

BURMA ALERT No.11 (Volume 2, November 1991)

Burma News:

HEAVY FIGHTING ERUPTS IN IRRAWADDY DELTA

Heavy fighting has erupted in the delta area of the Irrawaddy river. After an absence of nearly 20 years, Karen National Union (KNU) troops were able to penetrate Rangoon's defenses and begin operating in the area again. Recognising the KNU's support for the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), even ethnic Burman villagers, students, workers and politicians have reportedly joined the Karens in fighting the troops of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Between 5-11 Oct, fighting was intense and four villages, Ket-thamaing, Ket-Thabaung, Kayin Sabyuzu and Yut-kati in Bogale township were repeatedly bombed by the Burma Air Force inflicting severe casualties on the civilian population. Bogale is about 40 miles southwest of Rangoon. Steamer service between Rangoon and the delta has been disrupted. On 18 Oct, SLORC issued a decree forbidding boats plying between Rangoon and major delta towns to travel without armed military escort. During Oct, the KNU claimed to have shot down 2 attack aircraft, 2 helicopter gunships and destroyed 3 patrol boats.

Fighting is now widespread in the Irrawaddy Division and has been reported as far west as Myaungmya and Bassein (80 miles from Rangoon). Maubin and Pyapon townships, only about 30 miles west and southwest of Rangoon, were also the scene of battles. On 12 Oct, SLORC placed all its military regional commands, its navy and its air force on full alert. Local military commanders were also ordered to *"shoot deserters on the spot"*, raising questions about the loyalty of its own rank and file. Sources claim that some local police and militia units have joined the Karen forces.

The army is carrying out house to house searches in the delta. Reports have been received that anyone having had ties with the KNU in the past is being arrested. Even wives and mothers of ex-KNU members, including 70-year olds, have been arrested, interrogated and jailed. Over eighty arrested community leaders are said to have 'disappeared' en route to detention centres. On 22 Oct, the Burma Army raided the villages of Tekpan-Kyungyi and Shwelon in Labutta township (200 miles southwest), the villages of Wete and Taikgon in Bassein township, and the villages of Wa-gwe and Myapuko in Bogale township. Women, children and the old were driven out and all able-bodied men were arrested. About 50 suspects were said to have been summarily executed.

The Commander of SLORC's South West Command, Major General Myint Aung who is well-known for ruthlessly crushing the democracy movement in the delta in 1988, is personally directing the delta campaign. Army Commander-in-Chief General Than Shwe, Intelligence Chief Major General Khin Nyunt and SLORC Secretary No.2, Major General Tin Oo have inspected the front-line. Troops massed to attack NCGUB and KNU headquarters at Manerplaw on the Thai-Burma border have been recalled to reinforce SLORC positions in the delta as well as to defend the capital Rangoon.

The fighting in the delta is a major setback for SLORC. It has seriously undermined SLORC's claim that it controls the country. The delta fighting is said to have spread even to the Hanthawaddy district of Rangoon Division. On 23 Oct, the Army sealed off the towns of Thon-gwa (about 50 miles southeast) and Tan-lwin in Rangoon Division and interrogated suspects. Fighting has also been reported in the townships of Kyauk-gyi, Shwe-kyin, Kyauktaga, Nyaunglebin and Toungoo (about 300 miles north of Rangoon) in Pegu Division [B911011, F911114, KNU911030, NCGUB, N911011 and Radio Rangoon].

SLORC FORCED TO ACCEPT UNITED NATIONS INVESTIGATOR

After initially refusing, SLORC has accepted Professor Yozo Yokota, a Japanese legal expert, as the United Nations' Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma. Prof Yokota and Jacob Moller, a senior official of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights in Geneva, visited Burma from 21-26 Oct. They were reported to have visited Insein Jail but it is not known whether they were able to speak to prisoners detained there. Mrs. Sadako Ogata, Prof Yokota's predecessor, was not allowed to visit Insein Jail on her 1990 visit. Prof Yokota's request to meet with Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was denied. Previous attempts by the French and Japanese Ambassadors to meet with her were also denied by SLORC [JT911027 & N911022].

Burma News: (continued)**INTER-PARLIAMENTARY COUNCIL PRESSES FOR RANGOON VISIT**

On 12 Oct, the Inter-Parliamentary Council of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) adopted a resolution on Burma reiterating its grave concern over the fact that the Pyithu Hludaw elected on 27 May 1990 has still not been convened and that a large number of Members of Parliament remain under arrest. The IPU expressed its anxiety at the lengthy prison sentences imposed on the detained MPs and requested SLORC to allow an IPU mission to visit Burma to gather information about their condition. The resolution was adopted without a vote at the 86th Inter-Parliamentary Conference held in Santiago, Chile [IPU].

SLORC UNHAPPY WITH VISIT BY ASEAN EMISSARY

SLORC has made it clear that it will receive Philippine Foreign Secretary Raul Manglapus in Rangoon only in his capacity as Philippine foreign minister. Manglapus, who is also chairman of the ASEAN Standing Committee, was given a mandate by ASEAN in July to approach Burma on human rights issues ("Alert" No.9, Vol.2). SLORC was unhappy the mission was made public and perceives that the visit is being made at the behest of ASEAN's dialogue partners, including the United States [F911024].

FOUR ARRESTED FOR DISCUSSING NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

On 14 Oct, U Ohn Maung, 56, U Maung Win, 43, Saw Min Tun, 36, U Thaung Kyi, 56, and U Ohn Maung, 70, were arrested in Kyaiklat by SLORC for discussing in a coffee shop, the BBC and VOA broadcasts about the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. No official announcements have been made by SLORC about the award. Instead, a cartoon in the official 'Working People's Daily', said, *"The Nobel prize is not a peace prize... it is a domestic interference prize"*. On 16 Oct, SLORC Minister for Planning and Finance, Brigadier General David Abel, dismissed the award saying it was just an honour bestowed by a 'special institution'. He said, *"I don't feel anything at all.. I just have no reaction at all"*. Brig. Gen. Abel was in Bangkok to attend the World Bank /International Monetary Fund meeting [KNU911030, NCGUB, & N911019-23].

POLISH AMBASSADOR DENIED VISA TO RANGOON

On Oct.17, Bangkok-based Polish Ambassador to Burma, Lucjan Mieczkowski, said he had been denied a visa to Rangoon to personally convey President Lech Walesa's congratulations to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who won the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. Lech Walesa won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1983 as leader of Solidarity, the Polish opposition movement [B911018].

MALAYSIAN OPPOSITION CALL FOR RELEASE OF DAW SUU KYI

On 21 Oct, Malaysian opposition leader Lim Kit Siang tabled a motion asking the Malaysian Parliament to demand that SLORC *"allow Aung San Suu Kyi to exercise her mandate to form a democratic government in accordance with the results of the May 1990 general elections"*. It was rejected by the Speaker who said that though the motion is a matter of public interest, it did not warrant urgent discussion [N911023].

NORWEGIAN AMBASSADOR DENIED VISA BY SLORC

On 22 Oct, a Norwegian Foreign Ministry spokesman said that its Singapore-based Ambassador to Burma, Jens Kjell Otterbach, had been denied a visa to Rangoon. Ambassador Otterbach was instructed by his government to contact Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and to persuade SLORC to allow her to travel to Norway to receive the Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo on 10 Dec. SLORC said a visa was not issued because it did not have the time to receive the ambassador [N911024].

BRITISH PRIME MINISTER'S NOTE REFUSED BY SLORC

On 25 Oct, British Ambassador to Burma, Julian Hartland-Swann, went to the SLORC Foreign Ministry in Rangoon to deliver British Prime Minister John Major's congratulations to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. SLORC, however, refused to accept the note or pass it on to the Nobel laureate [N911027].

GERMANY DEMANDS ACCESS TO NOBEL LAUREATE

On 25 Oct, the German government summoned SLORC's ambassador to the Foreign Ministry and demanded that SLORC allow diplomats to communicate with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. German diplomats had not been able to pass on congratulations from German leaders to the Burmese leader [N911027].

Human Rights:**SLORC NOBEL PEACE PRIZE QUESTIONNAIRE**

In an effort to intimidate and blackmail its civil servants, SLORC forced them to answer 33 questions in April 1991 to determine their loyalty ("Alert" No.6, 1991). Similarly, Members of Parliament elected in May 1990 were made to answer over 300 questions (available in Burmese from ADDB). Now with the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, SLORC is trying to intimidate members of its own junta. The award and the renewed fighting in the delta has clearly worried SLORC.

SECRET**GOVERNMENT OF THE UNION OF BURMA**

Ministry of Defence

Office of the Defence Services Chief of Staff

Letter No.7/43/C3

Date: 1991 October 21

Subject: The Nobel Affair

You are to clarify by 24-10-91, whether or not you agree/disagree or support/do not support the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Daw Suu Kyi, former General Secretary of the National League for Democracy which came into being because of Aung-Suu-Tin (*).

By order,

Win Aung (Colonel)

(for) Defence Services Chief of Staff

Copies to: SLORC Vice-Chairman General Than Shwe (DSCOS Army); SLORC members Vice-Admiral Maung Maung Khin (DSCOS Navy), Lieutenant General Tin Tun (DSCOS Air Force), Lieut Gen Aung Ye Kyaw (Adjutant General), Lieut Gen Phone Myint (Quartermaster General), Lieut Gen Sein Aung (Bureau of Special Operations 1), Lieut Gen Chit Swe (Bureau of Special Operations 2), Major General Kyaw Ba (Northern Command), Maj Gen Maung Thint (Northeastern Command), Maj Gen Maung Aye (Eastern Command), Maj Gen Nyan Linn (Southeastern Command), Maj Gen Myint Aung (Southwestern Command), Maj Gen Mya Thinn (Western Command), Maj Gen Tun Kyi (Central Command), Maj Gen Aye Thoun (Southern Command) and Maj Gen Myo Nyunt (Rangoon Command); SLORC Secretary 1 Maj Gen Khin Nyunt; and SLORC Secretary 2 Maj Gen Tin Oo.

Copies also to: Brigadier General Abel, Minister for Planning & Finance, and for Trade; Colonel Pe Thein, Minister for Health and for Education; U Ohn Gyaw, Foreign Minister; U Aung Toe, Chief Justice; U Tha Tun, Attorney General; U Khin Zaw, Auditor General; Office of SLORC Chairman; all government ministries; Office of the Defence Services Chief of Staff (Army); Office of the Defence Services Chief of Staff (Navy); Office of the Defence Services Chief of Staff (Air Force); Office of the Adjutant General; Office of the Quartermaster General; Office of the Bureau of Special Operations 1; Office of the Bureau of Special Operations 2; Office of Military Appointments; Office of Military Tribunals; Directorate of Defence Services Intelligence; Office of the Chief Justice; Office of the Attorney General; Office of the Auditor General; Burma Historical Society; Multi-Party Democracy General Election Commission; Research Division of the Office of the Chief of Defence Staff (Army); True Burmese Historical Records Office; SLORC Historical Evaluation and Research Office; and the Military Museum and Archives.

SECRET

Note (*): Aung-Suu-Tin refers to ex-Brigadier Aung Gyi, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and ex-General Tin Oo, who co-founded the NLD.

On the surface, the above question seems unnecessary. No SLORC member in his right mind would answer that he supports the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. However, SLORC will now have an official (if indirect) declaration from members of its inner circle stating that they oppose Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's leadership. This will be used by SLORC to blackmail them and forestall any switch of allegiance in the future - Ed.

International News:

BURMA:

The 3rd Conference of the ALL BURMA STUDENTS DEMOCRATIC FRONT, held from Aug-Oct 1991 at the Salween Students Camp, elected a new 23-member Central Committee to a three-year term. Elected were: Naing Aung, Chairman; Kyaw Kyaw, Vice-Chairman; Myo Win, General Secretary; Aung Htoo, Secretary 1; Hla Htay, Secretary 2; and Ne Win Aung, Khin Maung Win, Thaung Htun, Htay Aung, Myint Cho and Maung Di, Central Executive Committee members.

GERMANY:

On 16 Nov, the COMMITTEE FOR THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY IN BURMA, the GERMAN BURMESE ASSOCIATION and the INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR DEMOCRACY IN BURMA organized a celebration in Bonn to honour Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for winning the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. The event ended with a protest march to the SLORC embassy.

JAPAN:

A group of prominent Japanese women have formed a network to work towards the release of this year's Nobel laureate, called the INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S NETWORK FOR THE FREEDOM OF AUNG SAN SUU KYI. The network at present has a membership of 106 women, mostly Members of Parliament, writers, journalists and university professors. The group's 10-member Executive Committee includes Ms. Takako Doi, former President of the Social Democrat Party, Ms. Manae Kubota, former Vice-President of the Party and a Member of the Japanese Upper House of Parliament, and Ms. Kuniko Funabashi, President of the Women's Studies Association of Japan. Fax: 81 (473) 877-800.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

On 15 Oct, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (USA) and the BURMA FORUM held a reception in Santa Monica, California, to honour Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Dr. Em Marta, Foreign Secretary for the KNU and the Democratic Alliance of Burma was among those in attendance.

On 17 Oct, the COMMITTEE FOR THE RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY IN BURMA (USA-West Coast), the FEDERAL FREEDOM FRONT (BURMA) and the FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY IN BURMA demonstrated in downtown Los Angeles to draw attention to the fact that Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is still under house arrest.

Three new first-hand reports on Burma are now available for US\$5.00 each from PROJECT MAJE. *"Jumping Rope on the Front Line"* contains 36 interviews with Kachin children and teenagers and it is illustrated with drawings by school children. *"Difficult Lives"* contains 11 interviews with Kachin farmers, traders, doctors and teachers. In Aug 1991, Edith Mirante, the author and Director of Project Maje made a trek into northern Burma's Kachin State under the protection of the Kachin Independence Army. A brief account of her travel is reported in *Asiaweek*, 22 Nov 1991, Almanac. The reports provide an introductory picture of the situation regarding human rights, health, education and the economy in the Kachin State. The third report, *"Our Journey"* is a report of the situation in western Burma's Arakan State and includes 36 interviews conducted on the Burma-Bangladesh border which Edith visited in Apr-May 1991. Please make cheque out to: E Mirante, 14 Dartmouth Rd, Cranford NJ.07016, USA.

The NCGUB delegation to the U.S.A. led by Prime Minister Dr. Sein Win, Foreign Minister U Peter Limbin and Minister of Finance U Win Ko visited Burmese communities in New York, Washington DC, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco during September-November. For part of the journey, they were accompanied by Dr. Em Marta, Dr. Khin Maung Kywe and Sai Htoon from Bangkok. Besides lobbying at the United Nations in New York, calling on U.S. Congressional leaders in DC, giving press conferences and speaking at various functions, Dr. Sein Win spoke at the dinner given by the FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY IN BURMA and at the meeting in Washington DC of the Burma interest groups held 15-17 Nov. Dr. Sein Win especially appealed to Burmese expatriates to consider returning to Burma after democracy is restored, even for a limited time, to contribute their technical skills and help rebuild the country. A roster is being compiled by the NCGUB.

Foreign Investments & Trade:

THAILAND TO DAM THE SALWEEN ?

In 1988, Thai Army Commander-in-Chief General Chaovalit Yongchaiyudh proposed to SLORC that Burma and Thailand embark on seven joint hydro-power projects on their borders. The scheme drafted by Thailand's NATIONAL ENERGY AUTHORITY (NEA) called for a 6,400 megawatt dam on the Salween river, three 70, 120 and 250 megawatt dams on the Moei river, a 100 megawatt dam on the Kok river, a 25 megawatt dam on the Nam Mae Sai and a 40 megawatt dam on the Klong Kraburi. The power generated would meet Thailand's total energy needs and Burma's. The ELECTRICITY GENERATING AUTHORITY OF THAILAND (EGAT) has been looking to develop hydro-electric sites in Burma and Laos as it faces increased opposition from environmentalists at home for constructing new large multi-purpose dams. In June 1989, the proposal was followed up by a delegation to Rangoon headed by NEA Secretary-General Prapath Premmani. A joint working group to coordinate the projects was formed and priority given to the 25 megawatt Nam Mae Sai and 40 megawatt Klong Kraburi dams.

In Oct 1991, the *Thai Rath*, a Thai language newspaper, reported that SLORC Planning and Finance Minister Brig Gen David Abel had met with the current Thai Army Commander-in-Chief General Suchinda Kraprayoon and agreed to go ahead with the 6,400 megawatt Salween dam. According to the NEA's initial estimates, the Salween dam will cost US\$5.85 billion and take 16 years to complete. The *Thai Rath* report suggested that 30% of the water from the dam could be diverted through a 20 km canal to the Ping river, a tributary of the Chao Phya river, to supplement the Chao Phaya's decreasing water-flow which is critical for agricultural purposes in the North and Central Plains of Thailand. The increased flow could also flush the polluted water in Samut Prakan province into the sea. According to the report, the project could be financed privately and that "eight of the largest banks in the world" have agreed to provide loans pending a final decision by the two countries.

SLORC Ambassador in Bangkok, U Nyunt Swe, could not confirm the Abel-Suchinda agreement. He, however, said that a feasibility study for the hydro-electric projects would begin in December 1991 with bridging loans from the Manila-based ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK [N911026]. Brig Gen Abel was in Bangkok in Oct to attend the World Bank/International Monetary Fund meeting. The World Bank, however, is very unhappy with SLORC. A senior official said, "Our concern is that we have not been able to establish a meaningful dialogue. Up to now the government has not been responsive to the issues we have brought to their attention ... There is no point putting resources where we cannot be sure that they will be efficiently utilized."

Despite the World Bank's evaluation, SLORC is confident it can continue its current policies by strengthening ties with China and ASEAN. Burmese trade with ASEAN, Japan, S Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan was US\$747 million in 1988/89. Trade with the European community was US\$105 million and only US\$10 million with the US. SLORC has bilateral trade pacts with China, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, S Korea, Thailand and eight European countries. To lure more foreign investments, SLORC has designated 1992 its "Economic Year" but major restrictions on private businesses remain in place. For example, Burma's main exports are: timber, rice, beans, fresh and dried shrimps, raw and tanned hides, bird nests and textiles. However, the private sector cannot export timber, rice, beans, fresh and dried shrimps, hides, maize, sesame, raw cotton, rubber, ivory, petroleum products, gem stones, weapons and antiques. Private businesses are also prohibited from importing television sets, video players, air conditioners, beer and alcoholic drinks [B910918, 1014, 17].

SOURCES this issue: [B911011] Bangkok Post, [F911114] Far Eastern Economic Review, [IPU] Inter-Parliamentary Union, [JT911027] Japan Times, [KNU911030] Karen National Union, [N911011] The Nation, Bangkok and [NCGUB] National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma.

The "Burma Alert" is published monthly by the ADDB. It monitors foreign investments and trade with Burma to provide the Burmese democracy movement with data for their campaigns against the military dictatorship in Rangoon. Readers wishing to support the work are invited to become 'Associates' by contributing US\$100.00 annually. The ADDB is partially funded by subscriptions to the "Burma Alert", by associates and by a grant from the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Montreal, Canada. Subscription to the "Burma Alert" is US\$25.00 per annum payable to ADDB, c/o Harn Yawngnwa, RR.4, Shawville, Quebec J0X 2Y0, Canada. Fax: 1 (819) 647-3088

BURMA BOOKS FROM KISCADALE

The ADDB's objective is to facilitate the development of democratic values and traditions in Burma. We believe that easy access to information is a key requirement in the process. We are, therefore, happy to announce the following books on Burma from KISCADALE PUBLICATIONS. Kiscadale cannot offer discounts but they offer FREE POSTAGE AND PACKAGING, which can be substantial, to addresses in the UK and North America:

FREEDOM FROM FEAR and Other Writings. A new anthology of 1991 Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi's collected writings edited by her husband Michael Aris. Foreword by Vaclav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia. 1991, 357 pages. HB US\$25.00, Paper US\$12.50

AUNG SAN OF BURMA - A biographical portrait by his daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi. The book offers clear insights into the character of Aung San. 1991, 96 pages, photos. Paper US\$12.00

BURMA - Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity by Martin Smith. The first complete and detailed analysis of Burma as a whole during her first forty years of independence. 1991, 492 pages. HB US\$65.00, Paper US\$30.00

OUTRAGE - Burma's Struggle for Democracy, by Bertil Lintner. The fullest published account of the terrible events of 1988. 1990, 256 pages, colour and black and white photos. Paper US\$25.00

Burmese Edition of Outrage available. Translated by San Win Maung and Min Myo Naing and other Burmese refugees in Bangkok with new photos not included in previous editions. 1991, 268 pages. Paper US\$25.00

LAND OF JADE - A journey through insurgent Burma by Bertil Lintner. Travelling by foot, bicycle, jeep and elephant, Bertil was the first foreigner to cross this isolated land since the 1940's. 1990, 400 pages. Paper US\$25.00

BURMESE NATIONALIST MOVEMENTS 1940-48 by U Maung Maung. A fresh and sometimes controversial account of Burmese negotiations for independence. 1989, 416 pages. HB US\$60.00, Paper US\$27.00

WORLD OF BURMESE WOMEN by Daw Mi Mi Khaing. 1984, 208 pages. Paper US\$17.50

SCOTS IN BURMA - Golden Times in a Golden Land by Alister McCrae. A record of enterprising Scottish merchant adventurers in Burma. 1990, 120 pages. Paper US\$25.00

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