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The Peace Way Foundation

Burma Issues

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Civil War

After the Communist Party of Burma's headquarters, Panghsang, fell to mutineers of the ethnic Wa forces and Kokang in the Shan State in July 1989, the junta called for a cease fire with the Wa and Kokang. Previously a lot of the junta's regiments under the East and South East Command Headquarters, had fought against the CPB. Now, following the cease fires, a lot of these regiments have been transferred to other areas to suppress the political wing of other ethnic dissident

Shan State:

The United Wa State Army have been fighting to control the Drug Lord Khunsa's strongholds of Doilang and Loi Maw in the

Northern Shan State since 1989. The junta back UWSA are trying to control the drug trading routes. On both sides the causalities were around 300 dead and 2,000 wounded. Both sides are carrying out fighting in Northern Shan State.

Karen State:

Last year, the two main Karen strongholds of Kaw Moo Ra and Yegaw survived attacks by about 4,000 of the junta's troops who received heavy causalities in the severe fighting at Kaw Moo Ra. Some of the Junta's POW privates are very young - about 17 years old.

In January of this year, the dry season offensive was launched in the Karen State and Thai logging firms were warned to leave from the Kaw Moo Ra area, opposite Thailand's border city of Mae Sod. After the 4th Jan. the junta's troops shelled with heavy artillery into Kaw Moo Ra (Wankha) where the students and KNU are still defending their stronghold. It is expected that the junta's troops soon will storm Kaw Moo Ra as the govt. troops started arresting the people along the Kaukaraik-Mya Waddy highway and the villages in MyaWaddy township. These people are used by the Burmese military as porters and human mine sweepers. According to the residents in Myawaddy township, hundreds of people were arrested to serve as porters and were put into the military regiment in Myawaddy.

During the first week of March in this year, government aircraft bombed Saw Hta and U Thu Hta camps. The junta's troops later took Saw Hta, the students' camp, but last week students from ABSDF and KNU joint troops recaptured Saw Hta. Causality figures were not released.

On Feb. 11, eight government soldiers from No. 515 division defected to join the All Burma Students' Democratic Front at Pobatha camp. The defected Govt. troops were led by Sgt Kyaw Khine and the others are Wing Hlaing, Than Zaw Oo, Khin Zaw, Chit Aung, Zaw Lwin U, Ye Naing and Nyunt Thein.

Mon State:

On January 23, the junta's troops overran a base 50 Km east of Tavoy in Southern Burma belonging to the Mon guerrillas in the new year dry season offensive. Since last December, troops have been massing in this areas.

On 24 March 1991, a students' special squad of Reg. No.206 from ABSDF, attacked the Daiwon Police Station in Moulmein and the attack caused the death of one police officer. On the 26th, a special squad attacked a second time and captured the police station.

Hundreds of Mon civilians were fleeing across the border into Thailand's Sanklaburi province after the three-day offensive by the junta's troops. At the present time, there are more than 45,000 Burmese refugees on the Thai-Burma border line.

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Politics

Within three months of this new year, many of the elected representatives of the people were reportedly arrested by the Masala (the junta) in Burma. Especially, the elected representatives from the National League for Democracy (NLD) were arrested all over the whole country. After forming the coalition government by some of the representatives in Manerplaw, the headquarters of the ethnic dissident Karen National Union, in Nov., last year, more than 40 people, mostly members of the NLD, were immediately arrested. According to Masala's (the junta) accusation, those arrested were involved in the plans to form the coalition government.

The junta forced all the political parties to sign an agreement to obey the election laws and the martial laws. Almost all of the political parties signed the contracts, except the Democratic Party for New Society (DPNS) and some of the NLD's members.

The election laws were drawn up by the election committee backed by the Masala (the Junta). Some of the five members of the election committee have very bad reputations in their back ground history. Although the election committee said, "we stand on neutral ground", they are actually working under the laws of the Masala.

NLD acting Chairman, U Aung Lwin, who is also secretary of NLD said "We (the NLD) have no idea when the Slorc will call a national convention and we will have to stop our contact with the foreign media and embassies." A total of 45 elected representatives from NLD were arrested nationwide and almost all of the Central Executive senior members were arrested. That is why the NLD is reorganizing the party structure.

The junta-backed, U Than Kywe, chairman of the National Unity party (NUP), accused the NLD that it was too impatient for a transfer of power and wanted to skip the conditional drafting process. He also claimed that the NLD was trying to grab power by force of arms, as some members go underground. "Since the NLD is the winning party, why do they go underground? They should cooperate with Slorc to speed up the drafting of the constitution," he went on to say.

The vice chairman (former admiral) of the NUP also said his party would have achieved a landslide victory in the election had the NLD not resorted to "malpractice" which intimidated potential voters for the NUP.

Col Than Tun, vice director of military intelligence accused the NLD that, "It is linked with the dissidents groups based near the

Thai-Burma border."

Opposition Parties

Three month into this year, the registration of four political parties were revoked by Slorc. These are the Democratic Youth Front of Burma, Patriotic Democratic Youth Front (PDYF), Anti-fascist People's Freedom league (AFPFL) and the Party for National Democracy (PND). The registration of all these political parties were revoked by Slorc under accusation of having links with outlawed dissidents.

Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein, General Secretary of the AFPFL was arrested on January 25 in Rangoon for allegedly assisting student organizations. She is the daughter of a former Deputy Prime Minister and is believed to have been sentenced by Slorc.

According to a Bangkok based Nation news paper, Myint Myint Khin, one of the remaining associates of NLD's Central Committee Member, resigned this week apparently in protest at efforts to oust the Aung San Su Kyi. She is a close friend of Aung San Su Kyi and openly criticized the Army in August 1988. She was detained under martial law from July 1989 to April 1990.

Tin Maung Win from the NLD, died of Leukaemia in Insein jail on January 18. He is an elective representative from Kayan constituency and his named was removed from the list of National Assembly representatives.

The junta stated that Maung Ko, a labor organizer from the NLD, committed suicide in Insein Jail. Since he was arrested, his family members have not been permitted to meet him. He is believed to have been tortured to death.

Nay Min, local correspondent for the Asahi Shimbun, died of Cirrhosis of the liver last month. Diplomats say his condition worsened after he was interrogated last year. He is a lawyer and was arrested on Oct 21, 1988 and sentenced to 14 years

imprisonment with hard labor for allegedly passing on information to the British Broadcasting Service (BBC).

Some of the political prisoners were moved from Insein Jail in Rangoon to Thayawaddi jail in Thayawaddi District because the Insein Jail was over-crowded. There are more than 15,000 political prisoners in Burma and most are sentenced under the criminal acts by the miliary tribunals.

The NLD won 82% of seat in the election last year. The criticisms of the NLD members against Slorc are threatening the power of the Junta which wants to wipe out the NLD because of their popular support by the people. They, therefore, are arresting all the strong opposition within NLD as well as in others parties. It is sure the junta will never arrest members of the National Unity Party (NUP) which was created by the strong man, Ne Win.

The junta will stop arrests if the opposition signs the contract to protect the wealth, power and the lives of Ne Win and his loyalists. That is why the junta is forcing the opposition to sign the contract by arresting consistent opposition.

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Investments

Thai Fishing Companies

The cooperation in the field of fishing between Thailand and Burma started about 20 years ago when Burma allowed Thai fishing companies to fish in Burmese waters in 1968. However, this cooperation was abolished 5 years later due to the lack of experience of the two countries in the fishing business.

However, in 1988 Slorc launched a policy to allow the foreign fishing companies to fish in Burmese waters in order to get

foreign exchange. This hard currency is essential for the Slorc to purchase weapons from abroad, especially from China.

At the beginning, only 3 Thai companies were allowed to send their fishing trawlers to Burma. They were: 1. Mars and Co.Ltd., 2. Atlantis Marine Cooperation Ltd., 3. Sirichai Fishery Ltd.

Afterwards, 135 fishing trawlers were sent to Burma at the beginning of 1989. Later, five more companies limited did not send their fishing trawlers to Burma. Therefore by the middle of 1989, 241 fishing trawlers were legally sent by Thai fishing companies were in Burmese waters. Moreover, there are a lot of illegal Thai vessels in Burmese waters. The Thai fishing companies earn three times more profits from illegal fishing boats than legal vessels in Burmese waters. There was high competition among the Thai fishing companies who proposed unrealistically high returns to the Slorc.

The Thai Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Agriculture & Cooperatives, Dr. Charoen Kantawongsa, visited Burma on 2-4 Nov. 1989 and 10-11 Jan. 1990 and had a talk with Maj. Gen. Chit Shwe of the junta. Thailand and the Burmese junta signed an agreement to cooperate in both fishing activities and technical assistance.

As agreed in the discussion with the Burmese junta, Thailand supported the private sector to establish a central company named Thai-Burma Fishery Company Ltd. in 1990 and 25 million baht was put up as registered capital.

From 1990 to 1991, five more Thai companies received concessions with 256 fishing vessels in Burmese waters. Moveover, the Thai fishing companies are both raping wealthy marine resources in Burmese waters and supporting financially to the brutal junta. According to a Thai survey, one of the Thai special nets can catch 183.5 kg/hr and one floating net can catch 5.2 kg/hr of fish in Burmese waters.

There are abundant marine natural resources in Burma's coastal areas which were formally restricted for the Thai fishing vessels. Now the Thai fishing boat owners give large bribe payments to high ranking officers of Slorc and the Navy in order to be allowed to freely fish in these waters. That is why, Burmese fishermen are facing the a dearth of fish in their own waters because of the Thai vessels' special fishing nets.

At the present time, many Burmese fishermen are becoming jobless in some areas of the Tennaserin coast. The Masala's troops (Burmese military) are also either raising a high tax or persecuting them. They finally abandon their homes and become refugees or illegal immigrant cheap laborers in Thailand.

Some of the young women from these areas are sold to brothels by Thai or Burmese gangs and they become prostitutes in Thailand. Some are very young, aged about 13 years.

Companies from countries throughout the world are rushing into Burma to invest because they believe they can make quick profits. They seem totally dis-interested in the suffering which their investments bring on the people of Burma.

At the present time, the junta can buy more weapons to intensify the civil war in Burma. Moreover, the foreign investments are encouraging human rights abuses by the Slorc. We ask our friends throughout the world to put pressure on Thailand's investments, as well as on all other country's who investment in Burma, to immediately withdraw all investments in order to help promote internal peace in Burma.

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Interview with refugees

My name is U Toe. I am 62 years old and I live in Kanpauk township in Tennasarin Division. I would like to tell of the brutal incident by the junta troops in my village.

On June 1989, in the evening, four soldiers came into Daw Nan's home which is my neighbour's house and they raped Ma Khin, the daughter of Daw Nan by force. She struggled to escape from the four soldiers attempts. I heard the loud screams of the young woman who was asking for help. I ran to inform the officer of the four soldiers who was in the Buddhist monastery in my village. The officer aimed his pistol at me and told me to stay out of her house. I was not able to save her although I heard the voices of the woman and soldiers the entire night. Even though the junta's troops looted our rice and animals, we were force to give fees to free our friends who were taken as porters. I could not work under the persecution of the junta. I finally crossed the border into Thailand. I am now a refugee in Thailand."

My name is U Thaung Din. I also live in Kanpauk township in Tennansarin Division. I was a local organizer of the National League for Democracy Party. On Januanry 3,1990, two soldiers came into my yard and shot my chickens for their meal without asking any permission. Although I appealed to them, they neglected my appeal. They even threatened my life. I have two young daughters. I became worried about my daughters safety. Finally we crossed the border into Thailand. I and my family are now refugees in Thailand."

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