

Burma Archives Newsletter

Issue No. 2, May 1999

Research

Experiences in the changing World of Burmese Research by Martin Smith

In the eight years since the first edition of *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* was published, the political and ethnic crisis in the country has become a subject of much greater international focus and debate. Similarly, although censorship and political deadlock have continued, there has been generally greater reflection inside the country of many of the challenges and controversies that face Burma's peoples during the present era of transition.

This, however, does not make the work of researchers any easier. Indeed, not only is much of the new writing and analysis in propagandised form, but, beneath the day-to-day head-lines, many other grave issues — from HIV/AIDS and narcotics to displaced persons and armed conflict — continue to suffer from the difficulties of access and polarised state of confrontation that exist within many parts of the country. Burma may have become a different political entity from a decade ago, but the essential task of archiving is no less

urgent and the student of today is faced by a new generation of complex problems to deal with.

Historical research for the first edition was, in the main, conducted during the 1980s at a time when the country had almost retreated from the world under Gen. Ne Win's idiosyncratic 'Burmese Way to Socialism'. The state of crisis and armed conflict was no less concerning than today, but, with foreign visitors all but banned from the country and subject to tight restrictions, there was little access to government officials and departments, while the state-controlled media rarely made any mention of internal problems or countrywide insurgency.

Compounding these difficulties, foreign academics had also, for the most part, given up on Burma since, despite both its problems and potential, it was widely regarded that no career could be based upon a country where it was impossible to conduct field work. The exceptions — notably Profs. Josef Silverstein, David Steinberg and Robert Taylor in political science — were very few and largely belonged to an older generation. As a result, the British days when Edmund Leach, the doyen of modern anthropology, had conducted his pioneering studies in the Kachin hills

seemed very distant. By contrast, during the 1980s there were still archives abroad, notably the India Office Records in London, which were fertile, if much neglected, ground for the study of early political movements within Burma. This was brought to the attention of a much larger audience by the 1983 publication of the monumental *Burma: The Struggle for Independence, 1944-48*, edited by Hugh Tinker, which presented a selective but broad glimpse into the complexities of Burmese politics during the formative pre-independence era.

Finding reliable contemporary sources, however, was more difficult, but in the 1980s, at least, there survived a generation of retired leaders and activists as well as many insurgent veterans, who had not only been eyewitnesses to many critical events but had remained closely involved during the turbulent decades after the British departure. Many were only too keen to impart their recollections, which were often surprisingly free of the personal agendas and self-consciousness that has come to dominate the emerging Burma of the 1990s.

Reliable documentation was, as today, more of a problem, but many of the diverse armed opposition groups

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maintained records (of varying quality) of their histories, meetings and battle reports, and these they were generally willing to open or discuss with the rare outside visitor. In many respects, Burma had entered a 26-year sleep walk under Gen. Ne Win, and, although a time-consuming task, any journey around the country's frontiers always provided new insights and materials. With insurgent 'liberated zones' running virtually door-to-door around the ethnic minority borderlands, the Burma of the 1980s looked little different to that of the 1960s or, indeed, the 1950s.

Now in the 1990s, the last decade has seen a relative explosion in contemporary books about Burma, mostly by Western writers, creating a virtual new genre in itself. Adding to these publications has been heightened foreign media coverage, a plethora of reports by international human rights and other non-governmental organisations as well as more incisive reporting by United Nations and other aid or development organisations that have been allowed generally greater access within the country or arrived to work externally from Burma's borders.

Perhaps the single, most striking new phenomenon has been the advent of the internet, with the BurmaNet, which is sponsored by the Open Society Institute, widely regarded an international pioneer for putting Burma on the global information and activist map. With the internet, too, have come a host of websites, with everyone from the Burmese (Myanmar) government to the British Broadcasting Corporation and numerous activist groups putting up daily or regular news about Burma on their sites. Even if much news is recycled, never has the researcher apparently had so much access to reporting and comment on the country, while in the 1980s it would have been hard to fill a scrapbook with several years of international press clippings.

On the ground, however, many difficulties have persisted. In particular, the lack of new or independent literature on Burma's politics by indigenous writers has continued, especially by ethnic minorities. The one obvious development has been the emergence of a new business press with a focus on

economics and social affairs. In addition, many of the veteran old-guard in the different political camps have rapidly begun to pass away without recording their memoirs, while many of the records of Burma's two oldest surviving parties, the Karen National Union and Communist Party of Burma, would appear to have been lost during the collapses and serious reverses both organisations have suffered during the past ten years. Since the Burma Archives Project was begun, a number of people have come forward with important and fascinating materials, but there is still a long way to go.

Compounding these difficulties, in the frequent absence of first-hand sources and materials, many groups and organisations have become far more conscious of news presentation and manipulation in this information-driven age, which is partly reflected in the strong interest in the internet. This is not something that has only affected the government, and it was noticeable that one of the first departments set up by the many parties and fronts which sprang up along the Thai border during the past decade have been 'historical committees' to establish their own versions of events.

The same trend is even more advanced inside Burma where two main organisations have been set up, the Myanmar Historical Commission, chaired by Daw Ni Ni Myint, the wife of Gen. Ne Win, and the Defence Services Historical Research Institute and Museum, run by Col. Ye Htut. A main platform in their work has been the research and publication of several volumes outlining the four critical eras in Burmese politics since independence from the military's perspective. Despite obvious question-marks over objectivity, within these institutions there have also been subtle signs of recognition of the need for change from the 'Burmese Way to Socialism' era that preceded. Foreign scholars have been allowed occasional access, notably the US academic Mary Callahan, whose ground-breaking PhD on *The Origins of Military Rule in Burma* was published in 1996, while last December an international historical seminar on post-colonialism was organised in Rangoon, attended by academics from around the world who

generally reported favourably on the efforts by scholars inside the country to keep the academic light burning.

Thus, as the end of the 20th century draws near, the political dilemmas and challenges remain immense. After the tragedies of the past, countrywide reform will undoubtedly be a longterm process and, in supporting transition, never has the need for information, analysis and access to sources and materials been greater. Through such discussion lies the way to peaceful solutions. The upcoming generation, however, is greatly handicapped by the lack of examination or understanding of the past while the cultural diversity and vibrancy that underpins modern Burma is barely reflected or celebrated. Here it is to be hoped that the Burma Archives Project can play a significant role by stimulating and supporting a multi-dimensional approach that revitalises research, the safe-guarding or collection of extant materials, and the renaissance of Burma's great cultural and educational traditions in a neutral atmosphere of academic pursuit and endeavour.

The third edition of *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, including a new chapter on the 1990s, will be out in July. 522 pages in royal format, including maps, charts and 53 pages of footnotes detailing sources. Copies are £19.95 (sterling) in paperback and £50.00 pounds in hardback. Orders from: Zed Books
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Workshop

Rebuilding a Democratic Burma: Strategies for Sustainable Development

Bellagio Conference Follow-up Workshop

Cultural Preservation in Burma

On 19 March 1999, the Open Society Institute Burma Project hosted a Workshop meeting on issues around cultural preservation and archiving in Burma.

This report summarizes presentations offered at the Workshop and participants' for cooperation in moving forward to protect and preserve Burma's cultural heritage.

Background

The gathering was a follow-up to the conference "Rebuilding A Democratic Burma: *Strategies For Sustainable Development*," held at the Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, from 23-27 March 1998. The Rockefeller Foundation made the Bellagio Conference and this follow-up Workshop possible through a generous grant, with additional funding and organizational support provided by the Burma Project.

In panel discussions and plenary sessions, the Bellagio Conference discussed numerous issues that Burma faces in its current crisis, and others the country must address over the longer term to realize a widely desired transition to sustainable democratic development.

Cultural preservation was among these topics. One of the consensus conclusions of Conference participants noted in the Conference Report¹ was that "Cultural preservation requires both formal and informal approaches to document languages, record oral histories and protect remaining art and artifacts."

In its summary of discussions on cultural preservation issues, the Conference Report also noted, in part: "Libraries and archives are vehicles for

cultural transmissions...and are especially important in countries experiencing fast modernization and attendant societal changes. Promoting preservation of archives, and encouraging transmission of cultural traditions and languages, requires commitment of energy and scarce resources. The effort is further complicated under conditions where freedom of expression is repressed and language and culture are venues for competition or conflict. ... Even in dire humanitarian and political situations, there is a need to preserve and sustain cultural systems. ... Among certain ethnic groups, priests who offer recitations that sometimes last for days perform transmission of cultural information from generation to generation. Disruptions of modernization and political and economic crisis can break the transmission chain. ... Training and support for oral history recordists is necessary to expand and preserve knowledge of ethnic history and tradition. A challenge expressed by local researchers is how to reintroduce this heritage to areas where it has faded."

Workshop Principal Findings

The follow-up Workshop gathered several Bellagio participants and specialists in cultural preservation, archiving, architecture, traditional puppetry and other areas. The day-long meeting focused on identifying both the most important issues and seeking possible areas and means for, as the Bellagio Conference had suggested, "both formal and informal approaches" to preserving Burma's rich cultural heritage.

The Workshop accepted that there is a crisis-level need to preserve Burma's cultural heritage, in the face of ongoing conflicts, modernization, and economic change, especially that taking place without attention to prevailing traditions and physical and cultural structures. A clear consensus also emerged on the need to protect and preserve the ancient and more recently built monuments and historical sights, as well as the natural environment. Participants also agreed that working with international organizations such as UNESCO, non-governmental groups including religious and cultural groups, and Burmese officials responsible for preservation

activities, is necessary to achieve best results. All efforts, however, need to engage local communities to assure acceptance and participation that will yield sustainable results.

Two overriding blockages were cited: (1) a paucity of information in almost every field, and (2) a lack of awareness, education and training, from the grass roots to senior officials, of new preservation techniques and participatory approaches that raise chances for long-term successes.

Workshop participants suggested three principal strategies for addressing these and other problems: (1) Documentation for historical preservation; (2) Training in and demonstration of best practices and techniques; and (3) Education to promote community participation in cultural preservation.

The workshop concluded with a commitment by participants' to seek new means to cooperate concretely on specific projects, and to engage in an informal network to seek opportunities and entry points for cultural preservation assistance. It was recognized that some of this work must be performed through official channels, but in a situation of conflict, contested priorities and scarce resources, results in some areas might only or at best be achieved through religious groups and other independent non-governmental organizations.

Book

Strengthening Civil Society in Burma: Possibilities and Dilemmas for International NGOs
Edited by Burma Centre Netherlands (BCN) & Transnational Institute (TNI)
ISBN 974-7100-90-8, 140x215 mm, 112 pp, 350 baht

What role has civil society played in the history of Burma? Is civil society reemerging in today's Burma? How can the international community develop strategies to strengthen the existing institutions that are essential to the growth of pluralism and democracy? What role should international NGOs play in this process? This collection addresses these issues by bringing

together the research and insights of four experts in the field. Timely and highly readable, these papers present the current thinking on whether and how civil society can develop under the present Burmese military regime. With contributions by David Steinberg, Martin Smith, Zunetta Liddell and Marc Purcell.

The book is published by Silkworm books, Chiangmai

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NAD, Rangoon

Secretary-1 calls for systematic development of national archives

Yangon, 30 Jan - Secretary-1 of the State peace and development council Lt. Gen Khin Nyunt inspected the work concerning national archives at National Archives Department of the Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development this afternoon.

On arrival at the department on Pyidaungsu Yeiktha Road in dagon township, accompanied by officials of the State Peace and Development Council office, the Secretary-1 was welcomed by Minister for National Planning and Economic Development U Soe Tha, (etc. ...).

The secretary-1 and party inspected the archives showroom, Archives Room 1, Computer Room, Archives Room 2 books and papers room, microfilm rooms, records maintenance Room and reading room and gave instructions.

In meeting with officials of NAD, the Secretary-1 said that his visit was to fulfil

the requirements of the department. The objective of the department is to preserve records and facts about historical and cultural heritage and administration and to assist the government organizations and researchers, he said.

He spoke of the need to preserve complete records on historical and cultural heritage and management affairs in accord with the objectives and to coordinate with various ministries and organizations for realization of the objective. Continuing, he said, the ministries and organizations are to send their records and documents to the department. NAD is an important place where affairs such as history of the country, administration and culture are held in safe-keeping, he added. The Secretary-1 recalled the promulgation of the National Archives Law, stressed the need to carry out the tasks systematically in accord with the law and to form a committee on policy, preservation of archives, safety, fire prevention and renovation of the building. He called for putting forward suggestions for development of the department.

Next, Deputy Minister Brig-Gen Zaw Tun reported on tasks of NAD, programmes for systematic development of the archives and requirements. The ministers and scholars discussed development of national archives including collections of historical record on Myanmar spread in the world. The Secretary-1 took part in the discussions. He then signed in the visitor's book and left the department later in the afternoon. *MNA*

from: New Light of Myanmar, vol. VI, no. 287, January 31, 1999.

Interview

Interview with Colonel Yod Suk

Images Asia & Burma Centre
Netherlands, 13th February 1999

1) What is your present policy on drugs?

In order to eradicate the drug problem in Shan state, we have four stages:

1. We would like the world to solve the ethnic problem.
2. We would like the world to come and observe what is happening in the Shan State.
3. To prohibit the international drug dealers from coming and getting involved in the Shan State.
4. Our people must have the rights and power to decide themselves. Only they can solve these problems.

Right now we can do very little, because of the oppression of State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) of our people. As for the trading, if there were no international dealers coming in, then people will not have the incentive to grow more poppies.

When we talk about traders, it is not only the traders inside the Shan state, but also the traders outside the country too. If we can prevent them from coming in, we will have a better chance to resolve the problems.

When we talk about drug problems, there is always a connection or a relationship to the ethnic problem. If you refuse to separate the ethnic problems [from the drug problem], you will have no way to solve both these problems.

At the beginning we were trying to set up a federal union. But later on, the Burmese turned it into a unitary state and became aggressive instead, and the drug problems worsened. If they had followed in the footsteps of General Aung San, there would not have been any problems. But they deviated from his treaties, so the problems have become so much more difficult to handle. The UN has helped the Burmese government for 30 – 40 years

now. But the problems have never improved. It became worse.

If the Burmese military is going to continue to cling on to political power and the suppression continues, there will be no way to resolve the problems.

2) After the drug-burnings in mid-December by the Shan State Army (SSA), signifying your readiness to work with foreign governments and the UN on the drug problem, what has been the response?

After the announcement of our drug eradication program, on the 5th March 1998, we began to implement this plan. When we burned the drugs on the 29th of November, 1998, we released the information to all the news agencies, and many journalists and reporters came from many places. But the international community has not given us any response yet. Especially it will have a high impact on the SPDC's income. And as a consequence of this, they [SPDC] plan to have an international Interpol conference to save their dignity.

3) As many countries are the recipients of drugs produced in Burma - and the fact that the UN and the international community have said that they can not negotiate with the SSA directly - realistically, what can they do to reduce drug production and trade in Burma?

In my opinion, if the international community really wants to eliminate the drug problem, they should not say that they can not come and talk with this and that group directly. For example, if they really want to eliminate the drug problem, Shan State is connected with drugs and the SSA defends the Shan people. So the international community should come and help. If they refuse, it means they do not want to support the Shan people, and they do not really want to eliminate the drug problem.

4) Have you approached other ethnic groups regarding your new drug policy and what has been their reaction?

Since the beginning of the reformation of Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA) we have explained our six guiding principles to every group. [These principles are:]

1. To get a unity amongst our people.
2. To stand by the Panglong agreement.
3. To establish democracy.
4. To improve our people's standard of living.
5. To fight the narcotics problem.
6. To achieve peace.

We sent our six guiding principles to all the alliance groups and they also approved of it. All the armed revolutionaries are patriotic. They do not take up weapons for the purpose of trading opium. If the world does not clearly understand this, they will continue to think that we are the drug dealers. This is the propaganda of the SPDC.

5) What can the international community do specifically to fight the drug problem?

The SPDC does not want to hold tri-partite dialogue. They know that if they do, they will lose. But the international community must give pressure to the SPDC to conduct tri-partite dialogue.

These are examples of how [the international community] can pressure [the SPDC]:

- Withdraw all investments from Burma.
- The world has to study more about what the SPDC is actually doing and not only highlight what is happening Rangoon, but must study how the SPDC oppresses the ethnic minorities.
- ASEAN and the international community must set more conditions before allowing the SPDC to attend their conferences. If they [SPDC] can not accept this, let them stand alone.

6) The international community have asked why they should trust your new drug policy, as you were a former high-ranking commander under Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA), as the MTA were seen as drug traffickers by many?

I dare to say that I am not a former commander under Khun Sa. I joined the struggle with the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), which was led by General Korn Zerng. It was General Korn Zerng who started the anti-

narcotics policy, even before Khun Sa joined him. I am following his steps and not those of Khun Sa.

Even before general Korn Zerng died, he set up an anti-narcotics program and submitted it to Khun Sa. It was only because Khun Sa accepted this that they [the MTA] made their own principles, and we then were able to join them.

7) Can you explain why amphetamine production is rising in comparison to heroin production?

I think that amphetamines are easier to produce than heroin. They can be produced anywhere, even in a private building. That is why amphetamine production is increasing in comparison with heroin. It is easy to produce and sell well. The production of amphetamines not only takes place in the Shan State, but also in Thailand. Also, the producers are educated people. The ordinary Shan people cannot do it. They can only buy and consume it.

8) Has heroin production reduced, or is there just more amphetamines being produced?

The heroin production has not been reduced yet. It is increasing more, because in the past Khun Sa used to control the heroin production area, but now these areas are monopolised by the SPDC. The number of transportation routes for heroin have also increased. It is carried by truck or by other ways. The amphetamine production only started, and has increased, in the last three or four years.

9) What effect has this had on the Shan, Burmese and Thai people (in terms of usage and addiction)?

Amphetamines has a worse effect on people than heroin. You can kill yourself [on amphetamines] and you can even kill your mother. The prevention and elimination of amphetamines will be more difficult than heroin, because the roots of the heroin problem are in Shan State. If we have democratic rights [we would be able] to replace the poppies with other crops, and then the people would grow opium no more. But as for the amphetamines, we will not be able to stop it, because they are produced in many places. That is the big

problem.

10) Can people afford to buy amphetamines in the Shan State?

There are very few people who are addicted to amphetamines [in the Shan State]. More people are addicted to opium. The problem must be very large outside the Shan State. The country most affected is Thailand.

11) What would you like to say to Interpol and the international community countries who are attending the interpol conference on heroin in Rangoon?

From my point of view, they should not attend. Because if they attend it, they will not get insight and knowledge of what is really happening inside Burma. It will be tantamount to giving support to a group [the SPDC] that has been opposing democratization, as well as solving the problems between the Burmans and the ethnic groups. It would be like helping them [SPDC] to suppress the people who are demanding democracy and freedom. And the aim to eliminate opium will not be successful. It will become even worse.

Regarding involvement in the drug trade, I believe that our Thai cousins, who live across the border, may know much better than me. During Khun Sa's time there were few laboratories, but now it has increased. Our camp team has even managed to burn down between 20 and 30 refineries. If you are going to have an Interpol conference it would be better to have it in Thailand than in Burma, because in Thailand you have the right to express yourself. Maybe even people like us would be able to attend it too. If we were allowed to attend it, even if they do not want us to talk about the ethnic issue, that is okay. We can talk about the drug issue. If it is going to be held in Rangoon, we will not be able to attend it. Furthermore, the countries that are going to attend it, would be hesitant to find fault with the host-country.

In Thailand, we would be able to present our six guideline principles, the first of which is our anti-drug policy.

What the Burmese [SPDC] are doing is seizing a small portion [of drugs] one

time, but they will make a propaganda as though they have made three or four seizures. After the seizure, they will show it to the press and they will either use it or sell it.

12) We have a registration form for the conference, would the Colonel like to register?

I can sign on for it.

13) How do you feel about Burma's admittance into ASEAN and what should ASEAN's policy be?

I think that Burma being accepted into ASEAN was a big mistake. Why? Because if they want to support Aung San Suu Kyi to attain democracy, by admitting Burma as an Asean member, it is giving indirect support to the SPDC to suppress Aung San Suu Kyi. Also the ASEAN countries are supporting the military to continue to violate human rights. If they had not admitted the SPDC into ASEAN, Aung San Suu Kyi could have gained power, and other problems might have been resolved. The admission of SPDC into ASEAN lends legitimacy to the regime. One policy that I would like them to review is the policy of 'non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries'.

14) How is the SPDC involved in the heroin trade and can you give specific examples?

One very obvious example is the laboratories along the border. After Khun Sa surrendered, there were few laboratories left along the border, but now they have many more under the protection of Burmese soldiers. They [the Burmese soldiers] are being paid 100,000 baht every seven days in protection fees. And also they [the drug laboratory operators and the Burmese army] work hand in hand together in Tachileik, and in parts of the North-eastern command.

15) Up to what level is the SPDC involved and can you give examples?

You remember that Khin Nyunt has been called "Four-Khin Nyunt". "Four" means "Number Four" [the term used to describe heroin refined in a certain way that mainly comes from Burma]. They

also join hand-in hand with those in Murg Lar near the Chinese border.

16) What are your criticisms of the SPDC drug policy? Is it working?

It is a political weapon for them [the SPDC] to suppress the people and Burmanise them, and also to suppress the revolutionary groups. Only after these are eliminated will they start to eradicate drugs, but not right now.

17) SLORC claims that they have an anti-drugs policy in conducting drug-burnings. Is it effective?

The UNDCP does not have any real insight. they only have the reports and dictates of the SPDC to listen to.

18) Can you give us a brief history of what happened to the armed Shan groups after the Khun Sa/MTA surrender?

After Khun Sa surrendered, three things happened:
- We could cease the armed conflict amongst our groups [in the Shan State].
- All the soldiers who were involved with drugs, or those who had bad reputations, have gone with Khun Sa. So the remaining soldiers are not involved with drugs anymore.
- The most serious thing that happened after we gained peace among our ethnic groups in Shan State was that the suppression of the SPDC considerably increased.

19) Can you describe the difficulties facing the people of the Shan State following the MTA/Khun Sa surrender?

Forced relocations, no means of livelihood, and then more tightening on freedom of expression.

20) Can you explain the forced relocation in more detail?

When we first started the Union [of Burma] we had equal rights. The insurgencies are a consequence of the fact that we lost these equal rights in the Union [of Burma]. In order to break the unity of the insurgencies, they [the Burmese Army] started the 'Four-Cuts' operations [anti-insurgency operations aimed at cutting connections between

insurgents and the local populations].

21) How many people have been affected by these operations over the last year? How big is the area affected?

About 3,000 villages, with a total population of hundreds of thousands. The area is from Mung Karng, from the Kesi road south to the Karenni border.

22) Can you describe the moves of the SSA towards the SPDC in terms of cease-fires?

Their policy is to have only one armed force there [in Shan State]. As long as the oppression continues, we cannot accept surrender. They have been talking about cease-fire, but actually they are demanding surrender. But if a cease-fire means to have dialogue, we will accept it.

23) Can you describe your policy towards Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the NLD, and the SNLD? What are your views on future cooperation with these groups?

According to reports, the SNLD and NLD have an alliance and coordinate with each other. As for future cooperation, it depends on the results of tripartite dialogue.

24) Do you support the idea of tripartite dialogue?

Yes, I agree with it. If there is tripartite dialogue, there must be equality among the participants. Only if there is equality among the participants will tripartite dialogue be meaningful and successful. And the other thing is the constitution. In order to restore a Federal Union, there must be equality [in drafting the constitution] too. And then, we, the people, must not be forced to accept their draft. And also, the SPDC's troops must withdraw from ethnic lands. If they refuse, then the tri-partite dialogue will not be meaningful and the result will be the same as before. They have lied too much to the people, so many times, that the people are distrustful of them.

25) Can you tell us how many troops you have and how much of Shan State you control?

We have half of the Shan State area

under our control. Our strength is 12,000 soldiers. We have units from the North down to the South.

26) How do you get support for the army?

We get support from our people, and we get taxes from the gem mining and some other businesses. We don't need to buy our weapons now. We use the weapons remaining from the MTA troops.

27) Can you explain the recent alliance the SSA made with the KNPP?

As the Shan and Karenni share the same border, our soldiers and their soldiers are joining hands. We will never surrender our political system to the SPDC.

28) Can you describe your relationship with other NDF groups?

We have been in constant touch with the NDF, but the NDF unfortunately have been put to the real test while the call for democracy by Aung San Suu Kyi NLD has become louder. So in order to have a united front of nationalities, a better one, a new one, we will have to talk to each other again.

29) What are your views on the political future of the Shan State? Do you support federalism or independence?

The Shan State, whether one likes it or not, has been independent according to the outlawed [former] constitution. In the future, whether we are going to set up a federal union or an independent nation, we must cooperate with each other, which means Kachin, Karen and even Burmese, on equal terms, whether it is federalism or independence. For federalism to be successful it must be on equal terms, and we should not be simply forced to accept it.

Message to the International Interpol Conference Participants

I would like to tell the participants who are attending the International Interpol conference that they should seriously look into what is happening in our ethnic lands.

Absolutely do not trust the SPDC.

In relation to drug issues, you should go and help solve the problem directly in the drug-producing areas. Do not rely on them [SPDC] and do not support them. If you do, your assistance will only reach the level of corrupted senior officials.

We, the patriotic revolutionary groups of Shan have been struggling for between thirty and forty years. But the international community consider us drug dealers. It is because of the Burmese military that we have been put on the black list for drugs. That is why the international community has a negative view of our armed groups.

Only if the world is really interested in eliminating drugs, will we have more chance to help eradicate the drug problems. At the moment, because we are suffering from forced relocation and do not have access to farming and other businesses, the narcotics problem still exists in our land.

The narcotics problems are connected to ethnic problems. Unless the ethnic problems have been solved, the narcotics problem will remain.

If the international Interpol conference is to be held in Burma I would not be able to go. However, if possible, I would like to meet with all the international participants who attended the conference back here in Thailand.

Whatever it may be, do not only focus on the SPDC side. The SNLD represents the Shan people, so we have the right to express ourselves. If it is an issue which relates to us, please come to see the Shan people. If it relates to drug issues, you should come and see SNLD and SSA as well.

The IISH and Burma

The International Institute of Social History (IISH) was founded in 1935. It is one of the world's largest documentary and research institutions in the field of social history in general and the history of the labour movement in particular. Most of the collections are open to the public.

Collections

The IISH holds close to 2,000 archival collections, some 1 million printed volumes and about as many audio-visual items. The available collections are accessible through an online catalogue and inventories. The IISH is also home to a number of other documentary institutions, most notably the Netherlands Economic History Archive (NEHA) and the Netherlands Press Museum (NPM). Both offer supplementary collections and services. Their material is included in the IISH catalogue. Visitors can consult the collections for reference and research in the reading room.

Research and Publications

The IISH carries out and stimulates scholarly research. It is a respected meeting place for researchers from all over the world and organizes conferences, symposia and international research projects. The Institute publishes research results through international academic publishers and its own inhouse publishing unit. The International Review of Social History is published for the Institute by Cambridge University Press and appears three times a year, plus one supplement.

Burma Collections

The IISH has a growing interest in Burmese material. It collects documents, letters, diaries, minutes of meetings, pamphlets, posters, cartoons, newspaper clippings, audio-visual material, microfilms and other material on Burmese social history as well as current affairs. IISH is also building up a library of publications in any language on Burma and is keen to take subscriptions to journals, magazines and newspapers. Our idea is to rescue material which may otherwise get lost or damaged. We plan ultimately to make such material also

available in Burma itself, in a future Burmese archive of social history. If you have any material or publications which could enrich our holdings and make it possible for researchers worldwide to study Burmese social history, please contact us at the address mentioned on the frontpage.

Donating or depositing collections at IISH

If you consider donating material to IISH, you could do so in the form of a gift or a deposit or a sale (conditions available upon request). Material is accepted from individuals as well as organisations. It is also possible to retain the originals and give IISH microfilm copies, or the otherway around.

Burma Acquisitions

A small overview of some of the acquisitions from the last 8 months (August 98 - April 99)

Apart from the regular material we received through the friendly support of different organisations, we were also able to get hold of copies of older magazines, statements, press-releases (KNU, Karenni) and rare documents. Herefore we have to thank: Burma Centre Netherlands, Drum Publications, Shan Human Rights Foundation, Committee for Publicity of People's Struggle in Monland (CPPSM), Karen Human Rights Group, Images Asia & Borderline Video, Communication Center - NCGUB (New Delhi), Rakhine Information Centre, Arakan Rohingya National Organisation and the Burma Action Group.

From the British Library, the Burma Studies Center (NIU University) and the Burma Project we received duplicates from their libraries (with thanks to Patricia Herbert and Mai Kyi Win) Some of the acquisitions whom deserve to be mentioned separately:

- through Robert Zan (and with the help of Burma Issues) we were able to acquire an interview with former Karen leader Mahn Ba Zaw (9 C-90 cassettes), and 1 cassette with a speech by him. The interview was done by Robert Zan.
- we received 21 filmrolls (colour) containing photos from meetings, seminars, daily life etc. in Manerplaw in 1992.
- we were able to get hold of the banners used for the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Karen Revolution Day (31.01.1999).
- additional material to our collection on the National United Party of Arakan (NUPA) and other Arakanese resistance movements.

In the course of these 8 months we also received the archives of two private persons, whose names can't be made public yet.