I arrived in Thailand in May 1996. I had been a soldier in the MTA in the Loi Lang area. After Khun Sa surrendered to SLORC, I went to stay with my parents in Wan Kha Hla village, Mong Nai township. After 2 months, the SLORC soldiers came to the village, and ordered the village to move. They said: "We will give you 3 days to move. After that you mustn't come back or we will kill you."

I heard that in one village one man went back to his village after three days to get his cattle and pigs, and he was shot. All the villagers had to move to Nar Kha village, about 40 kms from our village. The SLORC didn't give us anywhere to stay. There was not enough time to carry everything when we moved. We also didn't have a car or truck for transport. It wasn't enough time to carry everything on foot.

The villages from our circle that were forced to move were: Wan Kha Hla, Ho Mai, Doi Kyen, Loi Pai, Nong Kham, Khun Sar, Ho Dai, Nong Lang. They were all moved to the same place, Nar Kha village. There were about 60-70 houses or 150200 people in each village.

My parents and sister are now in the Nar Kha village, they are staying at a friend's home.

Interview 80: HRV: Arrest, Slavery, Torture

Name: Htun Win
Sex: Male
Age: 28

Nationality: Burmese, shopkeeper
Religion: Muslim
Family: Married, 1 daughter aged 14 months
Address: Myawaddy town, Karen State
Interview: August 22, 1996
Source: KHRG

[Htun Win was carried into a refugee clinic in Thailand at the end of July, but was too weak and delirious to be interviewed until one month later.]

I moved from Thaton to Myawaddy. I have already been working there for 3 years. I was arrested in Myawaddy. It was on a Saturday. I had a fever so I cannot remember exactly. [It was early July.]

Q: Why were you arrested?

A: Because I couldn't pay the porter fees for two weeks ['porter fees' are just routine extortion money demanded from all civilians by the Army]. Just at that time they needed porters, so someone brought me a message from the chairman of the local Ya Wa Ta [Village LORC]: "'Htun Win', come to the office for a while." At the time, I had fever and I had an intravenous drip in my arm. They came by car and I got into the car. The car stopped in front of the office. I didn't take anything with me because they said it would only be a moment. I had only the set of clothing I was wearing.

Instead they sent me to Maw Kee and Ka Neh Lay [frontline areas 80 km. (50 miles) southeast of Myawaddy, which SLORC seized from the KNU in 1995]. We travelled by truck for half a day to Kway Ta Maw mountain. The truck stopped there, at the foot of Kway Ta Maw, and I had to carry for 14 days. On the way, we faced fighting three times. I had to carry three 120 mm [mortar] shells, and 75 mm [recoilless] shells, and four 60 mm [mortar] shells. Altogether up to 7 shells at one time. It weighed about 25 viss [40 kg. / 88 lb.]. There were more than 700 porters. We were all walking together, but after we faced the first fighting the soldiers divided us into two groups. SLORC was fighting KNU and ABSDF. The SLORC Battalions were 356, 88, and 275. I was carrying for IB 356. I think they were headed further than Ka Neh Lay.

Q: Do you know any of their commanders' names?

A: I can't remember. The commander was very brutal. He was from #3 Company. He kicked me in the face with his boots. Now I can't see clearly anymore. When I fell down, he stepped on me with the heel of his boot and he

broke my rib. When I cough, I feel terrible pain in my whole body.

Q: Tell us step by step.

A: I was ill at that time, so I couldn't carry this heavy load. I was carrying it for 14 days and I fell down unconscious. On the way, while walking, I suddenly fell down. I don't know how long I was unconscious. The commander threw water on my face and told the soldiers: "If he can't carry anymore, we cannot leave him like this. Otherwise the enemy will find out our movements." Then the commander ordered me to stand up. He said, "Stand up! Why don't you stand up? You are just pretending!" He stepped on me and broke my ribs. He hit my back with a G3 rifle butt, then he pulled me up and kicked me and hit my arm. Then a soldier beat me on my arm with his rifle butt. They carried on kicking me and they hit my legs. I couldn't count it -- kick and hit... hit and kick... They hit me, but they didn't shoot me because we were too close to the enemy. But as for me, I wished I was shot dead, so I wouldn't have to suffer anymore. They beat me trying to break both my thighs, because after that I couldn't stand anymore. My face was covered with blood. And the commander thought I would die soon. Then the soldiers said: "We cannot leave him like this. If we do, we give information to the enemy." Two soldiers were pulling me up, and when I was halfway up the commander cursed me and kicked me again. I suddenly saw a big flash in my eyes [he had been kicked in the eye] and I got up slowly. Then the commander kicked me down the slope beside the path. I went unconscious.

That path was very old and the ditch was about 3 meters deep. The path was on the hill, called Kyaut Taung hill. My body was stopped from falling further down by the bushes. When the commander kicked me down the slope, other porters from Myawaddy saw me. Later when they were moving with the troops they ran away, and the same day at about 4 p.m. they came back to save me.

Two hours earlier, they had shot one of the porters and he died. He was from Myawaddy. They shot him in front of me. He was my friend. He was sick, the same as me. He fell down two hours before I did. He couldn't stand up and a soldier hit him with his gun. Then he shot him dead. He fell down face down and he was shot with a G3 in the back of his neck and the bullet came out through his mouth. He was my friend. His name was Htun Htun Oo. He was from Myawaddy. [At this point "Htun Win" began weeping and could not speak for a while.] His age was about the same as mine. He was living with his old mother, not married. He was a trishaw driver. Half way along he got fever. So many got sick. Not only us. So many. But some of them could still keep carrying. I asked for medicine, but they said, "We don't have enough

medicine for porters.” We got only one handful of plain rice twice a day but sometimes we didn’t, and sometimes our rice had turned bad [old and smelly]. Even salt we didn’t get. After the meal we didn’t even get water. We had to clean our hands with our clothes. For drinking water, it was water from the river. Along the way we didn’t get water either. The soldiers swore at us [if we asked]. Sometimes we asked each other. Some of the porters had a water container and they got water on the way.

Q: Did they allow people to bathe?

A: Nobody was allowed. We had to lie down on the ground. We had no shelter at night. We had no blanket. We could only cover ourselves with our longyi [sarong]. When it was raining, we had to stay in the rain like that. We were all put together as soon as we stopped .

Q: What did you do when there was fighting?

A: Me, I had to carry ammunition for big weapons [mortars / artillery]. I had to stay a bit far from the fighting. But I could hear it very well. There was shooting continuously for 15 or 20 minutes, then they stopped and then started again. But they were shelling steadily. This happened 3 times. I would have tried to escape then, but I couldn’t manage to escape because soldiers were around in the back. We [porters] just sat down.

Q: Did some people get wounded?

A: I saw two porters and two soldiers killed by landmines; three people were killed by bullets. They took them to the medic. The two porters died but the two soldiers survived. Both porters were wounded in their left leg. Then they were amputated, just beside me. I saw the medics carrying the porters, and they didn’t look in such bad condition. But I don’t know if they died due to their injuries or if they were killed on the way. When they stepped on the landmine, it was about 8 or 9 a.m. One died shortly after and the other in the evening. The medic gave better treatment to the soldiers -- he amputated them too and put on a dressing. Then they were carried away but I don’t know where. The dead porters were buried.

Q: How were you rescued [after being beaten and left for dead]?

A: I was carried by 6 people. They are Burmans from Myawaddy. We got to know each other along the way [as porters -- after Htun Win was left for dead, these 6 men escaped later the same day and came back to save him]. I don’t

remember what time of day the soldiers beat me, but I felt that it was very hot. Then my friends came at 4 p.m. We had to walk one day. People there were cutting wood. They knew them. I was carried to Thailand in a hammock of 3 longyis [sarongs] tied together. Then they put me in a car. A Thai driver took me for free, and I spent one night in Thailand. Then we crossed by boat [back to Burma]. In Myawaddy I told them I was a porter. Then they brought me in a trishaw to the Ya Wa Ta [Village LORC] office, but the chairman said "This is not a hospital!" and told me to go home. Then they took me to my house.

I was conscious, but I couldn't speak clearly and I couldn't open my eyes very well. My face was swollen. My mother-in-law tried to cure me with many kinds of medicine and my face felt better. We cured my fever with herbal medicine. I couldn't speak very well but I could drink well. Then I was sent to the clinic. The doctor said that an operation was needed. I agreed. I had pain in my whole body and I still had fever. I was coughing blood because they had kicked me here [in the chest]. I couldn't even drink for 2 days after they kicked me. My mother told me, "Do what you like. We are with you." If I had the operations, I would have to spend a lot of money. To operate on only one part of my body [his thigh] it cost me more than 4,000 Kyats. I called my mother to help and now all her savings are gone. And still I didn't feel better. So I had to come here [to a refugee clinic in Thailand] and I came. People brought me here about 8 days later.

Now [a month later] I can't stretch out my leg. I cannot walk. My whole body is in pain. [A medic added: It will take him a long time to recover. Dr. xxxx had to do surgery three times. He got three blood transfusions because he had become so anemic and lost so much blood. Not only his body but also his eye is damaged. He will need an eye operation. He will be able to walk again, but not as well as before. His thighs were injured by the beating and the muscles became infected. Pus was coming out and he had already had an operation in Myawaddy. Some muscles of his thigh are gone now." His thighs healed with muscle tissue missing and fibrosis, making it so he can only walk with his legs in a "cramped up" position; medics expect him to only recover 60-70% mobility. One of his left ribs was also broken, he had severe pains in his whole chest even a month after the beating, and his right arm was severely swollen from the beating - during the first surgery, the doctor drained 1.5 litres of pus from his arm. His left eye will have a permanent corneal scar which will affect his vision.

Q: What are you planning to do when you recover?

A: Until my left leg is cured, I don't know what to do. I don't know. Because

now I have no more capital. I have nothing left. My house was by the river-side, and now since I have been here it has been destroyed by the floods. I don't know what to do. I am just left with a few clothes and one pot. That's all. The goods in my shop were carried away at the same time [the shop was in his house]. My wife couldn't save anything. She had the child to take care of. When the river rose, she fled and came here.

I want to go back to Thaton. My mother stays in Thaton. Down there [in Thaton], they don't have to pay as much as here. In Myawaddy we have to pay 500 kyats per week as porter fees. Here [in Myawaddy], we can make money more easily. If you work hard, you can earn from 500 up to 1,000 Kyats per day. So each household has to pay 500 Kyats per week [much higher than in most other places]. I don't know how everyone can get that money. But as for me, I failed to pay twice and here am I now! This was my first time as a porter. The whole journey [as a porter] was 14 days.

Q: Did you see any DKBA soldiers when you were a porter?

A: I only saw DKBA soldiers at the checkpoints and doing security along the road, the Myawaddy - Kawkareik road. [The DKBA sets up checkpoints merely to collect money from everyone who passes.]

Interview 81: HRV: Forced Labor, Child, Torture

Name:	Ah Naing
Sex:	Male
Age:	13 years old
Nationality:	Mon
Religion:	Buddhist
Occupation:	None
Native Place:	Min Thar village, Yebyu Township
Interviewed:	August 12, 1996.
Source:	HRFOM

I helped my parents in rice-field. The work is not so hard, I just help them as I can. In rainy season, my father and I have to catch fishes with a small boat or angles fishes in our farm for extra income. I just helped my parents. The work for me is not so hard.

Q: Did you ever attend the school before you worked in your father's farm? Why did you left from the school?

A: I attended the school when I was about 7 years old. I left school three years ago. I passed only second standard. Once, while my father was arrested by the Burmese soldiers (to be porter according to his father) my mother was alone in our farm and she also looked after young sister, and I quitted school to help my mother. At that time, my uncle Ah Win (who helped his parents) also went into Thailand (illegally to seek jobs). I had to reap grass to feed cows in the farm. My mother could not work such heavy job. My father was away for three weeks and when he returned back he was in sickness for another two weeks. When he recovered from the sickness, I also tried to attend the school again. But did not understand the lessons and I was disappointed. Then I left the school.

Q: When were you arrested to be a porter and what kind of work did you do for the military? Please describe me how you were arrested?

A: At the beginning of this year (in February, according to his father), when I returned from our farm I was arrested by the Burmese soldiers (of LIB No. 409, according to his father) in a place on the way before I reached to entrance of the village. And, they asked me where did I come from and I told them that I just returned back from my farm. And they forced me to follow with them. I was afraid of being killed by soldiers as they had gun and I followed with them. An officer, the battalion commander, ordered me to carry his bag. Then they went to the north for the security of the railway (Ye-Tavoy under -construction railway). We walked along the way and in the evening we reached to Kalein Aung. In the military barrack of Kalein Aung, we have to sleep for one night there.

Q: What the treatment did you receive from Burmese troops? Were they very bad to you?

A: The commander was not so bad. Luckily he liked me and he fed me whatever he ate. When the other villager porters never got any meat in their meals, he fed me chicken or pork curry everyday. When the Burmese soldiers arrived in our village every time, the commander always ordered the village headmen to provided such sorts of meat. After the troops left from the villages, the village headmen had to collect from the villagers and paid to owners of pigs and chicken.

However, the rest of the soldiers were very bad Along the way, they always beat the villagers who were walking slowly. They always shouted to villager porters not to be lazy and they put everything of their belongings to the porters. One soldier also added his jungle boots to my heavy loads after his foot was hurt. Thus, my loads became heavier and heavier, but the commander did not

tell his men to stop.

Q: How many viss did you have to carry along the way up to Kaleing Aung and did they reduce the loads on your back when you slowed down?

A: I have to carry about 25 visses (40 kilograms) of the commander's belongings. I did not have to carry the ammunition or supplies for the troops. All materials that I had to carry were owned by commander. Mainly his clothes in a small box, beers, beef canes, dried fishes and etc., when he took breakfast or lunch, they have to prepare for him with special dishes that foods were made with pork or chicken confiscated or stolen from the villages. Along the way, there were three porters beaten by the soldiers severely, I know. The kicking to porters who were walking slowly was normal for the soldiers. One soldier also kicked me and he said to hurry up to follow his commander, because I had to pee in a bush and I was late to reach the commander. Then I hurried up.

One porter from Eindayaza village was very weak. I think he was getting sick. He was arrested by the Burmese soldiers before us. His walking rate slowed down on the way and three soldiers beside him shouted to hurry, but he could not. He asked the soldiers to reduce his loads and said he could walk more quickly. The soldiers were dissatisfied with his complaint and beat him severely with their riflebutts.

Q: Did the commander know of such inhumane torturing of the porters? What was his response to his men?

A: Yes, he saw. He said nothing to his men. But he ordered not to beat the head of the porter with rifle butts and told them to beat his body and legs. He didn't stop them.

Q: How many days did you have to walk with them and where did they release you?

For three days, we had to walk with troops. On second day, we arrived Kyaukadin village and we slept there for one day. On that day, because of the loads, I became weak and could not sleep for the whole night. My whole body was hot with fever and I talked the to commander to release me. But he refused to release me and reduced some materials from me and gave to the closest porter. He said, we had to walk to Alesakan village, when we reached that village he will release me if he gets substitute. I did not dare to tell him for several times for my weakness and fever. I was also afraid he would beat me. It was very hard for me to reach to Alesakan.

Q: Then what happened on you when you arrived to Aleskan and did their medic treat you?

A: When I reached to Aleskan village, my fever was getting very terrible and I could not stand up anymore. So I lied down the village headman's house and his wife treated me well. The medic never gave me any medicine. The housewife gave me some traditional medicine and hot water. I could not sleep for the whole night and she treated me for the whole night. On the next day, the troops left from the village. As I was in a terrible situation, the commander did not bring me and left me. I think if they brought me again, I will die on the way surely. I was treated in Alesakan for three days, on those days I could not stand up or walk more.

Q: Did your parents hear about that case and how can you return back to your village?

A: When I was in his home, the village headman asked me my name, my native village, and my parents' name and he promised to contact my parents. After I stayed in his home for two days, my mother came to Alesakan and she cried when she met me.

Q: Did she know that you were arrested when you returned back from the rice farm?

A: No. She did not know that I had been arrested by Burmese soldiers. When I was arrested, nobody saw the incident and my mother thought I traveled to Kywetho-nyi-ma village for a visit to my uncle there. When she met me in the bed, she was very surprised and she asked what happened on me. The village headmen explained to her that the Burmese troops brought me as porter with heavy loads. My mother wept for the whole day.

Q: Did your mother bring you back on the day she arrived?

A: No. I have to stay there for more three days and she waited me to be recovered. The village headman and his wife were very kind to us. They helped us what we needed. Then we returned to our village and whenever we have chance we visited to Alesakan and my mother always sent them sticky rice or dried fishes.

Interview 82: HRV: Slavery, Torture

Name: Maung Myint Win
Sex: Male
Age: 27 years
Nationalities : Mon
Religion: Mon Buddhist
Occupation: Laborer
Native Place: Morkanin village, Ye Township
Interview Date: September 9, 1996
Source: HRFOM

[This interviewee was a victim of forced portering and he was severely beaten by the Tatmadaw [SLORC] soldiers. When he arrived to the refugee camp clinic of Baleh Donephai, his back was terribly damaged and infected. His two legs were also badly damaged, and the medics in the camp had to treat him for nearly three week.]

[This interviewee explained his arrest by the Burmese soldiers].

Q: When and where were you arrested by the Burmese soldiers?

A: When I traveled to Ye for a visit to my uncle on July 17, 1996, I was arrested by the Burmese soldiers. Before I reached my uncle's house while I was passing in front of the IB No. 61 battalion headquarters, I was arrested. When I reached in front of their compound, two soldiers who were standing at the entrance gate called me to meet them. I did not know what reasons they would like to meet me and I was so afraid that they would arrest me. I thought they needed some help from me to buy something.

But, when I reached to them, they told me I have to meet their officer. And I complained why did I have to meet him and they did not tell me any reason and brought inside the battalion compound. When I arrived inside a room, they arrested me and threatened me not to flee and put me in that room and locked its door outside. I have to stay in that room nearly three hours and in the evening about 5 o'clock, three soldiers came and brought me to a detention cell. There were about 50 men inside the small cell and as I was not so clear why I was arrested and I asked a man. The man told me we were arrested for portering. But he also did not know where the Burmese trips would bring us.

Q: You said you met with other men, are they town residents or villagers who came to Ye?

A: Both. I think half of them were town residents. The rest were villagers mostly who came to town with purposes to buy materials for their farms or houses. And the few others were also from other townships. They came to Ye for trading or visit. On the first day, there were about 50 villagers in detention and on the next day about 6 men of Ye town left from the detention after they paid 3,000 kyat up 5,000 kyat each other commander. One Sergeant also told me if I paid them 5,000 kyat they will release me soon but thee payment must reach to them evening (of July 18) and they would release me as soon as they received cash. Or, the troops will leave on the next day early morning to the Three Pagoda Pass and brought all porters. Then I was very afraid of being a porter with Burmese troops to Three Pagoda Pass and I approached that Sergeant to ask my uncle payment. The Sergeant would not like to find out my uncle but he had no time and had to prepare for the trip. I was detained for two nights and on the next early morning, they troops brought us by trucks to a village and by boats to Kyaung Kywa.

Q: Did you ask other detainees how they were arrested by the Burmese troops?

A: They were arrested like me. One man was arrested in a shop that sells groceries for farming and fishing, and the two soldiers came with civilian clothes and arrested him and asked him to follow with them. He did not know they were soldiers and refused to follow with them. And, he was beaten by them and the man was too angry and he also responded beating to those soldiers. Then, the soldiers arrested him with the help of town policemen and brought him into the battalion. When he reached to the battalion they continuously beat him severely. So, he has a lot of injuries in his back. They never treated him with any medicine and then they also brought him to the frontline. As he was strong farmer, he could tolerate the pain.

The others porters were arrested by the soldiers, mostly in town. According to town residents, it is normal for the Burmese troops to forcibly arrest the porters before they left to the frontline or changed their bases. The most porters were beaten or kicked by soldiers as soon as they were arrested. But commonly they did not arrest the town residents who they were familiar with them and they chose to arrest local villagers. For example, they did not arrest the shopkeeper of coffee shop and barbers but they will arrest local villagers who were taking coffee and cutting hair there. Even though, if you paid 5,000 kyats, it is OK, they will release you.

Q: Can you explain me the whole story of when you were on the way with Burmese troops to Three Pagoda Pass?

A: Yes. When I was arrested I was very weak as I had fever just one week earlier. The reason I went to visit my uncle was to buy some medicine. After I was detained for two nights in the battalion under the poor conditions of the room, I became weaker than before and after we left from Kyaung Ywa, I got malaria. And my leg became painful and I could not walk well and my walking rate was slowing down gradually. We left from Ye early morning of July 17. So I asked to a Sergeant to give me permission to take a rest. He told me “this is military operation, you have no chance to stop on the way” his two assistants beat me with their rifle butts and jungle boots in my back several times. I was in alot of pain with severe wounds. It was very painful. I tried to walk along with them, as much as possible. Totally, I have to carry six rocket shells that weighed about 25 viss (40 kilograms and) and it became heavier and heavier along the way. When we left from the Ye, there were about 50 porters along with 200 troops and more than 10 porters escaped on the way. The soldiers were so angry about those escapees and threatened that if we fled they will shoot. When the porters fled they did not take ammunicions or supplies that they had carried and the soldiers put those left heavy loads to the rest of us porters. As I was sick enough, they did not put on me.

Q: Did you have to sleep on the way and what kind of treatment did the military provide you?

A: We have to sleep one night in Baleh Donephai village (as section of Halockhani Mon refugee camp, which was burnt down by Burmese troops in July 1994, before the NMSP reached for cease-fire agreement with SLORC) my malaria became terrible and I asked the villagers for some medicines and the villagers told me if I needed to get medicine I had to go to a clinic. When I asked the Sergeant I would like to go to a clinic he did not allow me. But he did not provide any medicine or treatment. An elder woman in the house gave me some kind of herbal medicine (which is traditionally produced from inside Burma) and some cups of plain tea. She treated me kindly. But the Burmese soldiers did not provide me any medical care.

Q: When you reached to Three Pagoda Pass did they (the Burmese soldiers) treat you in the Township Public Hospital?

A: No. We reached to Three Pagoda Pass on July 22 and they never allowed me to attend the hospital for treatment. They did not release all porters who came along with them and put them in Three Pagoda Pass battalion headquarters for three days. They did not allow us to go outside.

Q: Along the ways and in their battalions' detention, did they give you enough

food to eat?

A: No. They fed us with a very small amount of rice and curry. Everyday, they fed with bad quality rice and bean curry. Sometimes, when the soldiers pass into Karen and Mon villages, they also took chicken and they cooked for meals. But they did not feed us. They also take some vegetables grown by villagers without asking permission from them.

Q: Did they release you in Three Pagoda Pass? And was your health condition better?

A: No. They did not release us. They transferred us with the troops that returned to Ye. The battalion was LIB No. 343 and when the troops returned back to Ye, all porters from IB No. 61 were transferred. The Burmese soldiers took all about 40 porters together with another 150 porters who were arrested around the Three Pagoda Pass area.

My health condition became more terrible than before and I was very weak and I asked the soldiers many times for treatment and they never allowed me. The wounds in my back also became more painful and I thought I would die at that time. When the troops returned back, they also brought us and I have to carry ammunition again. We left from Three Pagodas Pass on July 26. My body became more painful. And I told them I could not carry any more because of my wounds and sickness. They beat me again. On July 26, we have to sleep one night before we arrived to Baleh Donephai. I escaped at night when too heavy rain fell.

Q: After you escaped, where did you go and what happened on you?

A: I was too tired and anyhow, I had to escape. If they knew I escaped, they would kill me for sure. I was in the rain for the whole night and I could not sleep. But, I could not leave in early morning. If I left early morning, I could meet with them and I had to delay my time in the forest. About 10:00 a.m., I left to Baleh Donephai. When I was close to Baleh Donephai, I did not dare to enter in the village and when a villager walked down from the village, I asked the villagers where is the clinic, they brought me to the clinic. I have to treat my wounds and sickness here [in the clinic of Baleh Donephai where we conducted interviews]. The medics are very kind to me.

Q: When you will return back and do you dare to return back?

A: I will return back to my village soon after my health condition is better.

Interview 83: HRV: Torture, Detention, Killing, Livelihood

Name: Pu Piang Te
Sex: Male
Age: 35
Nationality: Chin
Address: Nga Lang village, Than Tlang township
Interviewed: October, 1996
Source: CHRO

[This interview also includes comments by a Nga Lang village elder where noted.]

Pu Piang Te: On October 9, 1996, a platoon of Light Infantry Battalion 266 troops based in Haka led by Second Lieutenant Win Than entered our village. When I arrived back from my farm, all the villagers had been gathered together by the Army at the open ground just at the upper side of the village. All the men were ordered to lie down on the ground and the women and children were ordered to sit facing the sunlight. All the men were asked questions about the leaders of CNF and those who didn't know about CNF were beaten. Then the soldiers told them: "Ask for the help of your God and you will see!" One of them named Pa Maung was beaten on his right hip with their guns. He could not even get up and was hospitalized. He is now in serious condition at the hospital.

We went to the commander along with the teachers and members of village LORC to ask him not to treat us like that, but as soon as we arrived I was arrested and handcuffed immediately. Each time they asked questions I replied as much as I knew, but I was beaten with a stick and with their belts. My right hand was bleeding from the beatings with their belts and my whole body was covered in blood. When I was bleeding too much they stopped beating me. Then my head was covered with plastic and I could not even breathe. I was taken like that in front of all the villagers and they said to them: "If you do not answer what we are asking for, we will kill your headman in front of you." I could hear the people crying and soon after that I became unconscious and fell down on the ground because I could not breathe and felt dizzy. When they could not wake me up, they poured water on me and they took the plastic off of my head. When I became conscious again, it was about 5 p.m. Then they took off the handcuffs and let me sit down. The villagers were still sitting on the ground, and after some time we heard firing near the village [this was the soldiers shooting Bawi Kung] and the soldiers started taking cover. Some of the people managed to escape while they were taking position, but most people

were still sitting on the ground. The firing stopped and we were ordered to go back home. Curfew was declared and nobody was allowed to go out. They warned: "If you go out of the house, you will be shot."

After some time they carried the one whom they had shot and rolled into a blanket [Bawi Kung] to my house. One of our teachers and I asked him some questions and he said, "My name is Bawi Kung from Haka and I am a cattle trader. We came back from Mizoram after we sold all the cattle that we took there. When we were approaching the village, we found 6 army men who were on duty at the resting place near the village. When we reached them they fired at us. My friend was arrested because he was in front of me, and I tried to escape. They shot at me many times but they missed me. They told me to stop. So I stopped, and when I was standing in front of them one of them shot me in my abdomen and I fell down. They came to me, searched my bag and took all the money I had, which was 194,480 kyats."

Village elder: They also accused him of being a CNF member. But he replied that he was not and he showed them his identity card and his licence to sell cattle in Mizoram. They told him, "We shot at you because you tried to flee. If you didn't try to run away, we would not shoot." Then the troops reported to their commander in the village [by walkie talkie]. They rolled him into a blanket and brought him to the headman's house, and he talked to the village elders. "Pu Piang Te": When the soldiers realized that he was talking in Burmese about the money they had taken [he was speaking in Chin to the elders but mentioned the amount in Burmese], the soldiers ordered us not to speak with him at all and he was left alone lying down in my house. Nobody was allowed to take care of his wounds. Even my family members were not allowed to speak to him. I requested the soldiers to give him food and my request was also turned down.

Village elder: Even Dawt Hlei Thang was not allowed to speak at all and was kept separately.

Pu Piang Te: At 10:10 p.m., I was informed that Bawi Kung had died. They also called Dawt Hlei Thang, the one who was arrested when Bawi Kung was shot, and told him that the money would be given to him when they reached Haka, so they didn't give it back to him.

Village elder: They said to Dawt Hlei Thang: "If you keep this money it will be dangerous for you on the way. So we will keep it for you and we will give it to you later!"

Pu Piang Te: I was ordered to bury the body of Bawi Kung immediately. They wouldn't allow us to carry his body to Haka, which is his native place [according to Chin tradition, a dead person should be buried at his native place -- Bawi Kung was from Haka]. They added: "When you finish burying him, you must put a fence around his grave [if there is a fence around a grave, nobody can touch or go inside the fence]. Nobody is allowed to enter the tomb. If you don't follow my order, your village will be burned down."

That night, they took 15 chickens and 200 eggs and whatever else they liked, including rice, from the villagers. About 20 children, 5 to 10 years of age, were missing because they had run to hide. We requested the commander's permission to search for them because their parents were so worried about their missing children, but they did not allow us to go outside. The parents of the children were crying the whole night long.

Village elder: Early the next morning, the villagers went to bury his body. They secretly checked the body and found not only gunshots but also marks of knife stabbings and they saw pieces of intestine hanging out of his belly. Win Than forced them to bury him immediately. After that the troops left for Khua Bung.

Pu Piang Te: In the morning on October 10 1996, they took 16 porters and 4 horses and left for Khua Bung at 10 a.m. After they left, the children who were hiding came back. Some families had nothing left to eat because their rice had been stolen. My whole body is still in pain because of their beatings. Now I am worried about staying in my village.

Interview 84: HRV: Slavery, Killing, Torture

Name: Van Ceu
Sex: Male
Age: 37
Nationality: Chin
Address: Nga Lang village, Than Tlang township
Interviewed: October, 1996
Source: CHRO

[Van Ceu was taken as a porter when the troops left Nga Lang village.]

Troops of Light Infantry Battalion 266 led by Second Lieutenant Win Than entered Nga Lang village on October 9, 1996 and tortured all the villagers in

our village. They took whatever they liked. A cattle trader was shot dead in our village. They took 16 porters and four horses from our village to carry their rations, weapons and things in order to go on to Khua Bung village, which is 14 miles away from our village. The oldest porter was 62 and the youngest was 16. Most of us were about 30 to 40 years of age. We started at 10 a.m. and reached Khua Bung at 7 p.m. We had to carry rice, eggs, and meat which they had taken from the villagers, and we were ordered to walk in line alternating with the soldiers to protect them from bullets. We carried about 30 kilograms each, and they fed us nothing on the way.

The soldiers told us that portering is compulsory for the villagers twice a month throughout the whole region. "Phun Uk" and I were beaten when we could not walk like the others because our loads were too heavy. They beat others as well, but not as much as us.

Interview 85: HRV: Forced Labor

Name: Ki To
Sex: Male
Age: 48, farmer
Religion: Chin Christian
Address: Hlung Mang village, Matupi township
Source: CHRO

The people from Hlung Mang village were ordered to construct the police station in Lailenpi, which is 35 miles away from Hlung Mang village, from April 5 to 10, 1996. Our duty was to complete a quarter of the police station which is 40 x 20 [feet] within five days. We had to work from the early morning until night. We had to build it until they were satisfied with the building.

They provided nothing. We had to provide our own food and received no wages at all. The order was sent by U Pe Ku, who is in charge of the Lailenpi police station.

[Other villagers reported that the villagers from Lung Cawi village, Matupi township, received a written order (Reference number 212-Ka Pa Ya/2/Police - 2(111)) dated April 24, 1996 to build one quarter of the Lailenpi police station. They were ordered to reach Lailenpi on May 30, 1996. At that time the villagers had to work on their fields and could not go, so every household was fined 200 kyats.]

Interview 86: HRV: Religious Persecution

Name: Salai Lai Bi
Sex: Male
Age: 25
Nationality: Chin, student
Religion: Christian
Source: CHRO

I am a final year student in mathematics at Magwe College [in Magwe town, Magwe Division, southwest of Chin State] and I am involved in the activities of the Chin Literature and Culture Committee of Magwe College and the University Christian Fellowship.

Each year when the Universities open an amount of 100 kyats is asked from every student for the construction of a Buddhist Monastery -- including the Christian students. If a student fails to pay the requested fee, they are not allowed admission to the college.

Up to now, I have given 400 kyats during my life at university as they have required. Our Jesus said, "Do not worship other Gods except me," and we have to follow Jesus' commandments. But we cannot, since we have to study for our livelihoods. In 1994, the monastery was built in the campus with the permission of the SLORC authorities. But when in November 1995 the University Christian Fellowship requested permission to build a Church for worshipping, the authorities turned down our request.

Interview 87: HRV: Child Soldier, Livelihood, Religious Persecution

Name: Myo Aung
Sex: Male
Age: 18
Nationality: Burmese
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Single, 2 younger brothers and sisters
Education: 6th Standard (Grade 6)
Rank: Private, 269 Battalion
Address: xxxx village, Mandalay Division
Interviewed: January 1996

Source: CHRO

In 1992, I was studying in 6th Standard at the State High School in my village and our family was facing extreme financial difficulties. I couldn't continue my education. I wanted to let my younger brother and sister go to school. At that time, the rumour circulating in our area was: "Anyone who joins the Army will be given rations and be paid 600 kyats per month." I thought that I would be able to send the 600 kyats to my family, so that they could send my brother and sister to school. So I decided to enroll in the Army.

On August 23, 1993, I went to the recruiting center in Mandalay [note: he was only 15 years old]. I started my military training on September 12, 1993 and completed it after 4 months. I was posted to LIB 364. Then I was transferred to 269 Battalion at Tiddim [northern Chin State, just east of the border with India's Mizoram State] on October 9, 1994. This was a newly established Battalion for the 'Chin People Operation' under the commander of Northwestern Command, Colonel Maung Thein [Northwestern Command covers all of northwestern Burma]. They selected only unmarried soldiers for this Battalion and encouraged them to marry Chin girls and convert them to Buddhism. If the soldier cannot convert the Chin girl whom he marries to Buddhism or if he becomes a Christian himself, he is punished and put in jail. If he can, he gets rank and privileges.

Our company commander was Captain Win Tan. The company was divided into two platoons. Our platoon commander was Sergeant Thein Aung. Our section commander was Lance Corporal Aung Kyaw Win and I was the section second-in-command. [A SLORC company is about 100 soldiers, a platoon is about 30 and a section is about 10. SLORC battalions usually have 4 or 5 companies.] Our company was posted at Rih camp near the border of Mizoram, India. Our main duty was to patrol the border area, which is part of Tiddim and Falam townships in Chin State. We had to convince the civilians to condemn CNF rebels, and persuade them to support the Burmese Army. But whenever the civilians requested any assistance from the SLORC, they got nothing. Whenever the commanders disliked someone, they ordered us to beat him up and to harass him. Once, when our platoon was in Hai Mual village, one of the volunteer labourers [i.e. forced labourers] was not well. My platoon commander ordered me to beat him up. I hit him four times in his chest with my gun. After that he couldn't even stand up by himself. I felt so sorry about that, but an order was an order.

Instead of teaching us good things, the officers frequently ordered us to steal whatever they wanted. When we entered a village, they ordered us to steal

chickens and wine. During my 3 years of service, we stole more than 500 chickens from the villagers. The commanders are always very happy to eat the chickens. Sometimes we stole the locally made Zupi, which is the most appreciated traditional wine. Once in Thing Lei village the section commander, Aung Kyaw Win, ordered me to steal a jacket worth 1,000 kyats from a person who lived in the house where Aung Kyaw Win was staying.

The salary of a private is 600 kyats per month [it is supposed to be 750]. But every month the officers cut it: 1 kyat for donation [alu ngui], 5 kyats for Buddhist religious funds, 10 kyats for social welfare, 100 kyats for savings in the bank, 40 kyats for a Battalion Certificate. Only those with this Certificate were allowed to meet the Battalion Commander, and it was valid for one month. The remainder of our salary was not sufficient for a uniform. We had to save money for 3 or 4 months to purchase a full uniform. By the time we could afford to buy one part of it, another part was already torn, so we didn't look much different from the volunteer soldiers [the militia units which are forcibly conscripted in the villages].

I escaped because I was not satisfied with my salary or with the relationship with our higher officers and the civilians. I came to realize that the Burmese Army is not supported by the people and is not working for our country. Most of the Privates and some NCO's [Non-Commissioned Officers, i.e. Corporals, Sergeants etc.] from Battalion 269 would like to escape but they have no chance. I discussed running away with Lance Corporal T—, Z— and 6 other soldiers. Three friends and I planned to flee on December 3, 1995 at 11 p.m. with the help of a villager, but our plan fell through because our officers were drinking and gambling up to midnight. On December 4 at 3 a.m., I replaced B— on duty and we took off. At 4 a.m. we reached xxxx village and hid in the forest. The SLORC was chasing us. They reached xxxx village at 8 a.m. and there was fighting with the CNF. As soon as the SLORC left, we went to a farm and asked for food and drink. The villagers helped us to meet with the CNF on December 6, 1995.

Interview 88: HRV: Child Soldier, Livelihood, Killing, Slavery

Name:	Za Kap
Sex:	Male
Age:	20
Nationality	Chin, farmer
Religion:	Christian
Family:	Single, 2 brothers and sisters

Education: 4th Standard (Grade 4)
 Rank: Private, 550 LIB
 Address: xxxx village, Paletwah township, Chin State
 Interviewed: 1/96
 Source: CHRO

I joined the Army in September 1993 [at age 17]. After 15 days in the recruitment centre of Sittwe [capital of Arakan (Rakhine) State], I was moved to the No. 9 Training Centre of Arakan State. After completing the training, in January 1994 I was posted with LIB 550. The Battalion Commander is Maung Myint Aung, the commander of Company 2 is Captain Tin Aye, the platoon commander is Lieutenant Eigh Khain, the section commander is Saw Hla Maung and the section second-in-command is Aung Naing.

The main duty of my battalion was to provide security for Than Tlang camp by patrolling the areas of Swe Let Wah and Salain Wah. The area is very rural and the people there have never seen a car or a motorcycle. There is no middle school, only one private primary school. They are poor and isolated from the Burmese. When I got there, no chickens were available because the previous soldiers had already stolen them all. The porters were very weak. Their heavy loads made them fall down again and again. They were scolded, punched and beaten continuously. We never carried our own rations. Wherever we went we demanded food, money or animals from the villagers. Often the villagers were suspected of having contact with the rebels. The saddest thing I heard in my life was when a Captain from Infantry Battalion 376 killed more than 10 villagers because they were members of CNF. Then he took people as porters to the SLORC camp, and he was given a promotion. I do not remember his name.

Interview 89: HRV: Relocation, Forced Labor, Slavery

Name: Naw Lah Lah Htoo
 Sex: Female
 Age: 30
 Nationality: Karen, hillside-cultivator
 Religion: Animist
 Family: Married, 5 children aged 8 months to 11 years
 Address: Nan Ka Prao village
 Interviewed: February 18, 1997
 Source: KHRG

Q: How many houses are there in Nan Ka Prao village?

A: There are about 40 or 50 houses in Nan Ka Prao village.

Q: I heard that the Burmese ordered the village to move.

A: Yes. We got here over 2 months ago because the Burmese [SLORC] expelled us. They came up to Nan Ka Prao village, ordered the villagers to move and made problems. They burned all the houses. Some of the villagers came up here and some of them went down to the Burmese area. We just came here quietly, so the Burmese didn't know it. The people who went down where they ordered are staying in Kyaw Mote. As for me, I would not move there. I fled when all the other villagers were running into the jungle. We were in the bush for about 3 weeks. Then I went and stayed at Boke Pyin for about a week, then I went back to my village again and it had already been burned by the Burmese. Then I couldn't do anything, so I came to stay here in Kaw Thay Lu. I couldn't bring along any sleeping-mats, I just brought along some rice and one blanket. Then we couldn't stay in Kaw Thay Lu because the [Karen] leaders were worried that there would be troubles for us when the Burmese came. That's why we came here [1 km. into Thai territory]. I came here with all my children. My husband is still staying on the mountaintop [the Thai authorities would not let him cross the border, even though he is just a villager and has never been a soldier].

Q: How many Karen villages are in Nan Ka Prao area?

A: There are many Karen villages, like Nan Ka Prao, Waw Pa Doh, Ler Pa Doh, Kyet Der, ... Waw Pa Doh has 12 houses, Ler Pa Doh has 30 houses. All these villages had to move. Now there are still some villagers living there, but they've run and are staying in the forest [around their villages]. They were ordered to move to Le Nya and Ma Kaw, which are among the Burmese and the Mon. The Burmese said they will kill all the villagers who are living in the jungle, they said that these are bad people. They say all the people who stay in the jungle or come to Thailand are bad people, that we all help Kaw Thoo Lei [KNU/KNLA], and that only the people who go to their [relocation] place are good.

Q: Are there Thai and Burman villages there too?

A: There are also Thai and Burmese villages there. The Burmese make difficulties for them too. All the villagers [Karen and others] who stay around Le Nya or go down to the places among the Burmese have to build the road and carry heavy things [as porters]. They're building a road to Boke Pyin, and one to Le Nya Kee and Nan Ka Prao. The Burmese said they'll build a camp in Nan Ka Prao.

Q: Are Burman and Thai villagers also fleeing?

A: Yes. Only a few of the Thai villagers are still staying there now. Some of them are moving to Thailand.

Q: Why hasn't your husband come here?

A: He hasn't come because the Thais won't allow the men to come, so all the men have to stay in Kaw Thay Lu. The Thais only allowed 4 men to come and stay here among us. I don't know why the Thais said that. My husband is not a soldier, he is just a villager. I don't know how long I'll have to stay here, but I've been here a week now.

Q: If the Burmese attack Kaw Thay Lu do you dare stay here?

A: No, I wouldn't dare stay here.

Q: What is your situation here?

A: We just got rice and salt while we were fleeing [from the KNU]. Yesterday we were given some sardines and noodles too. My children are healthy but I am not well, I feel bad and have pain in my back.

Interview 90: HRV: Relocation, Livelihood

Name: Naw Lah Ghay
Sex: Female
Age: 28
Nationality: Karen, hillside-cultivator
Religion: Christian
Family: Married, 1 child aged 19 months
Address: Meh Naw Roh village
Interviewed: February 18, 1997

I married a [Karen] soldier, and I stayed in Meh Naw Roh. Meh Naw Roh is a Karen village. It is a big village with about 100 houses. I stayed in the village, but my husband was living among the soldiers. Then we couldn't stay in the village because the Burmese ordered us out, so I came to my husband [in Kaw Thay Lu]. Meh Naw Ro is about a week from here on foot, one day's walk from Nan Ka Prao. Now there are no more villagers in the village because the Burmese wouldn't let them stay. The Burmese said they would kill any villagers they saw. It was about a month ago. Some of the villagers went down to the place we were ordered to move at Le Nya, some fled upstream into the jungle, and some came to the Karen revolution area.

The Burmese came to the village, but there were also Karen soldiers staying at the village. There was fighting. All the villagers ran away, and the soldiers stayed in the village. Then after that the Burmese burned 7 of the biggest houses in the village.

My husband is a soldier so I was afraid [that SLORC would arrest him], and I fled the village and came up here. I came along with our child. We only brought a few things.

Interview 91: HRV: Relocation, Refugee, Livelihood

Name:	Tee Reh
Sex:	Male
Age:	34 years
Nationality:	Kayah
Religion:	Roman Catholic
Family:	Married with 2 children
Interview Date:	September 26, 1996
Interview Place:	Camp 2, Karenni
Source:	KNPP

On May 12, 1996 a SLORC's letter arrived to our village, Daw Klaw Du from Shadaw. The letter said that we should move to Shadaw within in one week. If we would not do so, they would come and kill us. We were very upset because we did not want to move to Shadaw. Our village is located 20 miles from Shadaw. So we could not carry very much. When we left village, we could carry only a few things of some rice, two pots, two chickens and some money. When we left the village, an old woman left in village because she could not walk and we were also unable to help her.

When we got to Shadaw there was nowhere to stay for us. So we had to stay in local people's house, some were under the temples and some were under the trees. My family and others -- 4 families altogether had to stay under the same local people's house for 2 weeks.

After I finished a small hut in location site our family moved there. We did not get enough food. We get a tin of rice for one person a day. So we had have rice soup as our daily food. They only gave us rice for three week. After that they could not give any more. So we had to go back our village and fetch our rice. When we want to go back our village, we had to ask for permission letter. If we did not take this permission letter when we returned we were punished. I went

back my village two times.

When I reached my village second time. I got very bad smell from in a house. I wanted to know what it was. When I got into this house and I saw a woman dead body. It had seemed dead about one week ago and she was killed by a SLORC's soldier's knife.

Our family had to take breakfast, but not lunch and dinner every day. Because I concerned about our limited rice. There was no toilet in the camp, so we use anywhere as a toilet. As you know this condition was easy to cause many diseases. If we need medicine we had to buy it ourselves. About 200 people died. Some of them were from our village.

SLORC made us cut bamboo and wood. Each household had to give them 50 bamboo poles and 15 wooden posts. We had to make fence around the relocation site. Because they worried that the people would escape from the camp.

One day in the early in the morning, our family fled from the camp. We had to hide in the jungle adjacent to our village for one month. After that we were not in a secure situation, so we decided to come here to this camp.

Interview 92: HRV: Refugee, Border Incursion

Name: Naw Tha Muh
 Sex: Female
 Age: 19
 Nationality: Karen
 Religion: No
 Family: Single
 Address: Huay Kaloke refugee camp, Thailand
 Interviewed: February 1, 1997
 Source: KHRG

[Naw Tha Muh was in Huay Kaloke refugee camp when it was attacked by a combined SLORC/DKBA force on January 28, 1997. Note that as a shopkeeper in the market, she is much better off than most refugees.]

On January 28, 1997, the DKBA came into the camp. I don't know the exact time because I had no watch. It must have been past 10 p.m. After I had watched television, I went to bed. My house was in the market [her house is also a shop selling mainly clothing]. I was sleeping when my mother woke me up, and the first thing I heard was jungle boots running ti...ti...ti... and chasing

the people who were running here and there. They came across the football field. I didn't know what was happening. Just then, DKBA soldiers kicked the door strongly with their boots and said: "Open the door!" I didn't open it and went to the back of the house, but the DKBA soldiers were also at the back of the house. When I came face to face with them, they asked me:

"Where are you going?" I didn't answer and went back to the front of the house. My mother was so worried for me. She said "Don't run anywhere!" Then the DKBA soldiers turned their guns on us and said: "All of you! Go back to the front of the house." At that time there were some guests staying with us. We were 7 in the house, all females, and we didn't say anything, so the DKBA didn't do anything to us.

Seven soldiers came to my house. My mother had hidden one bag that they didn't find, and they didn't find the money we had hidden either. They only saw the box with a little money in it. They took all the money from the small box. They also opened my handbag and took the money there as well. Altogether, they took some coins, 2,000 baht, and mostly clothes, also shoes, small knives, and a flask. They put the clothes from the shop into bags. The plastic bags were from my shop too and they carried them out themselves [they didn't use porters].

My mother told a DKBA soldier who looked about 20 years old: "Child, take everything you want but please do not burn our house down!" But the soldier pointed his gun at her and said: "Do you want to die, old woman?" A girl who was in my house begged the soldier: "Please don't do anything to Grandmother! She is old!" They also took the tehku [sarong] and clothes off an old man in my house and searched for something they expected to find on him, like gold or money, but they didn't find anything. They took everything they wanted and then they moved to another house, my friend's house.

The DKBA came into the camp, group by group, house to house, simultaneously. I heard that the same was going on at the other houses too. 40 baht was taken from my auntie's house. Her husband was kicked with boots too. They ordered everyone to get out of their houses without taking anything out and then they started burning the houses.

The DKBA went to the biggest shop and pointed their gun barrels at Uncle [an older man]. They questioned him about the key and the money. They took a lot of money from him, about 500,000 kyats, plus the golden rings, chains, and bracelets which belonged to others that they had given as guarantees for borrowing money from Uncle. They also used his telephone.

They took everything they wanted such as clocks, watches, cassettes, radios, clothes, and they even searched for things in the brassieres of the girls and the women. They expected to find things such as gold and money. They took off earrings, bracelets and chains from two girls. One was Karen and the other Chinese. Then the soldiers questioned a 50-year-old man who is insane, and hit his head with a rifle butt. He got a wound and the blood streamed down his head. The question was only: "Are you a soldier?" And the mad man only answered: "What?" Only for this!

I also heard that Nya Nya Say's father got kicked on his chest with their boots when DKBA demanded gold and money from him. Nya Nya Say is a student. I saw that they took two motorcycles from others but people said that 7 motorcycles were taken altogether. They left some motorcycles in the paddy fields because there is no road through the fields and they were unable to push them further. For some others, they didn't have the key to start the engine, so they just broke apart the dashboards and lights and destroyed the motorcycles on their way back to their camp. They also took the telephone.

After the soldiers went out, they started to set the houses on fire. I said to my mother: "Mother, the DKBA are burning the houses!" She thought they wouldn't burn them but then she saw the other shops burning.

I went down to my motorcycle to move it away from the fire and because I was afraid that DKBA would take it. They took the motorcycle from an Indian house, but I had kept the keys for ours inside and they hadn't seen it because it was kept at the back of the house. My mother helped me to pull it. Then they saw me pushing the motorcycle. Two DKBA soldiers came towards me to ask or do something to me. They said: "Where are you going?" I thought they would take the motorcycle, but another DKBA soldier helped me and called them. They turned back. They didn't have a chance to do anything to me. I don't know why. Maybe because we have been selling goods for a long time and they knew us. They didn't do anything to my mother either. When some soldiers pointed their guns at her, the others disagreed. Then they left her. I noticed they didn't speak rudely to her. They only asked: "Do you have money?" and didn't harm her. As for other people, they beat them when they demanded money.

I rode down to the Thai checkpoint. But I didn't see any Thai soldiers at the checkpoint. No one was there. Then I went to the other Thai gate and tried to wake them up. Only one policeman awoke. I told him that the DKBA were burning the houses and looting things from the refugees. But he didn't seem to understand, and he asked me: "What is the DKBA?" "The DKBA means the Buddhist soldiers," I said. Then he understood but he didn't do anything or

say anything. So I got angry and immediately rode to another police gate at Mae Pa [a larger Thai village very near the camp]. The police told me: "We already know and we have contacted the other posts." On my way to Mae Sot, we saw one or two cars with people in them between Mae Pa and Huay Kaloke. Maybe they were coming around to look at the fire. I didn't see any soldiers, just ordinary cars. I went to call my teacher in Mae Sot. When we arrived back at the camp, we saw that the people were all here and there in disorder and that the houses were burning with really huge flames.

My mother had taken as many things as she could and put them down into the well when the DKBA started burning the houses. My house was also burned down by DKBA. My mother told me that they came inside the houses, searched for things to light the fire with, then set the fires from inside the houses. I didn't see that because I ran to the Thai checkpoint.

Altogether I saw about 20 DKBA soldiers but other people said that there were over 100. They wore a full suit uniform of camouflage color. They had soldiers' boots and long guns like the G3 and G4 which the SLORC uses. Others had black uniforms which the Burmese wear. They were shooting up and down, in the air, not at the people. Nobody died. Some of them spoke Karen but most spoke Burmese.

At the time when the camp was already on fire, a 20 year old man came to help us carry things out of our house and helped to save a patient in another house. Before he reached the house, he met a SLORC soldier who asked him: "Where are you going?" The man answered in Karen: "I am going to help a patient there," and the SLORC soldier replied: "I am not Karen. Don't talk to me in Karen. Just take off your watch from your wrist and give it to me now!" So the man gave it to him. I am sure he was a Burmese soldier. People said that the Karen DKBA soldiers had put soot on their faces but that the Burmese didn't. I couldn't recognize them because their faces were all the same. They all looked black in the dark night.

At last the DKBA returned to their own camp, because they saw the fire engines coming to the camp to extinguish the flames and they thought that these trucks were from the Thai army.

When I came back to Huay Kaloke camp, I just saw the houses in flames, the people all disorganized and the Thai fire engines not doing anything to the burning houses. They just stayed still at a distance, and the Thai policemen were also staying still at a distance just looking around. Actually I am not sure, police or soldiers. They didn't have any guns. They wore brown uniforms like

the Thai police. Maybe they were firemen. I also saw some people from Mae Pa standing on the road. The firemen extinguished the fire when everything was already burnt down. The houses were burning continuously for about 3 hours.

I don't feel angry with DKBA. I don't want to kill them. We can understand each other because we are Karen. I just hate the Burmese, SLORC. Only a few DKBA came and they did nothing to me. The Burmese soldiers tried to shoot my mother but the DKBA soldiers stopped them from killing her. They also stopped them from catching me when I was trying to push my motorcycle. The DKBA soldiers helped my escape by calling away the Burmese soldier. [Note: At this stage of the events she was not actually sure which soldiers were which.]

My mother has practically nothing left, just a few things. She has no gold. They already knew that we didn't have any gold. We only had some money. I remember that we invested about 50,000 baht in this shop. Later on we increased it up to 70,000 baht, maybe more, but less than 100,000 baht. That included the shop and the clothing. All burned down.

I don't miss anything in particular, because many times my house has been burned down. This is the fourth time that my house has been burned down during my lifetime. I only want a better life. There is only one thing that I regret most: my family album of photographs.

Even when my mother was expecting me, our house was burned down in Old Wankha. But in my lifetime, the first time was when I was 5 or 6 years old and we were living in the new Wankha camp. At that time, my father was a trader. We also had a shop then and everything burned down. I can remember my house being destroyed. It was set on fire during the fighting between the KNU and the Burmese. The second time was when we were living at Wankha on the Thai side and I was about 12 years old. We had a shop there too and it was burned down by the Burmese soldiers, not even because of fighting. But that time we didn't lose the clothing because we took it all out ahead of time. The third time was at the new market in Huay Kaloke last year. It was an accident: an Indian family's carelessness with their stove in their kitchen [most of Huay Kaloke market burned down in March 1996 because of this accident].

Now we are staying in Mae Sot for a short time. We are renting a house. My mother will start a new shop when the situation is better in Huay Kaloke.

Interview 93: HRV: Refugee, Border Incursion, DKBA

Name: Naw G'Mwee Paw
Sex: Female
Age: 49
Nationality: Karen, medic
Religion: Christian
Family: Married, 6 children but 3 already died
Address: Huay Bone (Don Pa Kiang) refugee camp, Thailand
Interviewed: February 6, 1997
Source: KHRG

[Naw G'Mwee Paw, a medic at Huay Bone camp clinic, was there when it was attacked and burned on January 28, 1997.]

On January 28, 1997, they burned our camp. At the time I was sleeping in a house, very close to my own house. I was not in my own house.

It was 9:45 p.m. Karen time [10:15 Thai time]. At first, we heard one gunshot, just one gunshot, and the people who were staying together with me in that house all ran away. But I came back to my own house to get my daughter, because my husband was staying there with my son and my daughter and he couldn't carry them both [her son is disabled and her daughter is 21/2 years old]. Within a few seconds, we heard a very strong voice near our house which said "Catch them! Shoot them! Don't let them get out of the camp!" We saw a lot of men with guns running out of the bushes to Section 2, toward our house and directly toward the clinic. They entered the clinic looking for whatever they need. At first they didn't come for me. But when they didn't find the things they needed, they came to my house, surrounded my house and then ordered the others to guard my house while some of them came into the house and pointed their guns at me.

Ten of them came into my house. They all had guns. They didn't shoot at me but they touched me with their guns and said, "Don't run or we will shoot you!" They pointed their guns at me and asked me for the key of the clinic. I gave it to them. One of their leaders ordered them: "Look through this house and open all the things in it. After that he said, "Don't do anything. Don't touch this Auntie! Don't hurt her!" So the soldiers who were standing beside me stepped away from me. I took the key and my little daughter. I carried her with me to the hospital, and the soldiers were following me, and I looked for the microscope in the clinic [the DKBA are usually on orders to get micro-

scopes when they raid refugee camps]. When I opened the cupboard, I didn't find the microscope. But these men who came to get the microscope, they didn't even know what a microscope is. He looked everywhere but couldn't find it. I gave him medicine to take back [to Burma] and use. At first they put the medicine in their bags, but afterwards he told me: "Auntie, I don't need these. In our place, we have a lot of medicine." He gave it back and I closed the cupboard and came back to my house. When they came out of the clinic, they talked to one of the leaders on the walkie-talkie -- they said, "We haven't found the microscope. What do we do now?" One of the leaders told them on the walkie-talkie, "How is it that you can't find it? Today they were using it to do malaria tests." They were speaking very loudly so I could hear very clearly. They were speaking in Karen language over the walkie-talkie, not Burmese. The leader said to them over the walkie-talkie, "Threaten that woman and you will find it." The second time, they climbed into the clinic by themselves and didn't call me. They found it in the breastfeeding room. They took the microscope. We were staying under our house and we could listen to their voices. They were speaking very loudly. When they brought the microscope out of the clinic, the man with the walkie-talkie ordered: "Burn it down. Burn it down!"

I was under my house, I looked at the clinic and I saw the fire start to burn. Then my house and the camp office [next door] started to burn. They were about 30 soldiers there, and at other places maybe a lot more, but I just saw the ones who were near my house and the clinic. They were dressed in uniforms and all of them had guns, but I don't know which kind. One of the guns was very short and a lot of them had long ones. I could not see very well at night-time. We could not shine our torchlights, and they were shining their torchlights on us. Only some of them were DKBA. SLORC soldiers were also amongst them. As far as I know, the soldiers who came and talked to me were DKBA, but outside the clinic many of the soldiers were standing silently and they didn't speak. One woman told me that when they were outside the camp she heard them speaking Burmese to each other, but inside the camp they didn't speak at all.

Q: What about their faces?

A: I saw the face of the one who asked me for the keys but I didn't know him. But their eyes were very strange. Their eyes were red and they looked at us sternly, like they were crazy. I am sure they had taken some medicine. When they addressed me at first they were very aggressive, but afterward they became softer.

First, they surrounded the camp, then after the gunshot, some of them ran to

the clinic and my house but another group went to the market. They shot one Thai [a merchant who sold things in the camp]. I didn't see that. Early the next morning I came back to the market and I saw a lot of blood on the ground, and the people told me, "Oh! Min Yen's husband was shot last night!" When he heard that the DKBA were close to us, he jumped into his car and tried to drive out of the camp. Then he saw one DKBA soldier in front of him who ordered him to stop the car, but he tried to drive through and they shot him dead. He was hit in his leg and his bladder, inside the car. I don't know his name. He was Thai. His wife is also Thai. They do business here. They have a shop in the market. He was staying alone in the camp that night [without his wife].

At the time they ordered us not to run away: "If you run away, we will shoot you!" So my husband told them, "You are burning our house and yet you don't let us run away." But we tried to escape and we ran to the field outside of the camp. We didn't run too far and we could see the whole camp burning. They stayed around for about 4 hours. When the fire was nearly finished, we could hear them shouting: "All burned. Now we must go back." We could see them with their guns, we could even count them! We stayed very quietly just outside the camp. We couldn't go far because we had no shoes. So we tried to hide in the bushes, and we spent the whole night there in the fields outside of the camp. We couldn't save any of our belongings. We only had the clothes we were wearing. That night, I didn't wear a sweater, only a shirt and my sarong, so it was so cold. I had left my jacket in my house. I had 764 baht in it to give to someone in the camp. That day I couldn't find the person, so I had kept the money in my jacket to give to them the next day. I was keeping the money very carefully, but at that time I didn't remember about my jacket and it was burned. I lost an electric keyboard [a portable battery-operated piano keyboard, which are used by many Karen churches] and my cupboard with all our clothes inside. Also my medical dictionary, I lost it all.

At that time, we didn't know that they were also burning down Huay Kaloke camp. We could see the light of the fire in the sky but we didn't know where it was from [Huay Kaloke is just 10 km. further south]. It was nearly at the same time that they set our camp on fire.

There was no Thai security in our camp and nobody was staying at the checkpoint. Usually they stayed in the day time, sometimes at night too. But if they hear that the news is not so good [i.e. that there may be an attack], they go away. It happened at night time, so there was no security for us. But the next morning, a lot of Thai soldiers came, checked the situation and asked many questions.

Afterwards we came back to the camp, but we had no more house and nothing to cook. A lot of people were without any pots, without anything. So the monk who was staying here announced to the people: "If you have nothing, you can come to the monastery. Especially for the babies, we will give rice for you." The adults had to wait. A lot of people came and ate there. Some rice was left in the monastery. Some families who had rice came and gave it to the monks, and the monks gave food to the villagers.

I didn't hear of them looting anything in the market. Personally, I believe that their leaders only ordered them to do two things, to get the microscope and to burn down the camp. At the time I felt angry but also very sad. The people here felt so sad. A lot of them were crying because they had nothing left, not even clothes. Since then and even until now we have been sleeping outside of the camp. Only a few families have some blankets. The small children under 5 years old especially have been catching colds. We've also had a few cases of malaria and diarrhea.

For the future, we can do nothing. I don't know. We are waiting to know what we should do, where we should go. A lot of people are waiting to hear what the leaders will say and they will follow. If they have to go back to Burma side, they refuse to go. But if we build our houses here again, they will surely come and burn them again.

[The following is from a previous interview with "Naw G'Mwee Paw" conducted on 10 September 1996, after an attack on the camp in August 1996.]

I was in the camp when DKBA attacked us. It was on 23/8/1996. As I was afraid, I was not in my house but in another one in the camp [there were already rumours in the camp of a possible attack because DKBA soldiers had been seen gathering just across the border]. They didn't send any messages beforehand.

First they entered Ka Na Su [an outlying section of the refugee camp]. The camp leader told me that it happened at about midnight. I didn't hear the shooting because it is about 3 kilometres away. They killed Major Tun Kyi there. The villagers said that about 10 of them [DKBA] crossed the river and came directly to Major Tun Kyi's house. His house is a bit distant from the other houses. They surrounded his house. His wife ran out of the house. Major Tun Kyi also tried to run out of the house but he only got down the steps when somebody shouted to him and shot him. They didn't ask anything. Major Tun Kyi asked, "Who is coming?" He got no answer and he was shot. He was hit by many bullets in his chest. He was in the KNU before. He was 70 years old

and had retired. He had 4 children. That night, only Major Tun Kyi and his wife were staying in the house. Their children were not staying together with them because they attend school, one of his daughters is a school teacher in this camp [the main section - there is no school in Ka Na Su] and the eldest one is married. His wife thinks that if she hadn't manage to run out of the house, she would have been shot too. We think that maybe the SLORC told DKBA to go and find someone like a leader, a KNU leader or a camp leader, arrest him and kill him. We all know that they are controlled by the SLORC.

After they killed him they entered his house and took all the clothes and all his money too, 70,000 Baht. Nothing was left in his house. I think that they came to catch him, but after they caught him they also wanted to get his money. In Ka Na Su they also went to Pu Kyi's house. They stayed there for a few minutes and pointed their guns at his family. They didn't ask or steal anything. They only frightened them.

The same group came here. They entered the camp [main section] at nearly 2 a.m. They didn't take the path - they crossed the cornfield and came to the well in Section 7. One of the men saw them with their guns but he thought it was our own camp security. Only later he realized they were DKBA. They all had guns. My son also saw them, but it was nighttime and he doesn't know whether they were wearing uniforms or not. My son was not staying in our house. He was near the top of the road and he saw them passing by. Maybe they came in separate groups, because dogs were barking at various places - but then they must have joined together in the camp.

That night I was sleeping and I didn't notice anything. Only in the morning, my husband told me. When I went back to our house in the morning, my husband was complaining: "Last night I didn't sleep. I want to sleep now." So, I asked him, "What happened to you? Why didn't you sleep?" And he told me "DKBA came around our house, but they didn't ask or take anything in our house." He saw them. He knew it was DKBA because they had guns. In our camp nobody carries a gun, and we can recognize the Thai soldiers by their uniforms. Those that my husband saw didn't wear uniforms. He saw one man standing at the steps of the camp secretary's house [next door], two here and one or two there. The dogs were barking at them. They lighted their torches, and the dogs were barking a lot. We have 5 dogs, so if someone comes, there is so much noise. Afterwards they went to the hospital. Only one of the nurses and one patient were staying in the IPD [in-patient's department]. They went in and shone their torches but didn't ask anything and didn't take anything.

They went and surrounded Aung Gyi's house [Aung Gyi had recently married

an American teacher who had just left the camp the previous day]. They were standing there with an RPG [rocket-propelled grenade launcher], the neighbors saw them. Three men entered his house and looked inside the bedrooms, but they didn't find anyone. Only the headmistress was staying in the house. They said, "Where is the foreigner? We want to see the foreign woman and Padoh Captain [Aung Gyi's father, who is with the KNU]". But she didn't answer and pretended she was asleep. She felt so afraid. Three times the same night they surrounded his house, but only the last time they came and searched inside. But they didn't find them so they left. The only house they entered in this camp was Aung Gyi's house. They knew very well. They want a foreigner because they think that foreigners have a lot of money. And Saw Captain belongs to the Timber Department of the KNU and they want leaders like him.

They went to some shops and ordered, "Open the door. If you don't open it, we will do it ourselves." They took some bread and tins of sardines, and other things that they can eat. One shop was left nearly empty. They carried everything away themselves. They also arrested two people and asked them for money, 1,200 Baht. They couldn't give it, but the DKBA didn't do anything and left them. No one was taken away. They stayed in the camp for about 2 hours, then they left at 4 a.m.

We think they came here for some people, leaders that they wanted, but they didn't do anything because they didn't find them. Even the section leaders were in hiding [the refugee camp section leaders]. They didn't ask the refugees anything.

Everyone was afraid but they couldn't do anything. Most people here didn't even know what happened. Sections 1, 3, 4 and 5 knew but the other side of the camp didn't notice anything. They didn't shoot here. Only the next morning the other people heard the news and got frightened too.

On the 24th nothing happened, but on the night of the 25th they fired heavy weapons nearby again, across from the fields, on the Karen side [just across the border]. One or two fell on the Thai side near the river but didn't explode. I heard 5 shells. People woke up and ran away from the camp, some along the road and some to the corn fields. They didn't come back to the camp that night and stayed outside the camp under the trees. It was raining. Some people had a plastic sheet but some didn't. Some went to stay in the Thai [farmers'] field huts. My husband also went to stay in a Thai hut. That night I stayed here but the next day I went to stay in Mae Sot with my children.

Now we are afraid. When they came we knew some of them [DKBA soldiers] and nothing happened. Maybe that was good for us. But yesterday we heard that some villagers outside the camp saw them again, and this time they didn't recognize any of them - so maybe the SLORC changed them because when they came they didn't do anything in the main camp. SLORC wants them to kill someone or burn the camp. Before they sometimes used to visit some villagers who know them, but without guns. This is the first time that they came with guns. Each of them had a gun. The villagers are so afraid. The camp leader will have a meeting with KRC [the Karen Refugee Committee] and the NGO's [the foreign Non-Governmental Organisations who supply the refugee camps] to see if we should move. It will not be easy to move so many families.

[After the attack on the camp on August 24 and the shelling of the area on August 26 the refugees were living in extreme fear and no one was sleeping in the camp at night. They had moved their valuables out into the farm fields and went out there to sleep every night. By September 10 most of them had returned to stay in the camp.]

Interview 94: HRV: Refugee, Border Incursion

Eyewitness story of attack on Beh Klaw (Mae La) Camp

Source: KHRG

Beh Klaw refugee camp has a population of 25,596 (as of Feb. 1997) and is located 62 km. north of the Thai town of Mae Sot, sprawling over several kilometres of undulating land surrounded by forested hills, with the north-south Mae Sariang-Mae Sot highway passing along its eastern side. Many of the refugees here came after other camps such as Baw Noh were attacked and destroyed in 1995. At about 6:30 a.m. on January 29, a force of at least 30-40 soldiers attacked the camp from the northwestern corner near the camp's Bible School. They were backed up by a larger force which remained outside the camp, between the camp and the border. The force came on foot from the other side of the border a few kilometres away and was supported by SLORC shelling from the Burma side of the border. At least 35 shells were fired into the camp, and the attackers themselves used assault rifles, rocket-propelled grenades and M79 grenade launchers. A rocket-propelled grenade killed one elderly woman trying to flee the attack.

As the attackers moved into the camp, firing into houses and then setting them on fire, they encountered camp security forces who fought back and were later joined by Thai troops. The attackers, most of whom were reportedly DKBA, were pinned down and then driven back, eventually being forced to retreat to the border leaving behind 2 or 3 dead and taking along with them an unknown number of wounded. They managed to burn down 15 houses in the course of the attack. Over the next several days, some of them remained in Thailand between the camp and the border until the security forces gradually harassed them back into Burma.

The refugees fled the camp, and for a long time no one dared sleep in the camp at night and many people lived in hiding in the surrounding hills and forests. The people of Beh Klaw considered themselves fortunate to have escaped the total destruction which Huay Kaloke and Huay Bone suffered, and after they got news of the destruction of these other camps they even took up collections of clothing and other supplies among themselves and sent them down to their fellow refugees who had lost everything. However, no one in Beh Klaw feels secure and most people feel it is essential to be moved to a safer location.

Interview 95: HRV: Refugee, Border incursion, DKBA, Killing

Name: Naw Lah Paw
Sex: Female
Age: 30
Nationality: Karen
Religion: Buddhist
Family: Married, 2 children aged 2 and 5
Address: Sho Kloh refugee camp, Thailand
Interviewed: March 5, 1997
Source: KHRG

[“Naw Lah Paw” is the wife of the leader of Section 3 of Sho Kloh camp, who was hit in the shelling and died.]

I have been living in Sho Kloh for about 11 years. On January 4, 1997, I was selling lottery tickets in the market. Then when I heard an explosion I was staying in my house. I started running towards the bunker [after Sho Kloh was shelled in June 1996, most families dug a small bunker near their house] and I looked for my children. It was about 4 p.m. Burmese time [4:30 Thai time]. I

heard 3 or 4 shells and the last one landed right here [about 5 meters in front of her house]. I stayed in the bunker while the shells landed. I thought "What is happening?" because there was a lot of dust in the air, and I looked at my husband. I saw him falling down there [pointing at the footpath outside her house]. When the mortar landed, he was in front of the house shouting at the children to stay still and hide in the bunker. I called to him loudly that the children and I were already in the bunker. Just as I spoke the mortar landed there, as he was coming towards us. It was too late for him to get into the bunker. His name was Saw Pay. He was 33 years old, Sgaw Karen and Buddhist like me. He was the section 3 leader.

I saw him lying down just like that. I thought that he was dead because he was so quiet and stayed still. I didn't see his injuries, but people saw him wounded and took him to the hospital about 30 minutes after the shelling. The other people didn't want me to go, so I went back to the bunker again. My parents heard that he was wounded, so my father came up to me about 15 or 20 minutes later and I came out of the bunker again. But the others forced me back into the bunker because they were worried for me. At that time I also had my youngest child in my arms because I couldn't leave him lying in the bunker alone and there was no one to look after him. When it was already dark, I followed my mother walking and running to the hospital because I wanted to see my husband. People didn't let me see him because they were worried that I would be upset. When I saw him, his wounds were covered. He was injured by 4 pieces of shrapnel - in his neck, in his side, in his stomach and in his right leg. The people sent him to Mae Sot by car along with his brother. I couldn't go to Mae Sot with the child and went to stay in my mother's house in Section 2. The next day, I tried to go down to Mae Sot but I could only get to Beh Klaw [half way]. I went to see him about a week later. At that time he looked better. He had an oxygen pipe going into his throat and he couldn't speak. Two weeks later, he had become thin and couldn't eat well but he could speak a little. On the 12th of February he died. My brother-in-law told me. They burned his body in the hospital. I didn't even know when he was buried.

One uncle [older man] also got injured while he was staying in the bunker. I was in his bunker and he was trying to get into my bunker. I was too afraid to stay in my bunker, so I had gone to his. He got injured on his thigh and it broke his bone. His house is just here and his children are staying with his son. His wife is already dead. The people carried him in a hammock to the [camp] hospital. I saw him there with bamboo slats on both sides of his leg, tied up with a bandage from the hip to the ankle. They sent him to Mae Sot together with my husband. He is still in Mae Sot hospital now.

Altogether the shelling lasted for about 5 or 10 minutes. I think it is DKBA who fired the shells. They were coming from Baw Pa Hta area. I think they have bad feelings toward us, but we have done nothing to make them feel this way. I don't know why. The Thai soldiers in Sho Kloh did nothing. I didn't hear them firing back. They just stayed like that. About 5 or 10 minutes later, Thai soldiers from Mae Plu fired 3 or 4 shells back.

I dare not think about the future. I feel scared and sad. We have to stay alert. I don't want to go back to Burma. Only if there is peace would I like to go back. If the situation goes on like this, I don't want to go back. If everybody moves to Beh Klaw I will go too, because it is not safe to stay separate from the other people. I will follow the others, though I believe that Beh Klaw is not safer than Sho Kloh. For now, I am staying in Section 2 with my parents.

Interview 96: HRV: Refugee, Border Incursion, DKBA

Name: Saw Win Hlaing
Sex: Male
Age: 25
Nationality: Karen, shopkeeper
Religion: Muslim
Family: Single, 6 brothers and sisters
Address: Sho Kloh refugee camp, Thailand
Interviewed: March 6, 1997
Source: KHRG

[“Saw Win Hlaing” was one of the 3 people wounded by the shelling.]

I have been living in Sho Kloh for the last 10 years. I live in the market of Section 4. It was about 5 p.m. when the DKBA shelled into Sho Kloh. As soon as we heard the shelling, we closed the shop. As I was closing the door a shell exploded about 7 or 8 yards away, in front of my shop and the video house. Actually the mortar came through the roof of the video house and exploded in the middle [no one was in there]. It damaged the walls of the video house, my house and my things in the shop. A piece of shrapnel hit me. I was the only one hurt by that mortar shell. I was wounded in the back of my shoulder [the top corner of his left shoulder]. My family was already in the bunker and I went to the back of the house to my family. I waited for about half an hour until the shelling was over. My whole shirt got soaked with blood. Then my younger brother carried me to the hospital. He is bigger and stronger than me. I arrived there first, before the other two wounded people. There were one

or two medics but no patients, all of them had fled to the bunkers near the hospital. The medic washed the wound and applied first aid to it. Two other people were also wounded: Saw Pay, the section 3 leader, and one old man but I don't know his name. We had to wait for a couple of hours. We didn't dare go without any security guard. At about 7 p.m., a Thai Army car took us to Mae Sot hospital. There were 3 patients and two medics. In Mae Sot, the doctors took out the shrapnel and dressed my wounds that night and I came back here the next day. I only stayed one night at Mae Sot hospital. Now my shoulder is sometimes numb. If I work for more than 10 minutes it gives me cramps. It is still painful when I sleep on my left side.

Five shells landed in Sho Kloh [4 exploded and at least one or two did not]. They shelled from Baw Pa Hta. I didn't see them but I heard them, especially the one that hit me. One shell landed in front of my house, one at the monastery, one at the church and another one in front of the section 3 leader's house. That last one hit and wounded him. One leader dug up the tail of the shell and told me that it was a 21/2" mortar. I feel very angry and resentful about this, but since we are refugees we can't do anything. I believe this could happen again, and we will just run if we can escape. I don't want to move to Beh Klaw because of the difficulties for my family. Altogether we are 10 people in my family, 6 brothers and sisters, my parents, my sister-in-law and myself. Now we have no money to move there. If our leaders ask us to move we will move, and if they ask us to stay we will stay. That's all. Staying in Sho Kloh is better than staying in Burma, because there is a lot of fighting in Burma now. I used to live in Moe Nai village in Hlaing Bwe township. Sho Kloh is safer than my village. I want the organisations of the whole world to help the Karen refugees. There is no hope for improvement through the peace talks between SLORC and the ethnic groups. It can only be possible with the interference of the whole world and if SLORC transfers state power to Aung San Suu Kyi. I think the situation in Burma might be better if Aung San Suu Kyi comes to power.