

## KARENS GIVE UP MANERPLAW

On 26 Jan, the Central Executive Committee of the Karen National Union decided to abandon Manerplaw, headquarters of the KNU and the democracy movement. Troops of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) spearheaded by recently purchased Chinese armoured personnel carriers broke through defensive positions in the south and crossed the Salween river in the north-west. Previous assaults on Manerplaw in 1991 and 1992 were unsuccessful but it is believed that, this time, Karen defectors revealed strategic secrets to SLORC. The decision to withdraw was taken when it became obvious that Manerplaw could be defended only with heavy casualties on both sides. The current offensive against the Karens started in December but grew in intensity on 20 January. The All Burma Students Democratic Front headquarters at Dagwin and other bases along the border were also attacked. Over 10,000 refugees are reported to have crossed over into Thailand [F941229, NCGUB950130].

## LI PENG VISITS RANGOON

Chinese Premier Li Peng visited Rangoon 26-28 Dec.94. He was met by junta chairman Senior General Than Shwe and accorded a 19-gun salute. The visit is to cement China-SLORC ties. Li Peng was accompanied by his wife and a 100-man delegation. At a press conference before his departure, Li Peng said that allegations about China's military expansion in the Indian Ocean are pure fabrication. He said, "China will never engage in any hegemonistic activities" and that actually it has not stationed a single soldier abroad. Regarding Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, he said that it is an internal matter and he would not interfere. However, Li Peng said that political stability is important and that economic progress is impossible without it. He said that priority should be given to political stability [N941229,950101, WPD941229].

## ILLEGAL CHINESE IMMIGRATION

According to the Far Eastern Economic Review, Chinese from Yunnan are illegally entering Burma and are beginning to dominate commercial life in Mandalay. Identification papers of a deceased person in Mandalay can be bought on the black-market in Yunnan for

US\$500. This has re-ignited traditional anti-Chinese sentiment [F941222].

## NO SECRET DEAL

On 23 January 1995 in Bangkok, Dr Michael Aris released the following statement from 1991 Nobel Peace laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi:

*It has always been the firm conviction of those working for democracy in Burma that it is only through meaningful dialogue between diverse political forces that we can achieve national reconciliation, which is the first and most vital requisite for a united and prosperous country. That the international community shares this view is evident from clause 5 of the General Assembly resolution of December 1994 which encourages the government of Burma to engage in "a substantive political dialogue with Aung San Suu Kyi and other political leaders, including representatives from ethnic groups, as the best means of promoting national reconciliation and the full and early restoration of democracy."*

*It was in full acceptance of this view and with genuine good will that I approached the meeting with members of the State Law and Order Restoration Council on 20 September and 28 October 1994. There have not been and there will not be any secret deals with regard either to my release or to any other issue. I adhere to the principle of accountability and consider myself at all times bound by the democratic duty to act in consultation with colleagues and to be guided by the aspirations of those engaged in the movement to establish a truly democratic political system in Burma. I remain dedicated to an active participation in this movement.*

Aung San Suu Kyi  
22 January 1995  
Rangoon, Burma

○

## CURFEW IN ARAKAN STATE

Following a violent clash between angry Buddhists and Muslims, SLORC imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew. The clash broke out two weeks ago in Sittwe when angry Buddhists burned down three mosques. It left at least three dead and was sparked by a private dispute between a Buddhist and a Muslim [N941227].

⇒

**Burma News:****ARAKAN VILLAGE TERRORIZED**

The Burmese military forces patrolling south of Buthidaung township entered Saubrang village on 18th September and took away a 25 year old man. He was later shot dead without trial. The same group of forces returned on 20th September and arrested two youths who later were inhumanely tortured and subsequently shot. There have been unconfirmed reports of more than 50 Rohingya Muslims being raped, tortured and killed in the area. Due to severe restriction of movement, victims of rape and torture cannot reach hospitals or private doctors in Buthidaung for treatment [MA9410].

**KARENNI CEASE-FIRE?**

The Karenni National Progressive Party led by Aung Than Lay is reported to have met with SLORC for the third time in Loikaw, in Nov.94. The KNPP is the sole remaining Karenni group that has not signed an agreement with SLORC. An agreement is believed to be imminent. The Shan State Nationalities Peoples' Liberation Organization led by Tha Kalei signed an agreement on 9 Oct. The Karenni Nationalities Peoples Liberation Front signed an agreement with SLORC on 27 Feb [BA].

**REFUGEE STATUS DENIED**

Japan has formally refused to grant refugee status to 11 Burmese dissidents. The Justice Ministry rejected the applications because they did not apply for refugee status within 60 days of entering Japan. Lawyer Shogo Watanabe said "Today's decision reflected the government's intention not to accept any more refugees." Earlier in November, Japan said that it was easing its restrictions on economic ties with Burma in light of recent talks between the junta and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi [JT941118].

**CANADIAN ENVOY SNUBBED**

Canadian ambassador to Burma, Manfred von Nostitz, was denied permission to see Nobel Peace laureate, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. He made the request when he presented his diplomatic credentials. Von Nostitz said he told SLORC Foreign Minister U Ohn Gyaw that relations between Burma and Canada cannot be put "on a politically productive plane" again until Daw Suu Kyi is freed and permitted to play a role in Burmese politics [G941229].

**KAYIN BUDDHIST GROUP**

KNU dissidents who precipitated the SLORC attack on Manerplaw have set up a Democratic Kayin Buddhist Organization. According to the KNU, the DKBO number about 400 men. SLORC, however, claims that the DKBO is 3,000 strong and was responsible for the attack on Manerplaw. "No government troops were involved," said the SLORC embassy in Indonesia. Thai military and KNU sources, however, say that as many as 10-15,000 SLORC troops were involved. The DKBO only served as guides [AFP950131,BA].

**MON CEASE-FIRE TALKS**

In Dec, the New Mon State Party resumed its cease-fire negotiations with SLORC. The talks were broken off by the Mon in Aug.94, because SLORC refused to discuss political issues [BA].

**HARD LABOUR FOR WOMEN**

Approximately 100 Burmese women were transferred to Pyinmana in upper Burma in early December. They are believed to have been arrested for prostitution in Rangoon, Moulmein and other cities. The women will be working in the Kyauk Htu hard labour camp [Irr941223].

**MALAYSIAN DEFENCE VISIT**

On 21-23 Nov, a delegation led by Chief of Malaysian Defence Forces, General Tan Sri Borhan Bin Haji Ahmad, visited Burma at the invitation of the Vice-Chairman of the SLORC, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, and Commander-in-Chief (Army) General Maung Aye [RR941124].

○

**CORRECTION**

Burma Alert Vol.5, No.12, December 1994 quoted the Far Eastern Economic Review in reporting that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was allowed to meet with other detained members of her party on 1 Nov at the Army Guest house in Rangoon. The meeting did not take place - Ed.

○

NEWS SOURCES THIS ISSUE: AFP = Agence France Presse, BA = Burma Alert, JT = Japan Times, F = Far Eastern Economic Review, G = The Gazette, Montreal, Irr = Irrawaddy/Burma Information Group, MA = Mirror of Arakan, N = The Nation, Bangkok, NCCUB = National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, RR = Radio Rangoon, and WPD = Working People's Daily, now New Light of Myanmar.

○

**International:****AUSTRALIAN REACTION**

"The Australian Government is deeply concerned by the ...offensive against ...the KNU and the fall of...Manerplaw. The Government regards these developments as a blow to the process of reconciliation... Military offensives will not resolve the essential political differences ... While (SLORC)... professed a belief in dialogue with its political opponents, the continued detention of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the offensive against Manerplaw cast serious doubt on ... (SLORC's) intentions. Australia ... calls on (SLORC) ...to cease all military action ... and to negotiate a complete military and political settlement ..."

**DR SEIN WIN'S SOLIDARITY**

"By attacking Manerplaw, SLORC has shown that it was deliberately misleading the international community... They (the Karen people) have been fighting injustices for the last 45 years and will continue... although we have lost Manerplaw... Our leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi... remains dedicated to the movement to establish a truly democratic political system... We too will stand steadfast and resolute with our ethnic brothers and will carry the battle to SLORC."

**KACHINS URGE PEACE**

"The Kachin Independence Organization views with alarm and concern, the current deterioration ...We firmly believe that ... any military or political pressure is a regression... Therefore, in the interest of peace and reconciliation, the KIO urges the SLORC to ... desist from the army's onslaught against the KNU immediately."

**THE WHITE HOUSE**

"The Administration is deeply concerned... These actions conflict starkly with the regime's stated intention to pursue policies of national reconciliation and are especially alarming in view of the regime's pattern of serious human rights abuses in the context of civil conflict... We urge the regime to avoid the path of confrontation and international isolation, to end the violence and to implement its repeated assurances that it will peacefully resolve its differences .... We also urge the regime to take other critical action that will demonstrate a genuine commitment to political reform in

Burma, in particular, the release of Aung San Suu Kyi and other prisoners..."

**NATIONAL LEAGUE**

"The National League for Democracy (Liberated Area) strongly condemns ... SLORC and appeals to all the ethnic brothers and the whole nation to be united in fighting against the military dictatorship...at this very critical moment."

**LAHU SUPPORT FOR K.N.U.**

"By attacking Manerplaw... SLORC has obviously shown that it has no intention of finding a ... settlement by political means.... (It is) inconsistent with the speech given by its Foreign Minister U Ohn Gyaw in Oct.94 at the UN General Assembly... The Overseas Lahu Development Organization ...strongly condemns SLORC..., calls for SLORC to stop its military offensive immediately, (and) strongly urges the UN, US and the international community to ...take concrete measures... in the implementation of ...UNGA resolutions..."

**U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT**

"The United States Government calls upon (SLORC)...to act in accordance with its own oft-stated intent to resolve its difficulties with ethnic minorities peacefully... There are two scenarios for a future relationship between the US and Burma: increased cooperation ... or continued and heightened isolation if progress is not forthcoming... We are evaluating how ... the current fighting might affect our relationship..."

**NGOs SPEAK OUT**

"We denounce the brutality of SLORC... We appeal to the Thai government to continue its generosity to those who have fled...We also urge that access to the displaced by humanitarian agencies be maintained... We ask the US government and the international community to request the UN Secretary General ... to immediately dispatch personnel to work towards a resolution to the conflict and to call upon appropriate international agencies to monitor the situation and ensure the protection and safety of the displaced."

Amnesty Intn'l/USA                      Open Society Inst  
Intn'l Federation for Human Rights/France  
Inst for Asian Democracy              Refugees Intn'l  
Intn'l Rescue Committee      World Church Service  
Jesuit Refugee Service      Maryknoll Justice & Peace  
Nonviolence Intn'l      US Committee for Refugees

**Speech:****BURMA TODAY**

Dr Sein Win, Prime Minister of the NCGUB, delivered a keynote speech on Burma at the inaugural meeting of the Forum for Democratic Leaders in the Asia Pacific (FDL-AP) in Seoul, Korea, on 2 December 1994. The FDL-AP was formed to support democracy in the Asia-Pacific region. Its three co-presidents are former President Corazon Aquino of the Philippines, former President Oscar Arias of Costa Rica, and former presidential candidate Kim Dae Jung of South Korea. Following are excerpts:

*The situation in Burma changed dramatically at the end of September when the generals met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi... Given these developments, everybody is expectant. Will the meetings lead to ... democracy in Burma? To try and answer this question, ...we need to first examine ... the problems confronting Burma... (They) can be analyzed from three different viewpoints: the ethnic peoples', the democracy movement's, and SLORC's viewpoint.*

*Burma is a multi-ethnic country. It's ethnic peoples occupy over half the land area and make up about 40% of the population. In 1947, (they) agreed to join ...Burma because General Aung San... promised them that they would have the same rights as the Burmans. However, (he) was assassinated and his promise was not fulfilled... Ethnic leaders tried to find a political solution .... But in 1962, General Ne Win seized power... For the ethnic peoples, military rule signalled the end of any hopes for a political solution. Therefore, from an ethnic point of view, the solution to Burma's problems lies in having equal rights, in having the ability to decide their own future and perhaps in a federal system of government.*

*From the point of view of the Burmese democracy movement, the solution to Burma's problems is equally straightforward. The military has been in power since 1962... Under the military's mismanagement, the civil war intensified, problems multiplied and Burma became one of the poorest nations in the world. Therefore, the military should step down. This sentiment was demonstrated in the 1988 democracy uprisings and the SLORC-organized 1990 general elections. Both these events clearly showed that the people of Burma had lost confidence in the military... Burma needs a government that can unite and rally the people; a government that is transparent and accountable; a government that is open to criticism and is willing to rectify its shortcomings; and a government that can attract the*

*best qualified people to re-build the country. In short, we need a government that is everything SLORC is not... Re-building Burma will be a long and difficult task but, if the military steps down now, we can at least start the process.*

*From the military's viewpoint, the ethnic peoples cannot be allowed to decide their own future because they might decide that they want to speak their own language instead of Burmese. According to the military, this would make national unity impossible to achieve. The military is also afraid that if everybody is allowed to speak their mind, the military might not be able to maintain discipline. Therefore, according to the generals, to prevent Burma from disintegrating, to achieve national unity and to retain Burma's sovereignty, the people must not be allowed to decide for themselves. The military's control must be maintained at all costs.*

*Therefore, it is clear that to find a solution to Burma's problems, all these viewpoints must be taken into consideration... Let us ... look at some of SLORC's initiatives and see if they meet the criteria.*

*SLORC's meetings with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi have been hailed as ... a dialogue. ...It is clear that SLORC intended to use them to influence the US ...and the UN ... She met twice with the generals ... (but) no one can verify that a dialogue has actually been started. We know Daw Aung San Suu Gyi's position and have complete confidence in her. However, ... we cannot say definitely whether or not these talks will benefit the ethnic people or the democracy movement. We do, however, know that the talks could benefit SLORC. If the UN were to soften its position based on SLORC's claims of a dialogue, SLORC will have gained time for at least another year. If the US also decides to accommodate SLORC, the military could gain not only time but also the financial resources it desperately needs. To date, the US has been a major obstacle to SLORC receiving financial assistance from the world community.*

*What about the National Convention? From the beginning, SLORC convened the Convention to nullify the results of the 1990 general elections and delay handing over power. Therefore, the Convention definitely does not address the desire of the people for an end to military rule... In fact, the proposed constitution will allow the Commander-in-Chief to legally seize power and appoint at least 33% of all legislators and administrators from the Senate down to the level of district councils. Given such a dominant military role, the Convention also fails*

**Burma Today** continued

to meet the requirement of Burma's ethnic people to determine their own future.

*If we cannot unreservedly endorse the first two initiatives, can we support the cease-fire negotiations? SLORC has named 13 groups as having negotiated a cease-fire... However, it should be emphasized that according to SLORC, all political questions must be addressed at the National Convention. Given the way the National Convention is proceeding, it is clear that the new constitution will not offer Burma's ethnic people the political solution they want. Neither do the cease-fires benefit the democracy movement because it is clear that SLORC is using the negotiations to separate the ethnic groups from the movement. Therefore, these recent developments, as they now stand, do not provide much hope for either the ethnic people of Burma or the democracy movement. The only group that stands to significantly benefit is SLORC. If SLORC persists in such self-serving actions, neither the United Nations, or this Forum for Democratic Leaders can be of much help in resolving the problem in Burma.*

*SLORC will be able to continue to survive for a while, but it will have to devote more and more of its scarce resources to maintaining the status quo. The problems SLORC is facing will multiply. If SLORC cannot expand its resources fast enough, a crisis point will be reached... This is inevitable and ... the crisis point is fast approaching. Any nation supporting SLORC now, will in the end lose out.*

*An alternate to this... is if SLORC can truly demonstrate that it is willing to compromise. If this were so, any number of solutions could be worked out. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has said publicly that she is willing to negotiate anything except her leaving Burma. The National Coalition Government which I head supports her position. Our ethnic allies in the National Democratic Front are also open to a negotiated political settlement... It is the duty of all responsible world leaders to help persuade the military ...that it must change... Rushing in to trade or invest in Burma and giving...more aid will only convince the generals that they can continue as before with impunity. The only way to convince the generals to change is if they are given deadlines and told what the consequence will be if they do not comply. This is not interfering in Burma's internal affairs. The people want the military out of government. Supporting the military against the wishes of the Burmese people is interference in Burma's internal affairs.*

**Release Aung San Suu Kyi!**

"I call on the international community to join me in urging the SLORC to immediately and unconditionally release Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners in Burma."

Jimmy Carter, January 20, 1995

**A Tribute to Suu Kyi**

by "Bakka", Daily Star, Bangladesh

21 October 1994

What do you think in that quiet room all day long without a soul to speak to? How you thrive on, I wonder, in that dark revolving world of yours? Yet a ray comes through the window, enlightening your face as you meditate.

Do you go back to the days when you were first hurt deep down inside? When you went back to your dying mother, did you think you would be the world's ideal figure of democracy and human rights?

You strode along with students, knowing what they wanted. The bullets of anger could never dent your shield of honesty and truth. You marched forward in the quest for honour and identity. Your admirable courage and feelings for the oppressed - that is what touches us most. Don't think you are alone. Out here, we are with you, the movement you started. Stay there. Be strong. You are our only source of inspiration.

As you fight inside, suppress all your pent up emotions. We out here are fighting for you. Yet two parts of you are alone out there in the world. There is a lonely man waiting for his wife's return. But don't worry. They have courage. They are with you. Just as you are with them. Just like the ray of light through your window - you are our ray of hope in this world.

**Let Us Unite!**

"The capture of Manerplaw... proved once again that (SLORC) has no intention of looking for a political solution... While SLORC... deserves every blame, these developments should also serve as a lesson - the failure to unite - especially... the Karens and the Shans, led to these unfortunate events. The Shan State Association (USA) sincerely hopes the democratic forces (will) take steps... to unite solidly against SLORC."

**Tourism:****Irrawaddy Journey**

Paul Strachan of Kiscadale Publishing in Scotland is offering a 15-day 'Reconnaissance Voyage' from Pagan to Bhamo on the Irrawaddy Princess, a three-deck Catamaran for US\$2,500 per person. The first voyage is planned for January 1995 with additional cruises in July/August. Other 'cultural' cruises up the Chindwin are also being contemplated. Strachan lived in Burma for 2 years in the mid-1980s and is the author of a book on the temples of Pagan. Strachan was one of the first people to alert the world about SLORC's forced relocation of the people in Pagan. Strachan's collaboration with SLORC, therefore, comes as a surprise to many. The European Friends of Burma have called for a boycott of his "Reconnaissance Voyage". Following are excerpts of correspondence between Strachan and Paul Copeland, a director of the Law Society of Upper Canada and a friend of the Burmese people:

Copeland - I have concerns that this type of tourism will help SLORC maintain their repressive regime... I urge you to refrain from promoting tourism in Burma until Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners are free.

Strachan - *(There) is no military or SLORC involvement, financial or otherwise in this venture. You cite Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, but she has often stated that Burmese people must work together... in rebuilding their country. The Irrawaddy Princess is a glowing example of this dream realised... The ship was entirely constructed in Burma with Burmese money and skills..... It seems to be unspeakably arrogant for us Westerners to deny the people of a despoiled third world country the means of rebuilding their nation. The last Ne Win regime maintained power through the implementation of poverty. Are you suggesting that SLORC's power base lies in prosperity? Does this mean that now that Burma is enjoying its first economic boom..., albeit within a undemocratic framework, the Burmese people are to be denied all the things we take for granted... imported refrigerators, medicines, motor cars and TVs?*

Copeland - My views on the desirability of tourism at this time come from... the Burmese community.... It is their view that it is the military and friends of the military who are mainly profiting from the tourism.... Until my friends from Burma change their views, I believe that it is important that international pressure... continue to be directed at SLORC to force them to free the people of Burma.

Paul Strachan can be contacted at Kiscadale Publications, Gartmore, Stirling, FK8 3RJ, Scotland, UK. Tel: 44 (1877) 382-776, Fax: 382-778.

**Passage:**

**SAO SAI LEK**, 54, Secretary-General of the Shan State Progressive Party, passed away on 6 Jan.95 at Homong. Born 2 July 1941 in Wan Nong Tom, Hsipaw State, Sai Lek joined the Shan State Independence Army in 1962. When the SSIA and the Shan National United Front merged to form the Shan State Army, he became an assistant squad commander. A good field commander, he rose through the ranks. As a major, he was a member of the SSA delegation to China in 1975. When the SSPP/SSA split in 1976 into a pro and anti Communist Party of Burma faction, Sai Lek joined the pro-CPB faction. He became Chief-of-Staff of the SSA under Chao Hso Noom in 1981. After Chao Hso Noom's death in 1984, Sai Lek assumed overall command. In 1986, Colonel Sai Lek became Secretary-General of the SSPP and Northern Area Commander of the multi-ethnic National Democratic Front. In 1987, after travelling to NDF headquarters in Manerplaw, Sai Lek began promoting Shan unity and tried to establish a united fighting force. In 1991, he participated in the conference in Homong where it was agreed that the Shan State should be run on a democratic multi-party system. He travelled again to Homong in late 1994 to pursue his goal of Shan unity but fell ill and, despite treatment, died. His loss will be keenly felt.

The "Burma Alert" is published monthly. Foreign investments and trade with Burma is monitored to provide data for the Burmese democracy movement. 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. 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. E-mail: yawng hwe@hookup.net

In 1994, 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. were received