

BURMA ALERT No.4
(Vol.2, April 1991)

Burma News:

POLAND CANCELS ARMS DEAL

Polish President LECH WALESA has canceled the sale of 22 military helicopters to the Burmese military (*Alert No.12*). The secret US\$41.3 million deal was made by General Mazowiecki's government in June 1990 [INDB Europe 910319].

UNION LEADERS CONDEMN BURMESE MILITARY

Trade union leaders attending the general conference of International Trade Secretariats (ITS) in Amsterdam in Jan.91 and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), called upon the UNITED NATIONS and the EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES to impose comprehensive economic sanctions on Burma until democracy is restored. The ITS and the ICFTU represent more than 100 million workers worldwide [CDB910312].

NEW NLD LEADERS APPOINTED

The current acting Chairman of the NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY (NLD) is U AUNG SHWE and the Acting Secretary is U LWIN [F910221]. U AUNG SHWE is an ex-Brigadier and served as General NE WIN's ambassador to Australia, Egypt & France. He is Member of Parliament for Mayangon (1), Rangoon. U Lwin, 67, is an ex-Colonel. He was NE WIN's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance & Planning (1974-77). Their predecessors, Chairman U TIN OO (ex-General), 65, is serving a 3-year hard labour sentence for "*creating public disturbances*" (*Alert No.9*) and NLD General Secretary Daw AUNG SAN SUU KYI is under house arrest. Acting Chairman, U KYI MAUNG (ex-Colonel), 72, and Acting Secretary, U CHIT KHAING (ex-Colonel), 69, are serving 10-year prison sentences for "*violating the official secrets act*" (*Alert No.12*).

BURMESE GET ASYLUM IN INDIA

India granted temporary asylum to Burmese refugees including three NLD Members of Parliament who crossed into Mizoram and Manipur (*Alert No.2/2*). India rejected Rangoon's charges that its action constituted an interference in Burma's internal affairs. YE MARN and YE HTIN KYAW, the two students who hijacked a Thai International Airbus A300 to Calcutta (*Alert No.12*) in November were released on bail on Feb.12. Their request for asylum will be considered after their trial [F910228].

A UNIT OF KACHIN 4th BRIGADE SURRENDERS

Major MAHTU NAW of the 4th Brigade, KACHIN INDEPENDENCE ARMY (KIA) surrendered to the Burma Army with several hundred men in January [F910221]. Major MAHTU NAW's operation was in Northern Shan State bordering the SHAN STATE ARMY (SSA) in the west, the COMMUNIST PARTY OF BURMA (CPB) in the north and east and KHUN SA's MERNG TAI ARMY in the south. In Mar.89, the CPB disintegrated and became 'defence' militia for the STATE LAW AND ORDER RESTORATION COUNCIL (SLORC) in exchange for unrestricted trading rights including opium and heroin (*Alert No.7*). In Sep.89, the SSA led by HSO HTEN struck a similar deal with SLORC. Only a remnant of the SSA (about 200 men) under SAI LEK are still fighting SLORC. Surrounded by hostile forces, Major MAHTU NAW yielded to SLORC enticements. Other units of the KIA 4th Brigade are still active in Shan State as are the KIA 1st, 2nd and 3rd Brigades in Kachin State [F910328].

STUDENT REFUGEES FACE AID CUT

A catholic-led aid consortium in Thailand that has been supplying US\$20,000 per month to Burmese student refugees may withhold their funding. The consortium is upset that the students are increasingly resorting to armed struggle against SLORC. In Feb., MAUNG MAUNG GYI, an ALL BURMA STUDENTS DEMOCRATIC FRONT (ABSDF) leader said they had a 40% cut in aid in Dec.90 but negotiations are continuing [R910228].

International News:

AUSTRALIA:

On Mar.1, 1991, U MAUNG KO, Vice-President of the Overseas Burmese Democratic Community spoke on the freedom of expression in Burma before an International PEN conference. Anyone with information on Burmese writers in jail are urged to contact International PEN's Writers in Prison Committee, 38 King St., London WC2E 8JT, U.K.

BELGIUM:

On Mar.5, U PETER LIMBIN, Foreign Minister in the NATIONAL COALITION GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION OF BURMA, Dr. EM MARTA, DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE OF BURMA Foreign Secretary and Dr. THAUNG HTUN, ABSDF Foreign Secretary, met with Members of the European and Belgian Parliaments from the Christian Democrat Group, the Greens, the Liberal Democrat Group and the Social Democrat Group. On Mar.6, they attended a meeting of the Liberal Group chaired by GISCARD d'ESTANG. Mme. SIMONE VEIL was also present and an official of the European Commission hosted the lunch [CRDB/INDB/GBA910316].

BRITAIN:

U PETER LIMBIN, Dr. EM MARTA, and Dr. THAUNG HTUN met with a senior Foreign Office official and British Members of Parliament during their visit to the U.K. from Mar.16-21. They pressed for a trade embargo on Burma [CRDB/INDB/GBA & BAG UK].

BURMA SUPPORT GROUP (*Alert No.2/2*), is now known as BURMA ACTION GROUP, UK or BAG UK.

FRANCE:

On Mar.9-10, U PETER LIMBIN, Dr. EM MARTA, Dr. THAUNG HTUN met with and attended a meeting of the France Birmanie Association. On Mar.11, they met with the Secretary of the French Socialist Party, a senior official of the French Foreign Office, Medicine Sans Frontieres and Aide Medical Internationale [CRDB/INDB/GBA910316].

GERMANY:

In March, U PETER LIMBIN, Dr. EM MARTA, and Dr. THAUNG HTUN met with Members of the Bundestag, Members of the European Parliament, the Christian Democrat Party, the Social Democrat Party, the Free Liberal Party, officials of the German Foreign Office and Medico International. They also participated in a Seminar on Burma Mar.22-24. Speakers were: JOSEF SILVERSTEIN, DAVID STEINBERG and journalist MARTIN SMITH.

NETHERLANDS:

ELBERT WESTERBEEK of the Workgroup for Indigenous People and Friends of the Earth, Netherlands is working on ecological issues and indigenous nationalities in Burma. Address: P.O.Box 40066, 1009 Amsterdam, Netherlands. Fax: 31 (20) 275 287.

BB

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

The Buddha Sasana Foundation has initiated 'THE BURMA PROJECT' to raise public awareness and to seek an immediate halt to the mass oppression of Buddhist monks and people in Burma. ALAN CLEMENTS who spent 5 years as a Buddhist monk in Burma returned for 3 weeks in December 1990 to investigate reports of SLORC's imprisonment, torture and execution of the Burmese people. To raise funds, a recent ten-page report/interview done by ALAN by NEWSWEEK and social activist Julia Zarudzka can be obtained for US\$10 per copy. Donations are tax-deductible. Address: Burma Project, Buddha Sasana Foundation, 45 Oak Rd., Larkspur, CA.94939. Tel: 1 (415) 924-6447

National chapters of the Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma (CRDB) world-wide, are meeting Apr.19-22 in Washington D.C. to re-organize and elect a new CRDB International Chairman. Information, tel: 1 (703) 834-5670, 532-1249, 914-0253.

The "BURMA REVIEW", a Burma affairs journal published monthly in English and Burmese by the Burma Review Committee Inc. for the Burmese community worldwide is available from: Editor U Khin Nyo, P.O.Box 7726, Rego Park, NY.11374.

The Overseas Burma Foundation (OBF) founded in 1988, is an independent non-profit organization to a) encourage development of Burma, b) restore democracy in Burma, c) improve the lives of overseas Burmese, d) promote friendship and mutual understanding between Burma and the USA. The "BURMA REPORT" published monthly by the OBF to foster better understanding among Burmese and friends of Burma worldwide is available from: Dr. Shwe Dah, 175 Fifth Ave., Suite 2141, New York, NY.10010. Donations welcome.

Burmese Refugees:

ABUSE BY THAI IMMIGRATION POLICE

There have been many reports of brutality towards Burmese refugees in Thailand, but the event related below is the worst to date against detained students at the hands of Thai Immigration Police. The report was written by the victims in Burmese and translated into English. The events have been verified by several sources.

On Jan.29, 1991, Burmese students detained at the Immigration Detention Centre (IDC) held a demonstration against their continued detention. They had all completed their sentences but had not been released. At 3.30 pm, the students began shouting for the Commander-in-Chief of the Legal Entry Section and stroked the bars of their cell. A policeman questioned them and they asked to speak with the IDC Commander.

Some time later, the Commander who had been recently appointed, came to the students' cell accompanied by 10 detainees from other sections of the IDC. The students stated their case and the Commander left without replying. The other detainees who came with the Commander, were also Burmese. They told the students that if the demonstration continued, they were under orders to beat up the students.

The Commander then returned with some officers and detainees of other nationalities, numbering about fifteen. The Commander said he wanted to talk to ten students in a separate room. Fearing rough treatment, the students refused and the Commander left.

After about fifteen minutes, a number of officers handcuffed ten students and forced them downstairs into a small room where they were severely beaten with batons and kicked with combat boots. One student had his head repeatedly pushed under water.

*MYO NIN OO suffered a fractured left arm and nose, and two dislocated ribs,
AUNG WIN suffered serious head injuries,
WIN AUNG suffered head injuries,
MAUNG MAUNG LWIN suffered head injuries,
WIN NIN HTWE suffers from hysteria and severe mental disturbances. He had been beaten previously and is believed to have brain damage.*

The ten students are now held in separate rooms and have been told they will be deported within a week from either Ranong or Kanchanaburi. The Burmese military is stationed across the border at both locations.

The above report was prepared by a Thai human rights group and it was transmitted by SYNAPSES on Feb.22, 1991. It is not an isolated case of brutality. Thai newspapers routinely report cases of beatings in Thai prisons and police stations. Such clear human rights abuses need to be condemned. A reputation for human rights violations could be detrimental to the Thai tourist industry. Thailand's support for SLORC is already harming Thailand's image. Please protest to:

- General Sunthorn Kongsompong, National Peacekeeping Council, Bangkok, Thailand.
- Prime Minister Anand Panyarachun, Government House, Pitsanulok Rd., Bangkok 10300.
- General Issarapong Noonpakdi, Interior Minister, Asdang Rd., Phrakanong, Bangkok.
- Director, Immigration Detention Center, Soi Suan Plu, S. Sathorn, Bangkok 10120.

For publicity in Thai newspapers, please fax a copy to 66 (2) 212-5338, Synapses.

Foreign Investments:

BRITAIN:

British fisheries expert Dr. David Edwards called on Col. PE THEIN, Minister for Health, and Education, to discuss "*fish breeding and marketing*" [P910103].

*Myanmar Inspection and Testing Services Limited (Alert No.2/2), a joint-venture of *M/S SPECIALISTS SERVICES INTERNATIONAL, opened an office on Dec.6 at 62 Bogalayzay St., Botahtaung, Rangoon, Burma [P910110].

GERMANY:

An aircraft chartered by HAPAG-LLOYD TOURISTIK SERVICES on Jan.25 brought 88 tourists to Rangoon on a one-day tour and left for Kathmandu on the same day. *Hapag-Lloyd* has been running these one-day tours twice a year since 1987 [P910126].

ISRAEL:

ISRAEL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE President Abraham Blass called on Brig.Gen. DAVID ABEL, Minister of Planning & Finance, and Trade [P910102].

SINGAPORE:

The address of *SINGAPURA UNITED TOBACCO (PTE.) LTD (Alert No.2/2) is: Managing Director *Tay Choon Hye, 100 J, Pasir Panjang Rd., Singapore 0511 [P910131].

CDC CONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT PTE. LTD. has signed an agreement with the Labour Department to import Burmese workers (Alert No.9). Training Course No.5/91 "*Overseas Skilled Workers*" has started at the Vocational Training Centre in Rangoon [P910109].

THAILAND:

*CHAITANASARN LTD. (Alert No.6) Managing Director Charnchai Pharesiri donated US\$10,000 for the Shwedagon Pagoda Museum & Library [P910111].

Narong Sangquijiveth of *N & N CO. LTD. (Alert No.6) donated US\$10,000 for three projects at the Shwedagon Pagoda [P910125].

Lt.Gen. CHIT SWE, Minister for Agriculture & Forests and for Livestock & Fisheries proposed to Winai Subrungruang, Deputy Managing Director of the state-owned *FOREST INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION (FIO) (Alert No.5) that the FIO set up a joint venture company to represent Thailand's logging interests. It would handle concessions granted by SLORC instead of the present arrangement where individual firms operate the concessions separately. Between 1988 and Dec.1990, 49 concessions were granted to 29 firms. The logging joint venture would be along the same lines as the *THAI MYANMAR FISHERIES CO. (Alert No.3, 5 & 8) [N901204]. Lt.Gen. CHIT SWE also announced new contract prices for Burmese timber. Teak: US\$295/tonne. The old price was US\$ 150-200/tonne. Hardwood: US\$185/tonne. The old price was US\$85-90/tonne [N901208].

MERIEUX (Thailand) LTD. Managing Director Louis Henri Freidel headed a delegation to the 37th Medical Conference and called on Col. PE THEIN [P910119].

The PTT EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION CO.(PTTEP) (Alert No.5), a wholly-owned subsidiary of the PETROLEUM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND (PTT) is proposing a joint natural gas exploration project with SLORC in the Gulf of Martaban and a trans-national gas pipeline project. Other countries will also be invited to participate. Reserves in the Gulf is estimated to be 3.6 trillion cubic feet of natural gas, sufficient for a large-scale development. An output of 250 million cubic feet daily is being considered. Both projects will cost US\$1 billion. PTTEP would like at least a 20% share. If the projects proceed, SLORC will get income from the production sharing scheme and also earn foreign exchange from the export of liquefied natural gas. PTT is also interested in Vietnam's offshore crude oil reserves and the Thai government is hoping to turn Thailand into an oil refining centre [N901106].

UNITED NATIONS & INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES:

1. Dr. Jean Houston, *U.N. CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF) (Alert No.10,12 & 2/2) consultant, called on Col. PE THEIN, Minister for Health, and Education [P910126].

A *U.N. DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (UNDP) (Alert No.10,12 & 2/2) Tax Advisory Mission headed by Francois Corfmat and including Allan Firestone and Paul Laugesen arrived Jan.21 for a 2-week visit. They called on Brig.Gen. DAVID ABEL, Jan.30 [P910131].

The U.N. sponsored MEKONG COMMITTEE consisting of Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos has invited Burma and China to join the regional project to development the Mekong river basin. The *Mekong Committee* was founded in 1957 [B901128 & N901128].

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA:

BOEING CO. computer analyst & instructor Rich Hoo called on Col. PE THEIN [P910112].

*EVERWOOD INC. (Alert No.12) has discontinued using Burmese teak. President *Wayne Rogers writes: "When we decided to use Burmese teak, we did so because of the dark grains in the wood. We did not know about the political problems".

*DEAN HARDWOODS INC. (Alert No.2/2) President *Charles Dean, however, writes: *We remain sensitive to the human rights issue ... and committed to ... behind the scenes advocacy of the promised transfer of power ...but we urge your reconsideration of a boycott of Teak, because if it is successful, the natural result will be certain destruction of the largest reserve of the most magnificent timber in the world. Dean argues that if a boycott reduces the demand for teak, the forest will be cleared for opium production which is in great demand. Dean also claims that in Jan.91, a UN official in Rangoon reported: "Myanmar Selection System remains in full force. Border concession does not repeat does not have adverse effect as only two percent of total teak stand located in border area". According to information available to the Alert, the Burma or Myanmar Selection system is not enforced and that about 25% of Burma's teak forest is located on the Thai-Burma border - Ed.*

George Helland, US Deputy Assistant Secretary of Energy for Export Assistance at the US DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY, speaking at the 8th Offshore South-East Asia Conference in Singapore in Dec.90 said, *"The (oil) markets in Indonesia and Burma are blossoming. This is the place to do business"*. He said the US wants to reduce its over-reliance on any one source and a US national energy strategy is being finalized [Aus901206].

US STATE DEPARTMENT spokesman, Richard Boucher said that the US will not resume DRUG ERADICATION aid to Burma, *"There is evidence that the (Burmese) government, at the minimum, tolerates illicit drug production and traffic"* [AFP901106].

On March 6, Richard Solomon, US Assistant Secretary of State said that the US is considering imposing ECONOMIC SANCTIONS against Burma. The 1990 Trade Act called for President Bush to impose sanctions if Burma did not make reforms and improve its performance on narcotics suppression. Speaking before the House East Asian and Pacific Subcommittee, Solomon said, *"Burma cannot meet these requirements"*.

SOURCES [Aus901206] The Australian [F910228] Far Eastern Economic Review
(this [P910103] Working Peoples Daily [AFP901106] Agence France Presse
issue): [CRDB/INDB/GBA910316] Joint News Communique from the Committee to Restore
Democracy in Burma, the International Network for Democracy in Burma
and the German-Burmese Association. [N901106] The Nation, Bangkok.
[B901128] Bangkok Post [CDB910312] Committee for Democracy in Burma

The "Burma Alert" is published monthly by the Associates to Develop Democratic Burma (ADDB). The ADDB monitors foreign investment and trade with Burma to provide the Burmese democracy movement with data for their campaigns against the military dictatorship in Rangoon. Subscription Fee is US\$ 25.00 for 1991 payable to ADDB.

Seminar:

The following are synopses of the topics discussed at the seminar, "*Burma - Obstacles to Development*", held in Ottawa, Feb.28-Mar.1, 1991:

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Dr. MYA MAUNG of Boston College, argued that since 1962, the military has inflicted enormous damage on Burma's human capital. He showed how the military has intensified traditional barriers to modernization and said that the obstacles to development are: i) the military dictatorship, ii) technical incompetence of military managers, iii) state control of key industries, iv) short-term profit motive of the current wave of foreign investments, and v) hyper-inflation.

EUGENE THAIKE from the Univ.of British Columbia argued that countries like Japan have developed because a) the state played a key role, b) private enterprise was nurtured by the state, c) the labour force was docile, d) an industrialization strategy that was export-oriented was pursued. Nationalism in Burma became anti-capitalist as a reaction to colonialism, and General Ne Win carried it one step further by destroying democracy which is necessary for capitalism to work. To develop Burma, democracy must be restored and state resources must be used to deliberately and purposefully create a democratic environment in the way that the market economy and private enterprise were nurtured by economic bureaucrats in Japan and other countries.

Dr. DAVID STEINBERG of Georgetown Univ. identified obstacles to development in Burma as: i) decision-making based on political, not economic factors, ii) ambivalence to foreigners and foreign technology, iii) porous borders which make industrial development difficult, and iv) heavy military expenditure. Other obstacles are: hyper-inflation, incompetence, corruption, political uncertainty, no infrastructure, no civil service, no private banking system, no strategy for economic development.

Human Rights

Dr. BRIAN JOHN of McMaster University and Amnesty International (Canada) Burma Co-ordinator was the main speaker. The session recommended that: a) Thailand be urged to stop repatriating Burmese refugees, b) the UN be urged to de-recognize the Myanmar regime in favour of the NCGUB, c) Canada be encouraged to continue to act on behalf of the Burmese people, d) participants inform their organizations about Burma, and e) participants personally support AI campaigns on Burma.

Ethnic Concerns

MICHAEL JALA, Kachin Independence Organization, LOUISA BENSON, Karen National Union and GARY ROZEMA from the Burmese Relief Centre spoke. The session recommended that: a) Minority group rights be affirmed by participation in international forums (UNESCO, etc.), and b) Canada act through the UN to mediate the civil war.

Environmental Concerns

EDITH MIRANTE, Director of Project Maje and TERRY COTTAM, Friends of the Rainforest spoke. They recommended that a) US citizens follow up trade sanctions enacted by Congress, b) Canadian legislators be urged to impose an import/export ban, and c) Participants help in a grass root-oriented environmental educational program.

Human Resource Development and Education

LOUISA BENSON and DAVID STEINBERG were the speakers. The session recommended that Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) explore ways to implement education and training programs, as well as provide scholarships for and/or sponsor Burmese students.

The seminar concluded that economic development in Burma is not possible as long as the military remains in power. It recommended that NGOs wanting to help develop Burma should consider working with the NCGUB as an alternative to SLORC.

The opinions expressed above may not necessarily be those of the ADDB.