

WOMEN SPEAK OUT  
FOR PEACE IN BURMA



**Project Maje**

July 1989

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Project Maje is an independent information project founded in 1986 and designed to encourage American awareness of the political situation in Burma, particularly the frontier war and related human rights, narcotics and environmental issues. This report was produced by the Project Director, Edith T. Mirante. The survey in "Voices" was conducted by mail during June 1989. All entries received are reproduced here, as received (one was re-typed, verbatim), in the order in which they were received by Project Maje. Some addresses were deleted for security reasons, and some respondents used pseudonyms. For further information on the frontier war and other Burma related issues, please contact Project Maje (14 Dartmouth Rd., Cranford NJ 07016 USA). Material used in this report is for non-profit, educational use only. Project Maje is grateful to Mika Rolly, human rights activist, for inspiration regarding Peace for Burma, and to W.T. for a contribution funding distribution of this report.



## INTRODUCTION

This report expresses women's hopes and opinions about peace in Burma. Although Burma has the image of a tranquil, serene land, in reality it has not known peace since World War II hit it in 1941. Now, with international attention at last directed to Burma by the urban uprising of August-September 1988, the possibility of a solution to the frontier war that followed World War II exists. The women participating in this report have examined that possibility from their personal perspectives, as observers, participants and victims of the war.

Burma's forty year frontier war has centered on ethnic conflict between the Burmese (Burman) ethnic group and others. About two thirds of the estimated 40 million population of Burma are ethnic Burmese, urban Chinese and Indian. The rest of the population consists of tribal peoples, and nationalities such as the Mon, Shan, and Arakanese, who are the heirs to civilizations that had their turn at dominance in Burma's past. The pattern of migration into Burma between the 6th and 9th Centuries A.D. led to extended conflict between rival ethnic groups. When the British colonists took Burma by force, annexing it to their Indian Empire in the 19th Century, the Burmese ethnic group was dominant in the center of the country. In the colonial structure, tribal groups such as the Karen, Kachin and Chin were often treated favorably. Shan and other frontier nationalities enjoyed a degree of autonomy and a Pax Britannica in which conflicts were settled by adjudication and mediation rather than warfare.

The Japanese invasion of 1941 brought modern warfare to Burma. A Burmese anti-colonial movement cooperated with the Japanese as a way of ridding the country of British overlords and Indian moneylenders who had rendered many Burmese landless. However, Imperial loyalties and abuse at the hands of Japanese invaders led many of the frontier nationalities to actively support the Allied cause. Tribal guerilla fighters in units such as the Chindits and Merrill's Marauders were crucial to the effort that eventually retook Burma from the Japanese. World War II devastated Burma completely. The fighting raged from one end of the country to the other, civilian casualties and displacement were massive, and communications and commercial infrastructure were left in ruins at the war's end in 1945.

World War II fueled hostilities between the Burmese and other ethnic groups. When Burma was granted independence from Britain after the war, frontier ethnic groups were assured of autonomy by the Panglong Agreement.<sup>1</sup> A parliamentary government was established, with a constitution that guaranteed freedom of speech, religion and assembly. Despite auspicious beginnings, problems immediately arose for the new government, which was headed by Prime Minister U Nu. Many Karen leaders had opposed independence from Britain, and the Karen had not been granted an autonomous area. Burmese massacres of Karen villagers were a spark for a Karen revolt in 1949. At the same time, Communist groups left the government and began to fight against it. Arakanese, Mon, and Pa-O forces also revolted, and Kachin rebels joined with the Karens.

1. Engineered by Aung San, Burma's independence hero, who was then assassinated in 1947. His daughter, Aung San Suu Kyi, is Burma's foremost opposition politician. As of this writing, she is under house arrest in Burma's capitol, Rangoon.

The rebellion took hold throughout the country, but General Ne Win built up the Burmese Army, and during 1950-1951 the Karen rebels were driven into the eastern mountains bordering Thailand, and the Communists were forced into the far northern mountains. In 1950, Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist) troops fled the Communist takeover of China to the Shan State of Burma, where they recruited more soldiers and traded in opium. Burmese military efforts to dislodge the KMT included attacks on tribal and Shan villages. By the late 1950s, Burma's rice based economy was in a shambles and insurgency (the hardline Maoist Burma Communist Party and anti-Communist ethnic nationalist rebels) was on the rise again. Prime Minister U Nu temporarily gave power to Ne Win, who set up a military government in order to quell the rebellions. Kachin and Shan forces then revolted. In 1960, U Nu won a large majority in elections, and made good on a promise to make Buddhism the state religion, which inspired further Karen insurrection (many of Burma's tribal people are Christian, most Burmese are Buddhist). Shan and Karenni groups proposed to secede from Burma's federation, a right granted in the Panglong Agreement. In 1962, Ne Win staged a coup d'etat, citing the need for national security. He has remained, in one capacity or another, the helmsman of Burma ever since. Ne Win suspended the constitution and instituted his "Burmese Way of Socialism", a Utopian mixture of Marxist theory and Buddhism, to "bring the masses to enlightenment." The economy was brought under state control and the frontier areas were placed under direct military government administration, cancelling their autonomy.

A new constitution was established in 1974, and Ne Win declared that "Our Union is just one homogenous whole."<sup>2</sup> Considerable unrest festered in Burma during the 1970s, including strikes and brutally suppressed student demonstrations, and a coup attempt. Burma maintained an isolationist foreign policy and remained uninvolved in the war in Indochina. It was by no means at peace during the 1970s, however, as the domestic insurgency continued. Burma's economy stagnated, but a "shadow economy" thrived as black market consumer goods were smuggled from neighboring countries and agricultural, mineral and forest products were illegally exported. This trade was largely controlled by rebel groups which maintained bases and smuggling routes along the borders. The opium trade was run along parallel lines, by warlords connected to international Chinese syndicates and often in collusion with Burmese military officials.

At the end of the 1980s, the sputtering grease fires of rebellion have congealed into a stalemated frontier war spread over more than 50% of the country. Rebel groups have been able to maintain camps, and even civil administration, schools and hospitals in several areas close to the borders (called "black areas" by the government), but more prevalent are the war zones contested by government and rebel forces ("gray" or "brown" areas). In these rural zones, civilians have been targeted by the Burmese Army as suspected or potential rebel sympathisers. There has been what Amnesty International termed "a consistent pattern of gross violations of human rights."<sup>3</sup> Abuse has been directed at ethnic minority villagers in order to drive them out of the country as refugees or to forcibly employ them for military purposes. The Burmese Army has relocated them to walled villages, looted, destroyed property and crops, tortured, and used civilians as slave labor and human mine detector

2. Burma, A Country Study, F. Bunge, 1983.

3. Amnesty International, Burma -- Extrajudicial Execution and Torture of Members of Ethnic Minorities, 1988.

The Burmese Army's tactical abuses have served to engender hatred that sends more recruits to the rebel cause, and some families now have had three generations fighting in the frontier war. It has also sent hundreds of thousands of refugees into neighboring countries seeking respite from the warfare. Insurgent groups have also abused civilians, but sporadically and rarely as part of overall tactics. Narcotics-involved warlord groups use forced recruitment and often terrorize villagers. Throughout the frontier zone, civilians are killed and injured in crossfire and by minefields.

Women have been victims of the war, and, increasingly, combatants as well. Traditionally, women of Burma's Buddhist ethnic groups (Burmese, Mon, Shan) have enjoyed the highest degree of equality in Asia. A strong legacy of female leadership in these groups (including the Mon warrior queen, Chama Devi) remains influential. On the government side, although women's membership in the ruling party has been less than 2%, and there are no women in combat roles in the Burmese Army, 77 year old Ne Win's favorite daughter, Sanda Win, is thought to be extremely influential. An Army major and doctor, she is said to be in control of the Defense Intelligence Service secret police. In the 1950s and 1960s, a Chinese aristocrat named Olive Yang ran an Army sponsored narcotics trade militia in the Shan State with great notoriety.

The Mahadevi of Yaungthwe, a Shan princess, was the wife of independent Burma's first President and a member of Parliament who championed Shan rights. After Ne Win's takeover, she organized and led the first Shan resistance groups. Louisa Benson, a Karen who had been a movie star in Burma, led Karen rebels in the 1960s. Lydia Min has been head of the Karens' Kawthoolei Women's Organization, and was a delegate to the conference that formed the resistance coalition called the Democratic Alliance of Burma. Other women of the frontiers have been important in educational, medical and human rights work.

Several insurgent groups, notably Shan, Kachin, and Communist forces, have had female soldiers. They were most often deployed as medical corps, radio operators, and ceremonial bodyguards, but sometimes distinguished themselves in combat as well. In 1985, the rebel New Mon State Party allowed female membership, and the women who joined the party demanded a combat role as well. Now at least 200 of the NMSP's estimated 3,000 troops are female, with the same risks and duties as their male counterparts. In 1988, the Karen National Liberation Army recruited its first female soldiers. An increased political and military participation is foreseen for women in most of the insurgent groups.

While the trend is for young women to shoulder rifles to fight in the war, the fact is that most women in the frontier war zone are still easy victims for violence. The Burmese Army has consistently used rape as a terror tactic, particularly in occupation of tribal villages, a strategy of humiliation and dominance that dates back to Japanese military practices in World War II. Female refugees in Thailand are exploited and frequently sold into forced prostitution. Women, including the weak and pregnant, have been used as ammunition porters and for other heavy labor by the Burmese Army. They are often deliberately marched in front of government troops as "human shields", as in this Karen woman's account: "Before we reached the fighting place, the soldiers made the four women go in front... so that the Karen soldiers, if they saw us, they wouldn't shoot at us because we are Karen."<sup>4</sup>

Thousands die each year in the frontier war. In March 1989 the Burmese government announced that 1,541 insurgents had been killed since March 1988 and 796 Burmese government troops had been killed.<sup>5</sup> This did not include civilian casualties, which easily equal the military casualties and may in fact exceed them. The rebels' stated reasons for fighting the Burmese government include: suppression of religion, language, culture; the imposition of a Socialist economic system; human rights violations by the Burmese Army; the right to secession granted in the Panglong Agreement; precolonial territorial claims; the perceived government intention to "exterminate" minority groups.

Burma exemplifies a pattern of conflict in which a power (in this case the central government) invades a weaker area (the frontier regions), committing abuses against the local population. This causes the local people in limited numbers (the young men) to take up arms against the invader; the resistance is met with heavier force by the invader; which causes the resistance to seek a source of arms (the black market); which allows the invader to justify itself because of the resistance's "criminality". The pattern of abuse eventually mobilizes most segments of the population into military resistance (old men, boys, women). The cycle of escalated violence usually continues until outside intervention occurs; either a neighbor's invasion of the insurgency-weakened country, or an attempt at international mediation.

After four decades of fighting, Burma's insurgent leadership has become entrenched. There have been few gains in territory in the past ten years, and few dramatic attacks on the central region of Burma known as "Burma proper", although a raid by Karenni commandos on a northern power station did cut electrical power to the central cities in November 1988. The rebels have tended to fight an essentially defensive war, protecting a waxing or waning blackmarket trade. The rebels receive no foreign aid, and there has been no progress in revolutionary terms as they depend on expensive black market arms purchases rather than capturing arms and territory from the government. Poor economic planning and a dearth of strategic creativity have weakened the rebel cause at crucial points. In-fighting among rebel groups has decreased in the 1980s with the increased viability of a coalition of ten ethnic-based forces called the National Democratic Front, but it still occurs with destructive effects.

Although the government's 170,000 troops outweigh the estimated 40,000 insurgents, the government's pursuit of the frontier war has been characterized by extreme strategic incompetence. Foreign military aid has been small scale (including diversion of anti-narcotics and relief aid to military purposes). The Burmese Army's heavy-handed counterinsurgency tactics have alienated the frontier peoples en masse. It is felt that for all its toughness and battle experience, the Burmese Army is incapable of winning the war. In recent months it has resorted to human wave assaults and ill-directed artillery barrages in its offensive against Karen mountain bases along the Thai border, expending troops and expensive materiel just to gain a few abandoned camps. It has also repeatedly encroached on Thai soil to stage attacks against Karen positions, leading to conflict with Thai troops at a time when the Thai government was actually trying to support the Burmese government.

5. Bangkok Post, March 29, 1989, "Four Die as Karens Shell Town".

During the Summer of 1988, a series of killings of student demonstrators by Burmese police and soldiers in the cities inspired an uprising that spread throughout Burma proper. Ne Win formally resigned from the government in July 1988, replaced by two members of his ruling circle in close succession, as millions marched in the streets demanding a return to democracy. On September 18, General Saw Maung took the reins in an insiders' "coup d'etat", citing the need for law and order. Ne Win is believed to remain in charge behind the scenes. Martial law was enforced, and demonstrators were targeted by the Burmese Army with the same ruthlessness it had displayed in the frontier war zone. Two months of uprising produced thousands of unarmed civilians killed by government troops in Rangoon and other cities. Following the September crack-down, thousands of students and other urban dissidents journeyed to the frontiers to join up with the rebels. This continued a brain drain that had long brought many of "the best and the brightest" of the ethnic minorities to the jungles to serve as officers and teachers in rebel camps. The newly arrived students pledged to take up arms against the government. Endemic malaria and other jungle hardships decreased their ranks, but an armed dissident group, the All Burma Students' Democratic Front, remains based on the Thai border, and Burmese students have fought alongside the other ethnic groups battling government onslaughts on Karen territory during 1989. The new consciousness that people from all ethnic groups, including most Burmese, are fighting a common enemy for the same reason, to end the military dictatorship, may eventually ameliorate the ethnic tension that has risen from conflict since 1941.

When Saw Maung emerged as junta leader, promising elections after the country was brought back to law and order, observers predicted that his army would run out of ammunition by the year's end.<sup>6</sup> Burma, impoverished by decades of state mismanagement, had a 5.3 billion dollar foreign debt and foreign exchange reserves were exhausted. Saw Maung, with Ne Win ever evident in the background, found a solution in Burma's natural resources. He sold trade concessions to foreign buyers, mainly for logging and fishing rights. Although most countries, including the major donors -- Japan<sup>7</sup> and West Germany--had cut off aid to Burma in protest of the killing of pro-democracy demonstrators, there were many eager takers for what Saw Maung offered. In December 1988, Thailand's Army Commander, General Chaovalit Yongchaiyut, visited Burma. He arranged for repatriation of Burmese students (who had asked for refuge in Thailand) and after amicable meetings with Saw Maung, obtained lucrative timber and fishing concessions for Thai firms with military connections. Thailand's forests had been logged out to the point of no return and disastrous floods in November 1988 had led the Thai government to ban all logging nationwide. A rush to make timber deals with formerly isolationist Burma followed, along with rampant overfishing of Burma's coastal waters by Thai fleets. U Nu, now an opposition leader, commented, "Our forests will disappear. There will be no more fish in our waters." <sup>8</sup>

6. London Times, October 9, 1988, "Burma Plots its Revenge on the Army".

7. Japan resumed aid in February 1989.

8. Nation (Bangkok), February 8, 1989, "Saw Maung Sells Burma to Survive".

In order to clear the way between Burma and Thailand for trade in teak wood and other commodities, including narcotics, the 1989 offensive known as the "Teak War" ensued. Burmese troops put Karen bases and villages under heavy artillery attack. Burma sold concessions to Thai companies for timber located in Karen rebel territory, and used the payments to purchase arms (reportedly from Singapore and Pakistan) to use against the Karens and to maintain order in the cities. The Thai companies paid the Karen rebels to get the wood out, and the Karens used that money to buy arms to fight off the Burmese Army. The "Teak War" has resulted in deforestation of teak groves and tropical monsoon-forest, destruction of wildlife, and increased civilian casualties and displacement as tribal people are trapped in the crossfire.

This report focuses on the voices of women because, as Asiaweek (July 15, 1989) stated, "For the women, whether on the frontline or fleeing it, the war has irrevocably changed their lives." Involved as they are, their voices have been too rarely heard internationally. In the women's commentaries of this report, one finds the weariness of those who have lived their lives in the war, and also the eagerness of those who have just begun to fight it. When interviewed last year,

Mon women soldiers answered the question, "How long do you expect the war to last?" with replies of from two to three years. This war was also fought by their fathers, and in some cases, their grandfathers. Each generation in turn has expected it to last for two or three years. Could people of the West or Japan imagine still fighting World War II in 1989?

There has been no serious attempt to mediate the frontier war. A few gestures at negotiation in the past have failed, due to lack of good faith on the part of the government (ambushes of negotiating delegations, for instance) and factionalism on the part of the rebel groups. The government has never shown any interest in a negotiated settlement, and its only concession has been to amnesty rebel leaders who surrender. In recent years, the National Democratic Front has repeatedly expressed willingness to negotiate, with a goal of a federal system for Burma with autonomous frontier areas. The NDF's activities in resolving conflicts among its own member groups has indicated that they may be competent negotiators if the government ever agrees to peace talks. In May 1989, the 10,000 strong Burma Communist Party's leadership was overthrown by its tribal, Shan and Chinese troops. It is probable that the ex-BCP members will largely throw in their lot with the NDF, adding considerably to its negotiating clout.

In May 1989, the Thai government announced that it would sponsor peace talks between the Burmese government and the rebels. The Democratic Alliance of Burma, a loose coalition including the NDF, Burmese and Moslem groups, agreed to participate in the Thai sponsored talks. Saw Maung rejected the offer, insisting that the Burmese Army would fight the rebels "until they are eliminated."<sup>9</sup> Given its involvement in timber deals it was doubtful that the Thai government would have been a usefully objective mediator. Thailand has long been entangled in all aspects of the border trade and would perhaps have manipulated negotiations to its own advantage. Sponsorship by the Association of South East Asian Nations (of which Thailand is a member, and Burma is not) might have been a more effective alternative.

9. Bangkok Post, May 26, 1989, "Rangoon Rejects Offer for Peace Talks with Rebels".



Numerous observers and participants feel that there is no possibility whatsoever of negotiations while Ne Win is still on the scene. His dogged pursuit of the frontier war is considered personal and indeed pathological almost the *raison d'être* for his entire political life. Nonetheless, equally hardline regimes have ended up at the negotiating table, given enough international pressure, as seen in recent African developments. The fears also exist, justifiedly, that if negotiations were to come about they would only result in power-mongering warlords "carving up Burma" amongst themselves and Ne Win. Still, for people living in the frontier war zone, the best hope for their decent survival is a withdrawal of the government troops. Any peace talks that could bring that about for any period of time might be welcome there.

There is little doubt that a democratically elected government of Burma would make ending the frontier war a high priority. The economic drain on the country is horrendous. Burma is estimated to currently devote of 50% of its G.N.P. to the military, which may be the highest such percentage in the world. The war has made the Shan State the world's largest producer of opium, the raw material for heroin, because chaos and military occupation prevent normal tribal agriculture. Human resources are wasted on a huge scale as natural resources are destroyed. Ethnic divisions which would normally be minor have been magnified into race hatred by the war. Large segments of the population which normally would have been healthy, educated contributors to society have been degraded into a bare-subsistence existence.

The frontier war zone has few roads, few vehicles. People have become beasts of burden, whether carrying ammunition under duress for the Burmese Army or packing trade goods back and forth between Burma and neighboring countries to make a dangerous living. A Karen nurse recalled an incident from a past monsoon season: "I was walking back from a Karen village on the Burma side, with the American doctor from the hospital. There were many porters with loads strapped on their backs, struggling through the mud. We saw one of them slip in the mud. His load was so heavy that he couldn't get up again by himself. The doctor went to help him, but he was so weighed down, the doctor -- who was a big strong man -- couldn't lift him. We had to undo the pack first. When he got up, the porter put the muddy pack on again. I think he was coming down with fever. We walked along with him, slowly, until we reached Three Pagodas and joined the other porters. I couldn't get it out of my mind. The poor man down in the mud like an insect. That night I told my father about it. And my father just said 'That's what war does to people.' "

## WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR PEACE IN BURMA:

1. Boycott goods sold by the Burmese regime, and demand that your government impose a trade embargo on Burma, particularly on commodities such as timber and seafood which are products of environmental devastation. U.S. Senate Bill 822 is an example of legislation for that purpose. Do not buy products made of Burmese teak wood (or teak wood labelled "Thailand", it is actually from Burma). Do not go to Burma for tourism, the foreign exchange from the tours is used by the regime to buy weapons.

Opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has stressed that all foreign countries should suspend all trade and economic relations with the Burmese junta "until they keep their promise" to hold free and fair elections. A trade boycott will not only send a message about human rights, it will deprive the regime of money needed for arms and ammunition with which to prolong the war. Investigate companies in your country which have dealt with the Burmese regime, and urge them to stop doing so. Find out if your government or companies in your country are sending arms, or goods that can be diverted for military purposes, to Burma, and if they are, pressure them to stop doing so. Examples include the West German company Fritz Werner's resumed supply of industrial equipment, and the Japanese program providing Hino truck components which have been used in Burmese Army vehicles.

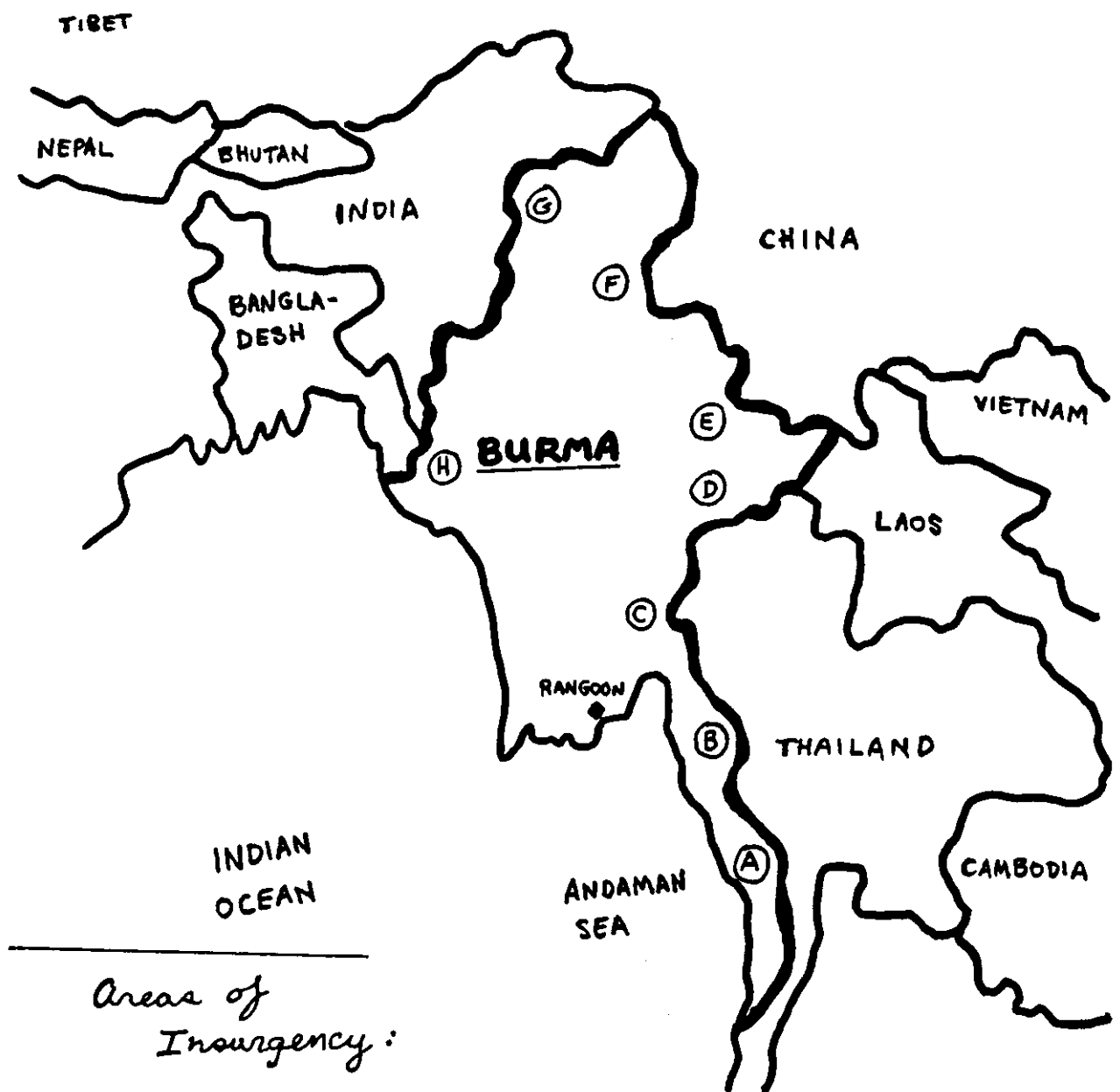
2. Contact your government. Write to representatives (Senators, Congresspersons, Members of Parliament), urging them to support legislation embargoing Burmese goods, to make efforts to mediate the war, and to provide relief aid to civilian refugees. Contact your State Department or Foreign Ministry about these issues, and your country's United Nations delegation.

3. Groups doing emergency relief work for civilian refugees welcome your contributions of money and goods (such as medicine, clothing and school supplies). The Burma Coordinating Group is a consortium of Non-Governmental Organizations in Thailand (from several countries) which provide ongoing aid to civilian refugees from the Burma frontier war. Religious and secular NGOs are represented in the BRG. For information, contact Burma Coordinating Group, c/o Therese M. Caouette, Jesuit Refugee Service Asia-Pacific, 88/1 Soi Luecha 1, Phaholyothin Rd., Bangkok 10400, Thailand. Addresses for Tribal Refugee Welfare and Burmese Relief Centre are provided in the "Voices" section of this report.

4. Join human rights organizations and encourage their Burma related efforts. Some suggested groups include: Amnesty International (1 Easton Rd., London WC1X 8DJ, U.K. or 322 8th Ave., New York NY 10001 USA), Survival International (310 Edgware Rd., London W2 1DY U.K. or 2121 Decatur Place, NW, Washington D.C. 20008 USA), Cultural Survival (11 Divinity Ave., Cambridge MA 02138 USA), The Anti-Slavery Society (180 Brixton Rd., London SWP 68AT, U.K.), Buddhist Peace Fellowship (218 Liverpool Rd., London N1 U.K. or P.O. Box 4650, Berkeley CA 94704 USA). It is suggested that these and other groups should seek to encourage the International Committee for the Red Cross, UNICEF and the UNHCR to find ways to operate relief efforts in the actual war zone of Burma.

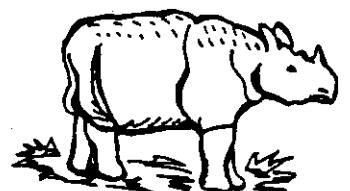
5. Keep informed about Burma and write to your local and national news media calling attention to the war in Burma. If you see news stories about Burma, photocopy them and send them to government representatives, organizations and other contacts.

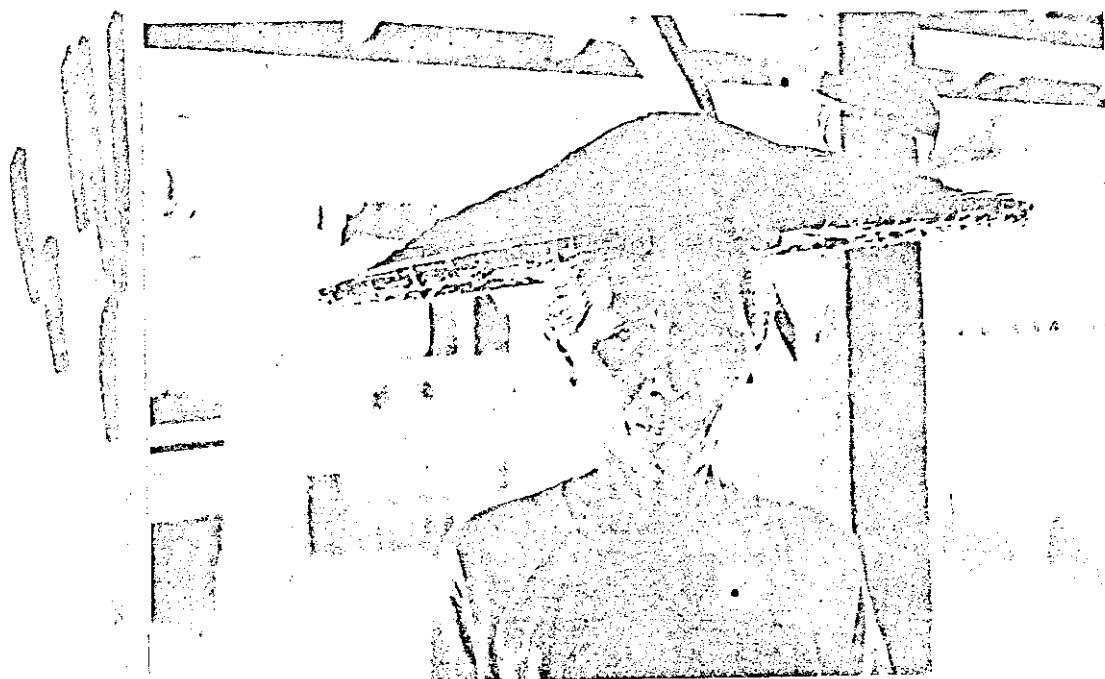
6. Urge your friends, colleagues, family, students, teachers, to take the above actions for peace in Burma.



*Areas of  
Insurgency :*

- A. Mon, Karen
- B. Karen, Burmese
- C. Karen, Karenni, Pa-O, others
- D. Shan, Wa, Lahu, KMT
- E. Shan, Wa (ex-BCP)
- F. Kachin
- G. Naga
- H. Arakanese





MIRANTE '88



MIRANTE '88

## VOICES

a written survey  
conducted in  
June 1989

Name Deni Gross Nationality American  
Profession homemaker/mother Organization (if any) Amnesty International  
title/rank/position (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address 15 Springhill Estates, R.D. #2, Honeybrook, PA 19344 U.S.A.  
=====

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

PEACE FOR THEIR BABIES

The bulldozers loom like predators  
Ready to devour the last stand of trees.  
She has to try one more time  
To make them understand,  
Her babies call this forest home.

Halfway around the world,  
The sun bakes the parched, cracked dirt,  
She patiently waits with her wooden bowl,  
A three-year-old crying in her lap.  
Soon his stomach won't hurt anymore,  
If only the trucks can get through.

Gunshots ring outside the hut.  
They could be miles away -  
Or just over the hill.  
She hustles the children into the night blackness  
And to an uncertain safety.

Woes, wars, and rumors of wars!  
Is it any wonder?  
These women have no ears for wars  
Above their babies' cries.



Name MRS C.V. ALLMARK Nationality AUSTRALIAN  
Profession HOUSEWIFE/SECY. Organization (if any) TRIBAL REFUGEE WELFARE I  
title/rank/position (if any) SECRETARY S.E. ASIA.  
Address 35 TANGMERE WAY, BALGA WESTERN AUSTRALIA 6061  
=====

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

The Frontier War must end. The war against ethnic minorities in Burma by the Ne Win/Saw Maung (S.L.O.R.C.) regime must end.

For too long our sisters have suffered the atrocities in this ethnic war. Our sisters have suffered rape, torture and murder and there are some who have suffered as porters for the Burma Army. Our sisters want to live in peace just like us in Australia.

We also see so many of our children caught up in drugs, drugs from the Golden Triangle. American helicopters and 2.4.D and money to stop the drugs is a waste of time and money. Only PEACE can stop the drug trade. The Civil War in Burma must stop.

Forty years of fighting for freedom and democracy, right to free elections and a political system that respects all races, their culture and their freedom to worship must be respected.

The only thing that is stopping PEACE is the Ne Win/Saw Maung regime who wants to stay in power at the expense of thousands of people from Burma.

To bring the regime down to its senses, all aid and trade must be stopped, once the regime has lost all support and has no funds, it will be forced to negotiate for peace. The United Nations, backed by other nations who believe in peace and democracy and not on the almighty dollar should be made to mediate and bring peace to Burma so that she may bloom again like the lotus of the East.

As a woman, I am tired of reading and hearing of the killings against freedom fighters and peaceful demonstrators for peace. Down with the brutal, dictator regime of Burma. We women want PEACE - NOW!

*C Allmark*  
(Mrs C.V. Allmark)

Name DEBORAH A. PETERS Nationality BURMESE  
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Address 174 Ravenswood Drive, Nollamara, W. A. 6061.

=====

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

As a Burmese woman in exile, I would like to add my say to what is happening in Burma right now.

My life in Burma was short, but memories are long. My country of birth did not recognize the rights of its ethnic people and therefore did not recognize the rights of its own ethnic minority (The Burmans).

Today we hear the Burmese students are being killed by their own Army, which bears me out. My role today is that of Refugee Education Co-Ordinator of the Tribal refugee Welfare in S. E. Asia.

I am trying to send educational books to the schools that are situated in the Refugee Camp areas and if possible to those who would like to continue to learn over the border in Burma.

There are schools there as well as the students who are on the frontline who is fighting with their new found allies the other ethnic minorities, the Karen, Karenni, Mons, and others more. I have been given a request to help them to supply their " JUNGLE UNIVERSITY " with text books from Australia.

We may help them till the desired result is achieved, but in the mean time, death lurks around the corner for them.

Any Doctors reading this, I ask you to please help in any way you can, for they would like Medical Books, Medicines and most of all the knowledge that you care what is happening to them. They would also like any teaching aids of models use for demonstrating medical points to other students.

At the moment they are relying on recently qualified vets for treating the human patients.

May we see some qualified Doctors to help them in this.

Thank you.



DEBORAH A. PETERS.

Name DR. Charlotte Nationality BRITISH  
Profession DOCTOR Organization (if any) International Medical Relief  
title/rank/position (if any)   
Address Higherbarton, Marlborough, Nr Kingsbridge  
===== DEVON  
UK.

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

Peace, is that too much to hope for the people of Burma?

This forgotten corner of Asia has been laid waste by war and economic repression. All the world sees is a week of dazzlingly beautiful monuments to an era that was; a land locked time and a people who are amazingly friendly and craving for western tokens. What no one sees is the misery of broken families split by the war's need for young people to kill each other. Villages resettled in guarded camps, crops and houses destroyed. Men conscripted and forced to march across mined lands. Children with limbs blown off because they played hide and seek outside their village in the jungle. Students and refugees dying like flies of malaria because they have no resistance and inadequate funds to purchase the simple life saving drugs.

Do we allow this to continue or do we speak out in the world for this silent people?



Name M/s Corinna E. Allmark Nationality Australian  
Profession Housewife Organization (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
title/rank/position (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address 6/71 Tendring Way, Girrawheen W.A. 6064  
=====

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

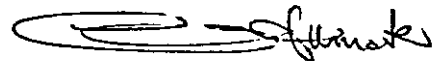
Whenever I am asked from where I've come from, I ask myself the same question. I'm ashamed to say I'm Burmese, so hopefully my European ancestry can make me proud of being part of a civilization that shows freedom, peace, human rights, humanitarian and respect for one another - ---- it spells DEMOCRACY.

The Burmese Civil War is an embarrassment which has been going on for forty long years! Who suffers??? Women and children --- people with no right to their own destiny and life is cheap, so cheap to the Ne Win Saw Maung (S.L.O.R.C.) regime.

When will the small minority of military egotistical, money hungry power mongers called MAN ever going to listen to the cries of us women and children? DAMN ALL WHO makes others suffer to gain their own ends.

Children shackled together and buried in pits, women raped and bamboo poles put through their bodies, used as porters and mine detectors, when is it going to end??

If that's the heritage my son's going to get and learn about, he will be my first and last child I am going to bring into this world.



(Corinna E. Allmark)

Name JO VALLENTINE Nationality AUSTRALIAN  
Profession POLITICIAN Organization (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
title/rank/position (if any) SENATOR  
Address PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA. A.C.T. 2601. AUSTRALIA.  
=====

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

JUNE 30<sup>th</sup> 1989

WOMEN SPEAK OUT FOR PEACE IN BURMA.

A SUBMISSION FROM JO VALLENTINE, INDEPENDENT SENATOR FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT, FROM WESTERN AUSTRALIA, SINCE JULY 1985.

There are two main problems associated with the conflict on the frontier  
\* in the international community, primarily because no great power interests are involved. The second, is that the Burmese Government has shown no interest in using a third party or mediation to achieve a settlement.

I would suggest that the best way to proceed is an international campaign to make known what is happening in the area concerned, followed by pressure on the Burmese Government to use the good offices of a Third Party to reach a settlement, much as a settlement has been reached - using the United Nations - in Afghanistan and Namibia, or through the mediation of Zaire, in the Angolan Civil War this month. Other examples include the All Africa Council of Churches in the Southern Sudan some years ago, although sadly the settlement did not last ; the arbitration of the Pope in the Beagle Channel islands dispute between Argentina and Chile in 1982 ; and the League of Nations in the Aland Islands dispute between Sweden and Finland after the First World War.

It is particularly important to involve Thailand in this process, and possibly India, Bangladesh, Laos and China.

I am aware of the fact that one of the other main obstacles is the lack of unity between some of the groups in conflict with the government in Rangoon, but from outside, I cannot pass judgement or intervene. There is also the role of the drug trade which is a major factor but that should be considered in the context of developing alternative cash crops and a peace settlement.

*Yours sincerely,  
Jo Valentine*

\* of Burma ; one is that little is known about it

Name MRS. MARIP KAW Nationality KACHIN, BURMA  
Profession BUSINESS WOMAN Organization (if any) HUMANRIGHTS COMMITTEE, BURMA  
title/rank/position (if any) MEMBER (non Burman Nationalities  
Address CHIANGMAI, THAILAND.

=====

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

27.6.1989

In the settlement of peace in Burma my Idea is the 40 year long civil war is the main cause for Burma's problem. In order to achieve Internal peace the civil war should be brought to an end. As far as the frontier is concerned, there should have understanding between the Indigeneous ethnic minorities and The Rangoon Regime. The frontier should be ended through a political process. Burma was granted it's independence by The British in 1948. Since then civil war broke out and various groups of ethnic minorities have been waging arm-revolutions in the country. The people of Burma could see no benefit of freedom. Burma's existant governments could not put the civil war into an end. It was only extended and spreaded throughout the country like fire. Demonstrations have been taking places several times in the cities. The peoples showed their desire through peaceful maners. However, they were brutally Oppressed by the government. They were given deaf ears by the government. Last year, unpresently, the population a large participated a general strike and cried for democracy. But, eventually military junta shamelessly committed massacre and the peaceful demonstration was invain. So that the present the People never trust the military junta and any opposition group as well. The people lost there tolerance and confidence on the oppositions. Their only desire is to put up their problem unanimously to The United Nation. Therefore, the entire population of Burma are just looking forward to the U.N's helping hand to settle a lasting peace in Burma. Thank You.

Faithfully  
(Marip Kaw)

Name Mrs. Marip LU Nationality KACHIN, BURMA  
Profession School Teacher Organization (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
title/rank/position (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address CHIANGMAI, THAILAND.

=====

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

Date... 27. 6. 1989.

My name is Marip Lu. I was graduated in Rangoon University in 1974, with a Bachelor Degree of Geography. Soon after my graduation I became a school teacher. I worked in a State High School in Myitkyina, Kachin State, up to last year general strike.

Through my past experienced as a government service woman I have seen clearly that how the Rangoon Military was deteriorated the country. I believe every Burma watcher may also see the same scene I do. The long time Suffering peoples of Burma are very argently wanting to be freed from the yoke of the military regime.

So, my sincere feeling is, to get true and lasting peace in Burma, THE UNITED NATION shoud tackle the problem as soon as possible. Thank You.

Faithfully

  
(Marip Lu)

Name Ian Nelson Nationality Australian  
Profession Home Duties Organization (if any) President of Nth Beach  
title/rank/position (if any) President World Vision International  
Address 78 Allinson Drive Club

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR Hi Edith let me introduce myself, my name is Ian. STOP WAR PLEASE MEN STOP fighting against EACH OTHER. It will be only the children and your wives who will suffer. Your children will go up hating each other and when both Parents are killed tragically, how can you leave other strangers to raise your children and they could fall into the wrong hands. I care too much for my family, so I pray that our Nation will not go to war, also for the stability of the government. So my Prayer is for your Nation to stop WAR & I pray for PEACE. THE WOMAN also suffer when they lose their love ones. I love children and I do not want to see the killed & suffer anymore, so Please stop fighting each other. God loves you & so do I.  
Love  
JANelson.

Name PHOEBE KLYSZ Nationality AUSTRALIAN  
Profession FLORIST Organization (if any) WORLD VISION  
title/rank/position (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address 28 FIRCROFT WAY HAMERSLEY W. AUSTRALIA  
=====6832=====

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

I agree that a just settlement to the  
Burma frontier war is long over-due  
I & many others are hoping & praying  
for peace, so that all Karen people  
can return to their home-land.

yours sincerely  
P. W. Klysz.

Name E.L. LONE Nationality Karen  
Profession \_\_\_\_\_ Organization (if any) K.N.U.  
title/rank/position (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
=====

PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

Dear Edith,

I'm sending you what I have written. I am  
sorry I cannot write well. I don't know what is the  
best to write. I hope you can choose some part  
of my writing.

In haste,  
Esther

P.S. please correct my mistakes.

[Ms. Lone's essay is included on following pages  
in its entirety]

As a human being and a peace loving Karen woman I now venture to present my feeling and ideas on the subject of Peace in Burma - Ending the Frontier War.

My husband's involvement in 1974 uprising which occurred in Rangoon brought us to the Karen Revolutionary areas, branded by the Burmese Military Government as the black area. I'd been a city Karen woman and never had known the lives of the Karen people in the Revolutionary areas. It is no wonder that the Karen people in cities or towns could never have known the lives of Karen people in the jungle. The Burmese Military Government strictly cut the connection of these two groups of Karen people.

Our Karen leaders posted my husband as the head of the district Education Department and at the same time they asked me to help teaching the children in the school. I started the school in 1976 with 30 children and two teachers included myself. Mostly all the children came from the revolutionists' families. The war between the Karen and the Burmese Military Government is growing worse, and worse each year. Today there are 610 students with 24 teachers and two office staffs in my school, and about 70% of the students are the children who came from the frontier villages where fighting frequently occurred. The Burmese Military Government branded this area as the Brown area. For them, the Karen people from the black and brown areas are their preys. The Burmese soldiers have been holding the order from the government that says they must torture and killed the Karen people in the brown areas. And thousands and thousands of Karen had been already tortured and killed.

My life was totally changed in this jungle. My ambitious was not to be a teacher. But I've learned to be a teacher and already been a teacher more than a decade. Now my sympathy and love for them is overflowing. I love to teach these innocent children how to become peace loving human being.

E. L. Lone



I've recorded<sup>\*</sup> background history of every students. 24% of these students lost one of their parents. 18% of them are orphans. Whenever the Burmese soldiers enter a Karen village they tortured and killed all the Karen men they'd seen and raped the women before killing them. They even raped the pregnant women. They took whatever they like and destroyed the things they can not carry away.

The Burmese Military Government's efforts to annihilate the Karen is stronger since they<sup>used</sup> the tactic of attacking the Karen with the "Four cut operation". These four cuts are cutting our lines for supplying provisions; cutting the contact between the revolutionaries; cutting financial income and resources and cutting the heads from the Karen people. To make the four cuts operation successful the Burmese military Government is using strong suppressive measures. When the Burmese troops enter a village they first shoot the villagers who tried to escape. Then they arrested villagers and made false accusations on them. After that they tortured and killed them. They destroy the fields of crops planted by the villagers and eat their grain and livestock. They captured villagers and made them to carry heavy loads as porters for the Burmese soldiers. They even force the pregnant women to be porters.

The children of my school who came from the brown area had seen all these things with their own eyes. They have had bitter experiences with the Burmese troops. This war has really planted hatred in the hearts of the innocent children. How can I teach them to become peace loving human beings. So I would very much like the Burmese military Government to end this cruel war. To end the war it is totally depending on the Burmese military Government.

The Karen are much more than a national minority. We are a nation with a population not less than 7 million and we have all the essential qualities of a nation. But because of this war we were cut off from all progress, civilisation and the rest of the world, and we were gradually reduced to backward hill tribes or minority group. The Karen are human beings in this wonderful world. By nature, Karen are simple; quiet; unassuming and peace loving people. We do not want to kill or to be killed. We hate war. But we have been coerced to fight for our very existence and survival.

When we compare two totally different things, there is a Burmese saying, "it is totally different like oil and water", the Burmese military Government received large amounts of foreign aid, including military aid from many countries while the Karen Government had to stand on its own feet and fight back without aid of any kind from any other country. Therefore to stop this bitter war it all depends on the Burmese military Government.

A few years ago the Battalion Commander of our district asked me to admit 80 young soldiers into my school, who were too young and not eligible to become soldiers yet. Their ages were between 8 to 17. They were all from the brown area. I collected each of their background history. Most of them came from peasant families. They have seen all the killings, lootings and

raping with their eyes. These children are too young to suffer the untold miseries at the hands of the Burmese military Government. They are not mature yet. They have only one thing in their minds. They wanted revenge. Conditions were so unbearable that these children wanted to take up guns and fight back the Burmese troops. If the war is still going on, I will have to admit more children like these young soldiers. I will have more orphans in my school. It is too painful for me to think about their future.

The Burmese military Government not only have practised the tactics of annihilation, absorption and assimilation upon the Karen but also upon the other nationalities such as Kachin, Karenni, Lahd, Mon, Pa-O, Pa-laung, Shan, Wa and Arakanese. If the Frontier war ends all the ethnic races in Burma will have their respective independent state and everyone in Burma will surely become peace loving human beings and make the world more beautiful.

75% of the children in my school have never been to Burma towns or Thai cities. These children never seen a train or areoplane in their lives. They are human beings in this World. If the war still goes on I am sure they will never know what other children in this world can enjoy in their lives.

Life in this malaria infected area is very hard for the children. Every child has been attacked by malaria. Many have already died from malaria and other serious illnesses. Lack of food and medicine so the children cannot avoid illnesses. How can they enjoy life when sickness knocks at their door all the time.

Thus, I beg all the human rights organizations, human rights activists to draw an attention to this case and urge the Burmese military Government to end the Frontier war and bring peace to Burma.

E.L. Lone

Name AMANDA LEIGH Nationality BRITISH  
 Profession TEACHER Organization (if any) -  
 title/rank/position (if any) -  
 Address -

# PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

I am a Western woman married to a Burmese rebel. My husband is an ethnic Burman, but is struggling alongside the ethnic minority rebels against the military dictatorship for democracy and human rights. He, like all the minority rebels, and all the Burmans taking refuge in the frontier areas, are prepared to sacrifice their lives for their cause, and will never give up their struggle.

My husband's camp is now being bombarded daily with over a hundred mortar shells by the Burmese Army. Their attack has so far been unsuccessful, but if they take the camp, my husband will just move to another jungle area and continue the struggle from there, as he has been doing for the last 20 years.

In other words, all the Burmese Army military attacks are totally futile. They can never "wipe out" the rebels as they claim. The military regime is selling off all the country's natural resources to pay for senseless destruction.

The only hope for an end to the war is for all foreign countries to stop trading with Burma. Only then will the military regime not have enough money to buy arms, and they will be forced to concede to the rebels' demands for democracy and human rights.



Some of the Burmese students taking refuge in Karen territory. Their camp is now under threat of attack by the Burmese Army.

2

Name Myint Thin Nationality Karenian  
Profession House's Wife Organization (if any) -  
title/rank/position (if any) -  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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#### PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

To develop of a country's economic and social condition, peace is the most important fundamental. To day we the people who are living in Burma we need peace to restore the country which was collapsed and destroyed by the Burmese military regime. Burma has become the poorest country in the world, because most all the Burmese budget had spent in military operation in killing and destruction of nation. Still along Chinese and Thai's border Burmese military regime increasing launches its military operation against the minority peoples, capture lots of civilians and force them as porters. People are neglect of their farm work besides they were killed without compensation. Along the borders thousands and thousands of civilians had left their native fled to other countries and lived in displaced person.

Saw Maung and his military regime claim that they will wipe out insurgents within two years, but it is impossible in the field. As the Burmese military launching serious its operation the more people are getting killings and the country plunged in misery. We would like to request the developed and industrilised countries pull harder pressure on Burmese military regime by stoping completely all aid to them and force them to solve the problem in the means of politic. Civilians are living under the misery of civil war for more than fourty years, so that we are tired of it, and now we need peace to restore our nation. We want democracy for every one as well as equality for every nation, so that we could achieve peace and prospectrity.

25

Name Mi Chan Nationality Mon  
Profession Farmer Organization (if any) Nil  
title/rank/position (if any) Nil  
Address ~~Mya Maung~~, Ye Township Mon State, Burma.  
=====

#### PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

My name is Mi Chan. I have learnt only in primary school. ~~I~~ I was brought up at ~~Mya Maung~~ village in Ye Township. We earn our lives by growing paddy. Government army arrive at our village sometimes. They treat us very badly because they accuse us that we are connected with revolutionary forces. They arrested every young man and force them to be porters. They use the young men as mine cleaners in front of their troops. They make a lot troubles to young women and commit rape. I would like to tell about my bitter experiences from the civil war. One of my husband's legs was amputated after he had stepped on a land mine when he was forced to carry ammunitions of Government troops three years ago. My younger brother was drawn and dead when his boat, which carried some soldiers of Government, was ambushed last year. Last two years, all houses and paddy barns were burnt down when the fighting between Government and Revolutionary forces took place.

Sometimes Revolutionary forces ~~arr~~ arrive in our village. They do not do any harms to us. they treat us very well. Anything they wanted <sup>give</sup> they/its value. They only give us political speeches about their struggling for equal right and self-determination. It is right there is no equal right and the ethnic groups lost their right of self-determination. The Government do not recognize their equal right and self-determination. The Government follows the policy of elimination of all minority groups by forces. I do not believe that the fighting could bring the peace to Burma. Even the Government have already launched a forty years old long civil war, it could <sup>not</sup> meet its goal, yet. I deeply believe that only negotiation could bring the true peace to Burma.

So we would like to request all the good will people of the world to bring the peace to Burma by persuading the Saw Maung Government to throw away its stupid policy and to sit down face ~~to~~ to face with the Revolutionary forces for true Peace.

25

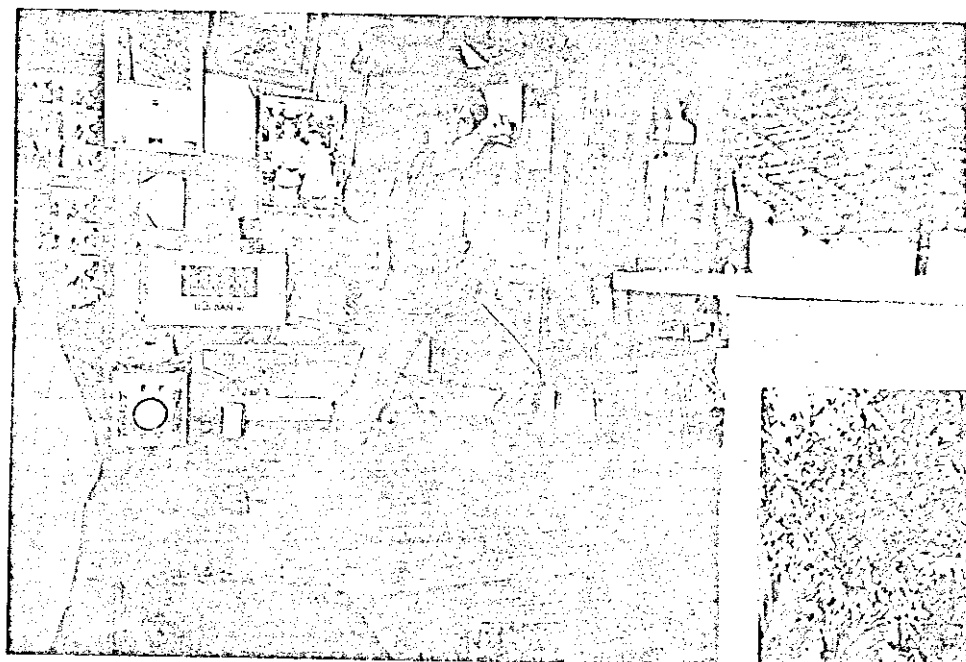
Name MI CHN MA Nationality MON  
Profession \_\_\_\_\_ Organization (if any) WOMEN UNIT, M.N.O.L.A  
title/rank/position (if any) \_\_\_\_\_ (CMN NATIONAL LIBERAT  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ ARMY).

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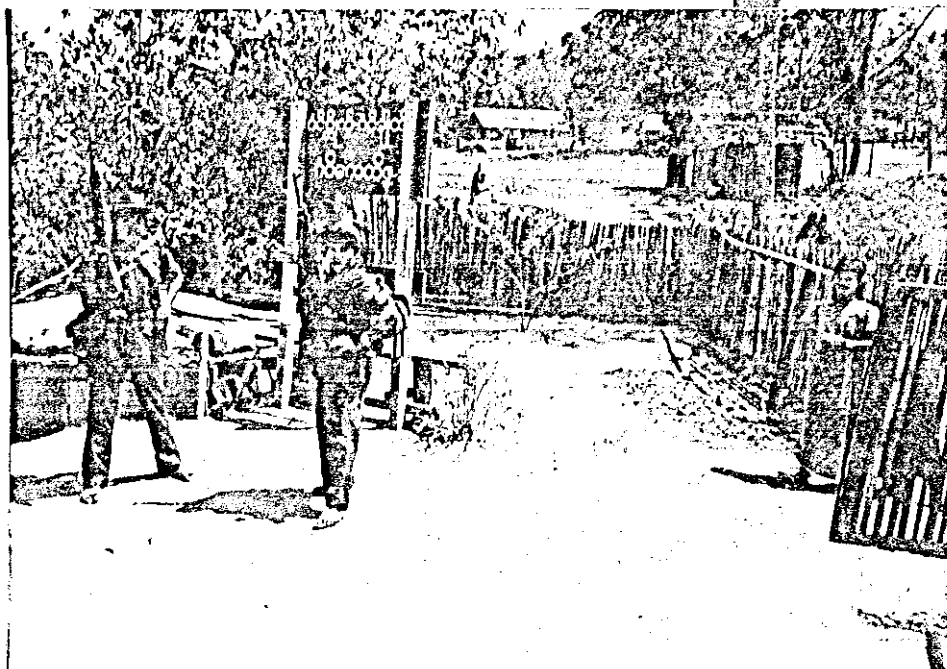
#### PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

The civil war in our country broke out since 1948. Now I am 25 years old and the civil war had broken out earlier than 25 years before I came into human being. Once our country was one of the richest countries in Southeast Asia. But due to the civil war among <sup>us</sup> and the policy of the government, our country has become one of the ~~poor~~ least developed country in the world.

In Fact, we don't like the civil war in Burma exist any longer. But we don't believe peace-talk with the present military junta can take place in this near future as military junta is claiming to crush insurgency completely by means of war. So the best way to bring peace into Burma is to win the present military junta by means of war, too. even then we gain more democratic rights and we can develop our country, to be able to defeat the military junta completely, we come to realize that we must fight hand in hand with the people. Now Except a handful of military, or almost all of the people in our country are against this military junta. So the chances to be able to conquer them is more greater than ever.



photographs of  
Mon women soldiers  
enclosed with survey  
page by Mi Ohn Ma





NAME\_\_\_ MI CHAN MON      Nationality ---MON  
Profession \_\_\_ TEACHER      Organization \_\_\_ PRIMARY SCHOOL, ~~MON~~ VILLAGE,  
YE TOWNSHIP.

title/rank/position(if any) \_\_\_ PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER.

Address\_

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#### PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

I was born in 1966, and brought up in a small village named ~~MON~~ -in YE Township, about 270 miles away in the south from Rangoon, capital city of Burma. My parents earn their living as farmers.

The civil war was going on since I was young. The following is some of my experience.

Ne Win Government's troops. often enter into our village. Sometime they come across with MON revolutionary forces and skirmishes occur. MON soldiers always make their way out from the village for fear that the clash would cause danger to the villagers. From time to time the Ne Win troops accuse that our villagers are insurgent's sympathizers and those healthy and strong are ~~arrested~~ arrested and they have to serve as porters. These porters are always loaded with heavy artillery shells going in front of the troops to be used as bullet- cover and mine - sweepers. In the village vegetables , pig , chicken etc. are taken by these troops without paying any charges to very often. Many village-girls are sexually assaulted some being raped and some being killed. Some Valuables and belongings of the villages are seldom robbed off. We, all the villagers are always under hardship during the stay of the troops in our village. This is the general situation of our village. From my childhood and up to this date , this situation is not yet changing.

In Summer 1987, my father was arrested by a troop from 61 st. Battalion, stationed in Ye. They took him to the jungle. About 2 months later he was sent back home. But he was severely wounded in his right hand. He told us that he had to carry heavy 81 mm mortar shells and to go in front of the troops in the jungle. Unlucky, in an ambush by the MON soldiers he was shot in the right hand. The Ne Win's troop took him to a near by village and told him to stay with villagers. They gave him completely nothing not any food, money. We immediately took him to the hospital where his right hand was unavoidably chopped off. My father became a disabled man. He can no longer work as usual. More hardship besets on our family.

3

Again in April 1989 , Ne Win's troop about 40 strong (from 61 st battalion) came to our village ~~to burn houses, including my house~~ to seize the surplus paddy from farmers. Before entering into village they come across with some of MON soldiers and they exchanged gun-fire for a few moment . No casualty on both sides. But Ne Win's troop took it as a secret plot by the villagers and they were extremely angry. So the result was the burning down of the village! 15 houses, including my house were burnt down to ashes. All the house-owners were forced to see the burning houses with bare hands. Not any aid from the local government authorities was rushed to the fire-victims. In stead, Kind Villagers built up small huts for the homeless peoples and some necessities such as food, cloth and medicine were provided. Untill now, we are leading a poor life in a small hut, but thanks to our Kind Villagers! .

Our rural area of Ye township is listed as "Black area" by the local government authorities. They regard it as insurgent's aera. So, Ne Win's troop treat us as insurgent's family or relatives.

In our aera skirmishes, ambushes, clashes etc. between the Ne Win's troop and the MON libration army are very common. The plight of the villagers become greater and greater ----.

I, may be my fellow villagers too, pray for peace before the sacred Buddha Image every day. I hope that one day our God would bless us!. But this is only my wishful thinking. Inreality, Peace can be at hand only when the civil war is over.

I am of opinion that the war can only be over by means of peace negotiation. Insurgents, as Government termed it, are in reality national freedom fighters. They are fighting for their right. So through peace negotiation the best settlement could be achieved. So, the present Saw Maung Government should imitiate the call for peace parley. We, all the people in Burma should stage peaceful demonstration and voice out for realization of PEACE NEGOTIATION! We cordially call to all of the democracy-loving peoples all over the world for "HELP"

37

Name THET THET WIN Nationality BURMESE  
Profession CIVIL ENGINEER Organization (if any) ALL BURMA STUDENTS'  
title/rank/position (if any) COMMITTEE MEMBER DEMOCRATIC FRONT  
Address SHAN STATE, BURMA  
=====

**PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR**

THE ONLY WAY TO GET PEACE IN BURMA IS BY FIGHTING.  
IN TAUNGGYI LAST YEAR I ORGANISED A GROUP TO DEMONSTRATE  
PEACEFULLY FOR DEMOCRACY; BUT IT WAS NO USE. ON THE DAY  
AFTER THE SEPTEMBER 18 COUP IN TAUNGGYI SOLDIERS SHOT  
AND KILLED ABOUT 40 PEOPLE. SO I FLED TO THE JUNGLE.  
I HAVE BEEN LIVING IN THE JUNGLE SINCE THEN, ORGANISING  
RESISTANCE TO THE MILITARY REGIME.

Name Ms Marti Patel Nationality Australian  
Profession Ph.D. candidate Organization (if any) Macquarie University, Australia  
title/rank/position (if any) Co-ordinator of BRC (Burmese Relief Centre)  
Address P.O.Box 48, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai 50002, Thailand  
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#### PEACE IN BURMA - ENDING THE FRONTIER WAR

I came to Thailand in June 1988 as an anthropology student. Soon after, following the coup in Burma last September, I became involved with the refugees who fled to the Thai-Burmese border. This involvement crystallized into an NGO called the Burmese Relief Centre (BRC). BRC was formed as a reaction to the inhumane conditions Burmese students and civilians were forced to live in due to civil war in their country. These people arrived in the most desperate condition I have ever experienced. Overnight, we learned to cope with severe health and social circumstances. Besides the lack of food, shelter and clothing, we were faced with serious health disorders such as malnutrition, malaria, dysentery and skin diseases.

During the period as a volunteer on the border, I visited the student border camps on several occasions. I have had direct contact with several pro-democracy supporters as well as porters who escaped from the Burmese military army. I have also met several of the ethnic minority members, such as the Karens, who have been fighting for their basic rights for over forty years. These minority groups have been providing sanctuary to the students.

It is extremely difficult to express the feelings that have accumulated since my involvement in the Burmese frontier war. In brief, I find it hideous. BRC is assisting people who are fighting for their basic human rights, the very rights we often take for granted in the West. Such rights include the access to free and fair democratic elections, education, health services, staple foods, housing, employment - in short - basic subsistence needs.

For the past two months, the Burmese army has been ruthlessly destroying all of our work in the attempt to completely wipe out both the students and the Karens. "In recent battles at Mawpokay, Klerday and Maetawaw, Rangoon troops have adopted heavy shelling tactics, often shooting over 300 shells a day. With each shell costing about US\$ 100, and with the outcome of each battle simply being the occupation of an empty camp, it is clear that the military regime think that public money is theirs for the taking" (DAWN, ABSDF newsletter May 1989:6). The aim of this destruction, in my view, is blatantly selfish in the regime's desire to conduct cross-border trade, particularly in Burmese teak. The fact that Burma has sold almost a million tons of timber to Thailand is evidence of this. Not only are the teak forests and hence environment at stake, but peoples lives are being needlessly sacrificed in the process.

The consequences of the frontier war are yet to be felt on the other side of the border. In November 1988, hundreds of people died in Thailand as a result of deforestation. What will be the outcome in the oncoming years? Up until now, Thailand has boasted of control over malaria and other diseases. Now these diseases are rapidly spreading across the border in a fresh new wave.

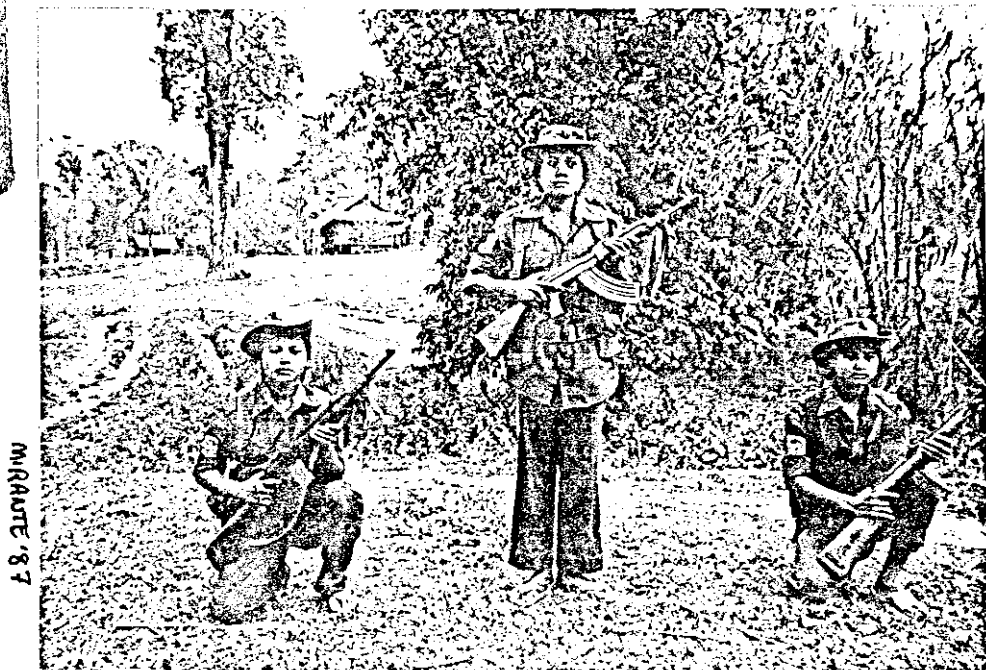
As a citizen of a democratic country, I find it very difficult to tolerate such inhumane conditions just to feed the coffers of the Burmese military regime. As an anthropologist I am watching the genocide of an ethnic minority. The concerned citizens of the world have a major role to play and must help to put an end to this war. Without natural resources and without people, what are we?

MIRANTE '88



## IMAGES

*meeting your sisters of the frontier  
face to face*



MIRANTE '87



Karen church choir,  
Tenasserim, 1984

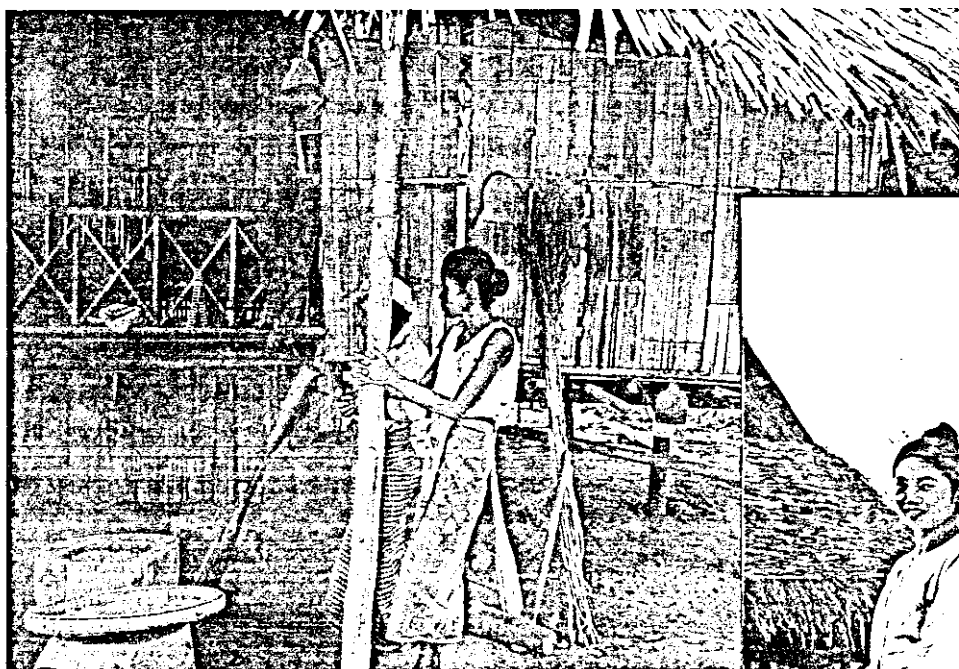


near the Mon seacoast, 1988



Shan State, 1987

MIRANTE



Mon refugees,  
Southern Tenasserim, 1988



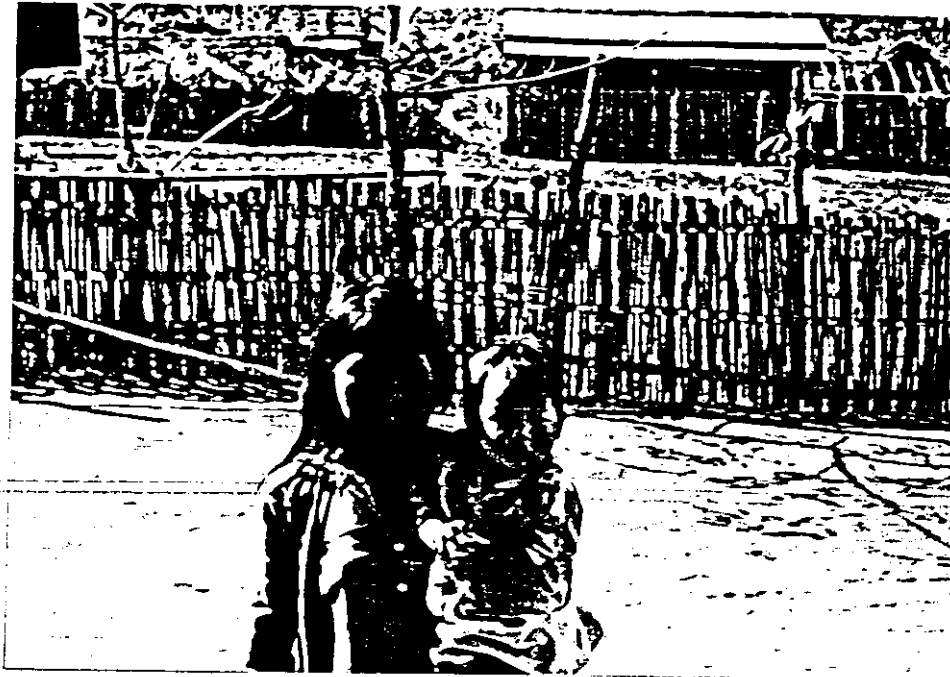
Shan villagers, 1988

MIRANTE



Skaw Ler Taw addressing meeting of Kawthoolei Women's Organization,  
Wangkha refugee camp, 1985

Wa mother & child,  
KMT Village, Mae Aw  
1987



Yunnanese shopkeeper  
Three Pagodas Pass,  
1985

Mon schoolteacher  
and her brother,  
Southern  
Tenasserim, 1988





MIRANTE '87



## IN THE PRESS

*and suggested reading*



# A Silent Revolution, Fought by Unsung Warriors

By BARBARA CROSSETTE

Special to The New York Times

THREE PAGODAS PASS, Burma, June 23 — It would be easy to make light of the Mon revolution.

A silent struggle, devoid of violent glamour, it does not figure on solidarity posters in the West; there are no videos or folk songs or fund-raisers.

The commanding general of the patchwork Mon National Liberation Army — barely 3,000 men and women holding out for regional autonomy in Burma — laughs softly as if at an absurdity when asked if he gets any help from abroad. His troops hitch rides to Bangkok to buy arms.

A young combatant, leading visitors to the general's jungle headquarters a few miles from this Mon-controlled border town, plops through mud and underbrush in laceless old shoes too large for his slender feet.

When the visitors reach the camp, the general, Taw Mon, is busy — conferring with monks. The field hospital across the clearing relies on bullock carts for ambulances.

But then, while everybody waits for the general to finish his religious discourse, the young soldiers begin to talk about what has brought them into the ranks of a cause older than they are. It is the restoration of some self-government to the Mons of Lower Burma, descendants of a once-mighty and cultured Southeast Asian empire that predated the rule of ethnic Burman kings and brought Buddhism to a land now hallmarked by pagodas.

## Other Minorities Rebel

While most of the four million ethnic Mon in Burma have opted to live with Rangoon since independence in 1948, others — perhaps 100,000, including children — support an armed resistance, living in small villages like this in areas beyond the central Government's control.

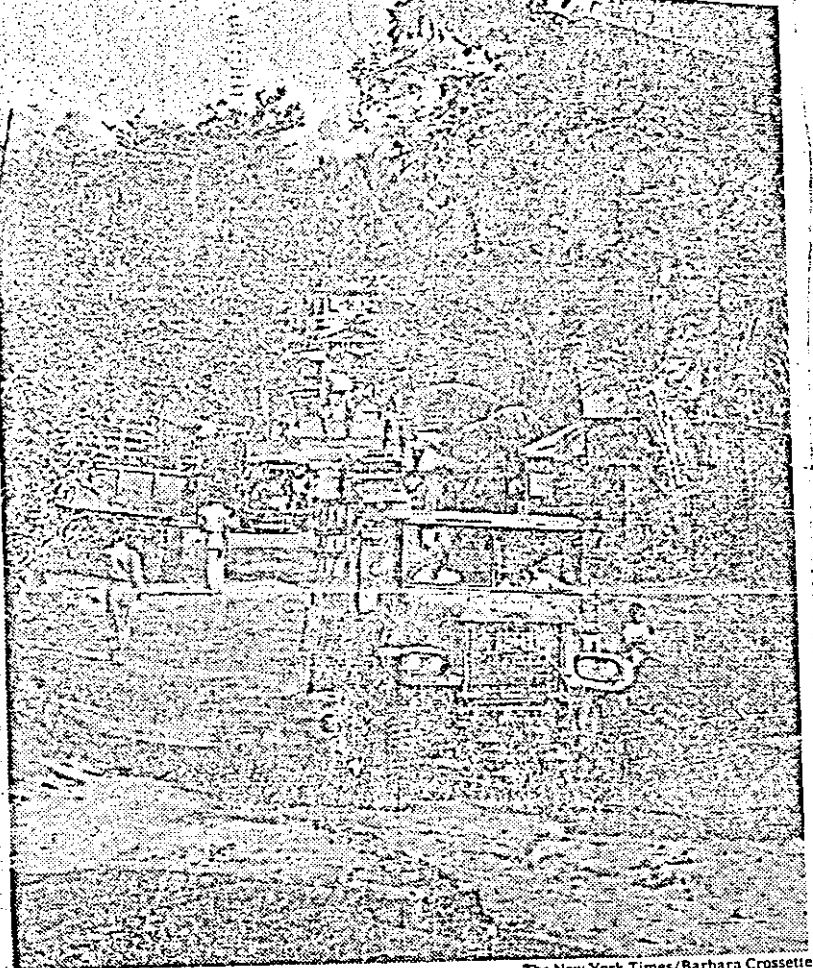
The depth of commitment among young Mon men and women who join the rebel army — many born after Gen. Ne Win, an ethnic Burman, seized power in 1962 and put an end to further discussion of regional autonomy — is echoed all around the country's borders by other ethnic minorities whose battles go on against all odds.

"There are at least nine ethnic regions like ours," a young Mon guerrilla from the port of Moulmein said. "And we are all Burma's colonies."

Later, Gen. Taw Mon said: "Our aim is to free our Mon from Burman chauvinism. Students are coming to join us. We have plenty of patriotic men. Only our arms are not enough."

## A Circle of Rebellions

Karen, Karenni, Kachin, Shan, Wa, Chin, Arakanese and other ethnic minorities and tribes have circled Burma with rebellions, giving the Ne



The New York Times/Barbara Crossette

Smugglers' trucks in Three Pagodas Pass, Burma, a Mon rebel stronghold. Smugglers are allowed to pass through Burma's rebel-held border areas, hauling away natural resources and weakening an already battered economy. The Mons collect a 5 percent "tax" on contraband.

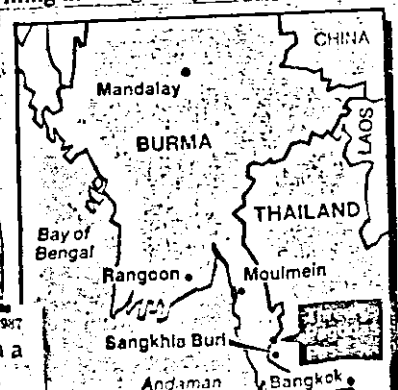
Win Government its most persistent military problems. They also further weaken an already battered economy, as smugglers pass through these rebel-held border territories, hauling away in trucks and carts and on the backs of porters, Burma's gems, cattle, rubber, timber and, farther north, its opium and heroin.

The fortunes of the ethnic armies rise and fall, but the smuggling goes on. Trade routes through Karen territory, cut by Rangoon's troops in recent winter offensives, for example, have been replaced by new channels through the Mon state, bringing the guerrillas and their families here in the village of Three Pagodas Pass a sudden windfall. They have begun to collect a 5 percent "tax" on contraband.

Across the border, local Thais have found the new routes even more lucrative, to judge by the substantial

teak houses and a small resort rising along the mountainous road to Sangkhlaburi.

Increasingly, Burma's guerrilla generals and their political counterparts say they want a chance to talk with the Ne Win Government, not about independence, but about a measure of autonomy for traditional homelands. In return, they could offer safe borders and some hope of stemming the illegal export flow.



The New York Times, June 30, 1987

The Mon rebel leader is based in a camp near Three Pagodas Pass.

# Four Decades of Insurgency in Burma

By LUCY KOMISAR

It's dry season now in Burma, and the fighting between government troops and minority tribes once again is increasing in the country's jungles and mountains. Last month, Rangoon radio reported a 7,000-man government offensive against the Karennis in their mineral-rich homeland across from the northeast corner of Thailand. The radio also blamed the Karens, further south along the border, for a bomb explosion that killed eight and injured 33 on the Mandalay-Rangoon train.

It is 40 years since Feb. 11, 1948, when the Karens staged nationwide demonstrations demanding an independent Karen state to safeguard their culture and religion. That was only one month after the British colony gained its independence. A year later, they took up arms. After four decades, the war, which now involves about a dozen other tribes as well as a force led by the Burmese Communist Party, is at a stalemate.

At Karen headquarters at Manerplaw, a collection of wooden houses and training fields on the Moi River bordering Thailand, the Karen's political secretary said, "I think we'll win, because in a war like this, if the guerrillas don't lose, then that means they win."

## Stalemate Isn't Victory

But unlike in Afghanistan, there is no pressure on the government to settle. Stalemate is not victory to the young Karen at Manerplaw who expressed dismay at not being able to go to college or to the soldier who sat in a bare clinic brooding over a foot lost to a land mine.

Ethnic minorities represent at least a third of Burma's 37 million people, and the rebels claim to control 30% of the largely rural country. They probably hold at least a quarter of it, and the government has made 45% of the territory a militarized zone, off limits to foreigners.

Although Rangoon appeared content for years to allow the tribes to exist in their enclaves, making forays against them in the dry season and retreating when the rains began, in recent years the conflict has heated up as the Burmese pushed harder into rebel areas. About four years ago, the government, which spends a third of its budget on the military, instituted "the four cuts" policy: to cut the resistance off from income, from popular support, from lines of communication, and from its leaders.

Rangoon has had some military successes, most recently last August when its troops temporarily captured the headquarters of the Kachins, a tribe in northern Burma.

Against government forces of 170,000, the ten-member National Democratic Front, set up by the tribes in 1976, deploys about 20,000 regular troops. Two years ago, responding to increased attacks by Rangoon, the NDF began closer cooperation through three regional commands that occasionally combine forces during operations. It also made a tactical alliance with the Burmese Communist Party, a group led by ethnic Burmans that controls some 10,000 troops, most of them tribal minorities.

Still, the Karens and their allies can't match Burmese military strength and have no chance of overthrowing Rangoon. The rebels lack arms, ammunition and other supplies. At Manerplaw, young recruits learned to march barefoot or lie on the grass taking aim with wooden rifles. They have no heavy artillery, no anti-aircraft weapons.

The Karens can put a bomb on a train; January's was not the first such attack. But they haven't built an urban underground to carry out sabotage or other activities. Bo Mya, the sixty-year-old Karen

leader, said urban Karens were afraid to get involved in the movement. "If they are discovered doing anti-government activities," he said, "they are put into solitary cells, and their relatives are tortured and killed."

As in most guerrilla wars, most victims have been civilians. The effort to cut off the rebels from popular support has led to a policy that refugees say involves murdering villagers, looting and flattening their homes, and gathering survivors in strategic hamlets. Males are forced to carry the army's supplies and function as human mine detectors.

At a Karen refugee camp in Thailand, a



39-year-old man squatted in front of a wood shack surrounded by children. He said the Burmese had come to his village and shot into his house, killing his sister and wounding a brother in the leg. He fled.

Yana, 58 years old, arrived at the camp last spring. "I was a porter," he said, and pantomimed how he was bent double almost crawling through the jungle. "One of my friends carried bullets. He fell down, and they kicked him and then stabbed him with a bayonet. It left me shaken. Some porters who tried to escape, when caught their fate is unthinkable. They were tortured in many ways."

Currently, over 20,000 Karens live in refugee camps on the Thai side of the border, and Karen officials say three times as many have sought shelter in rebel areas. Robert Tuja, a Kachin who is NDF foreign secretary, said that since last summer, about 10,000 Kachins have fled to Kachin villages inside China.

## Move to Thailand

The tribes can't defend their villages against government assaults, but Burma can't defeat the insurgents either, because it can't occupy their land. An American woman teaching English and the Bible in a Karen village, said, "Last March, the Karens heard Burmese troops were coming. So they moved (the contents of) every house, every hut and also the big saw mill machines into Thailand. The Burmese came in and burned most of the village, except for the church and school. But they stayed only a few days, and then the people came back and started again."

By the early 1970s, the Karens were pushed from areas they traditionally inhabited close to Rangoon in central Burma to a 600-mile-long thin, barely penetrable, and sparsely settled stretch of mountains, rivers, and jungle between the Andaman Sea and Thailand.

The Karens, in effect, have their independent state, with elected bodies functioning on village, district and national levels. They run schools, medical clinics, lumber operations, "customs gates" for tax smugglers, and prisons.

There is some war weariness—a women's organization was reportedly set up to boost morale—but there are also new recruits from Burma's universities and from villages that have suffered government assaults.

Still, the Karens recognize that they

need a political solution. But the Rangoon government appears uninterested. There have been only three attempts at negotiations since the war began, the last with the Kachins in 1981. Rangoon demanded surrender.

Burma could be subject to outside pressures to reach a settlement. It is in desperate economic shape and depends on foreign aid, primarily from Japan and West Germany. Burma's external debt, mostly soft loans from Japan and West Germany, is \$3.4 billion, and payments account for three-quarters of export earnings. Foreign donors could press Rangoon for a political settlement to cut its massive military

The population is completely subjugated and thoroughly intimidated. And they have guns." He said the guerrillas war had been based on feelings of racial oppression.

Still, the rebels are hopeful that the pressure of the war and the failure of the economy could eventually shake up the government. In the wooden house of Karen district governor of Mergui-Tavoy, a copy of an old Bangkok Post was open to a story headlined, "No Win: Mistakes been made." The Burmese leader in Mergui-Tavoy had called on the Central Committee of his Burma Socialist Program Party to analyze the weaknesses of the government and party over the past 25 years as necessary, to propose constitutional legislative changes.

"There is very big poverty at this time, so he has to change his constitution," Sawthathi, 41, a civil engineer who is Karen district agricultural official. "He has to change one thing, the state economic system, but we think that will not fulfill the need. He also has to finish the civil war."

David sat on the plank steps of Manerplaw guest house and tried to be optimistic. "Because the country is in an economic crisis," he said, "they will seek peace because of internal sure."

He saw a chance for victory through revolt in the army, where he said unhappiness is widespread, especially among officers who suffer on the front line. Those with government posts got worse. "The younger officers are better educated and they may get organized," he said. "The officer corps has a division that is away to fight Ne Win and the BSPP. Then it will be like in the Philippines."

Maybe. Maybe, as he said, the Karens will win just for having held on. But now, at Karen headquarters or in a village, one does not smell victory.

Lucy Komisar, a New York journalist who specializes in foreign affairs, recently visited both the government and rebel zones of Burma.

## Christian Allies?

Another possible ally are the world's Christians. Many of the Karens and Kachins—and all their leaders—are Christians, their forebears converted by American and British missionaries. Foreign missionaries were expelled from Burma in 1963, and the tribes say that Rangoon doesn't allow them to publish Bibles or other religious materials and prevents religious teachers from traveling around the country.

But Karen Prime Minister Ba Thin, 64, a genial former accountant, said the Karens had approached Christian agencies, but were told they didn't want to get mixed up in political activities. However, the refugees in Thailand subsist on aid from Christian groups, because Thailand has refused to accord them refugee status.

Although Burma's dictatorship is unpopular among ethnic Burmans, an internal uprising in support of the minorities' cause is extremely unlikely. Since General Ne Win took power in a 1962 coup, there have been only a handful of public protests, and all were dealt with harshly. Last fall's demonetization of 80% of the nation's currency, a move believed aimed at black marketeers but which wiped out the savings of ordinary people, provoked protests only by students who had been caught in the middle of exams without money to buy food.

David, 52, a former chemist who is the Karen's political secretary, said: "There is a lot of dissatisfaction among the people, but the people in towns and cities want a quick victory. They cannot stand a protracted war with long deprivation in the jungle. Class consciousness is not strong, and democratic tradition in Burma is weak."

# Burma's New Guerrillas

## The student-rebel link

For a boy of 15, Win Bo has seen much gunfire. During last month's bloody coup in Burma, he was part of a crowd of demonstrators in the city of Moulmein when government troops began shooting. Unhurt, he fled for the jungle on the Thai-Burmese border with 62 other activists and Buddhist monks. Along the way, they met more soldiers, who began shooting, too; one from their group was killed and 16 injured. After four days of walking, Win Bo and his fellow refugees reached the frontier outpost of Thay Baw Bo, a stronghold of ethnic-minority rebels known as the Karens. There he received a shirt and a packet of laundry detergent, and entered the guerrilla life. "My parents don't know I'm here, and I don't miss them," said Win Bo. "I want to stay here to learn to fight the military government."

For years, as many as 20 ethnic nationalist and communist guerrilla groups have harassed the Rangoon regime from remote, rural enclaves; they control perhaps one fourth of the countryside. Now thousands of activists from Burma's cities are joining them, principally in alliance with the National Democratic Front (NDF), which claims 35,000 guerrillas, including the Karens along the border (map). According to a government spokesman in Rangoon, thousands of students joined the insurgents during the past month. In the Karen outpost of Kler Day, 340 students have already begun military training. In Thay Baw Bo, farther north, 1,600 activists and monks plan similar courses, and have begun constructing a separate camp nearby. "Many more are going to join us," said 23-year-old Winn Moe, a top-ranking leader of the All-Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU) that spearheaded Burma's protest movement. "We plan both urban and rural warfare. If necessary, we will resort to assassinations."

Warfare requires more than willpower, though. "We will give the students military training, arms, ammunition and sanctuary in [our] areas," NDF chairman Gen. Saw Maw Reh said recently. Yet the students have already strained their hosts' resources. At Thay Baw Bo, for example, they subsist on twice-a-day meals that typically consist of rice, watery vegetable soup, curry sauce and sliced banana with palm hearts. Top Karen leader Gen. Bo Mya said his 7,000-member army would help students set up an independ-



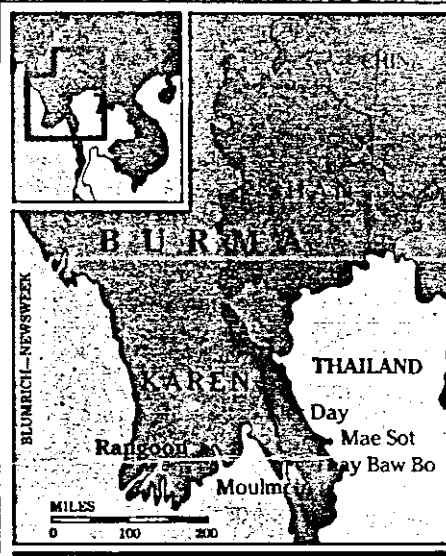
Brave or just naive? At a training camp

ent camp and would provide security and military training. However, he appealed for international assistance, especially weapons. "We are not rich revolutionaries and we do not have enough [supplies] ourselves," said Bo Mya. Back in Rangoon, the radicals' urban guerrilla force is armed with no more than a few rifles and Chinese-made hand grenades.

There are other difficulties. Despite a common hatred of the Rangoon regime, frictions persist between minority-group separatists and the students who, like Rangoon's ruling elite, are ethnic Burmese. The half dozen or so student refugee groups also remain geographically isolated and factionalized, unable to unite on common policies. And their naiveté is telling: at Kler Day, a former law student was asked how long it would take his group to defeat the combat-hardened, 170,000-strong Burmese Army. Once armed, he said, "We can achieve victory within a month." Winn Moe is more realistic about his comrades' sophistication: "Some students just want revenge, without thinking of politics and policies."

**Borrowed weapons:** What the students lack in resources, they make up in enthusiasm. At Kler Day during a recent visit, two dozen eager students marched about an open courtyard to the orders of a drill instructor. Many were barefoot or shod only in beach sandals. Nearby, another group rolled, crawled and assumed firing positions to orders barked by a former Burmese Army lance corporal who had joined the demonstrators. Karen soldiers lent the trainees nine M-16 rifles for practice; those without guns clutched rough wooden planks and pretended they were guns.

In some ways, the student influx has invigorated the Karen movement, which had lapsed into something of a toy-soldier insurgency engaged as heavily in com-



merce as in battle. Once favored by Burma's colonial masters, Karens retain anomalous Western habits that have limited their income compared with less scrupulous rebel groups. Many Karens were converted to Christianity, and as a result shunned Burma's lucrative opium trade, opting instead to "tax" consumer goods smuggled between Burma and Thailand. (Western influence shows in other ways; one officer was called "Captain Marvel" until he got promoted. Now he's Col. Marvel.) Since the military takeover, Burma's insurgents have been fighting with born-again fervor. In addition to harboring student refugees, rebels have launched a dry-season offensive to retaliate for the Sept. 18 coup. Now far from Kler Day nearly 1,000 Karen guerrillas are laying siege to a Burmese Army outpost on the Moei river. Altogether, 30 government troops and insurgents from various groups have died in countrywide clashes since the takeover. Even if Burma's student guerrillas never manage to topple the military regime, they've triggered a new challenge on the country's troubled frontiers.

MELINDA LIU on the Thai-Burmese border

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The Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong) and Asiaweek (Hong Kong) provide excellent ongoing coverage of the war in Burma. Also of interest are The Alliance Bulletin (P.O. Box 13, Mae Sot, Tak Province, Thailand) and Dawn magazine (P.O. Box 1352, G.P.O., Bangkok 10500, Thailand).

