



# BURMA LINKS



OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2000

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## Still No Freedom from Fear in Burma

For a while this fall — as the SPDC regime tightened its noose around the necks of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD colleagues — it seemed as if the SPDC generals' long-term plan to destroy its world-renowned, democratic opposition was moving ahead.

In September and October the state-run media kept up a constant barrage of hysterical vilification and physical threats even after Daw Suu and her companions had been put under house arrest after they tried to meet supporters in Rangoon and Mandalay. Two hundred riot police with flashing lights and high-speed vehicles were judged necessary to return them to Rangoon. They and their supporters were manhandled later when they tried to travel to Mandalay from the Rangoon train station. Daw Suu is alleged to have been handcuffed. One hundred of her supporters are still in Insein prison.

But the world, and the students of Burma, responded. At three just-opened universities — newly set up in the countryside at a 'safe' distance from Rangoon — posters appeared calling for more freedom and opposing the SPDC's new university system. (The school year has



been shortened and all undergraduate courses are being held at least an hour's bus ride from Rangoon and major cities.) Riot police were again sent out from Rangoon to comb through the universities. The regime said the students were having exams and that universities had not really been closed.

ASEAN showed signs of getting fed up with its newest member. Thailand's efforts to form a 'troika' with Vietnam and Brunei to negotiate with the regime reflected willingness to move away from its policy of non-interference. The Royal Thai Army, unable to stop the flood of millions of amphetamine tablets crossing the border from Burma, recognizes that the drug link between traffickers and the Burmese military must be cut. Even China has hinted that it doesn't really care who is in charge as long as the explosion of illicit drugs crossing the border into Yunnan is stopped. Australians and their politicians attacked their country's sponsorship of human rights seminars which continued in Rangoon while the NLD leadership was being held incommunicado by the regime. The Swiss froze all Burmese assets held in Switzerland and banned the export of materiel that could be used for repression. The European Union

extended its 'common position' against the regime and hedged about whether it would show up to the EU-ASEAN meeting scheduled for December in Vientiane. And Japanese women turned out in Tokyo demanding that their government, one of the regime's prized investors, take firmer action against the generals.

Perhaps United Nations special envoy Razali Ismail's reports on widespread torture throughout the country and serial massacres in Shan state will result in strong new UN initiatives. Perhaps overdue efforts, led by the USA, to put Burma's crisis before Security Council members will bear fruit. Perhaps evidence of systematic forced labour in Burma will convince the International Labour Organization next month to impose meaningful sanctions on Burma.

And perhaps, just perhaps, Canada's new foreign minister John Manley will find the political will to end loopholes that allow this country to support the regime by its trade and investment. Through taxes and individual stock purchases the biggest foreign mining operation in Burma, Ivanhoe Mines (50 percent owned by the SPDC), is supported by Canadians and Canadian law. Our imports of Burma-made cheap clothes have more than doubled and other imports are rising since the government imposed its weak version of sanctions on the regime in 1997.

This is a disgrace to the shining example of Daw Suu, her brave companions, and to all Canadians.

Join CANADA-**BURMA ACTION** **ONLINE!** page 5



# Canada Lags Behind on Burma

Canada has a new foreign minister, John Manley. What must he do to gain the support of Canadians who want to see their country take firm action in support of Burmese democrats and their leader, Nobel Peace laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi? We understand that the Hon Lloyd Axworthy had the best interests of the Burmese people at heart but his record, especially in recent months, failed to reach standards set by our international partners.

## Canadian Corporate Complicity

Most glaring is our government's refusal to sanction Canadian investment in Burma. The biggest foreign mining venture in Burma is registered in the Yukon and is only the biggest of several Canadian mining companies nosing around Burma. Among others are Leeward Capital, Mindoro, International Panorama Resources, Lyons Lake, Palmer Resources, Sea-Sun Star Co., Silver Standard Resources, and Teck Corp. Oil and other companies doing business in Burma include Prime Resources Management, BC Gas, Kilborn-SNC Lavelin, Canadian Helicopters International, Reitmans, and Nortel Networks. Government lawyers say they have no power to stop this indirect support of the regime. We say they must and can find ways to do so. Canadians who support the return of democracy to Burma demand it.

## Britain

Last spring the British government took braver action. In an unprecedented move, it asked Premier Oil to close its operations in Burma and relinquish its 27% stake in the huge Yetagun gas project. A British foreign affairs committee concluded that constructive engagement with the regime "does not appear to have solid ethical foundations". British investment in Burma has ranked among the top three for the past seven years.

## Belgium

And the Belgian government, instituting a new policy of applying ethical criteria for government purchasing, has given notice it will end its contract with TotalFinaElf in September 2001 because of the company's complicity in human rights abuses in building the Yadana pipeline.

## Switzerland and Liechtenstein

This October, both Switzerland and Liechtenstein imposed sanctions against Burma's junta, prohibiting arms exports to Burma and freezing the bank accounts of junta officials. In addition, Switzerland will expel all military personnel attached to Myanmar's diplomatic missions and all non-humanitarian aid will be suspended.

## The USA

In the USA, the appeal of the decision to strike down the

Massachusetts Burma Law to end state contracts with corporations doing business with Burma was dismissed by the Supreme Court, which ruled in favour of the National Foreign Trade Council, a powerful corporate lobby group. But the decision was narrow enough to allow states and cities to pass new laws penalizing companies that do business with the Burmese regime. In addition, activists are in the process of campaigning to extend the current US federal sanctions, which prohibit new investment in Burma, to include to ban on apparel imports from Burma.

## The European Union

The European Union, renewing its visa ban against SPDC officials visiting Burma, is also under notice by the European Parliament to institute sanctions. The EU is also banning the export of any equipment that might be used for internal repression or terrorism.

These strong international initiatives reflect poorly on Canada. The upcoming federal election gives us all a chance to use our political muscle to demand stronger action.

## Internal Conflict Plagues Burma's Military Regime

**July 7, 2000:** Brig.-Gen. Zaw Tun, deputy minister for national planning and economic development, revealed that official data for growth had been grossly, and deliberately, exaggerated. He called the Burma Investment Commission "too protective" and accused the government of spurring inflation by printing money. Zaw Tun has since been dismissed and placed under house arrest.

**August 28, 2000:** Naval chief and SPDC member Vice-Adm. Nyunt Thein submitted his "voluntary resignation".

**September 11, 2000:** 17 high-ranking naval officers were dismissed. Many naval officers, loyal to Nyunt Thein, are also reported to have submitted resignations.

*Analysts believe the navy shake-up reflects the larger rivalry between Gen. Maung Aye, the army chief and SPDC vice-chairman, and intelligence boss Lt.-Gen. Khin Nyunt. Resentment has also been growing over the increasing authority army officers have in coastal areas.*

Thanks for the photos this issue: Richelle Forsey page 7; Jamie Kneen page 3; Dr. Alice Khin Saw Win page 3; Rosy DT Yee page 6

# Canadian Mining Companies — The Grave Diggers of Burma

“Grave Diggers”, a report on mining in Burma by international mining expert Roger Moody claims there are more Canadian mines in Burma than from any other foreign country. And although regulations in Burma are lax, human rights and environmental standards virtually non-existent and free speech is denied, the mining industry itself, the Canadian stock exchanges that sell them, and the laws governing corporations in Canada, all fail to provide safeguards against the impacts of this mining on the Burmese people or the environments in which they live.

Moreover, “Grave diggers makes it clear that Canada is complicit in maintaining the dictatorship in Burma, through its unjust tax and corporate laws”, says Joan Kuyek, National Coordinator for MiningWatch Canada.

For instance Ivanhoe Mines, registered in the Yukon and listed on major Canadian stock exchanges is Burma’s biggest foreign-owned mine in a 50-50 partnership with the regime. Like all Canadian mining ventures it is eligible for Federal Foreign Exploration and Development tax credits and similar credits from whichever province or territory it is registered in. These credits enable it and its subsidiaries to pool all their expenses and each year deduct an amount up to their foreign resource income from this pool. If they have little or no foreign income they can deduct up to 10% of the pool against their Canadian income. They are also eligible for the Capital Cost Allowance and Accelerated Capital Cost Allowance — provisions that can mean they pay no income tax at all.

MiningWatch Canada and CFOB launched the report in Ottawa and the Yukon on Sept.18, the 12th anniversary of the military coup in Burma. It is the first systematic investigation into mining in Burma, naming the companies involved, their relationship with the ruling regime, and, in some cases, the situation of miners, local people, and the general population.

Reports from people in the area of the Ivanhoe Monywa copper mine indicate severe environmental damage and skin irritations. These are probably caused by the heap leaching extraction method employed which uses sulphuric acid or bacterial agents and results in highly toxic drainoff that leaks into the ground water.

The NLD says the military used forced labour in building roads near the mine and local people say that the hundreds of villagers in the way of the expanding mine have been forcibly relocated and their property confiscated with no compensation.

The president of Ivanhoe Mines, Daniel Kunz responded to the report by questioning its validity alleging it to be “full of



Roger Moody

blatant falsehoods, bias and misrepresentations” and calling the author, Roger Moody, an “anti-mining zealot”. Mr. Kunz confirms the privileged relationship of his company with Burma’s military regime and even implies that the generals are preservers of peace. “There are 146 different tribes and ethnic groups that have been at civil war for decades and decades...It’s complicated. The military government, unfortunately, is probably the only form of government that can deal with such a complex problem.”

## Dr. Alice Perseveres

From risking her life in Rangoon to the cold streets of Edmonton Alberta, Dr. Alice Khin Saw Win continues to fight for her country’s pro-democracy movement. A physician and lecturer at Rangoon General Hospital, she witnessed the brutal crackdown of Burma’s military regime on thousands of unarmed protestors in August 1988 and was there on the afternoon of August 10, when the military opened fire on the hospital itself.

Dr. Alice took care of the injured and continued to take a leadership role in organizing her fellow doctors and nurses to join in the pro-democracy activities. She became Daw Aung San Suu Kyi’s personal physician and one of her close associates and provided medical care to her supporters. Her extensive medical treatment of one of Daw Suu’s student supporters was the final straw for the military, who forced her to resign from her position in March 1989. By means of a large bribe, Dr. Alice was able to obtain a passport and leave the country for Singapore in July 1989.

Dr. Alice continues to work in the medical field as a faculty lecturer at the Faculty of Nursing and Medicine at the University of Alberta but she also continues to fight for the betterment of her country. As the president of Burma Watch International, she is at the forefront of lobbying politicians and raising the consciousness of Canadians about the situation in Burma. She also produces two radio shows for Radio Free Asia which are broadcast inside Burma: *Know the Ailment, Find the Cure* deals with current health issues of concern in the country and the *Children’s Corner* broadcasts children’s morality stories.



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# UPDATES

## EPIDEMIC KILLS THOUSANDS IN EASTERN SHAN STATE

An epidemic of malaria, anthrax and typhoid has ravaged the town of Maung Yawn in Burma's Shan state. A Thai military source said that as many as 10,000 residents of Maung Yawn have died since July. It is one of the worst epidemics to hit Southeast Asia in recent years. Maung Yawn has become the main southern headquarters for the Red Wa army, which moved thousands of Wa settlers into the area from their homes in the northern Wa Hills over the past year. The Wa army, known as the UWSA, is considered to be one of the world's leading drug producers. Most of the people who have died are civilians as USWA soldiers get whatever medication exists, though it is usually out-of-date. The USWA has brought in 20 Chinese doctors to attempt to bring the epidemic under control. Thai officials are keeping a close watch on the border to stop the diseases from spreading. They fear the UWSA will send more illicit drugs into Thailand to raise money to fight the epidemic.

## US WANTS UN TO CONSIDER NLD CRISIS

In an effort to put the worsening situation in Burma on the agenda of the UN Security Council the United States raised the subject of the SPDC's confinement of Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi before delegates this fall. The US wanted the UN Secretariat to brief the Council on the military crackdown but Russia, China and Malaysia were reluctant, saying it was internal domestic politics and didn't constitute a threat to peace and security. US deputy ambassador Nancy Soderberg said that Washington will continue to consult with council members "to try to work out a way forward," and will keep raising Burma's actions in the council.

## INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION LIKELY TO IMPOSE SANCTIONS

For the first time in its 80 year history, the governing body of the ILO is likely to impose diplomatic sanctions on one of its members. If the Burmese military regime does not improve conditions regarding forced labour in Burma by November 30, Article 33 will be invoked, which permits the body to decide on "such action as it may deem wise and expedient to secure compliance". Two years ago an ILO commission of inquiry into forced labour in Burma found the practice to be "widespread and systemic". Forced labour has been a state-sanctioned practice prevalent throughout Burma for years, particularly in rural and border areas.

## CHIN REFUGEES BEING RETURNED DESPITE INDIA'S OBLIGATION

Since July 25, 2000, hundreds of Chin and other refugees from Burma have been arrested and detained in Mizoram State, India. At least 90 have been deported under India's Foreigners Act, and a 25-year old Chin man, Mr. Lalrichana, died while being detained in the lock-up of Aizawl, the Mizoram capital, central police station on August 3. The Chin refugees in Mizoram have fled repression and persecution under Burma's military junta. Along with religious persecution, there have been instances of mass forced labour, looting of homes, and rape of women by the army. Deportees are likely to encounter the same conditions when they return. India is bound the principle of "non-refoulement", which obliges states not to forcibly return anyone to a country where they would risk serious human rights violations.

## ARMY USES LAND MINES IN MOST OF BURMA

The Burmese Army is one of only three government armies in Asia, and the only one in ASEAN, alleged to have used anti-personnel landmines in the past year — and Burma's mines produce more casualties today than in any other country in SE Asia, including Cambodia. The Landmine Monitor 2000 Report, published in September, released these facts in a report that includes details of how and where anti-personnel landmines were used in the past year. They occur in 10 out of 14 of Burma's states and divisions and are mostly located close to the country's borders with Bangladesh and Thailand, where long running civil wars with ethnic combatants continue to be fought. (The full report and other documents relating to Burma's landmine crisis can be found at: <[www.igc.org/nonviolence/burmamines/lm2.html](http://www.igc.org/nonviolence/burmamines/lm2.html)>)

## UNOCAL CLEARED ... FOR NOW

A federal judge in the United States cleared Unocal in September of responsibility for human rights abuses committed during the construction of the Yadana pipeline in Burma. Fifteen Burmese villagers attempted to hold the American oil company accountable for the forced labour, torture and other crimes against humanity committed by their venture partner, Burma's military regime. Although a Unocal spokesperson acknowledged that Unocal was aware that human rights abuses were being committed by the military during the building of the pipeline, Judge Lew ruled in favour of the company. Lawyers for the villagers said they would appeal the case and predicted it could end up in the Supreme Court.

# BURMA ACTION

To make "Burma Action" most effective, we need your help. Please contact us with activity ideas and event information in advance of our next publication.

## University Re-opening a Fraud, Suu Kyi Says

The re-opening of Myanmar's universities this summer, announced the same day ASEAN opened its meeting in Bangkok, is a sham aimed at defusing criticism of the regime, says NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

"The universities have been re-opened because of pressure on the government but this is a mere surface job to make people believe there has been progress in Burma...We would like governments and the student organisations of the world to think of education in Burma as part of our broader political situation".

Universities were closed December 1996 after student demonstrations. They have been closed sporadically since 1988. Students have been at the forefront of demands for democracy and human rights since Burma's independence. Sources in Burma say far fewer students have returned to class this academic year than the regime claims. They are again forced to take an oath of loyalty. Campuses have been moved out of cities to the countryside, often near military barracks. A 2-hour journey to class is not unusual. The student year has been compressed into 3 months and there are few text books. A class of 400 medical students had to rely on 6 manuals dating from the 1960s.

## Join Burma's International "Open Schools Campaign"

*spearheaded in Canada by Rights and Democracy in cooperation with Amnesty International's French and English sections.*

*Contact CFOB for postcards. Keep in mind, November 17 is a Global Day of Action for the Open Schools Campaign—plan your events for this date if possible!*



## Wal-Mart Canada in Burma: A Tangled Tale

*Wal-Mart, which denied importing goods from Burma last June, was still doing so and is still selling them in their stores.*

When CFOB learned of Wal-Mart's imports from Burma last year it joined forces with ETAG (Ethical Trading Action Group) which had already targeted Wal-Mart for its sweatshop labour practices. ETAG, the Canadian government and the Retail Council of Canada then discussed codes of conduct and ETAG brought up the subject of Wal-Mart. Wal-Mart told the Retail Council it no longer sourced from Burma. However, Wal-Mart did not respond to ETAG's requests for further information until last June, when its director of public affairs, Andrew Pelletier assured the group Wal-Mart was not importing from the only company in Burma he claimed supplied Wal-Mart. But by July CFOB and ETAG learned that Wal-Mart's imports, from four companies in Burma, had actually increased in the previous six months. One of these companies it buys from is owned by the infamous drug trafficker Lo Hsing-han. Mr Pelletier says any "Made in Myanmar" goods in his stores came from old orders. We say quit doing business there until democracy is won — and let's have it all in writing.

### CFOB's new web site has been launched !

**Visit us online** at <[www.cfob.org](http://www.cfob.org)> Please note: the site is still in process so will improve over time!

### Join the action Online!

**Subscribe** to the Canada-Burma inter-active list-serve and get postings about current action in Canada, the political situation in Burma—and you can participate in stimulating political debates—all from a Canadian perspective. Email: [canada-burma-subscribe@onelist.com](mailto:canada-burma-subscribe@onelist.com)

## A Woman of Distinction--Rosy Yee

**R**osy DT Yee of Winnipeg won the YMCA's Women of Distinction Award for her establishment and on-going work with Empowering Women of Burma (EWOB). Founded in 1992, EWOB is a humanitarian organization working for all women of Burma irrespective of ethnicity, religion or political belief on the Thai-Burma border. A mother of five children, Rosy herself was forced to leave Burma due her support of her country's pro-democracy movement. EWOB has established eight nursery schools and has plans for another 11. EWOB has also provided sewing, weaving, typing and teacher's training for over 500 refugees and displaced women. "These kinds of training are so important for the women", Rosy says, "the organization is not only providing them with valuable skills but at the same time provides these women with alternatives to the sex trade." Congratulations Rosy!

*Children studying in EWOB's Morning Star Practicing School in Mae Khong Kha, a refugee camp on the Thai-Burma border.*



## Coalition on Militarized Commerce

**C**anadian Friends of Burma has formed the Coalition on Militarized Commerce (CMC) that will push the federal government to deal with the problem of Canadian corporate involvement in zones of civil conflict where grave breaches of human rights and human security are occurring. The CMC intends to place an emphasis on the situations in Sudan, Burma, Columbia and Sierra Leone and is seeking support from organizations across Canada that are concerned with this issue.

Focus on the problem of corporate involvement with human rights abusing regimes was greatly heightened by the Sudan situation. The release of the Canadian government-sponsored Harker Report in particular, which concludes that the presence of Talisman Energy Inc. in southern Sudan is contributing to serious human rights violations by the Sudanese government, significantly raised the profile of this issue.

This problem has also taken on greater importance in light of Canada's evolving "human security" policy. Having recognized that civilians are increasingly the principal victims of modern conflict, the government has stressed it is necessary to develop a policy framework that will promote adherence to international human rights standards and humanitarian law. However, while the government has recognized the centrality of human rights protection, it has not advanced specific policies to deal with the problem of Canadian business operations that contribute to human rights violations in conflict areas.

As a result of widespread criticism, the government has announced it will work with businesses on voluntary codes of conduct. There is, however, serious concern that codes of conduct alone will be insufficient to ensure that corporations engaged with repressive regimes or militaries adhere to international human rights standards and do not undermine human security.

Rather than leaving this issue to the discretion of the corporate sector, the CMC has drawn up a list of policy options that it will present to the government. Contact your local MP and urge them to support the CMC's recommendations!

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**Montreal**—Founder, Jean-Michel Archambault-Cyr of a new Burma group, le Comité de solidarité Birmanie, says the group is extremely enthusiastic and has already started plans to raise awareness and support for Burma. Last year he began working with Rights and Democracy on a selective purchasing campaign and more recently the Open Schools Campaign. This past Aug. he went to Burma to participate in a forum on education organized by the NLD and since then he says, there's no turning back. Until the group's website is up, contact them at: (514) 270-0104 or <birmanie@cam.org>

**Ottawa**— About 40 people gathered on Parliament Hill to mark the 12th anniversary of the 8-8-88 massacre August 7. Representatives from BSDO and CFOB condemned the SPDC and called for greater support from the Canadian government for the Burma pro-democracy movement. The Canadian Federation of Students spoke of the need to increase solidarity with Burma groups. The demonstrators, carrying an effigy of Khin Nyunt continued their protest at the Myanmar embassy.

**Toronto**—To show solidarity with Suu Kyi while she was in a stand-off with the military, Burma groups in Toronto held a candle light vigil on Sept 1. Supporters from groups including BSDO, the Toronto Burma Roundtable and members of the Mon, Karen, Shan and Kachin ethnic groups participated.

**Toronto**— the Toronto Burma Roundtable held a demonstration on Sep12, the day of



the provincial Mines Ministers' meeting in Toronto. Playing on the theme of a new, damning report about Canadian mining in Burma called Grave Diggers, they acted out the report's title by lying on the ground, covered in soil, to illustrate the fact that the suffering of the people of Burma is supported by Canadian mining companies' investment in the country.

**Winnipeg**— Nearly 200 Winnipeg Burma activists had the chance to taste Burmese curry for the first time at a successful fundraising dinner last spring. Both Judy Wasyluscia-Leis, MP from Winnipeg North and Muriel Smith, former vice premier of Manitoba spoke at the event which raised more than \$1600 for Burma projects.

**Edmonton**— About 60 people showed up to the demonstration organized by Burma Watch International at the University of Alberta's International Centre on Aug 8 to commemorate 8-8-88. Amnesty International

members attended along with Alberta MLAs, Raj Pannu (NDP) and Ed Gibbons (Liberal). The two MLAs spoke to the group about the situation in Burma and the importance of Canadian support.

The **East Kootenay Friends of Burma** was finally able to welcome the Burmese "We are doing a sponsorship drive now, because we are committed to paying for all these folks financial needs for one year." says Shauna Jimenez, who is a pro at bringing Burmese refugees to Canada. "We ask people to send us 12 post-dated cheques (tax-deductible) for whatever amount they can afford." Contact Shauna at Box 139 Wasa Lake, BC V0B 2K0 or shau-najimenez@cyberlink.bc.ca

**Vancouver**— On Aug 5, Burma activists held a demonstration in Surrey to commemorate the 8.8.88 massacre while protesting Wal-Mart Canada's business in Burma. A rally was also held on September 16 to show support for Daw Suu in her confrontation with the SPDC. The BSDO, the Karen-Canadian Community and the Mon Community of Canada participated.

**Whitehorse**— The Yukon Development Education Centre presented Caught in the Crossfire in their film festival last May. The film examines the impact Burma's struggle has on the women of Burma. After the video, a discussion was facilitated.

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**BEANS, BEANS THE MUSICAL FRUIT**

the More You Export the More You Toot : Burma is the largest beans and pulses exporter among member nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation, Nyunt Tin says Myanmar’s ambition is to become the second largest exporter of beans and pulses in the world. Democracy activists are surely not surprised, knowing all along that Burma’s military was full of beans.

**THAIS, WHO REVERE ELEPHANTS**

as a national symbol, were relieved to hear this summer that Motala, the Thai elephant who stepped on a landmine on the Burma border, is able to walk again. She is in satisfactory general condition, almost returned to normal,” said veterinarian Preecha Puangkhan, a specialist at an elephant hospital in northern Lampang province. The Thai people, who watched regularly televised reports on Motala after the accident, contributed more than 4 million baht (\$105,000) to her recovery despite the country’s worst recession on record.

**SPDC TRAINS ITS “DIPLOMATS”**

— an Oxymoron or What? Burma’s Secretary-1, Lt-Gen. Khin Nyunt attended the opening ceremony of the country’s first course in diplomatic skills for senior officials in the midst of the Sept stand-off between the generals and Suu Kyi and her colleagues as they attempted to travel to a NLD meeting in a Rangoon suburb. “The course ... has been instituted to impart knowledge of diplomacy and international relations ....”

Secretary-1 told 36 trainee officers, as his riot police just up the road handcuffed the world’s most renowned democracy leader and her colleagues. “Today is a landmark day in the annals of our diplomatic history” etc. We wait with bated breath the results...

**JAPANESE WOMEN GET UPPITY:**

16 women MPs of the Socialist Democratic Party of Japan, led by party leader Takako Doi, were not impressed when they visited the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Sept 1 to urge more appropriate measures towards the Burmese government. “The blockade of Aung San Suu Kyi’s trip to her supporters is a clear violation of human rights. We are deeply concerned about the future of democracy in Burma”. In response, they were told by Kunihiko Maki-ta, director of Asian Affairs Bureau, that “The Japanese government does not practice the kind of strong measures taken by the US and EU. They hurt the pride of the generals in Rangoon. The generals never listen to the US and EU. Although Japan has suspended ODA to Burma, it is the only country among developed nations to be accepted by Rangoon...”

**BOOKSHOPS FINED**

for importing books on Suu Kyi: Five bookstore owners had to take an oath and swear they would never again import international magazines that might have articles about Daw Suu. They had to pay a fine of 30,000 kyat each. Maj. Thura Lwin, secretary of South Rangoon District Peace and Development Council, had spotted articles in the journals about Suu Kyi’s stand off at Dala.

**CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT**

with the military regime in Rangoon will do little to improve human rights in Burma, Australia’s ambassador to the country said in a leaked memo in August. “The State Peace and Development Council shows no sign of being interested in relinquishing power,” his cable said. “There are clearly no grounds for optimism in the SPDC’s unchanging approach to opponents of the regime. “Rather, all the indicators point to the regime being determined to remain in power at all costs, allowing only marginal reforms in the economy and society.” Nonetheless the Australian government has since gone ahead with all its 3 human rights workshops in Rangoon. 75 members of the Burma bureaucracy, hand-picked by the junta, attended.

**BURMA PRO-DEMOCRACY**

advocates were baffled by the UN’s decision to allow the election of Mya Than, the permanent representative of Burma to the UN Office in Geneva, as chairman of the First Committee for the 55th General Assembly. The First Committee is in charge of disarmament and international security. Mya Than has been closely associated with the work of the UN in various capacities since 1984, with disarmament and international security issues in particular. But in light of the repeated condemnations issued by the UN membership condemning the Burma regime’s gross human rights violations Mya Than’s chairmanship is quixotic to say the least.

*This edition of Burma Links was produced in Ottawa by CFOB staff. Graphic design, layout & PDF web file: Walters & Greene Associates.*

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