

## Message to the Reader

Dear Reader:

In the last issue I was talking to you about the proposed new guiding principle for the Shan language: **Speak universally, write locally** (*Gwam tai hom khaw, lik tai Hpy man*).

The old 40-year old guideline: **Write universally, Speak universally** (*lik tai hom toe, gwam tai hom khaw*) has been good enough to carry us this far against the tide of the towering official languages. However, it has also been instrumental in making Shan, particularly the cis-Salween Shan, an increasingly different tongue and a fast shrinking language. The reason is not hard to see: The Khm̄n and the Tai Neua were not ready to ditch their centuries-old written scripts for an upstart like the western Shan script.

Outside Shan State, it is the same case: Lao-tians are yet to give up their national script for Thai.

So the simple logic is why not deal with your problems one after another? Why not concentrate all our resources to make Shan a spoken language

that is more understandable to others of the Tai-speaking stock, especially the Lao-tians and Thais, so they can eventually interact with us and further enrich and strengthen ours?

Of course, not only western Shans like us should be held responsible for the future of the language. If somehow Shan becomes an extinct language, Thailand, being the largest Tai-speaking country, cannot shirk taking the lion's share of the blame, according to a lifetime friend and mentor. He has accordingly suggested that the Thais take the lead in what he calls Incorporate Tai project in order to establish a standard Tai for every Tai-speaking people in Asian.

That would certainly be a project worth taking.

But one thing seems to be clear: First we must help ourselves so others can help us.

*Mysoong!* (Wishing You Progress & Prosperity)

**SHAN**

S.H.A.N.

## Letter

On S.H.A.N.

Chao Tzang died last year and its obvious that he was not privy to what the People inside Shan States were thinking or doing - he was not in the confidence of those who really mattered "the People" and they will prove him wrong. He is not an infallible prophet but only a human with errors of judgment colored by his experience and unlike many other idealists he was a failed & disillusioned revolutionary who became a learned political teacher & because he was a scholar it does not necessarily mean that he had all the answers and an all-seeing eye. It does not necessarily follow that all learned scholars make brilliant political leaders. Far from it - there are indeed in this world many more learned political scholars than there are outstanding political leaders. Why is that, one can but ask?

S.H.A.N. should change their paper from "Independence" to "Slavery" perhaps and they are hypocritically

indulging in a one-sided political propaganda under the guise of free speech hence the picture of Thomas Jefferson with quotations from him implying - how dare those who oppose our views have the gall to refute us?

**Hsokhanpha**  
**President**  
**Interim Shan Government**  
**Federated Shan States**

**N.B.** The subject in question is S.H.A.N.'s Weekly Diary #146 (7-13 May 2005)'s

***China, India and the Asean will never support Shan State Independence and will even actively oppose it.***

Chao Tzang Yawngghwe  
(1939-2004), 12 December 2000

***The security of all is in a free press.***

Thomas Jefferson, quoted by  
Bangkok Post, 8 May 2005



# SHAN DIARY

## March - April 2005

### Think Piece

*There is always a promise to do something, a few little steps, then a terrible backlash.*

Ruth Dreifuss, ILO member on Burma's forced labor situation, AP, 25 March 2005

### The World

**2 April**



Pope John Paul II, 84, "returns to the House of the Father". (Bangkok Post)

**11 April**

Chinese premier Wenjiabao and Indian counterpart Manmohan Singh sign landmark accord to settle border dispute. (AFP)

**19 April**



The 265th Pope, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger of Germany, taking the name Benedict XVI, elected.

### International Relations

**28 February**

Burma is listed by the World Bank among 11 Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS). (Financial Express)

**1 April**

Six GMS countries meeting in Hanoi sign a plan of action to tackle human trafficking. (DPA)

**5 April**



Herve Jouanjean, Deputy Director General of the European Commission's Directorate General for External Relations, speaking at Burma Day, says EU is maintaining dual-track Burma policy:

- Sanctions against the regime
  - Humanitarian assistance for the ordinary people
- (Excerpt)

**8 April**

The Inter-Parliaments Union meeting today urges parliaments all over the world to press "more insistently" for the respect of democracy and human rights in Burma. (Press release)

UN Secretary General issues statement urging Burma to clarify their position as to the timetable

of their roadmap, enhance inter-ethnic harmony and political stability by engaging in substantive dialogue, release political prisoners and allow the UN envoy to return to the country to facilitate dialogue among parties concerned. (Statement)

**14 April**

53-member UN Human Right Commission passes a resolution without a vote expressing grave concern at ongoing systematic violation of rights and calls on Rangoon to restore democracy and respect the results of the 1990 elections by releasing the leaderships both of the NLD and the Shans (Text)

**26 April**

EU foreign ministers confirm Burma sanctions for another year. The Common Position has been maintained since 1996. (European Report)

**3 May**

Press Freedom Day and Burma is at the bottom of the list of countries with the least press freedom: 165th place, above North Korea (167th) and under Laos (153rd), Vietnam (161st) and China (162nd). (AFP)

### Thai-Burma Relations

**1 March**

Thailand delivers 1,000 tonnes of rice valued at \$ 277,000 at the office of the World Food Program in Tachilek in order to supplement

insufficient income caused by the cessation of poppy farming activities.

#### **11 March**

Kantathee Supamongkol becomes FM replacing Surakiart Sathirathai. (Bangkok Post)

#### **26 March**

Refugees with Persons of Concern status are being sent to the camps beginning today. (Irrawaddy)

#### **15 April**

Police Sgt-Maj Boonchob Moonmuang, a border patrol policeman, is killed in a clash with about 5 Burmese soldiers in Mae Ai's Pang Saen Khrua village, outside the 32-square km demilitarized area of Doilang. The intruders move back into Burma. (Bangkok Post)

### **Politics**

#### **4-5 March**

Ethnic Nationalities Council says it accepts 5 of the 6 political objectives of the SPDC. As for the 6th, it is ready to accept a political role for the military "in the transitional period" from military rule to democracy. (Statement)

#### **13-16 March**

KNU delegation meets junta delegation led by Maj Gen Thura Myint Aung, Commander of Southeastern Region Command in Moulmein. The talks with Burma's rulers have taken a new form, says David Htaw. There are new proposals from the Burma Army's side offering the KNU 3 out of 7 permitted areas.

In addition, the Karens are no longer dealing with the central government but with the regional authorities. (DVB/KNU)

### **Shans**

#### **12 April**



Shan State National Army's 176 members hand over arms to Rangoon. SSNA spokesman later said they were forced to surrender. (DVB)

### **Economy / Business**

#### **4 April**

Chevron Texaco Corp scoop up smaller California rival Unocal Corp for \$ 16.4 billion. (Reuters)

#### **29 May**



Burma's Teza, tycoon and arms broker, has taken over GSM mobile phone contract reached between Rangoon and China's ZTE company. (Irrawaddy)

### **Human Rights**

#### **18 March**

There are at least 576,000 IDPs in Burma, says UN sponsored Norwegian Refugee Council, out

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of the estimated 25 million displaced in 47 countries.

#### **23 March**

An estimated 7,600 children in Burma are infected with HIV, contracted through mother-to-child transmission, unsafe blood supplies or unsanitary injections. (AP)

### **Environment**

#### **10 April**



Gen Maung Aye unveils the controversial 60-meter, 13 story cylindrical steel tower in the ancient city of Bagan (AP)

#### **4 May**

Burma has been offered power generators from Lampang's Mae Moh for the construction of new power plant in Kengtung. (Bangkok Post)

### **Drugs**

#### **6 March**

70 kg of opium, 7 bags of methamphetamine and some heroin were burned at the Wa village of Yawng Ting. (Bangkok Post)

#### **19 March**

Marine police intercepts a fishing boat off Trat carrying 546 kg of heroin worth \$40 million bound for Hong Kong. (Bangkok Post)

Burma burns 720 kg of poppy seeds in Lashio. The ceremony



is presided over by PM Soe Win. (XNA)

### 20 March

Yaba has reached the Asian community in northern California and LA areas. (Men's News Daily)

### 1 April

Finance Ministry announces that licenses of the Asia Wealth Bank and the Mayflower Bank have been revoked effective 31 March. (AP)

### 11 April

Thaksin kicks off third phase of his War on Drugs.

### 20 April

Chuchai Udompote, Chief of Maesai accuses Wei Hsuehgang of diversifying into producing pi-

rated pornographic VCDs. (Bangkok Post)

## War

### 17 March

A bus at a bus depot belonging to the military in Rangoon damaged in an explosion. (DVB)

### 19 March

A bomb explodes in a bathroom of Panorama Hotel popular with Asian backpackers. No injuries reported. Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors claims responsibility.

## Politics

# Clogged ears



A Thai of Shan descent has called the arrests in February of 10 Shan leaders particularly two of them as a *tat-tawn* (cutting key links) operation.

One was Hkun Htun Oo:

- ❑ Nephew of Sao Kya Seng, Prince of Hsipaw, who was taken into custody during the 1962 coup and has never been seen either alive or dead since
- ❑ Leader of the Shan Nationalities League for Democ-

racy (SNLD) that turned out second nation-wise and first state-wise during the 1990 elections

- ❑ Member, Committee Representing People's Parliament (CRPP), formed by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
- ❑ Chairman, Shan State Joint Action Committee (SSJAC), formed with two ceasefire groups, namely, Shan State Army "North" and Shan State National Army
- ❑ Spokesman, United Nationalities Alliance, an informal coalition of ethnic nationalities parties that won seats in the 1990 elections

The other is Maj-Gen Hso Ten:

- ❑ Retired leader of Shan State Army "North"
- ❑ Vice Chairman of SSJAC
- ❑ Chairman, Shan State Peace Council, jointly formed by the SSA "North" and SSNA

On 15 March, military authorities held a news briefing where the two and their colleagues were charged with 'sedition', 'conspiracy against the state', (plotting to establish 8 states to pave way for secession one day), 'Having links with illegal organizations' and 'distribution of documents without registration'. The fact that non-Shan politicians, particularly Cho Cho Kyaw Nyein, whose father had been the leading opponent to Federalism, were among the invited guests at the Shan gathering on 7 February had conveniently escaped the logic of the regime's



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spokespersons.

Military authorities also took no notice of Aung Than and Nyan Win, legal counsels appointed by the families to defend their loved ones and went on to appoint Aung Khaing and Aung Myint, two obscure lawyers instead during their closed door trials, prompting opposition leaders to challenge the authorities to an open trial.

Nobody was surprised when

all the pleas and demands fell on deaf ears. "Did they listen to calls to free Aung San Suu Kyi?" a Shan dissident asked bitterly.

Whatever follows, the UNA is, for all practical purposes, finished, according to an Irrawaddy report.

"The UNA was supported financially by Hkun Htun Oo, owner of Japan's Overseas Courier Service franchise for Burma, whose operations had been sus-

pending since 14 February. Without him, the UNA can no longer be active at all," said an opposition politician in Rangoon.

The same conclusion appears to have applied to other interparty structures set up by the Shans and their ethnic allies, especially the SSJAC and SSPC. Sai Wansai, General Secretary of Shan Democratic Union, has dubbed Rangoon's campaign as a political assassination.

# Time buyers



**T**he 7th session of the National Convention held after an interval of 8 years, lasted 8 weeks and was somewhat a cliffhanger. In contrast, the 8th session, lasting only six weeks and overshadowed by the arrests of Shan leaders, consequent uncertainties and the war on the border, was more of a drab exercise. Except for some delegates who had taken advantage of the on-the-house enforced holiday to attend to their personal needs such as free dental treatment.

The Convention turned down proposals by the ceasefire groups

calling for more powers to the states and passed over their demands to release Shan ceasefire leader Hso Ten. Tenacious groups were warned the junta would annul the truce pacts if they refused to toe the military's line: future Burma, like the past and present one, will continue to draw its breath under the military. "The best you can expect is some rewording of the Preamble or the Appendices, if there are any," they were told by one of the conveners, "because the main text has already been drafted." His information parallels with what Bangkok Post was told by a

Rangoon-based Asean diplomat that the constitution is written and just waiting to be rubber-stamped.

Some are already resigned to it. "At least we'll have a constitution," one highly respected former government official said to S.H.A.N.. "One of the existing problems is the people don't have any law they can refer to".

Others are not so submissive. "The referendum (to ratify the draft constitution) is our next battlefield," said a delegate. "That's where we are going to beat the generals at their own game." Some who were of age during the 1974 referendum on the socialist constitution however were not so optimistic. "We cast black (objection) ballots," The weekly Voice of Burma reported a source as saying. "But when the ballot boxes were opened, all became white."

The National Convention was adjourned on 31 March, citing approaching monsoons, appropriately overlooking the fact that the previous session was held during the monsoons, 17 May – 9 July 2004.



# Forced submission campaign on

On 7 April, Lt-Col Ganna, Commander of 11th Brigade, Shan State National Army, a ceasefire group, was forced to surrender with 38 of his men and 21 weapons. He was later joined by more than 100 of his members and made another televised "exchange of arms for peace" 5 days later. The remainder of his 300-strong brigade went underground.

According to SSNA sources, he was summoned by the Burma Army authorities and confronted with a list of his unauthorized activities. "He had three options: to commit suicide, to shoot his way out or to acquiesce," said a senior SSNA officer. "He decided to acquiesce."

Encouraged by this initial success, Maj-Gen Myint Hlaing, Commander of the Lashio-based Northeastern Region Command, sent for Col Sai Yi, Ganna's erst-



while boss and the Commander-in-Chief of the SSNA. Forewarned by Ganna's example, Sai Yi simply sent his representatives to meet the Burmese commander who expressed anger and said in effect, "Go tell your chief he doesn't have any choice but to surrender. I will not be accountable for what happens if he refuses to."

Sai Yi, a forthright commander, took it as a threat and promptly went underground.

Myint Hlaing seemingly unbended and called for a parley, but when Sai Yi's envoys went to meet him, he declined to show up citing his work burden. In the meanwhile, Sai Yi's other units, the 6th Brigade in Namtu and the 19th in Nampawng, were being surrounded and their escape route blocked.

"The problem is that neither side wants to be blamed for breaching the truce first," said the SSNA source.

Myint Hlaing, reportedly a protégé of Deputy Senior Gen Maung Aye, was indeed not idle. On 29 April, he succeeded in having the Palaung State Liberation Army, one of the SSNA's allies, surrender.

According to unconfirmed sources, Rangoon's plan is to disarm all ceasefire groups including the United Wa State Army by November.

# Die Hard awakens



For years, Shan State independence had been a dormant cause, under the enlightened counsel of the late

Chao Tzang Yawngghwe (1939-2004), who believed that for the Shan State, hemmed in by opponents against secession both at home and abroad, a federal arrangement was the most realistic way out. "Let us not leave the battle we can win in order to fight in an arena where the prospect of winning is distant and strewn with landmines," he said.

One of his proudest achievements was the establishment of the Ethnic Nationalities Council, the alliance of non-Burman groups, both legal and illegal, both armed and unarmed, early last year, whose aims were for a Tripartite Dialogue and,

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through it, a Federal Union.

However, following the arrests of pro-federal leaders in Burma in February, the question arises whether or not the Tripartite Dialogue and a Federal Union are achievable aims anymore.

By and large, Federalism has become a bad word not only for the military rulers, who claims it as secession in disguise, but also for growing militant Shans as well, who see it as a treacherous attempt to prolong slavery under the Burmans. Sao Thusandi of Hsipaw, who wrote *Twilight over Burma*, herself warned, "Because there is repression and rejection of federalism, more and more Shans are demanding Independence."

Most activists therefore were not so surprised when a distinguished but politically nameless group of their compatriots suddenly claimed Independence in April and announced the creation of an interim Shan Government

(ISG). All had treated it outright as the natural outcome of the Burmese military's inability to find a political solution.

However what few of them anticipated was the stunning response of the Shans in favor of Independence over federalism and the idea of having a government of Shan State, if not actually the one that was established by the virtually unknown people at a secret meeting on 25 March. "The people are desperately in need of a mechanism where they can unburden themselves, an organization that will take steps to deliver them from their troubles," one respondent to a S.H.A.N. survey wrote. "They understandably cannot talk about their problems to the SPDC (State Peace and Development Council, as Burma's rulers are collectively known) as it is their first and foremost problem."

Many, even pro-unionists, also expressed resentment over

the National League for Democracy's statement that came out on 19 April, two days after the declaration of Independence by the ISG: No state must at any time secede from the Union. Which one of the S.H.A.N. readers greeted with a howl of derision: "How about us non-Burmans allowing the Burmans to secede from the Union?"

The rising balkanization potential – the total dismemberment of Burma – may as Chao Tzang said, be entirely owing to the SPDC, but the problem remains: What to do with the resultant chaos?

According to ENC advisor Harn Yawng hwe, brother to Chao Tzang and President of the ISG Sao Surkhanfah, one answer may well be "The International Community should consider strengthening the Opposition so to pressure Rangoon to accept a negotiated settlement.

(RFA, 29 March 2005)

## War

# SSA fighting whom?

Col Yawdserk, leader of the anti-Rangoon Shan State Army "South", is persistent in saying he is fighting against only Wei Hsuehkang a.k.a Prasit (Charnchai) Chiwin-Nitipanya, a drug convict wanted both by the United States and Thailand. He definitely has nothing against the United Wa State Army as a whole, who are his fellow countrymen.



## PHOTO battle Loitaileng

On the surface, this appears to be so:

❑ On 17 February, Sai Leng, a Shan under Wei's protection, a man reputed to be the owner of a drug refinery at Kharnpa, opposite Maehongson's Pang Mapha district, was returning from Monghta, where he had won a contract to build a motor road from Mongpan across the Salween. Just before reaching Kharnpa, he reportedly pulled up and went hunting in the nearby forest with 7 of his followers. All of them vanished into thin air. Somehow it was believed that the Shan State Army, whose main base Loi Taileng is less than 10 km from Kharnpa as the crow flies, must be involved and the UWSA accordingly demanded that the SSA return them. The SSA denied any knowledge of Sai Leng's whereabouts.

On 13 March, less than a month later, the first shot was fired by the UWSA's 171st Military Region, whose *de facto* commander is Wei Hsuehkang:

Since then assaults against Loi Taileng throughout April led to some 700 UWSA casualties against 70 of the SSA defenders.

- ❑ Panghsang, the Wa capital on the Chinese border, when asked by S.H.A.N., replied: It's Wei's war, not ours.
- ❑ To bolster the fact, the relations between the SSA's three other main bases and the Wa have remained fundamentally "friendly"
- ❑ The Wa are also known to be disturbed by the Burma Army's reported encirclement of their liberated area



in the north as well as the current campaign by the Burma Army to disaem other ceasefire groups

- ❑ Unconfirmed but much credited reports also say Wei had made a separate deal with Rangoon on 11 February that he would be allowed to have a free hand over whichever territory he seized from the SSA, a rehash of the junta's proven formula: using Wa to destroy Shans.

The Burma Army's involvement is presumably limited to supplying rations, ammunition and heavy weapons support.

Other data however contradict this claim:

- ❑ Wei is still a member of the UWSA. Positions from which he had withdrawn his troops were being taken over by Panghsang-units, namely, the 214th Brigade of Ta Roong and 258th Brigade of Ta Pan, without a struggle.
- ❑ Consignments of drugs, in anticipation of the drug-free declaration by the Wa in June, had been transported from Panghsang down to the

border in Mongton township without obstruction from the Burma Army

- ❑ A mutual friend of both the Wa and the SSA, who was trying to mediate between the two, was quietly told "not to meddle"
- ❑ The investments Wa leaders have made in Burma's economy have become too extensive to pull out in a short time
- ❑ Like other ceasefire groups, the Wa involvement in drugs is a closely monitored affair and might have been used as blackmail against them
- ❑ And coming after the crack-down on Shan parties and ceasefire armies, it appears too ridiculous to consider it a disconnected affair

Which points to the conclusion that whoever turns out to be the loser between the Wa and the Shan State Army, the Burma Army is going to be the ultimate winner.

In any case, Wei's next attack on the SSA is underway at the time of this reporting, 13 May.

## Thai-Burma Relations

The 22nd Regional Border Committee meeting between commanders of regional armies on both sides of the border was held in eastern Shan State's Kengtung, 29 April – 1 May.

According to sources, Thai commanders had flown to Burma with several bees in their bonnet:

- ❑ Planned deportation of 200,000 refugees living in Thailand
- ❑ Disputed border lines at Three Pagodas Pass in Kanchanaburi and Doi Lang in Chiangmai's Mae Ai district
- ❑ Construction of a 500-meter long concrete embankment on the Burmese side of the Moei
- ❑ The fighting across from Maehongson between resistance armies and pro-Rangoon forces where the

## RBC 22: Just a get together?

Burma Army is believed to be involved

Officially, Thailand was satisfied with the outcome:

- ❑ Burma said it was willing to take back the refugees "if the verification process showed they were its nationals," according to Bangkok Post.
- ❑ In Kanchanaburi where the two sides had been at loggerheads since March over a dispute that began when a pro-Rangoon Democratic Karen Buddhist Army member was shot dead by the Thai Army, the two sides agreed that some 50 houses and vending stalls on the border be removed.
- ❑ Troops from both sides should also withdraw from Doi Lang, a 42-square kilometer area claimed by both countries, following the kill-

ing of a Border Patrol Police Officer on 15 March near the area by Burmese troops

- ❑ Burma also agreed to the Thai proposal to set up a joint command to investigate areas where Thailand suspects the United Wa State Army has drug production bases on the Burmese side and Rangoon claims ethnic groups have been using Thai soil to launch attacks on its troops.

However, nothing was said in the report about the concrete embankment on the Moei. Whatever the case, Burmese authorities have, at this time of reporting (12 May), not stopped the construction. According to a bilateral agreement, any construction on territorial waters need approvals from both sides.

## Drugs

A month after he went under cover, following an arrest warrant issued for him, Ta Mahasang, leader of the anti-Rangoon Wa National Army, was run in by the Chiangmai police on 6 March. According to reliable sources, he was betrayed by a trusted friend while making arrangements to surrender himself and stand bail.

He and his half-brother, another drug suspect who lives across the border in Khun Sa's former stronghold Homong, were charged with being associates of Wei Hsuehkang, a pro-Rangoon Wa commander with a \$ 2 million price on his head. Both had angrily rejected the allegation.

## Wa on fool's errand



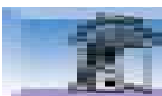
*Ta Mahasang*

While Mahasang maintained being a bitter adversary to Wei, Mahaja

swore he had never come across the infamous fellow countryman in his life.

At least Ta Mahasang was not without his tough defenders. The National Democratic Front, a coalition of armed ethnic groups to which he belongs, issued a statement 3 days prior to his arrest, that it was ready to guarantee his innocence. Drugbusters also expressed disappointment, saying his arrest, carried out without consultation, had foiled a major operation planned by the bureau.

Meanwhile, his WNA, based in Loi Wa-her, opposite Maehongson's Rak Thai, is being managed by his able lieutenant Ta Ai Htun.



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