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THE STRUGGLE OF KNU FOR JUSTICE

Dear Karen National and People of All Nationalities

The Karen State Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) Unit has published and distributed a propaganda tract recently with the heading "Do Not Go On Following the Wrong Way." In addition to being an insult to all the Karen nationals, it is a slanderous attack against the Karen National Union (KNU) which is engaged in the struggle for national independence. As the KNU has the responsibility to expose the vile intent of the accusations made and present facts in the true light of reality, the following explanation and true account of events are given.

1. "The Burmese and the Karens had lived in the same land together through the ages sharing all the weals and woes. There are many instances in our long history showing the firm unity of the two peoples." says the tract in one place.

This is nothing less than a patent lie concocted by the Burmese-chauvinists to cover up their gross offences against the Karens. The truth is that the Karens entered into the land now known as Burma in 739 BC, as confirmed and accepted by the majority of scholars and historians. Only many centuries later, the Mons, Burmese, Arakanese and Shans entered the land in successive waves of migration. The most numerous of the tribes, the Burmese started launching aggressive wars against the others in the 11 Century committing pillage, arson and wanton massacres. Thus, in 1044 AD, King Anawrata of Pagan Dynasty, in 1550 AD, King Bayin Naung of Ava Dynasty and, in 1730 AD, King Alaung Paya of Konebaung Dynasty succeeded in setting up a Burmese empire,



GHQ troops starting for operation

Brief pause on boat at the Salween River on route to target

three times, over the known areas of the land. As a result, the Karens, Mons, Arakanese and Shans, who had freely lived in their own lands with their own governments, lost their freedom and their lands three times and became land serfs under the rule of swords of the Burmese aggressors. Many a time, wars of resistance against the oppressive rule of the Burmese broke out. Wars bred hatred and hatred bred wars. There had never been any unity between the ruled and the Burmese rulers. The vicious circle of war and hatred had gone on until, as history has precisely recorded, the British, taking advantage of disunity in the land, annexed the country into their empire without much difficulty in the closing decades of the 19th Century.

2. "In the history of the struggle for Burma's independence we can find that the Karens, like the other indigenous races, had actively and unitedly participated in the fight against the colonialists. Similarly, in the resistance against the fascists, the Karens joined hands with neighbouring indigenous races and actively participated in the struggle, like in the previous instances," says the tract in another place.

This is a shameless attempt by the BSPP Burmese chauvinists to hoodwink the public by cunningly twisting the historical facts. In the years when the 2nd World War was drawing near, the political consciousness of the Karen people had become much heightened. They were opposed to colonialism in principle, but realising that the political immaturity of the Burmese politicians would only bring chaos and utter disorder in the absence of a moderating power, had scarcely participated in the anti-colonial activities.

When the 2nd World War broke out, the Japanese entered Burma in 1942 accompanied by the Burma Independence Army (BIA) led by Bo Aung San who was endeavouring for Burma's independence. The BIA troops, with the Burmese chauvinist idea that only the Burmese should dominate Burma, started to show their true colors soon after they had entered the country. Accusing the Karens in Papun district and neighbouring areas of being pro-American and pro-British spies, the BIA troops perpetrated atrocities to their hearts' content by torturing and killing the innocent and defenceless Karens, burning the villages, looting the properties and raping the women-folk, on a large scale.

The BIA troops repeated their atrocities in Maubin, Myaungaya, Pyapon and Bassein districts in the Irrawaddy Delta. As the Karens resisted, a full-scale communal war between the Karens and the Burmese broke out and spread to the whole country. Finally the Karen leaders succeeded in convincing the Japanese occupying authorities that the Karens were not the British and American spies as

the Burmese had alleged. Due to the mediation of the Japanese authorities, the communal strife came to an end after a period of six months.

As a result of these bitter experiences and the grievous experiences under the despotic system of the Burmese Kings, the Karens came to harbour a deep mistrust against the Burmese and found it very uncomfortable and insecure to cohabit with them.

In the hearts of the Karens the conviction that they had to have a free and separate country of their own, in order to enjoy the freedom to decide their own destiny, took a firm hold. With this conviction in mind and with the belief that they would definitely get independence according to the Atlantic Charter if they joined hands with the Allied forces, the Karens participated in the anti-facist movement and valiantly fought against the Japanese facists alongside the others.

5. "During the time prior to and, as well as, after the independence of Burma, the imperialists divided the true national spirit and, as a result of their incitement by various means to destroy the unity of the indigenous races, the history of internal insurgency began," explains the tract.

This is simply one of the favourite propaganda lines of the modern-day Burmese chauvinists who, at every opportunity, try to suggest or arrogantly assert that ethnic peoples in revolt against them are just stooges of the imperialists and their rebellions have no real cause.

The Karens have started and carried on their revolution because of their bitter and harsh experiences of oppression and tyranny at the hands of the successive Burmese chauvinists since the days of the Burmese Kings. It has not been due to the instigation of the imperialists as the BSPP Burmese chauvinists are trying to slander. The Karen revolution is a fight for self-determination



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and true democracy or, in other words, it is an historical task of the Karen people to fight for regaining of the loss freedom, for the re-establishment of own government and own country, and for the emancipation of the Karens from the evil conditions of the oppressed and the exploited.

The Karens are no more stooges of the imperialists than the Americans were those of the French, the Chinese were those of the Russians or the Vietnamese were those of the Chinese.

Portraying the revolutionaries fighting for justice as stooges of the imperialists, lawless bandits, or insurgents is a vile calumny spread by the Burmese chauvinists trying to cover up their odious and perverse acts of the past and the present.

After independence, when the Karens submitted their demand for a "Karen Land", of their own free will, the AFPFL Burmese chauvinist government arrogantly and openly declared that the Karens could not be given a country as "they had never owned an inch of land". On the other hand, the AFPFL Party formed its pocket army of "levies" organising a battalion in each district and used it to provoke the Karens by dacoity, murder and various other means. To smother the Karens peaceful demand for a homeland by creating a communal strife between the Karens and the Burmese, the AFPFL Party also employed the Burmese press to level inflammatory charges at the Karens. The peaceful demonstrations on the 11th February 1948 organized by the KNU and participated by more than 450,000 Karens, foreseeing such a strickery, carried posters bearing the slogans stating "We don't want communal strife" and "We don't want civil war" with the other two slogans stating "Give Karen Land immediately" and "Show equality between the Karens and the Burmese immediately", all of which reflected the true aspirations of the whole Karen people.

The reactionary AFPFL government and the Burmese chauvinists in power completely ignored the aspirations of the Karens as expressed in the slogans and, in apparent contempt, they increased their provocative acts against the Karens. The memories of major incidents caused by the provocations of the murderous Burmese chauvinists are still fresh in the minds of the Karens and there is no possibility of them being forgotten by the younger generations.

Within the month of December 1948, the AFPFL pocket army troops and units of the Union Military Police under the control of AFPFL government attacked and committed atrocities against the innocent and defenseless Karen civilians in the village of Palaw in Mergui district, Tha-nat-chaung village of Insein district, Sat-thwa-daw village near Htauk-kyant, Rangoon and the Karen quarters of Ah-lone San-chaung right in the city of Rangoon.

These attacks and atrocities caused great alarm, grief and bitterness not only to the Karens but also to the other ethnic nationalities who had been fellow sufferers of Burmese oppressions and atrocities in the past.

The Burmese chauvinists "provocations against the peaceable Karens reached the highest point when the AFPFL Party pocket army troops and some troops from the Burma Army attacked the Karen civilians in Insein, near Rangoon, on the 31st January 1949. Thus forced, the Karens had no choice but to take up arms and fight back in defence for the sake of their national survival and for the establishment of Karen Land.

These true events plainly and conclusively show that the Burmese chauvinists were fully responsible for the emergence of the armed uprisings in the country.

More than the old Burmese chauvinists, the new BSPP Burmese chauvinists have been wantonly killing and torturing the innocent civilians, and looting and destroying their properties by waging a war of genocidal nature against all the ethnic nationalities in the country. We do not need to ask the question whether the disunity in the country has been caused by the conspiracy of the imperialists or whether it has been caused by the inhuman savagery and brutalities of the Burmese chauvinists. The Burmese chauvinists are now pointing an accusing finger at the others in an attempt to deceive the general public in the country and the world.

4. "With a view to establishing unity of all the indigenous races and peace, the Government proffered the opportunity for negotiation once in 1949. again in 1960 during the time of the Care-taker Government of General Ne Win and finally on the 11th June 1962 when the Revolutionary Council Government offered to meet all the underground armed organisations. The KNU, like the other insurgent organisations, had a chance to negotiate,"



Arakan youths who arrived to join
Arakan Liberation Army

Pa-O Youth Organization at Kawmoorah

adds the tract.

The tract, however, conveniently fails to mention why the negotiations did not succeed. The fact is that the KNU met with the government three times to negotiate for peace. At every negotiation, the government just demanded for the total surrender of the KNU without any serious discussion about the KNU's demand for a state based on the right to full self-determination. In the last negotiation in 1963, the Revolutionary Council Government did not even accept the proposal for a general truce.

The demand for surrender is tantamount to asking the revolutionary forces, who are fighting for the noble and just cause, to admit a grave error which they have not committed. The unity and peace the Burmese chauvinist government wanted was the kind that exists between a master and a subservient slave. The negotiations were merely political ploys used by the government intending to reap some political benefits. For these reasons, all the negotiations ended in utter failure.

5. "As an expression of gratification and in honour to the success of the first convention of the Buddhist monks from all denominations in 1980, the State Council issued a "General Amnesty Order giving amnesty to all those who had committed political and other crimes. At that time, the KNU continued to follow the wrong path," says the tract further.

Again, this is a vile and base slander against the KNU which has never committed a political or any other crime. The KNU has been leading the noble fight in defence of the national survival of the Karen people and for a rightful Karen Land. In a peaceful and democratic manner, as it has been mentioned, the KNU had led the movement of the Karen people for freedom and a homeland, with the full spirit of harmony and amity. Instead of addressing a political question politically, the Burmese chauvinists resorted to armed suppressive of the Karens. The Burmese chauvinists, including the BSPP leadership, who have started and who have been perpetuating the atrocities and the civil war are the real criminals who need a pardon from the people. They are the real culprits who are responsible for all the chaos and disorder going on in Burma.

6. "Some of the KNU members who have seen their mistakes are now entering the light. The Government and the people stretch their hands out to welcome them," continues the tract.

Those who have surrendered are just a few who are shirkers, misfits or those who tried to escape punishment after committing some grave or criminal errors. It is no wonder that the BSPP is welcoming such persons as they are birds of the same feathers.

7. "As some of those are persons who had selflessly given their whole lifetime in the service of the country and the people during the struggle for independence, the Government honoured them by awarding titles of the Order of Distinguished Service (1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade) or titles of the order of State Honour (1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade)," adds the tracts.

Among the surrendered personnel of now defunct People's Patriotic Party, a Burmese organization, it is true that there were some individuals who had served with distinction during Burma's struggle for independence. The BSPP is simply bribing these persons, who still have some influence with the people and who could, one day, become opponents to its power again, with high sounding titles and monetary awards in order to neutralize them.

8. "After independence, there were Karen nationals who had served as head of state in the position of president and cabinet ministers."

The Karens who became president and cabinet ministers were just a few KNU turn-coats who sold their national rights to the AFPFL Burmese chauvinists for the positions they received. They became Burmese puppets and were never given any power to do anything good for the Karen people. The Burmese chauvinists made them to serve merely as figure-heads to trick the others into thinking that the Karens were getting equal opportunity as the Burmese.

9. "It is quite evident that in the present period of socialist revolutionary transformation, the Karens, like the other indigenous races, have the opportunity to work to the limit of their efficiency for the development of the Karen State."

To put it mildly, this is a complete nonsense. On account of the highly centralized socialist economic system, and the nationalization of private



High school girls welcoming victorious troops returning from front



Primary school girls welcoming victorious troops returning from front

enterprises, many Karens in the Karen State have become impoverished, like the other indigenous races in the country. Because of the scarcity of farm implements and the imposition of various rules and regulations by the land committee, many farmers have to abandon their traditional occupation of land tilling and become daily wage earners. It is compulsory for those who till the land to take what is known as government farm subsidies. At harvest time, the farmers have to repay the subsidies in rice at the government rate which is three to four times lower than the prevailing rice prices on the black market. In addition, the farmers are required to sell a certain amount of rice known as "quota rice", which is arbitrarily fixed by the land committee depending on the acreage titled, to the government at the said much depressed rate. This amount is usually much too high and the farmers are hardly left with rice for their own consumption. And the cash the farmers get from the government by selling their rice does not mean much in the inflation plagued economy. If the harvest fails due to bad weather or some other unfavourable elemental condition, the farmers have to sell their draft animals and farm implements to buy rice on the black-market to meet the requirement. They are sent to jail where they have to stay on their own expenses, if they fail.

One other unfortunate condition the Karens in the Karen State have is the concentration of the BSPP Burmese chauvinists' war effort in the state. The Karen civilians in their own state have been completely rodden down under the boots of the Burmese military. Many innocent civilians have been falsely accused, tortured and killed, their properties looted or destroyed and the women-folk raped. Thousands have been forced to carry heavy loads as porters for the Burmese troop columns going into the front where many have been killed or wounded by bullets or maimed by land-mines. Recently, many Karens have been forced by the Burmese army to join what are known as the "people's militia force" and "village anti-insurgent units". They are employed to stand sentinel or assist the Burmese troops in encirclement operations, exposing their lives to great danger.

Heedless to say, the Karens under such a tyrannical and exploitative system hardly have a time even to think, let alone a chance to work for the development of their state.

The BSPP Burmese chauvinists are the vilest of all the Burmese chauvinists and the most oppressive and tyrannical rulers in the modern history of Burma. All the indigenous races, including the ordinary Burmese people, are suffering great miseries and hardships under their despotic military dictatorship.

Under the system, the social, economic, political and other conditions are bound to get worse and worse as time advances. A day more of the BSPP Burmese

chauvinists' rule means a day mors of suffering and miseries for the people.

In the absence of democracy, there is only one way for the people to be liberated from such a system and that is to oppose force by force. Accordingly, we call upon people of all races and all walks of life in the country to rally under the flag of KNU which has been correctly leading the struggle for Justice, freedom and democracy.

10th October 1986
Thadingyut, Waxing-moon 7. 1348

Central Standing Committee
Karen National Union

WHY DID I TAKE UP ARMS AND FIGHT?

I am a Karen born of a Karen mother. In March 1982 the Burmese authorities arrested my uncle Saw Tun Shwe who was a Village headman. They alleged that Karen Village elders are supporting the Karen resistance movement and they killed him. This incident left me grieved and badly hurt.

ON August 8 of that same year I was again badly shocked by another incident. At about 3 O'clock in the afternoon of that unforgettable day, my mother called me and said, "your cousin Haw Mai Aung was shot and killed by an NCO of the Burmese troops. Her body is left unattended." Haw Mai Aung was the daughter of my uncle Saw Tun Shwe.

She was killed in Ee Heh village but at that time I was in another place. On learning about this I immediately went to Ee Heh. I got there at about 4 PM. and found the deserted and pitiful remain of my beloved cousin. She had only her sarong left on her. Her blouse had been torn to shreds.



One young woman taking part one youth discussion at Kawmoorah



Kawmoorah Women's Organization opening a temporary stall for their organisation fund (Photo Min Htoo)

I questioned the villagers about this incident and those who saw the shooting related to me in detail all that had happened. an NCO from the third company of the Burmese 24th Light Infantry Battalion had for quite a long time been asking for her love but she did not love him and had always tried to stay away from him. That evening she went to a shop to buy some dried fish. The NCO was there at the shop and so she slipped away quickly out of sight but he caught sight of her and at once pursued her. Unluckily, she was concerned in another house and the NCO tried to rape her. After a desperate struggle she finally managed to break loose and fled. In anger and frustration the NCO fired at her and killed her.

I buried my ill-fated cousin with the help of some villagers. When the officer in command of the 24th Light Infantry Battalion heard of the incident, the culprit lied to his superior that the girl was her lover but had jilted him and that was why he got so angry that he shot and killed her.

The Burmese are noted for their thoroughness in making investigations, but in this case, far from making a thorough investigation into the killing, they ignored it and let it fade away.

Not long after that incident a younger daughter of uncle Saw Tun Shwe was forced into marriage by a Burmese soldier. The villagers assumed that she would be loved and properly treated. After she gave birth to a child, she came back to village in sorrow, shame and tears. The soldier has an elder wife and the young girl was treated like a slave by the elder wife. In desperation she finally came back to her village.

Whenever I come to think about these two girls and their father it truly break my heart. After the death of my aunt, my uncle Saw Tun Shwe lovingly laboured to raise up his two daughters and cared for them until they have come of age. At a time when Naw Mai Aung was 26, the ripe age to get married and settle down, her life came to a sudden and tragic and because of the detestable and cowardly act of a Burmese soldier. She died the same death of her father who was ruthlessly murdered also by the Burmese. The Burmese had also brought shame on the younger sister and trampled her honour in the mud.

I am a Karen who grew up in the tender loving arms of my beloved Karen mother. I love my mother dearly and could never bear to part with her. I had decided to always stay by her and care for her because of what she had done for me. But that noble resolution had now been changed. The sorrow and heartache I had experienced and consequently, the anger and resentment that built up within me had changed my meek and gentle nature making it harsh and aggressive.

I am now away from my home, my family and my beloved mother who I never

before would have had the heart to part with. I have joined the Karen Liberation Army in order to settle the score,

I will try to redeem the lost honour of my Karen womenfolk and bring it back into the garden of honour.

These fateful incidents occurred four years ago and to many it was just a thing of the past. But to me it seems like only yesterday,

My people has to bear the atrocities, persecutions and unjust treatments of the Burmese and that is why I take up arms and fight in order to help in the realisation of national independence and the establishment of an independent Karen State, I will do my best to safeguard the life and honour of my beloved mother, the life and honour of all the Karen womenfolk and the entire Karen nation.

RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN BURMA

Buddhism, Christianity, Islam as well as other religious faiths are all being controlled and oppressed by the socialist Burma government. There's no religious freedom. Creating strange term such as "Religious Purification", Buddhist monks throughout the country were required to register. Those who refused to register were arrested, jailed and tortured. Well respected monks were discredited. They were falsely accused of sexual involvement with women followers or possessing wealth and were disrobed by force. Many monks were shot by the "Burma People's Army" when they protested against the religious restriction.

A political lecturer once taught: "In the beginning God created man and woman. They were created blind. They were able to see only when the kind snake



President Gen. Bo Mya seen at 1986 Karen Revolutionary Bay celebration



A.G.Gen.Hla Htoo with arms and ammos captured at Pynmabinseik battle

gave them the fruit forbidden by God for them to eat,"

Burmese Muslims were refused permission to go on holy pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. In 1980, Arakanese Muslims came under violent attack from lackeys of the military rulers. They were killed and beaten in hundreds. Arakanese Muslim women and children were brazenly molested and roughly handled. Their properties were looted and, homes and mosques were pillaged. Unable to bear their agonies further, these Arakanese, numbering over to hundred thousand, fled into neighbouring Bangladesh.

The "Burma Citizenship Law" of October 1982, made the Burmese Muslims into third class citizens. In 1983, more troubles met Burmese Muslims. Violent riots broke out between Burmese Muslims and Buddhists in Moulmein, Baingwunkwin, Maunggan, Kyaikmaraw, Kawkareik, Kanni, Kyone-doe (Towns in South-East Burma), Thingangyun (near Rangoon), Pyinmana, Toungoo (Central Burma), Yandoon and Myaungmya (Delta Burma), Burmese Muslims were killed in large numbers attended by heavy losses in property. Dozens of mosques were also destroyed. The Marxist Burmese government was behind all these troubles.

The "Highest Honour Awarded Buddhist Monks' Purification Committee" at a meeting chaired by U Nu, held at Kaba-aye, Rangoon, issued an unconfirmed plan for the systematic suppression and elimination of Christianity the plan laid down various methods against Christianity throughout Burma as shown below:-

1. To stop the existence in every household of having a Christian member and also to stop the increase of the Christian members.
2. To stop the Burmese public from listening to the broadcast of Christian programmes from Manila, Philippines.
3. To stop the delinquent youths in Burma from dressing in Western-style decadent clothes.
4. To protest against one of the Ten Commandments in the Bible which says, "You shall worship no other god before Me," a point which reveals the narrow mindedness of the Christian teachings.
5. To stop the campaigns of the Christian evangelism which have forced their ways indiscriminately into every community in every part of the country.
6. To be careful about the fine and polished ways of Christianity and then locate and reveal the weak points of it to the public for gaining our attacks successfully.
7. To make a strong protest and accusations against the Christians who are carrying out their evangelist work and campaigns in the rural areas and the hill regions.
8. To point out that Christian theology which teaches that Jesus Christ

had died on the cross to redeem the sinners of the world with His holy blood, is totally a false doctrine. The truth is that Jesus Christ was defeated in His mission and had paid for His mistakes by being executed and shedding His own blood.

9. To point out all the weak points of the Christian works at the right moments and right places in order to make possible a permanent struck-off of them from the places concerned, for instant replacement with Buddhism.
10. The Christian Bible must be thoroughly studied, verse by verse, chapter by chapter, phrase by phrase for making effective counter-measure against each verse, chapter and phrase.
11. There are discrepancies seen between the two Burmese versions of the Bible, the one produced by Mr. Judson and the other by Mr. Jacquire. These disagreeing points must be widely publicised.
12. The God of Christians limits His love to the twelve tribes of Israel only. He does not love all human beings of the world.
15. It must be pointed out that Christianity is too narrow minded in religious belief and view, whereas, Buddhism offers equal love and equal rights to every human being of the world.
14. The belief in the creation of the world and all that are in it by God is totally a false belief and this must be widely publicised.
15. Strict inspection must be made of the contribution of funds collected from the rural, Christians, by ways of checking their accounts, noting down the amount of fund received at each time and also to check the records showing the increasing number of Christians members from time to time.
16. To study the full accounts of the Holy Ghost and to hold discussion over the subject.



Karen " Don " dance

Karen bamboo dance at Karen New Year Celebration at Wally

17. The belief in Christianity throughout Burma must be practically stopped by a subtle and skillful means, and if necessary, by the use of force.

As it can be seen plainly, what the Highest Honour Awarded Buddhist Monks' Purification Committee is planning to do is diametrically opposed to the teachings of Buddha who had given to all humanity a message of universal love, the essence of which is to live and let live in compassion, harmony and tolerance.

For this, we have but to conclude that the organization has been thoroughly infiltrated by agents of the BSPP and that the BSPP has gone into top gear employing a state sponsored Buddhist organization to suppress the other religious faiths in the country as part of its Burmanization plan in accordance with the policies of Burmese chauvinism.

INTERNAL STRUGGLE WITH THE TOP LEADERSHIP OF THE BSPP

The daily papers, journals, magazines and other periodicals under the central of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) write untiringly about the work of the party in adulatory terms, always suggesting that the state of Burma is about to arrive at the socialist paradise. The main theme of the propaganda is that due to the united strength and the proportional participation of the three classes namely, the workers, peasants and the intellectuals in the building of socialism under the leadership of the party and people's councils, the final goal has come to within a hand's reach. However hard the BSPP tries to cover up the real situation by propaganda, truth about it has a way to come out into the open more often than the BSPP leadership would wish.

To a casual observer, it may seem that the hard-cores, or the top part of the BSPP leadership are working harmoniously together in deceiving and exploiting the people of the country and sharing the spoils equitably. A deeper study, however, would reveal that there is an intense rivalry and wrangling among the BSPP top leaders trying to consolidate their own position, jockey for higher ones or pull the carpet from underneath one another. Their god-father, U Ne Win himself has often to spend much time to dress down his own proteges who have become dexterous in the manoeuvre for power and who, thus, have become potential contenders for his own seat. As a result, U Ne Win has become more and more paranoid and, gradually, he has come not to trust any one of his own party top leaders to relate with confidence. His paranoid has not been helped by the emergence of plots, from time to time, to topple him from power or the bickering

and the attempts among his own loyal followers to oust one another from position of power by craft and intrigue.

U Ne Win's staying power is partly due to his ruthlessness in dealing with his potential rivals. The latest to get the sack on suspicion of harbouring an ambition for U Ne Win's seat was Brigadier Gen. Tin Oo who at one time headed the Military Intelligence Service. Brig. Gen. Tin Oo was one of U Ne Win's trusted proteges upon whom he had leaned for support and protection. However, as Tin Oo had become more and more powerful and influential in the BSPP top leadership, he was dismissed and tried on the trumped-up charges of misappropriating a few thousand dollars of the secret fund. At present, the one time Brig. Tin Oo who was once tipped to be a potential successor to U Ne Win is taking rest in Insein jail, broken in health and spirit. After removing Tin Oo from the political scene by a clever ruse, U Ne Win entrusted Lay Maung, one of his other proteges, to systematically purge Tin Oo's trusted followers from position of power and influence. Lay Maung is now chief of the Military Intelligence Service, a position once occupied by Tin Oo before his removal.

Though Tin Oo has been done away with, U Ne Win cannot still back and enjoy peace. Just in last August, U Ne Win had to quietly take actions concerning a development. The matter had to do with the conspiracy of Aye Ko together with Sein Lwin to accumulate more and more power in their hands. In the eyes of U Ne Win, the two had committed a deadly sin, since their action could lead to an attempt to grab for the ultimate power.

The pre-emptive move by U Ne Win consisted of the calling of a meeting of top BSPP leaders at U Ne Win's house. When the leaders, including Aye Ko and Sein Lwin, arrived, U Ne Win, however, took only the two into a room and talked with them behind closed doors. As the talk went on the whole day, no meeting with the others took place. When the two finally came out, their faces were hard



U Aye Ko ,General Secretary
BSPP



U Ne Win, Chairman
BSPP



U Sein Lwin, Joint Secretary ,
BSPP

and flushed with indignation and bitterness. Nobody dared ask what happened or what they talked about in the room. Starting from the next day, Aye Ko and Sein Lwin were put under house-arrest for a number of weeks, while U Ne Win took time to think.

Aye Ko was once chief of the Northern Military Command and has developed a considerable influence and following in the army which is the main power-base of the BSPP. Sein Lwin, on the other hand, has climbed to the top by serving U Ne Win as a henchman to quell riots and disturbances. He was in command of the troops that shot and killed more than one hundred Rangoon University students in 1962. He is a ruthless character as U Ne Win, if met more, in pursuit of power and like Aye Ko, has a considerable following in the army. Aye Ko and Sein Lwin are General Secretary and Joint Secretary of the BSPP. The combined following of the two is as strong as the one commanded U Ne Win. Prior to the incident, Sein Lwin was known to hold gambling parties frequently in his own house quite openly, but there was nobody who dared to talk about it. This shows how much powerful Sein Lwin had become.

These considerations have led U Ne Win to be very hesitant and to act out of character in dealing with the two. Observers conclude that even if the two could be removed, it would be almost an insurmountable problem for U Ne Win either to win over or remove the following of the two from the army and the party.

Nowadays, the BSPP top leaders are working harder than ever forming cliques and gathering followers. They have learned from past experiences that if something happens, it is those who are not clique members and those with no followers are at disadvantage.

The person who is out of place in all this is president San Yu who has no following in the army as well as in the party. He is only a figure-head president. He is watching all the developments with much worry for if the rivalries in the party heat up and things come to a head he could be the person who would lose everything. Consequently, he is in a state of great demoralization.

U Ne Win is a person who does not give up easily and who has never tolerated any rival, real or imagined, for his position. Sooner or later he has to come to grips with the case of Aye Ko and Sein Lwin. If he becomes impatient and decides upon a show-down with the two sooner than it should be, things could lead to an upheaval in the party and the army both of which could self-destruct, and change in the history of the country for the better.

* * * * *

THE KAREN STATE QUESTION

After the atrocities at the hands of the Burma Independence Army(BIA) led by Aung San during the Second World War, when Burma came under the Japanese occupation, the Karens became convinced that they had to have a state of their own in order to freely decide their own destiny. Accordingly, the Karens submitted their demand for the creation of a Karen State, consisting of the Irrawaddy Division, in the Irrawaddy delta region, the Insein, Hanthawaddy district and Nyaunglebin subdivision of the Pegu division, and the old Tenassarim division (Toungoo district included) ,to the British government after the War. The British government, which was trying to get the most concession from the Burmese for the business operations of the British in post-independence Burma, simply urged the Karens to throw in their lot with the Burmese.

When the Burmese independence movement led by the same Aung San gathered momentum in 1946, the Karens became much alarmed. When the British considered for the inclusion of the frontier area into Burma as demanded by the Burmese politicians, the Karens desperately fought for the exclusion of the Special Salween District, which was in the frontier area and which had enjoyed a special autonomous status.

The Karen National Union(KNU) had all along been the leading organization for the Karens in their demand for a free state and , later,the exclusion of the special Salween district from Burma. In the face of Karens' adamant refusal to comply with their solicitation for a show of unity with them, the crafty Burmese politicians resorted to bribery and intimidation to devide the Karens. As a result a few from the KNU broke away and formed an organization known as the Karen Youth Organization under the tutelage of the Burmese.

When the British formed an enquiry commission called Frontiers Area Commission Agency(FACA) to gather evidence, the KYO together with the Burmese made much effort to disrupt the KNU's activities, again by bribery and intimidation. The most illustrative case of Burmese trickery was the bribing of four ordinary Karens of Papun,Salween district, led by one Saw LuLu to testify in front of FACA as recognised representatives of Karens in the district.



Playing Karen harp on Karen New Year Day

"Katein " festival at KNU HQ. Manerplaw

The following extract from an official report written by J.L.Leyden, Director of Frontiers Area Administration, evidently shows that the Karens had been denied a legitimate autonomous state by the trickery of the Burmese politicians.

There is a document and a copy of it as well written by J.L.Leyden, Director of Frontiers Area Administration, sent as despatch 188, May 10, 1949 from the American Embassy to U.S. State Department,

"Representative witnesses were selected and expressed the view that they did not wish to unite with Burma. Their evidence apparently represented correctly the views of the Karens of the Salween district, but an attempt to set this evidence aside was made by a group of young Karens, headed by Saw Lu Lu. This Saw Lu Lu party was in favor of participation in the Burma constitution as an ordinary district of Burma. Unfortunately the FACA accepted the evidence given by Saw Lu Lu and his supporters and recommended the inclusion of the Salween district in Burma as an ordinary district. The wrongful nature of this decision was made clear in the election for the constituent assembly when Saw Lu Lu and his supporters suffered a severe defeat by election of Weregaw and T.Po Ku, member of the other side."

This document has been dug up by Professor H.Klein, a friend of Kawthoolei. We were very grateful to him for sending us such a valuable piece of evidence to support the Karens claim that the Burmese have been using trickery, deception and out-right lies to deny the Karens of their lawful and valid rights.

The following is Prof. H.Klein's comment on the Salween district affair.

- (1) What this means is that the KNU has been right all along in saying they were wrongfully done out of an autonomous state.
- (2) They were being vindicated.
- (3) British historians, especially Robert Taylor will now have to cut their words that the Karens are radicals and insurgents - the implication being if they are insurgents who act illegally. They have no standing. The Karen uprising is justified because they were wrongfully done out of an autonomous state as promised in the Panlong Conference and which Aung San had approved. The subsequent FACA inquiry under U Nu was clearly an illegal act.
- (4) The FACA (Frontiers Area Commission Agency) report is flawed by their own secretary's admission.



Refugees arriving Somo camp with their luggages

Scene at refugees camp

ANNUAL SUMMARY REPORT OF KULA MILITARY ACTIVITIES FOR THE YEAR 1985/86
(1st JUNE 1985 TO 31st MAY 1986)

Total	GHO Area	Pa Dom Dist	101	6	5	4	3	2	1	MILITARY ZONE	
										170	909
	2	6	83	11	-	11	16	16	25	25	Ene Attacks
	21	175	160	90	124	74	42	28	195	195	Own Attacks
	76	154	59	290	2	7	142	19	174	174	Own Mine Bombs
	113	379	150	385	240	83	141	50	180	180	Killed
	328	389	413	767	492	103	121	61	186	186	Wounded
	2	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	5	5	Captured
	-	-	-	6	-	3	-	3	-	-	Surrender
	10	20	21	47	7	30	3	2	57	57	Small Arms
	5	2	-	2	2	1	-	-	9	9	Heavy Arms
87336	10258	770	2062	11687	2428	1395	-	-	8825	8825	Small Arms Ammunition
717	130	1	94	107	215	-	-	-	170	170	Heavy Arms Ammunition
77	39	-	-	21	10	5	-	-	2	2	Bombs
	12	17	25	26	18	18	13	3	-	-	Killed
	16	13	46	24	15	7	5	3	-	-	Wounded
	-	-	-	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	Captured
	-	-	1	-	1	3	3	1	-	-	Surrender
	-	9	7	34	-	11	22	7	109	109	Total Arms
10444	-	320	320	3024	-	-	410	-	6370	6370	Total Ammos
	-	10	19	26	-	8	36	15	45	45	Killed
	1	11	16	25	-	10	20	-	68	68	Wounded
											R E M A R K S
											Ene Officers 4 Kld 2 Wdd 7 Bridges 6 Cars Destroyed
											Ene Officer 1 Kld 1 Wdd 1 Bridge 1 Car Destroyed
											Ene Officers 4 Kld 1 Wdd 1 Train 1 Car Destroyed
											Ene Officers 3 Kld 1 Wdd 4 Factories 1 Car Destroyed
											Ene Officers 4 Kld 3 Wdd
											Ene Officers 10 Kld 20 Wdd 10 Cars Destroyed
											Ene Officers 5 Kld 6 Wdd 5 Bridges 10 Cars Destroyed
											Ene Officers 3 Kld 1 Wdd 1 Bridge 10 Cars Destroyed
											Ene Officer 1 Kld 1 Wdd 1 Train 1 Car Destroyed

THE KAREN TRIBES OF BURMA

The Karens possess all the five basic characteristics of a nation , namely ;

- (1) Specific historical background ,
- (2) A particular language of their own ,
- (3) Specific customs and culture ,
- (if) Specific land of settlement , and
- (5) Identical economy.

Though the Karens possess all these five characteristics that make a nation, yet, time and oppression had driven them apart causing them to be scattered and divided.

An official statement on May 6, 1936 of the Governor of Burma stated that there are 11 different tribes of Karens, namely; (1) Sgaw, (2) Pwo, (3) Taung Tha (Pa-O) , (if)Paku, (5) Maw Nay Pwa, (6) Bwe, (7) White Karens, (8) Padaung,(9)Red Karens(Karenni), (10) Keko, and (11) Keba .

At the commemoration of the 17th anniversary of the Burmese Union Day on February 12, 1964 the Ne Win military government stated that there are altogether 12 Karen tribes, namely; (1) Keko, (2) Keba, (3) White Karen, (if) Sgaw, (5) Pre', (6) Pwo, (7) Paku, (8) Paleiki, (9) Yin Baw, (10) Black Karen, (11) Red Karen(Karenni) and (12) Yintale'.

Again, at the 18th anniversary of the union Day a year later,officials of the so-called Karen State announced that there are 11 Karen tribes. According to them, the 11 tribes are; (1) Sgaw, (2) Pwo, (3) Paku, (if) Bwe, (5) Maw Nay Pwa , (6) Tha Ler Pwa, (7) Keko, (8)Keba, (9) Paleiki, (10) Moh Pwa and (11) White Karens .

In its official announcement, the Ne Win government no longer classify the Pa-os(Thaung Thus) , Karennis (Kayahs) and Padaungs(Kayan) as Karens though these people until today proclaim themselves to be of the Karen tribe. The language they speak are identical to the Karen language and differ only in accent and tone. The Burmese greater-nationalists have been trying through the ages and are still trying today to brood diversity and sow discord among the Karen tribes so as to undermine their solidarity there by making it more easier for them to oppress the Karens .

Black Karens and Striped Karens live in the North Eastern Shan State and so, geographically they are isolated from the rest of the Karen communities. Consequently, decades of interrelationship with the Shans have turned many of them into Shans. But there are many who until today proclaim themselves as Yangs (Karens) and not Shans (Tai). In many ways their language and culture are still identical to those of the Karens.

Paku, Bwe, Maw Nay Pwa, Tha Ler Pwa, Keko, Keba, Moh Pwa, Paleiki are Karens who live in Thandaung township of Toungoo district. Some Bwes and Pakus also live in the Karenni state. Paleiki (Tawbyagyi) is but a single village and the only factor that differentiates its villagers from the Bwe family is the utilization of the consonants " f,v and z " in the Paleiki spoken dialect. Tha Ler Pwa is a group of 7 or 8 villages in the Paku sector and their spoken dialect does really differ from Paku and Maw Nay Pwa. Likewise, Moh Pwa is a group of 7 or 8 villages

at the foot of the Thandaung hills and they are but members of the Bwe family.

Bwe Moh Pwa, Bwe Muh Htaw (Red Karens or Karenni), Keko, Keba, Paleiki, Pre', Manu, Manaw are all classified as members of the Bwe family.

Nowadays, the Karens can be found scattered in different places inside Burma as follows:

- (1) Sgaw - in the whole Irrawaddy Delta region, in the Pegu Yoma and in the Eastern Yoma.
- (2) Pwo - In the Irrawaddy Delta region, especially in Maubin, Myaung Mya, Bassein districts and also in Pa an, Moulmein and Mergui districts in the Eastern Yoma.
- (3) Paku - in Toungoo district between Myitngan and Thaukyegan chaungs.
- (4) Bwe - in Toungoo district north of Thaukyegan chaung.
- (5) Keko, Keba - in Toungoo district especially in Leik Tho township.
- (6) Red Karens (Bwe) (Karenni) also comprising of Manu, Manaw and Pre' - In the Karenni State.
- (7) Maw Nay Pwa - in Toungoo district between Myitngan and Mon chaungs.
- (8) Padaung (Kayan) - in Karenni State in Kyet Po Gyi, Bawlake' and Mo Bye' of Shan States.
- (9) White Karens - in the Pyinmana hills. They belong to the Sgaw family but live in areas between the Sgaws, Bwes, Padaungs and Pa-os.
- (10) Black Karens - in Upper Shan State along the valley of the Nam Pan, a tributary of the Salween river.
- (11) Striped Karens - In central Shan State along the valley of the Nam Tin, a tributary of the Salween river especially in Loilem and Mauk Mai townships.
- (12) Pa-os - in Southern Shan State and also in Thaton district and Toungoo district.

Anthropologists agreed that the above mentioned groups are families of the Karen race. Karen in Sgaw is Ka Nyaw, in Karenni it is Ka Yah, in Padaung it is Ka Yang, in White Karen, Black Karen, Striped Karen and Pa-o it is Yang. The Shans and the Chinese also call the Karens, Yangs .



The enemy porters were permitted to go home, after keeping well fed

Enemy porters who fled and arrived Wankha camp

POPULATION FIGURE OF THE KARENS

In the history of Burma, the latest and most complete population census taken was way back in 1931 and this census showed the population of Burma at that time to be 14.6 millions. The population of the Karens according to this census was merely 1.3 million. The Karens and other ethnic minorities refused to accept the figures as complete and accurate for the following reasons:-

- (1) This census was based more on language groups than on ethnic origin;
- (2) The officials assigned to take the population census were mostly Burmese;
- (3) Buddhists were generally classified as Burmese;
- (4) Karens who could not speak their native tongue were also classified as Burmese;

A lot of Karens in areas like the Irrawaddy delta region, Kamayut in Rangoon suburb, the Delta plain, and Hanthawaddy, Tharawaddy and Prome districts could not speak their native tongue.

- (5) Ignorant Karens in the hilly regions were suspicious of the population census and did not submit their names;
- (6) There were even some Karen elders who did not fully understand the importance of national census and so they deliberately minimise the number of Karens in their areas.

Successive greater Burmese nationalists who came into power have been ruling the country by force and are still trying to eliminate the ethnic minorities in three main ways, vis.

- (1) By annihilation in the battlefields;
- (2) By absorption of language and culture;
- (3) By assimilation through matrimony;

The ethnic minorities also on their part subconsciously gave away their national identity and consequently, with the passing of time were technically Burmanised.

There were four basic factors that compelled the ethnic minorities to give away their national identity and adopt another language and culture.

- (1) By conquest they had to submit to the will of the victors;
- (2) By absorption and assimilation their language and culture faded away;

