

Burma Alert No.9
(September 1990)

ELECTION UPDATE

The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) will not hand over power to the parliament elected on May 27. Readers are, therefore, urged to photocopy the following letter or write a similar letter (copies to your government):

To: Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, The United Nations, New York

Ref: The Transfer of Power in Myanmar (Burma).

Dear Mr. de Cuellar,

General Ne Win overthrew a 'freely elected democratic government in Burma on 2 March 1962. In 1988, the Burmese people called for a return to multi-party democracy. Instead, Ne Win called on General Saw Maung to re-establish control. The New York Times reported that at least 3,000 demonstrators were killed by the army.

To appease international criticism, the Saw Maung military regime on 7 November 1988 promised you and the General Assembly of the United Nations that it would hold free and fair elections and hand over power to an elected parliament.

The election process in Burma did not meet internationally accepted minimum standards for free and fair elections. Hundreds of opposition leaders were arrested and are still in prison. However, foreign journalists allowed to observe the May 27 elections confirm that the balloting was 'clean' in most areas.

The National League for Democracy (NLD) won 396 seats out of the 485 contested and the National Unity Party won 10 seats. It is clear that the Burmese people want the Secretary-General of the NLD, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, to lead their nation.

However, it is equally clear from the Saw Maung regime's latest declaration (SLORC No.1/90, 27 July) that it will not fully honour its pledge to the United Nations.

Can the Myanmar regime be allowed to nullify its pledge by imposing additional conditions to render the results of the elections meaningless? Is it right for a member of the United Nations to treat the organization with such contempt?

Your silence, sir, will signal your consent to such high-handed manipulations. We call on you to protest by not recognizing the delegation from Burma to the General Assembly in September. We also call on your good offices to restore peace in Burma.

First, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners must be released immediately and unconditionally. Second, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the elected parliament must be allowed to form a government. Third, the military must submit to the civilian government and in return the NLD government will pledge that it will not seek revenge by prosecuting military personnel. Only those who carried out criminal acts will be tried by a court of law. We trust that you will uphold the honour of the United Nations and not let the Burmese people down.

Yours respectfully,

WHY PROTEST TO THE UN?

Some argue that protesting to the UN will not achieve anything. This is not true. Contrary to claims made by General Saw Maung, governments are not 'recognized' or given legal status by the UN. Rather, 'Nation-states' like Burma are recognized by the international community and it is assumed that whoever controls Rangoon is the lawful ruler. We need to point out that the Saw Maung regime practically admitted to the UN in 1988 that it does not have the legal right to rule Burma. After the elections on May 27, SLORC has even less right to be ruling Burma than before.

If we keep quiet, governments will take the most expedient route and continue dealing with the Saw Maung regime. For example, JAPAN has already given the regime a debt-relief grant of Yen 3.5 billion (US\$ 23.5 million). This grant cancelled a payment on Japanese loans which was repaid in March. Although Japanese officials say the grant is not a resumption of aid to Burma and an endorsement of SLORC [F900816], the military saw it differently. The grant was received on July 23 and on July 27, SLORC declared that it would not hand over power to the NLD. The Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma (CRDB) and the International Network for Democracy in Burma (INDB) have strongly condemned the Japanese government. Write to: Toshiki Kaifu, Prime Minister, 2-3-1 Nagata Cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100, Japan.

ARE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AND BOYCOTTS RIGHT?

The legislation to ban US imports of Burmese products (see "Alert No.5 ") is awaiting approval of Congress and ratification by the President. The bill stipulates that if the junta in Rangoon does not take steps to transfer power to a civilian government and release Aung San Suu Kyi by Oct.1, the President must impose punitive sanctions [R900731]. Write: President George Bush, The White House, Washington D.C. 20500.

Thailand's Prime Minister Chatichai Choonhavan and others, however, argue that the U.S. should drop its 'hostile attitude' towards Rangoon. Thai Deputy Foreign Minister Prapas Limpabandhu has even argued that sanctions against Rangoon are an example of how 'western' countries impose their version of human rights on 'eastern' countries. He argues that contact and economic integration with the world community will encourage political reform in Burma [N900518-19, 28 & N900613].

The Thai position is self-serving and ignores the reality in Burma. Shooting and torturing those who disagree with you and forcing people at gun-point into slavery is a violation of human rights by any standards - East or West. In any case, the call for sanctions and boycotts is not a 'western' one. All pro-democracy Burmese opposition groups are in favour of it. The Thai government is only fooling itself if it thinks that it is influencing Burma to reform by championing SLORC.

In the East European countries, political ideology has influenced conduct. As events prove the ideology to be flawed, reforms have been introduced. Even in China, a reform-minded faction exists within the communist party. In Burma, a political ideology does not exist. Ne Win dominates the whole scene and ideological slogans are used only as window dressing. Ne Win's prime motivation is power and survival, not ideology. Faced with a mass revolt and international condemnation in 1988, he promised elections and opened up the economy. Like a bully, he gives ground only when he meets greater strength. Even then, the economy was opened up only because it gave him a tactical advantage. Therefore, Thailand can never hope to influence Ne Win. He knows that current Thai-Burmese relations are based purely on economics and greed and he will exploit the situation to the fullest extent. Without force, SLORC is unlikely to give up power. Write: Major General Chatichai Choonhavan, The Prime Minister, Government House, Nakhorn Pathom Road, Bangkok 10200, Thailand.

"THE UNION, NATIONAL SOLIDARITY & SOVEREIGNTY"

SLORC has repeatedly stated that the *Tatmadaw's* objective is: 1) To prevent the disintegration of the Union, 2) To prevent the disintegration of national solidarity, and 3) To perpetuate the sovereignty of the State. How valid are these claims?

1) Disintegration of the Union

In 1962, Ne Win seized power saying that the Union was in danger of disintegrating because the 1947 Constitution was about to be amended. He ignored the fact that amending the constitution is a legitimate constitutional process. If the 'Federal' movement had wanted to break up the country, as implied by Ne Win, there would have been no need to amend the 1947 Constitution. It already provided for the Shan State which led the 'Federal' movement to secede from the Union.

SLORC is now saying that if the *Tatmadaw* stepped aside, Burma will disintegrate. In reality, the *Tatmadaw* has aggravated the disintegration process. The minority peoples can testify that the *Tatmadaw's* indiscipline and excesses have been the most significant factor in their war against the central government. All minority groups are now fighting Rangoon, whereas before 1962, this was not the case.

If the *Tatmadaw* continues to hang on to power against the people's will, the Union can only disintegrate further with Burmans fighting Burmans more intensively.

2) Disintegration of National Solidarity

A basis for national solidarity was the Panglong Agreement of 1947. For example, when the Mujahids, the Burman communists parties (Red & White Flag) and the People's Volunteer Organizations revolted in 1948, the minorities rallied firmly behind the government. In fact, it relied on the Karen and Kachin Rifles under the command of Lt.Gen. Smith-Dun, a Karen, to re-exert authority because all the Burman units of the *Tatmadaw* (except the 4th Burma Rifles) had mutinied.

Again later, when the Karennis, the Mons and the Karens decided to fight for their freedom and some Kachin troops under Naw Seng mutinied, most of the minority leaders expressed solidarity with the Union government because of their commitment to the Panglong Agreement. The *Tatmadaw* did not play a role in their decision.

To have national solidarity, a government must have the goodwill and support of the people. The Union of Burma cannot be kept together by force. If the *Tatmadaw* is serious about national solidarity, it should hand over power to the NLD.

3) Perpetuating the Sovereignty of the State

To maintain one's sovereignty, sound financial management is a key requirement. But in 28 years of *Tatmadaw* rule, Burma, which was one of the richest Asian countries has been reduced to a pauper nation - the 4th poorest in the world.

The *Tatmadaw* is now also auctioning off Burma's natural resources to the highest bidders without regard for the consequences for the people of Burma. Is this protecting Burma's sovereignty? The *Tatmadaw* is helping others plunder Burma.

The *Tatmadaw* then, has not and is not meeting any of its own self-defined objectives. Seizing power is, therefore, clearly not in the 'national interest' even as defined by SLORC. It is time for the *Tatmadaw* to stop pretending to 'save Burma' and return to its constitutional role of defending the people. Write: Senior General Saw Maung, State Law and Order Restoration Council, Ministry of Defence, Rangoon, Burma.

BURMA NEWS:

In April-June 1990, the entire population of Pagan was forcibly relocated by SLORC to transform the site into a 'history park' for tourists. SLORC is also planning other 'history parks' at Ava, Amarapura, Pegu and Toungoo. Although these plans totally contradict UNESCO recommendations concerning the development of historic sites, SLORC may be using funds from UNESCO and the UNDP for the project [Ps900630].

In spite of international criticism, Thailand repatriated 766 Burmese on June 7. Major Mya Maung Htun confirmed that they were being held in Myawaddy [N900624].

A meeting of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions was foiled and 41 people were arrested in Mandalay on July 5 for 'attempting political activities' [AFP 900706].

U Myint Thwin Aye, 54, Second Secretary at the Embassy in London defected [B900713].

Rallies to commemorate the thousands of pro-democracy demonstrators massacred on 8 August 1988 were reported in Mandalay, Meiktila, Monywa, Pakokku and Rangoon. Troops opened fire in Mandalay killing 2 monks, 2 youth and injuring 3. SLORC blamed the NLD for the demonstrations and warned that it may further postpone handing over power if unrest continues [A900824, AP/Re900809, F900823, Ny900809 & R900731].

The health of ex-general Tin U, chairman of the NLD who was arrested 20 July 1989 is deteriorating due to thrombophlebitis. The 64-year old prisoner is not receiving any medical care in jail. Tin U was sentenced on 22 Dec '89 by Military Tribunal No.5 to three years' hard labour for 'creating public disturbances' [F900816 & AI900802]. At press time, unconfirmed reports say Tin U has died - *Alert*.

AUSTRALIA:

*ELDERS INTERNATIONAL LTD. (see "*Alert No.8*"), 1 Garder St., P.O. Box 54, South Yarra, Victoria 3141. Tel: 61 (3) 249-2220, Fax: 61 (3) 369-7095.

BRITAIN:

CHERRY VALLEY in early 1990 signed a 10 year contract to supply duck parentstock and breeding technology to Burma. The plan is to produce 600,000 ducks a year and use the feathers as a by-product. *Cherry Valley* is a subsidiary of NICKERSON (?), the world's leading supplier of breeding ducks [Em900825].

*CROFT EXPLORATION LTD. (see "*Alert No.1*"), Managing Director -M.F. Ridd, 5 Woodside Crescent, Glasgow G37 UY, Scotland, U.K.

*PREMIER CONSOLIDATED OILFIELDS PLC. (see "*Alert No.8 - UK*"), Chairman - Roland C. Shaw, 23 Lower Belgrave St., London SW1W 0NR, U.K.

CHINA:

M/S CHINA NATIONAL AERO TECHNOLOGY IMPORT EXPORT CORPORATION (CATIC) and M/S AIRTRUST (S'pore) PTE. LTD. demonstrated the 17-seat, short-haul, multi-role, Y-12 aircraft in Rangoon and flew to Pagan, Nyaung-U, Gangaw and Kyaukku. *CATIC* Vice-President Wang Dawei and *Airtrust* President Peter Fong called on Brig.Gen. David Abel [P900608-10].

FRANCE:

SETRACO CO. is the company that sold 200 Renault buses (see "*Alert No. 6*") to Burma.

INDONESIA

GARUDA AIR signed an agreement in April to fly twice-weekly to Rangoon [J900705].

HONG KONG:

*Myanmar Hotels International Co. Ltd. (see "Alert No.8") has a capital of Kyat 80 million (US\$ 12.4 million divided equally between the Ministry of Trade and *Strand Hotels International Ltd. which is owned by *Adrian Zecha, an Indonesian financier. Peter Brown is another Director of *Strand Hotels International* [P900628 & F900823].

JAPAN:

*Myanmar Concord Development Organization Ltd. (see "Alert No.8") has a capital of US\$ 1 million divided equally between *DAI ICHI and the Myanmar regime [P900618].

Yoshio Sakamoto, Chairman of '15 large companies' called on David Abel [P900607].

KOREA:

A Korean economic survey team visited Burma May 2-8 to discuss Bilateral Economic Co-operation and aid to the 'communications and electrification sectors' [P900509].

*DAEWOO CORPORATION (see "Alert No.1,3,5 & 8"), Chairman - Kim Woo Chong, C.P.O. Box 2810, Seoul, Korea. Fax: 82 (2) 753-9489.

SEGYI CORPORATION and the Union of Myanmar Holdings Ltd. (see "Alert No.5") formed a joint venture, Myanmar Segyi International Ltd. to manufacture and market 'textile materials'. Segyi holds 60% of the K 8.5 million (US\$ 1.3 million) shares [P900603]

YONSEI UNIVERSITY's Professors Dr. S.Y. Koo and Dr.T.K. Park called on Brig.Gen. David Abel to discuss implementation of the Bilateral Economic Co-operation Project and also gave a seminar on Korea's Economic Development Experience [P900613-14].

SINGAPORE:

SINGAPORE is planning to import Burmese workers. It will be the first time that Burmese other than seamen are allowed to go overseas in large numbers [F900816].

M/S AIRTRUST (S) PTE. LTD. and M/S CHINA NATIONAL AERO TECHNOLOGY IMPORT EXPORT CORPORATION (CATIC) demonstrated the 17-seat, short-haul, multi-role, Y-12 aircraft in Rangoon and flew to Pagan, Nyaung-U, Gangaw and Kyaukku. Airtrust President Peter Fong and CATIC Vice-President Wang Dawei called on Brig.Gen. David Abel [P900608-10].

SINGAPORE PARAMEE TRADING opened the Myanmar Paramee Sales Centre at 404 Maha Bandoolla St., Rangoon, for electrical & personal goods, foodstuff and roofing. Purchases can be made in both Kyat and 'foreign exchange' [P900608].

M/S TW RESOURCES and M/S WICKERTON SINGAPORE PTE. LTD. co-sponsored a seminar on 'Road Construction Equipment, Port Equipment, Crushing and Asphalt Plant' in Rangoon. Present were TW Resources Executive Partner Johnny Lim Chang Kang and Wickerton's Managing Director Daniel Sanzeni and Area Sales Manager Daniel Chow [P900614].

TRADEWIND AIRLINE Co. LTD. signed an agreement in May to begin twice-weekly commercial flights to Rangoon on Aug.21 [J900705].

THAILAND:

*MAE SOD FOREST INDUSTRY (see "Alert No.2") received an extortion note for Baht 12 million (US\$ 480,000) in 'protection' fees from an unknown armed group [B900318].

SAHA PORNSRI and the Trade Ministry signed a joint-venture agreement in June to set up a retail shop in Rangoon [F900823].

*SEA EXPLORATION & MINING (MYANMAR) CO. LTD. (see "Alert No.3 & 5") represented by Director Thawat Niranatvarodom signed a second offshore tin exploration and production contract in Block "X" off Tenasserim. The first group of dredgers from Phang-nga have been exploring in Block "IV" (1st contract) since April 1990 [P900602].

SIAM CEMENT CO. and BERLI JUCKER CO. LTD. co-sponsored a seminar on 'Siam Cement Refractories' in Rangoon. Present were *Siam Cement's* Dr. Veerayuth Lorprayoon (Research and Development) and *Berli Jucker* Manager Sukij Siridumrong [P900628].

Two *SILAR INTERNATIONAL (see "Alert No.2") workers riding in a company truck in Burma were arrested by the Army who suspected them of spying for the Karens. One was shot dead 'while attempting to escape' and the other was later released [P900704].

*SIRIN TECHNOLOGY (see "Alert No.1, 2 & 7") Managing Director *Boonchu Treethong donated Kyat 150,000 (US\$ 23,000) for escalators at the Shwedagon Pagoda [P900608].

The Burmese 44th. Division commanded by Col. Tin Ngwe arrested 250 workers of *Sirin Technology* on June 27. The Thais had illegally set up 3 sawmills in Burma with the consent of the Burma Army's 33rd. Division which controls the area. Several million bahts were said to have been paid for the sawmill privileges [B900628 & 0715].

The Bangkok Post on 28 July ran a front page article entitled "TRUE CONFESSIONS OF A LOGGING COMPANY". It details how trees are being illegally processed in Burma; how Thai trees are being illegally cut and disguised as Burmese lumber; and how corrupt officials are aiding the destruction of the forest on both sides of the border.

THAI FURNITURE EXPORT ASSOCIATION Manager Suppakit Tavornwong said that the Association is planning to hire a US-based lobbying firm to fight US legislation to ban Burmese goods. Thai furniture exporters use Burmese hardwood and rely heavily on US market [N900505].

UNITED NATIONS:

*ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (ESCAP) (see "Alert No.2") has completed a feasibility study for the highway bridge across the Moei river. The total project cost of US\$ 20 million will be divided equally between the two countries [F900823]. Rangoon is seeking financing for the project from Japan who paid for the feasibility study. ESCAP's Executive Secretary (currently *S. Kibria from Bangladesh) is appointed by the Secretary-General of the UN and ESCAP's fixed costs and salaries are also paid by the UN. Various other UN agencies such as the UNDP and voluntary contributions from members pay for individual projects like the bridge. Write to the UN; to ESCAP, Rajdamnoen Ave., Bangkok, Thailand; and to Japan.

U. S. A.

MIRIAM MARSHALL ASSOCIATES on July 10 signed a fishing contract with the Myanmar Fisheries Enterprise [F900823].

SOURCES:	[A900824] Asiaweek	[N900223] Nation, Bangkok
	[B900628] Bangkok Post	[Ny900809] New York Times
	[F900823] F.E.E.Review	[P900608] Working Peoples Daily
	[AFP900706] Agence France Presse	[R900731] Burma Review
	[AP/Re900809] AP/Reuters	[Em900825] Private Correspondence
	[Ps900600] Paul Strachan	[J900705] Jesuit Refugee Service
