

US CONGRESSMAN VISITS DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI

On 14 Feb, US Congressman Bill Richardson was allowed to visit Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at her home in Rangoon. He was the first visitor allowed, besides her family and physician, since her house arrest on 19 July 1989. The United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Burma has repeatedly been denied access to Daw Suu. The first meeting, which lasted 3 hours, included Jehan Raheem, the UN Development Programme Resident and Philip Shenon of the New York Times. Richardson also delivered a letter from US President Bill Clinton to Daw Suu (text page 6). He met with her again on 15 Feb for 2 1/2 hours, and received a letter for President Clinton in return. On 14 Feb, Richardson also met twice for a total of 4 hours with Lieut-General Khin Nyunt, head of Intelligence and Secretary 1 of the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Richardson said that he has proposed a face-to-face discussion between Daw Suu and Khin Nyunt to promote a dialogue between the military regime and the democratic opposition. Richardson also urged the UN and Australia to help facilitate the process and called for the UN Secretary General to send a special envoy to Burma. Richardson first visited Rangoon in Aug.93 and is a close friend of US President Bill Clinton [NY940215,16, N940217].

SLORC PUBLICIZES RICHARDSON STATEMENT ABOUT DAW SUU

On 18 Feb, SLORC-controlled newspapers published in English and Burmese the transcript of US Congressman Bill Richardson's 16 Feb Bangkok press conference on his visit with Daw Suu. To ensure maximum impact, the state radio announced on 17 Feb that the transcript would be in the morning papers. Diplomats in Rangoon were dumbfounded and speculate that SLORC may be laying the groundwork for some sort of negotiation with Daw Suu. In the transcript, Richardson praised Daw Suu as "a woman of towering intellect and strength of conscience, a woman of passion and commitment, a woman who stands for the best ideals of democracy, and a woman that is ready to engage in talks." He also made it clear that Daw Suu cannot be excluded from the political process in Burma. He said, "Aung San Suu

Kyi is the key to the solution" and that Burma-US relations will not improve as long as Daw Suu and other political prisoners continue to be detained and a genuine effort to democratize is not made. In the transcript, Richardson was 'cautiously optimistic' that SLORC would agree to talk with Daw Suu but added, "We need to see deeds and not just words." Khin Nyunt's reply that he would seek authorization to do so was also reported [VOA940216, NY940219].

DAW SUU TO REMAIN UNDER HOUSE ARREST TILL 1995

On 15 Feb, a senior SLORC official confirmed that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would be detained for another year. Under SLORC's own law, she cannot be detained without a charge beyond 19 July 1994. Earlier, Daw Suu informed Congressman Richardson that she had been notified that her house arrest will be extended until the beginning of 1995 [NY940215, B940218].

GENERAL NE WIN HAS CANCER

On 21 Jan, General Ne Win, 84, travelled to Singapore for 'dental and eye treatment'. However, sources close to the strongman say that he has prostate cancer, and that he might have suffered a stroke last year. "He has been more or less bed-ridden since mid-November. He is becoming increasingly incoherent and unable to tell friend from foe" said one insider. Although Ne Win officially retired in July 1988, the very fact that he is still alive has kept the Burmese military establishment together. Ne Win's illness could explain why SLORC has become extremely jittery, with soldiers combing parks and other public places for bombs. In early January, Colonel Thein Win, the Rangoon police chief was transferred and several officers dismissed after some pickpockets stabbed a student to death. The over-reaction to contain a possible student demonstration illustrates SLORC's tenuous hold. A diplomat in Rangoon describes SLORC as a 'tripartite alliance of convenience' - a faction led by Khin Nyunt and another led by Army Commander-in-Chief Lieut-General Maung Aye with SLORC Chairman General Than Shwe balancing the two [F940210]. Others claim that a third faction is led by Lieut-General Tin Oo, Chief-of-Staff of the Army and SLORC Secretary 2 - Ed.

Burma News:**JAPAN TO RESUME AID TO SLORC**

On 17 Feb, the SLORC Foreign Ministry announced that Japan will resume financial aid as early as the end of March 1994. However, the aid will be on a small scale and it will be channelled through non-government organizations at the grass-roots level. It is expected that each project will cost a few million yen [ASAHI940218]. Independent NGOs do not exist in Burma - Ed.

AUSTRALIA CLOSING TRADE OFFICE IN RANGOON

The Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator Gareth Evans, is said to be running out of patience with SLORC and Australia will be closing the Trade Commission office in Rangoon soon. Ambassador Stuart Hume in Rangoon said that Australia does not want to be involved in any activity that directly supports or sustains the capacity of SLORC to maintain an oppressive government. "Burma is potentially an extremely prosperous country and there will, one day, be an important commercial relationship between Australia and Burma," he said [CT940213].

THAILAND TO SET UP FUND TO AID SLORC AND INDOCHINA

On 21 Dec.93, Somchai Ruchupan, Chief of the Fiscal Policy Office in the Thai Finance Ministry said that a special Indochinese Development Fund will be set up to encourage economic growth in the region. The Fund will extend low interest loans to Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Burma. Somchai said that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has agreed to help establish the Fund by re-channelling its existing aid program [FBIS931227].

INDONESIAN FOREIGN MINISTER ALATAS TO VISIT RANGOON

On 15 Feb, Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas said that he will visit Rangoon 19-20 Feb. He said, "I think, for me, it will be important to visit Myanmar before the forthcoming ministerial conference of the ASEAN." Thailand and Singapore are seeking a consensus among ASEAN members to invite SLORC as a guest to the July meeting [B940218, N940216]. Lieut-Gen Khin Nyunt visited Jakarta 21-25 Dec.93 - Ed.

International Action:**UNION DAY VALENTINE FOR DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI FROM JAPAN**

International human rights activists and members of the Burmese Relief Center - Japan celebrated Union Day (12 Feb) and Valentine's Day (14 Feb) by gathering in Kyoto and sending a giant two meter-long Valentine card by registered mail to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. More than 200 people signed the card. To date, 755 letters from 38 countries expressing solidarity for the Burmese democracy movement have been forwarded by the BRC-J to Daw Suu and SLORC.

INKED OVER, RIPPED OUT:

A PEN American Center Freedom-to-Write Report, "INKED OVER, RIPPED OUT: Burmese storyteller and the censors," featuring Burmese short stories deemed unsuitable for publication by SLORC censors, is available for US\$5 from PEN American Centre (Siobhan Dowd), 568 Broadway #401, New York, NY 10012. The stories were selected and translated by Anna J Allott, Senior Research Fellow at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. The excellent introduction and explanatory notes by Allott charts the history of censorship in Burma since 1948 and examines the workings of the Press Scrutiny Board that routinely rip out or ink over offending sections of books and magazines. The book was launched in Sep.93 (The Silenced Voices of Burma - BA No.11, Vol.4, Nov.93).

FREEDOM FROM FEAR IN BURMESE

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's book, "FREEDOM FROM FEAR and other writings" is now available in Burmese for US\$9.95 (PB) or US\$25.00 (HB) from La Haule Books, West Lodge, La Haule, Jersey, Channel Islands, UK. Tel: 44 (534) 44947, Fax: 47414. Payment by American Express/Visa/Mastercard accepted.

⇒

NEWS SOURCES THIS ISSUE: ASAHI = Asahi Evening News, Tokyo, B = Bangkok Post, BWR = Bangkok Post Weekly Review, CT = Canberra Times, Australia, F = Far Eastern Economic Review, FBIS = Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Washington DC, N = The Nation, Bangkok, NY = New York Times, USA, VOA = Voice of America Radio, Washington DC, and WP = Washington Post, USA.

International action:**CANADIAN PEPSI BOYCOTT**

The Ontario Public Interest Research Group's campaign to boycott Pepsi is gaining momentum. A student group at City School is protesting the Toronto Board of Education's December decision to give Pepsi exclusive rights to distribute drinks in all Board school. Zev Tiefenbach, writes, "What kind of message is the Board sending by overlooking Pepsi's history (support for the military dictatorship in Burma)?" The boycott, which is being co-ordinated through the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, is asking Pepsico investors and employees to vote for a resolution at the annual meeting in May 1994. The resolution calls for Pepsico to terminate operations in Burma until political prisoners are released and power is transferred to a democratically-elected government. OPIRG, Tel: 1 (613) 788-2757. Email: WCSBEAU@CCS.CARLETON.CA

UK NGOS GIVE SUPPORT TO HELP END CHILD SEX TOURISM IN ASIA

In Nov.93, Mrs Prakai Nontawasee and Mrs Sudarat Srisang of Thailand received the 1993 Anti-Slavery Award in London on behalf of End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT). Anti-Slavery International, Save the Children, Christian Aid, CAFOD, and the Jubilee Campaign have agreed to campaign for more UK government action in support of ECPAT. The campaign will seek to involve the tourist industry in making clear that sex with children is completely unacceptable and illegal wherever it takes place. Australia, Canada, Germany, France and Sweden have announced measures to crack down on their nationals who abuse children while abroad. According to Asia Watch, the trafficking of Burmese women and children in Thailand is widespread. Some of the girls are only 10 years old.

A MODERN FORM OF SLAVERY

A 160-page report on an in-depth investigation of the trafficking of Burmese women and girls into brothels in Thailand, published in Dec.93, is available from Asia Watch/Human Rights Watch, 485 Fifth Ave, New York, NY.10017-6104. Fax: 1 (212) 972-0905, Tel: 972-8400. Email: hrwatchnyc@igc.apc.org

Foreign Investments:**TOURISM:**

Tourism is fast becoming a major foreign exchange earner for SLORC and it has launched an ambitious plan to make 1995 a 'VISIT BURMA YEAR'. Tourism earned SLORC US\$10 million in 1993 and ranks fourth after agriculture, oil/gas, and timber. One-month tourist visas will be issued instead of the current 14-days visas. According to SLORC, one million visitors entered Burma via border crossings in 1993 (Thailand and China). About 30,000 tourists visited Burma via Rangoon in 1993 and SLORC expects the figure to rise to 50,000 in 1994. In 1995, SLORC hopes to attract 500,000 visitors and 1 million after 1997. In 1993, the visitors were from: Germany (14%), USA (11%), France (10%), Italy (9%), Japan (9%), the UK (8%) and the remainder from Asia. The number of Burmese visiting relatives rose to 6,436 in 1993 (21% of total) from 389 in 1992; non-group visitors rose to 10,528 from 565, and business visitors rose to 11,313 from 7,464.

In the north, tourists will be able to enter across the border from China. Plans are being drawn up to develop Hkakabo Razi, Burma's highest peak (5,900 metres), as a new tourist destination. Visitors can fly from Chiang Mai directly to Mandalay or cross the border on a 3-day permit at Mae Sai and travel overland to Kengtung. In the south, a number of islands in the Mergui Archipelago are being developed into resorts. Moulmein and Kawthaung (Victoria Point) are now tourist destinations and can be accessed directly by sea from Phuket or Ranong. Charter flights are being allowed into Rangoon, Mandalay, Pagan, Tachilek and Kengtung [BWR940211, N940123].

Given SLORC's record in 'developing' the Burmese forest industry with the help of Thailand in 1988-91, one cannot help but wonder what SLORC development of tourism Thai-style will do to Burma. Very disturbing reports of an uncontrolled HIV/AIDS epidemic in Burma (BA No.8, Vol.4, Aug.93) and the massive trafficking of Burmese women and children into the Thai tourist industry (above) are already surfacing. What social and health problems will a 16-fold increase in tourists in 2 years bring? Every Burmese who is serious about re-building Burma should read the Asia Watch report - Ed.

From Interviews with Philip Shenon
New York Times

DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S

POSITION ON THE SITUATION IN BURMA

ON SLORC'S DECISION TO ALLOW THE MEETING TO TAKE PLACE: "It is significant. What sort of good it will do, I don't know. (They are) unpredictable. They were under a lot of international pressure."

ON NEGOTIATING WITH SLORC: "There is nothing...that I've refused to talk about except...leaving the country. I've refused nothing...They must talk to me, but it will depend on what they mean and the guarantees they offer. They have made no moves to have a dialogue of any kind except on the terms under which I would leave Burma...that is not a dialogue. That is a monologue."

ON LEAVING BURMA IN EXCHANGE FOR HER FREEDOM: "That will never happen. The concept of driving somebody out of their own country is totally unacceptable. They have tried to pressure me to leave the country in ways that no self-respecting government should."

ON SLORC'S DECEIT AND THE 1990 GENERAL ELECTIONS: "It must be very exhausting for them to go on lying... Elections were promised, elections were held (and yet the military continues to hold on to power despite its defeat at the polls). The people feel cheated."

ON SLORC'S NATIONAL CONVENTION: "It is an absolute farce. It makes no sense at all because if people are not allowed to speak and if they are just there to nod their heads, there's nothing. It is not a convention. I cannot accept it as something that seriously represents the will of the people at all."

ON HER ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE BURMA ARMY: "I personally have nothing but good will toward the Army, even though there are some things that I don't like. I do have good will toward them, perhaps because I think of them subjectively as my father's army, perhaps for other reasons."

ON ECONOMIC SANCTIONS: "Foreign governments should really consider whether their trade with SLORC is really helping the people or is it simply helping the government to dig in its heels. This is the question to be asked."

ON USING ECONOMIC CARROTS INSTEAD OF SANCTIONS TO PERSUADE SLORC TO CHANGE: She said that too many nations are using carrots instead of a stick, "You can stuff a mule to death with carrots".

ON U.S. POLICY TOWARDS BURMA: (She said she would like) "a more clear cut policy in favour of the movement for democracy."

ON WINNING THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE IN 1991: "I felt tremendous humility and tremendous gratitude. I was very grateful. The prize meant that the whole movement for democracy will receive a lot more recognition."

ON DISPUTES AMONG BURMESE DEMOCRACY GROUPS: "They must stop squabbling...We must be united if we want to get democracy. It's not going to do us any good if people keep condemning each other."

ON THE FEAR THAT IS SAID TO PERVADE THE NLD: "You must go and give them a message that I said, 'Don't be scared'."

ON HER INSPIRATION: "I think of him (her father, General Aung San) often, yes. Sometimes I think it's just him and me. When I first went out campaigning, a very, very old abbot - he was over 90 - gave me two bits of advice. The first was that to get happiness, you have to invest in suffering. The second is that if you want to indulge in honest politics, you've got to be prepared to be reviled and attacked. He was right...I've read about (Nelson) Mandela, and I admire him very much."

ON HER PERSONAL CONDITION: "Whatever they do to me, that's between them and me; I can take it. What is more important is what they are doing to the country... Isolation is not difficult. I know that other people have suffered a lot more. People have died...I'm not interested in any sort of personality cult or personality politics. This is what you've got to avoid from the beginning. We want to see a democracy based on social principles, not on personality."

NOTE: Daw Aung San Suu Kyi spends her afternoons reading, "politics, philosophy, religion - mostly Buddhism but also about other religions." She has stopped playing her piano because "It's totally out of tune, there are broken strings." She will not sell her piano because it was her mother's. Her doctors say she has spondylosis, a degenerative joint disease that results in a hardening and stiffening of the spinal column. "I can't sew any more because it gets at the shoulders."

INTERNATIONAL REACTION

TO RICHARDSON'S VISIT WITH DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI

"The meeting is a significant result of increasing international pressure on SLORC for reforms ... The NCGUB firmly believes that the problems in Burma can only be resolved through a comprehensive political dialogue and calls on the international community to continue the pressure ... To bring peace, prosperity, ethnic harmony and national reconciliation, we, the people's representatives elected in 1990, also call on the United Nations, the United States, Thailand and the international community to facilitate dialogue among the democracy movement led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma's ethnic leaders and the military."

National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, 16 February

"The visit is a positive and welcome first step towards what we hope can become a wider dialogue on the issues confronting Burma including the process of national reconciliation and improvement of human rights."

Senator Gareth Evans, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Australia, 15 February

"Clinton...pledged continued US support for the struggle to promote freedom in Burma. These brave words in support of Suu Kyi must be matched by deeds... International pressure can change the situation in Burma and free Aung San Suu Kyi and other political detainees. For ASEAN to continue to associate itself with a corrupt and brutal military regime is indeed disgraceful. Aung San Suu Kyi's strength and fortitude in the face of SLORC's repressive rule gives the Burmese people a model to emulate. It's only a matter of time now before freedom comes their way."

Editorial, The Nation, Bangkok, 18 February

"Would allowing Suu Kyi to meet 'various people', coupled with 'economic liberalization' and cosier relations with neighbours like Thailand, get the SLORC off the hook? Hardly. They have too much to answer for, and they know it. The junta will not give up power without a fight. Nor will any 'constitution' they might promulgate allow more than a veneer of democracy, with a 'leading role' for the military. The only just and justifiable outcome of the appalling situation in Burma is a genuinely constitutional democracy led initially by Suu Kyi and the NLD."

POST Opinion, Bangkok Post, 15 February

"Aung San Suu Kyi received a personal letter from President Clinton ... Neither Lt-General Khin Nyunt nor SLORC received a personal letter from the US President. You can draw your own conclusions from that... America is now taking the leadership role to expedite an orderly transition to elected civilian government. I am confident we will win."

Myint Thein, Dallas, Texas (Bangkok Post, 18 Feb)

"Do visiting American Congressmen further the cause of democracy in Burma, or are they merely legitimizing a military regime denounced worldwide for its gross human rights abuses? ... the military is embarked on a major campaign to improve its poor image It retains former New York Congressman Lester Wolff as its registered lobbyist in Washington, at \$10,000 a month... Several Wolff-sponsored tours last year resulted in positive remarks about Burma's military... Clearly the junta is pleased with its congressional guests."

Denis D Gray, Associated Press Bureau Chief, Bangkok, 16 February

"It was a good gesture from Rangoon which allowed Bill Richardson, the US Congressman for New Mexico, to hold talks with Suu Kyi."

Prasong Soonsiri, Thai Foreign Minister, 17 February

○

The "Burma Alert", published monthly by the Associates to Develop Democratic Burma, monitors foreign investments and trade with Burma in order to provide data for the Burmese democracy movement. Individual subscription to the "BURMA ALERT" is US\$25.00 (or C\$25.00) per annum payable to the Associates to Develop Democratic Burma, c/o Harn Yawng Hwe, RR.4, Shawville, Quebec J0X 2Y0, Canada. Fax: 1 (819) 647-5403, Tel. 647-5405. Institutional subscription is US\$100.00 (or C\$100.00) per annum. Readers are also invited to become 'Associates' by contributing US\$100.00 (or C\$100.00) per annum. In 1993, the ADDB received grants from the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development, Canada; the Evangelisches Missionswerk, Germany; and the National Endowment for Democracy, U.S.A.

TEXT OF LETTER FROM
U.S. PRESIDENT BILL CLINTON TO
DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 10, 1994

Dear Daw Aung San Suu Kyi,

Let me take the opportunity to express again my deep concern about your welfare and to applaud your remarkable courage in pursuing human rights and democracy for the people of Burma. Despite your four and one-half years of detention, your determination and courage continue to inspire friends of freedom around the world. Recent resolutions adopted in the United Nations General Assembly and the United Nations Human Rights Commission make clear the international community's outrage over your continued detention as well as that of all other prisoners of conscience in Burma.

I also want to assure you of the United States' continuing support for the struggle to promote freedom in Burma. The 1990 elections handed your party an overwhelming mandate from Burma's people and firmly rejected military rule. Obviously, the path to democratic change must be worked out by the Burmese themselves who have assigned you a key role in bringing about such a democratic transition. We strongly condemn the effort to deny you the right to participate freely in the political life of Burma.

You have my utmost admiration for your stand. Like your courageous father, you symbolize the authentic aspirations of the Burmese people. History is on the side of freedom throughout the world and I remain confident that your cause will prevail.

Please accept my warmest personal regards,

Sincerely,

/s/ BILL CLINTON

US GOVERNMENT POSITION

The United States urges Burma's military leaders to build on this small step by beginning a dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and moving toward genuine democratic reform. The Burmese people made clear their desire for an end to more than three decades of military rule and the establishment of democratic government in the 1990 elections but the government continues to thwart implementation of the results. The President regards the continued detention of Aung San Suu Kyi and all other prisoners of conscience in Burma as unacceptable and renews his call for their immediate and unconditional release.

The White House, 15 February 1994

○

NEW FAX: 1 (819) 647-5403 ALERT

US BURMA POLICY REVIEW:

According to an official in the Clinton administration, the Burma policy review ordered by President Clinton in May 1993, has been prolonged because several agencies involved have differed over tactics. The challenge, he said, is to muster more international efforts to isolate SLORC over human rights issues without undermining parallel efforts to persuade it to crack down on heroin trafficking. "There is no sentiment in the upper reaches of the foreign policy leadership that we should be backing off on Burma. The issue is, are there ways we can be better engaged in the effort to support human rights and democracy?" The policy review aimed at finding ways to "delegitimize the regime" is continuing. Washington has accused SLORC of open cooperation with opium producers and money launderers responsible for most of the heroin entering the US. Under current US law, SLORC's narcotics record requires that Washington vote against any loans to Rangoon by the World Bank or other international lending agencies. Although Clinton has maintained a very low level of diplomatic representation in Rangoon, some Congressmen led by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan want to go further. Moynihan and 19 other senators from both parties in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee told Clinton in Oct.93, that "nothing less than a change of government" will end human rights abuses and reduce the flow of drugs [WP940218].

○