

B. U. R. M. A.

BURMA RIGHTS MOVEMENT FOR ACTION

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Hungry villagers dig for rodents and frogs in the paddies

In 1990, Burma's public debt was placed at 4.8 billion US dollars. With only 337 million dollars of export earnings reported in 1989, Burma's debt service ratio is 60%.

The economic outlook for the future is dim for the people. As foreign companies flood into Burma, inflation soars. Seeking daily survival takes all the time and energy the people have. Malnutrition, unthinkable in the past, is now becoming a common problem especially in the rural areas.

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CIVIL WAR

The hope for a peaceful solution to the long civil war in Burma has consistently been shattered by the Burmese junta's stubborn demand on ethnic minorities and some armed dissidents "to completely abandon the armed struggle first" and by their increasing arms imports from China, Pakistan, Poland and Czechoslovakia. At the same time, the junta is pouring its troops into the combat zones of the state's frontier border areas where the ethnic minorities live. Rangoon has been buying a tremendous amount of weapons with the aim of eliminating the armed indigenous minority groups from their lands.

Saw Than Aung, vice president of the Karen National Union (KNU) claims that the junta has allocated 35,000 million Baht (about US\$1,380 million) in financial support for the coming offensives against the minority groups and other armed dissidents. Another 7,500 million baht (US\$295 million) has been spent for buying weapons. Armaments already acquired include helicopter gunships, 130 mm artillery guns and at least six 240 mm mortars from Poland. Some of the equipment was shipped from Singapore and unloaded at Moulmein town, close to the Thai-Burma border. During last month, about 700 advance Burmese infantry troops were sent to Papun town of the Karen minority state, and very close to the combat zones. About 100 Burmese military men were sent to China, Poland and Malaysia to undergo training in the use of advance jet fighters and the other weapons.

The situation suggests that very bloody fighting the end of this year will be intensified even more with newly equipped Chinese-made fighters staging air raids over the Karen State's ethnic minority areas. There is also a prediction that by next year the number of the refugees will increase from the present number of around 82,000 to more than one hundred thousand in Burma's neighboring countries; especially in Thailand.

Usually the military starts the "dry season offensives" in the ethnic areas at the end of October or December but the Burmese infantry troops have already started moving on important

strategic areas in the east and north of Burma. Moreover, the junta wants to occupy Manerplaw which is one of the most logistically important places for both military and political aims as it is the headquarters of the ethnic groups as well as political dissidents. Last year the junta lost hundreds of its soldiers during the offensives against Manerplaw which is a well-sheltered place housing more than 5,000 ethnic civilians.

Thailand, perhaps, will be playing a key role in Burmese's clashes on its border in the coming "dry season offensive". Currently Burmese troops are starting to use Thai territory with the purpose of attacking some of the minority's strongholds which are located on the Thai border, from the rear. Recently, about 200 Burmese troops took up a position in Thai territory in Mae Sarin District, about one kilometer inside the border. Here they have placed some of their heavy artillery which shell the ethnic rebels' strongholds. Several Kaya and Karen rebels and seven Burmese troops were killed during the exchange of fire. Shortly after that, the Thai government announced that "Thailand will not become involved in this fighting". However, the important point is why does Thailand allow the Burmese military temporarily in its own territory and how many times will Thailand allow the Burmese troops on Thai soil "temporarily" in the coming junta's dry season offensives? There is also an obvious contradiction in the Thai policy on Burmese dissident students who are not allowed refugees status in Thailand because they are involved in political struggle against the military junta of Burma.

Recently about 15,000 ethnic refugees, mostly Karen from the KNU control areas, have been threatened by the junta's offensives. However, the refugees absolutely do not want to take refuge on Thai soil as the Thai officials often repatriate the refugees back to the Burmese army who brutally torture them as revenge. Therefore, though the lives of these people have been threatened seriously, there is no place to safety for them. Some of them

are being forced to move from a more passive life to becoming more militant.

One of the Karen guerrillas said, "Last year I retired from the KNLA (Karen National Liberation Army) and went back to my village but shortly after that, some of the women from my village were raped by the soldiers from the Burmese army. That made me feel the need to protect our people. So I joined again to the guerrilla unit of the KNU."

Mhan Aung Htay, an intellectual and the one of the leaders of the KNU, said, "Six thousand Karen from nine villages in Tha Yet Chaung township were forcefully relocated to the Burmese army's controlled area in order to cut off the civilian support to the Karen guerrillas. Though almost all the people are farmers, there are almost no farms in the new area. Currently the people are living in a hell with a terrible shortage of food, cloths and suffering from many diseases. Moreover, the children are dying from fever and malnutrition. Even though the people are in the hands of the junta's soldiers, three of them were beaten to death because the soldiers suspected them. I want the world to see how our people are suffering from the inhuman harassments of the Burmese army."

The roots of this serious civil war originate from the lack of a democratic system and the rights of participation of the indigenous groups in the country. The political dissidents and the ethnic minorities have been fighting for forty three years for freedom and autonomy. However, the present situation in Burma gives no hope for any kind of peaceful solutions while there is a continuation of involvement in arms production by German experts and the importing of arms from China, Pakistan, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Malaysia and the Soviet Union. Thus, these countries should cease immediately all shipments of arms to Burma and end any kind of relations with the Burmese junta.



FOREIGN INVESTMENTS

After three years of trying to re-shape the foreign investments of the country by the military junta, Burma is suffering even more seriously under a four-decade old civil war. Actually, none of the foreign investments in Burma have had any positive effect to lift the country out of its "least developed country status" because this status is the final result of the civil war and total centralized militarization.

The present economic benefits from the foreign investments are only for the power of the military to provide the financial support for military operations against the ethnic minorities and political dissidents. After the 1988 unarmed nationwide uprising was crushed by the regime, Gen. Saw Maung abruptly started his open door economic policy reportedly in order to find the cash needed to cover the increased military expenses due to the raising of the salaries for the military men. To do this, Gen. Saw Maung gave an order to form the "Union of Myanmar Foreign Investment Commission (UMIF)" which was consequently set up on 7 December 1989. It gave the military an opportunity to operate closely with other foreign governments or private owned firms. Moreover, all of the UMIF's members are from the military except the director general, who is a female civilian, Daw Khine Khine. She is also the director general of the planning department, and in reality she can not afford to manage these two departments at the same time. Obviously the plan to form the UMIF is an extremely naive notion of the military men.

Shortly after the formation of the "UMIF", Thailand quickly started its direct investments in Burma amounting to about US\$160.97 million. These investments were, in fact, a definite recognition of the illegitimate Burmese military regime. Following Thailand's lead, other countries also began investments. These included the USA (\$125.19m), Japan (\$100.00m), Netherlands (\$80.00m), UK (\$72.695m), Republic of Korea (\$53.337m), Australia (\$42.520m), Canada (\$22.00m), Hongkong (\$9.9m) and Singapore (\$3.047m). However, recently the European

Community (EC) and US President George Bush have agreed to put partial trade sanctions on the regime. Nevertheless, US private oil firms, Amoco and Unocal, Netherlands's Shell (oil), Croft (oil) of UK, BHP of Australia and Petro-Canada of Canada have invested large amounts for oil exploration and production, and are still operating in Burma.

Despite the fact that direct investments by foreign firms in energy amount to US\$317.0950 million in the country, local people must pay about 200 Kyats (US\$33 at the official exchange rate) per one gallon of gas in the illegal market of Rangoon. Official supplies, which are much cheaper, are rationed and extremely limited.

At the same time, the poor plan for the foreign investments has created a high salary gap between government staff of public departments and the local Burmese staff in foreign firms. While the lowest paid Burmese staff in foreign firms get about US\$200 (many of them are paid in US dollars rather than Burmese kyats) as direct payments, the salaries for government workers are about US\$80 (officially US\$1 is equal to 5.96 kyats). This high gap between the salaries of government and foreign firms' staff is one of the main reasons for the unstable price of essential commodities. Subsequently, people are being encouraged to pay bribe money to middle military men and members of the UMIF to be hired as staff of foreign firms. Currently the exchange rate in the illegal

market is US\$1 to about 80 Kyats. This price is also unstable and able to change at any hour of the day.

To rid themselves of the blame for this terrible economic problem, the regime often charges that rising costs of essential commodities is created by local businessmen and opposition politicians with the purpose of creating political unrest. Recently, Maj Gen. Myo Nyunt accused the opposition politicians with using the economy as a weapon for their own political aims. In fact, the military itself has invested US\$10 billion capital in local and foreign joint ventures with the aim to keep state control over the economy.

The final result of the investments by these foreign transnational corporations is simply more money for the military's power which encourages the continuation of the forty-three year civil war. This war continues to leave thousands of innocent people dying by the execution of the military. A further negative result of these investments continues to be increasing inflation of essential commodities, and this adds many more heavy burdens to the people in both urban and rural areas. How much longer the people of Burma will be able to carry these heavy burdens remains to be seen, but they are not totally unaware of the game being played against them by the military regime and the foreign investors.



ITEM	1988/89	1989/90	1990/91	1991/92	PER CENT INCREASE
RICE	6 KYATS	13 KYATS	20 KYATS	25 KYATS	316%
FUEL/GAL	45 KYATS	80 KYATS	100 KYATS	200 KYATS	344%
COOKING OIL	60 KYATS	85 KYATS	100 KYATS	120 KYATS	100%
MINIMUM WAGE/MON	200 KYATS	500 KYATS	500 KYATS	500 KYATS	250%

How some prices have increased since 1988

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

This is the first of a series of articles which will try to look at what the future might hold for Burma based on an analysis of the events of the past years. These articles are not intended to be an indepth analysis of the situation, but as an initial tool for others to use as they analyze and plan for future actions.

Economics

Since the military coup in 1962, Burma's economic planning and development has been dominated by military men with little knowledge of economic systems. Their consistently bad economic planning has forced Burma into the humiliating position of being named one of the poorest nations in the world. Even if positive changes could be initiated now, the road to economic prosperity for the people of Burma would be a long and laborious one.

Following the 1962 coup, General Ne Win began the process of nationalizing all businesses, schools, hospitals and other economic and social institutions. His "Burmese Way to Socialism" was to build up a country which would be self-sufficient and uniquely Burmese. This plan might have been successful had the military men responsible for putting it into action been competent and scrupulous. Unfortunately they were neither competent nor scrupulous, and through their corruption they have become extremely wealthy at the expense of the vast majority of the people who have neither sufficient to eat, nor hope for economic security in the future.

Following the 1988 democratic uprising and the ensuing military coup by General Saw Maung, economic reforms were proclaimed by the military leaders (basically the same military leaders who had led the country since 1962, but who had only changed the name of their dictatorial structure from the Burma Socialist Program Party to the State Law and Order Restoration Committee). These economic reforms were done mostly out of their desperate need for foreign exchange and to attempt to appease both local and international criticism.

The first economic reform was to open the country to foreign investments. Thailand led the way by rushing into Burma to exploit the vast natural resources from its seas and forests. Foreign oil companies quickly followed as did tourist-related businesses, dealers in electronic goods and other luxury items, and gems dealers to mention only a few. Individual Burmese with money were encouraged to invest in some of these businesses as well as set up their own joint-ventures with outside money. Still the State (military) continued to hold major control over most of these economic activities. Even though the economic reforms gave the impression that the private sector was gaining more involvement in the nation's economy, the State was, in fact, getting control over businesses which were traditionally a part of the private-sector such as trading, automobile sales and light industry production. State control continues over the country's 10 most valuable commodities, including teak, oil, gems, jade and rice.

Foreign investments have increased, but foreign companies investing in Burma must cede the major share of equity and investments to the government/military. Asian companies, mostly Thai owned, which are investing in the lucrative timber and fishery industries, risk being taken over by state companies.

David Steinberg, a Burma scholar, has said that, "Burma is moving hesitantly from state socialism to modified state capitalism, not economic pluralism as understood in the United States."

The money which began flowing into the country has resulted in few improvements for the general population. In 1990, gross domestic product growth was indicated to be 5.6 percent, and the government/military projects a 4.9 percent GDP growth for 1991. Inflation is officially tagged at 60 percent. Prices of necessities have soared high above the average incomes of the people. Rice, which was once sufficient to feed most of South-east Asia, is now extremely expensive

and scarce. (see the article on the economy in this issue of B.U.R.M.A. for further details on prices)

The profits which these "economic reforms" are generating have benefited only the military which has increased in size, and has rapidly been upgrading its strike potential by purchasing huge amounts of material including fighter planes, tanks and long range artillery from China, the Soviet Union and other European countries. At the same time that the military leaders are "opening up" to foreign involvement in the Burmese economy, they have begun a campaign to convince the people of Burma that the same foreigners will destroy the resources and culture of Burma. This contradiction probably arises from their desperate need for foreign exchange to keep themselves in power, while at the same time they know that



the general population of Burma is dissatisfied with their rule and would probably rise up again if they were not facing such dire economic problems. Through creating an atmosphere of xenophobia, the military leaders probably hope to discourage too much contact between the people and the foreign investors as well as to create a general suspicion of these investors. If such a xenophobic atmosphere can be successfully created, the military can justify their continued manipulation of the country by saying that only they can protect Burma from being destroyed by these "foreign devils".

So, what lies ahead? If SLORC continues to hold power in Burma, the present trends will probably continue. The natural resources, under state control, will continue to be sold off with little or no limitations, providing more funds for the military to use in its war against the people of Burma. A facade of improving prosperity will probably start appearing in the form of newly constructed buildings, an increase in the availability of consumer goods, more cars, etc. Yet the people will continue to suffer economic hardships.

As the forests along the Thai/Burma border continue to be harvested off, flooding of the Salween and Moei rivers will probably intensify resulting in the displacement of ethnic minority villages from areas they have occupied for many generations. These villages will be moved to new locations where the natural living patterns of the people will be destroyed and they will become more dependent on welfare for survival. The flooding will also create new hardships for Thailand as uncontrolled run off from the tropical rains will have no place to go but into the Thai provinces bordering Burma.

"Development" projects which will be created in Burma, funded by either foreign private investments or money from the World Bank and United Nations agencies, will continue to benefit people other than the Burmese people themselves. The plan to build several giant hydroelectric dams along the Salween river will provide a tremendous amount of electric power for Thailand's industrial development, while flooding large areas of pristine forests in Burma which provide food and shelter for thousands of Karen people. Thai, Japanese and American fishing companies will rake in large profits from their rape of the Burmese waters, while local fishing people will finally be forced to move inland to seek other ways of surviving.

As these economic hardships continue to weigh down on the people, they will have to seek jobs outside the country. Thailand, Burma's wealthiest neighbor, is now posting double-digit annual growth figures. The per capita income in Thailand is now US\$1,620, double what it was five years ago. By 1996, the per capita income will probably be \$2,800, qualifying Thailand as a newly-industrialized

country (NIC). Under the guidance of the World Bank, Thailand is rapidly building up its industrial sector, attracting foreign industries with cheap labor and other incentives. However, as Thailand's economy strengthens, local cheap labor will become more and more scarce. A source for this cheap labor will have to be found. Already Burmese people are moving illegally into Thailand to fill some of this need. It is estimated that at least one hundred new economic refugees enter Thailand daily seeking jobs on plantations along the border, or in small factories. Being illegal, they have no security in the country, and thus will work for wages far lower than any Thai laborer is willing to work for. As foreign industries in Thailand find it more and more difficult to attract Thai workers with the low salaries they want to pay, they will probably begin looking to Burma as a source of this cheap labor. From Burma they will be able to hire workers for a pittance; but workers who will work hard because they desperately need money to help their families back in Burma survive. Since the Burmese military can levy a heavy tax on the meager earnings these laborers will send back to Burma, it is once again the military who will benefit the most. With this potential source of more foreign currency, it is doubtful that the Burmese military really wants to improve the economic life of the general population.

The Burmese military will also come under increasing pressure to develop Export Processing Zones in the country where foreign industries can make major profits by using the cheap labor and cheap resources available in the country. These Export Processing Zones could become a major source of foreign exchange for the military regime.

Under these conditions, there is little hope for improvements in the economic life of the Burmese people if there is not a drastic change in the leadership. Since the military now survives only through the money they can earn from these foreign dealings, it is crucial that effective international campaigns be launched to isolate the military from this source of foreign exchange. If that can be done, the chance for leadership of the country to be turned over to the legally elected

government can be brought about with less violence.

However, once a government elected by the people is in place, the task of rebuilding the economy will remain complex. One of their first tasks will be to review all of the present contracts made between SLORC and foreign investors. It is possible that many of these contracts might be canceled, especially if they are found to be deleterious to the people and the country of Burma. Since these contracts were made with a military regime which forced its way into power against the will of the people, and continues to hang on to power despite being voted out through legal elections, the government of the people will not be responsible to recognize these contracts.

The next step will be to analyze carefully how the many natural resources of the country can be carefully developed and used so that people living in all areas of the country will benefit equally from them. This can only be done if a truly democratic system is established in which the people from all regions of the country have an equal voice in the planning.

A third step will be to move cautiously and carefully in opening up to foreign investments. Such investments will be essential to the country, but they must be chosen in terms of their immediate relevance to the developmental needs of the people. The people's basic needs of food, shelter, medicine and education must be looked at as priority instead of consumer goods such as Pepsi, electronics etc.

The task is a big one, but it is clear that without change from the present military leadership, the country can never make any economic progress and will continue to be exploited by its neighbors and other countries interested only in their own economic benefits. Change such as is needed in Burma is difficult, and is made even more difficult and painful by foreign investments which benefit the foreign investors and the military leaders at the expense of the common people. It is this kind of involvement which hinders the democratization process so craved by the people of Burma.



POLITICS

Truth in Rumors

Dismissed Civil Servants

A few weeks ago there were widespread fears throughout Burma that the military regime planned to sack a large number of civil servants. Slorc members quickly clamored to deny these as malicious rumors.

"These rumors are baseless. These rumors are totally false and are aimed at demoralizing the public servants and impairing their productivity," said Tin Oo, Secretary (2) of Slorc.

However, while Tin Oo and other Slorc members were trying to repudiate the authenticity of the rumors, hundreds of civil servants were actually being sacked secretly by the junta.

Khin Nyunt, Secretary (1) of Slorc verified the rumors as truth at a meeting in Rangoon on October 4 which was held with senior officers of various state departments. At the meeting Khin Nyunt said that more than 10,000 civil servants had been dismissed from their jobs since the military pseudo-coup in September of 1988. He further warned remaining civil servants to carefully abide by the rules and regulations prescribed by the junta or they too would face sacking.

This rumor/truth contradiction of the military junta has been an on-going game for the Burmese people to follow for many years already. Shortly after the 1988 coup, General Saw Maung and other Slorc members declared that no action would be taken against civil servants who took part in the 1988 strike if they followed Slorc's orders. They went so far as to say that the members of Slorc were all "new faces" with no bad marks from the previous administration. As such, they requested that all people and civil servants cooperate fully with them.

A few months later, however, they began sacking a number of prominent public servants. Among these dismissed officials were doctors, directors of some civil departments, and some important university professors. One such professor was Dr. Tin Aung, professor of physics in Rangoon University. He was accused by Slorc of

participating in the civil disobedience movements of 1988. In fact, Dr. Tin Aung always tried to keep clear of politics, and during the 1988 demonstrations was actually in the United States. Later the military intelligence admitted their mistake, but refused to retract their dismissal order.

Hanging on to Power

Despite promises by Slorc that they would turn over power to an elected government immediately after elections, rumors persisted that either the elections would not be free and fair, or that Slorc would ignore the voices of the people. A recent statement by Aung Ye Kyaw, senior Slorc member in Mandalay, indicates that these rumors are once again becoming the truth.

After the 1988 coup, the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) dissolved in order to "pave the way for democratic changes in Burma." As the BSPP dissolved, it divided itself into three distinct groups in order to preserve its rule in the country.

The first group is led by Ne Win, Sein Lwin, Maung Maung and a few other old hard-liners. They actually hold the real power of the present regime. However, they have chosen to stay behind the curtain, and pull the strings that control the other two groups.

The second group is led by Tun Yee, Tha Gyaw, Hla Tun etc. This group is assigned to lead the National Unity Party (NUP) which is the political wing of the military. The NUP is waiting for a chance which would be favorable for them to take over power. Their political conviction is not true democracy, but "guided democracy" which would allow them in power indefinitely. Although they won less than 1% of the votes in the past election, they still desire to run the country.

The third group is led by Saw Maung, Khin Nyunt and other generals now in service, and is responsible to firmly control the army. At present they are also ordered by Ne Win to keep control over state power until a favorable situation appears when that

power can be transferred to their masters.

On September 8, 1991, Aung Ye Kyaw made it clear in a speech in Mandalay that this transfer of power could take up to ten more years. During these ten years Slorc would retain total control over the country, indicating that the rumors that state power would not be transferred to the people are, in fact, the truth.

The truth of these rumors was further established during an October 4 press conference in Bangkok at which two members of the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) spoke. U Myint Maung, Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Environment, and U Hla Oo, Minister for Labor, said that before they left Burma for the border area, they were intimidated by the military intelligence to support Slorc. Both men are members of the NLD which won more than 80% of the seats in the past election.

They stated that they were pressured by Slorc to sign approval for order number 1/90 which essentially negates the results of the May 1989 elections. A total of 221 elected parliamentarians reluctantly committed themselves to approving Slorc rule and the 1/90 order. Myint Maung and Hla Oo decided to flee to the border and join with other members in the NCGUB. Figures suggest that the Junta has imprisoned more than 10,000 dissidents in the country, including 70 elected members of parliament.



HUMAN RIGHTS

Women in Burma

According to a brief report in *The Nation* of September 24, 1991, Dr. Saisuree Chutikul Minister of the Thai Prime Minister's office has expressed concern about the increasing number of Burmese women lured or tricked into Thailand to work as prostitutes.

Dr Saisuree met with Daw Kyu Kyu Swe, wife of the Burmese Public Health and Education minister Col. Pe Thein, at the Thai parliament house on September 23.

"I asked the minister's wife to tell her husband to think about how concerned Burmese officials can stop the flow of Burmese women coming to Thailand for prostitution. The women will not only be arrested for entering without a permit, but they are also likely to get AIDS," said Saisuree.

The rapidly deteriorating political and economic situation in Burma is forcing tens of thousands of Burmese people to travel abroad in search of better opportunities. While educated people can manage to legally obtain appropriate jobs in foreign countries, uneducated people have to slip into neighboring countries, especially Thailand, where local employers are ready to hire them as workers on farms or in small factories. Due to the fact that these Burmese are illegal aliens and subject to arrest by the police, the Thai employers pay them only half of the minimum wage fixed by the Thai government for Thai nationals. The Burmese laborers dare not protest for fear of arrest and deportation.

Among those entering Thailand illegally are thousands of women, some as young as 13 and 14. Some are lured into the brothels with the promise of good money while others are sold by Burmese gangs to Thai gangs and forced to give up their dignity. In the southern Thai border city of Ranong alone, there are more than one thousand Burmese girls working in the brothels. Among them are some ethnic Mon and Karen villagers.

A human rights worker recently reported from Ranong that about 10 young women from Burma are sold across the border every day. They are as young as 16, and are sold for prices

ranging around 17,000 baht. Most of these young women come from villages inside Burma, and have little education. Their ability to read and write the Burmese language is limited, and they have almost no Thai language ability. He further reported that the Burmese military and police are often involved in these trading deals with Thai and Burmese gangs. These military and police in Victory Point (Burma side of the border) receive substantial sums of money from the gangs, so make no arrests or interfere in this slave trading.

The report goes on to say that some of the young women are killed and their bodies dumped into the ocean if they are found to have any disease. They are also moved from place to place if the brothel owners suspect that they have made any contact out-

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side for help. This suspicion can also result in the woman being killed, or sent down to the Malaysian border where she is more isolated from her country people.

Many of these young women have already contacted AIDS. If they are discovered to have AIDS, they are quickly sent back to Burma where there is little treatment available. Without immediate action on the part of Burmese authorities, AIDS will spread rapidly in Burma.

Women who are arrested in Thailand as prostitutes or simply as illegal aliens face further indignities. Many of them report that they were raped by the local police before being released. Few of them want to speak of this indignity publicly making it extremely difficult to follow up cases and press charges. Presently investigations on

an alleged rape case by police in Maesod is underway, and several reports have arrived from Sangklaburi of similar rapes.

Women in the rural areas of Burma, who opt to stay in their country, also face extreme hardships. When the Burmese military moves through an area, rapes and killings are common. Many women, including pregnant women, are forced by the Burmese military to serve as porters, carrying heavy loads of food and weapons to front line areas. These women porters are sometimes forced to walk in the front of the military columns where they detonate mines or booby traps which have been set up.

As long as there are no positive political and economic changes in Burma, and as long as the civil war continues, Burmese women will remain the victims of these indignities. Their basic human rights to life, security, dignity and happiness will continue to be violated.



A Karen mother and child. What lies ahead for them?

NEWS UPDATE

Pepsi steps into Burma

The fourth US company has started economic relations with Gen. Saw Maung's military junta. Pepsi-Cola and the junta have signed a joint business venture for the production of soft drinks in Burma. The joint venture is called "Pepsi-Cola Product Mynmar Company" and an investment of US\$3 million has been made for construction. The Burmese junta holds 60% of the stakes and the remainder is held by Pepsi International. Pepsi International will get 40% of the total profits. Recently, Pepsi started production and plans to produce 2.4 million bottles by the end of 1991. A target of 120 million bottles has been set for 1992. Vending machines will be distributed around universities and theaters.

Burma has its first civilian minister

Ohn Gyaw has been appointed by Major General Khin Nyunt to serve as the first civilian foreign minister of the Burmese military regime since the 18 September, 1988 coup. Earlier Ohn Gyaw was the Burmese ambassador to Russia and came back to Burma in 1983/84. Later he served as a senior secretary in the political affairs department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Maj. Gen. Khin Nyunt appointed Ohn Gyaw to attend the UN General Assembly in New York this September. It is expected that world condemnation on human rights abuses by Gen Saw Maung's military government will be discussed during this year's general assembly.

Slorc's biggest corruption

In February, secret agents of the Burmese military intelligence units launched an operation to recover Burma's biggest ruby (496 carets/ 1 carat = 200 milligrams) which was being smuggled into Thailand. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (Slorc) had named the ruby "Slorc Ruby". The military did not announce details about how they got back the ruby. According to a respected Kachin source, the fact is that a member of Slorc, Brigadier Tun Kyi who is commander of the north west military command, was involved in smuggling the ruby into Thailand.



To:

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Information Bureau of the NLD, (Liberated Area)