

Message to the Reader

Dear Reader:

Once again, we meet again, thanks to both your unflinching support and that of our good fairies. This is the good news.

But the not so good news is that, unless more endowments are coming, we will be forced able to meet each other only once every two months.

Which leaves us with a rather gloomy cloud with one distinct silver lining: 7 issues of Independence instead of 12 until September 2005 but more reports through the internet, many of which, we hope, will be aired by the radio stations and/or in-depth reports like Show Business we did last year. Which means we lose some, but also win some.

Which once more reminds us of what the sages keep saying is the way of the world we live: You can't have it both ways.

Which also brings one question to mind: Our people have lost their lands, homes, properties and their loved ones. What have they therefore won in return?

I hope this question will wake up some of us who are slipping to steel ourselves up for the struggle we had undertaken in the name of our people.

Mysoong!

SHAN

S.H.A.N.

Letters



Your ideas and assessments of S.H.A.N. reports are welcome. Apart from editing for lack of space and touching up on some words for clarification, we will gladly reproduce your letters in full.

14 October 2004

Dear Editor,

I read with interest your article of 13 October, "Shan leader slams drug report" in which you quote Mr. Sao Sengsuk as dismissing the results of the 2004 UNODC Myanmar opium survey by saying that the opium survey travels to the fields only once "every blue moon," and contrast the UNODC report with an article by Maxmilian Wechsler from the Bangkok Post of 26 September 2004, in which Mr. Wechsler quotes an unnamed source to say that opium cultivation is increasing between the Nam Hkam and Kutkai areas.

The principle here, I believe, is one of methodology. There is the anecdotal evidence such as that cited by Mr. Wechsler, which incidentally may be correct, but cannot reliably be used to extrapolate on larger, country-

wide trends. On the other hand are large-scale surveys such as that carried out by UNODC, which uses a combination of satellite imagery together with ground truthing through field visits. These visits are more extensive than you may realize -- for the 2004 survey, survey teams visited close to 600 villages and interviewed 6,592 households. The focus of the coverage was the Shan but rapid assessments were also conducted in the Chin, Sagaing and Kachin states. More information about the methodology of the opium survey is contained in the survey report, which is available from UNODC's website: <http://www.unodc.org/myanmar/en/reports.html>

Of course, even the best methodology contains a certain degree of statistical uncertainty. The 44,200 ha referred to in the media is not only a large quantity



implying that there is still a long road ahead of us, but it is equally the median between the wider range of 38,500 ha minimum and 49,600 ha maximum. Any figure in between this minimum-maximum range could be accurate. In that context, however, you may be interested to know that a second opium survey, carried out by the United States has shown an even more dramatic decrease in the area under cultivation. The US survey shows a decrease of 35% in the area under cultivation, from 47,130 hectares in 2003 to 30,888 hectares in 2004. It estimates total potential production at 292 tons in 2004, down from 484 tons in 2003. I would assume that it will be difficult for your organization to refute both the UN and US surveys, which, based on different and mutually independent methodologies, arrive to similar conclusions of rapid reduction.

The Shan Herald Agency for News has contributed to many of the important political debates that surround Myanmar today. However, in light of the consistent downward trend in opium cultivation recorded by two independent and extensive surveys, I would hope that one such debate could arise from, rather than over the opium survey. What will the farmers who are losing their livelihoods as a result of opium eradication do to feed their families and meet their basic human needs? And how can we help them in this? It was exactly this question which preoccupied the late Chao Tzang Yawngwe, Shan scholar and activist (1939-2004), at the Conference on Drugs and Conflict held in Amsterdam, 13-16 December 2003.

These are the important questions raised at the Amsterdam Conference, by UNODC, by the UN family, by the independent Transnational Institute (co-organizer of the Amsterdam Conference), and more recently by the report of another independent non-profit think-tank, the International Crisis Group. Your contributions to this debate would be most welcomed.

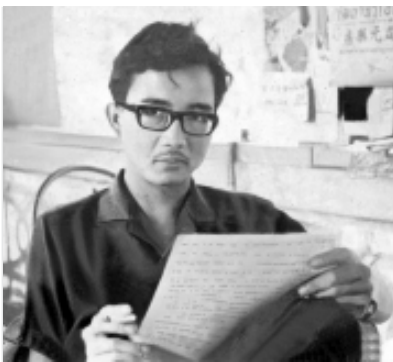
In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me with any further questions you might have on the results of the 2004 UNODC opium survey.

With best regards,

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Editor's Note:

When it comes to working out the output of any cash crop, the best way is to ask the guy who makes a living by buying and selling it, not the farmers, nor the experts. I had in the past relied on Khun Seng, Khun Sa's uncle, who handles the business for him, when I needed some data on drugs. These days, the UNODC could have done the same with either Wei Hsuehkang or his brothers, Hsuehlong or Hsuehying. □



Neighboring countries do not see the SPDC a problem. To them, the opposition is the problem.

Chao Tzang Yawngwe (1939-2004), 28 February 2003

Food for thought

Without India's and China's cooperation and partnership, no amount of sanctions by the EU or the US will alter the situation on the ground (in Burma).

Jose Ramos-Horta, 1996 Nobel peace prize winner, to Perspective, Bangkok Post, on 30 August 2004



SHAN DIARY

September - October 2004

The World

2 October



Two-week-long 13th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Fauna and Flora (CITES) begins in Bangkok.

25 October



87 protesters die, mostly from suffocation inside trucks taking them to army camp for questioning in Thailand's Pattani. (Bangkok Post)

International Relations

3 September

EU foreign ministers allow Burma

to attend Asem summit, 8-9 October, but at a foreign minister level. (Reuters)

10 September

International Crisis Group releases new report which says the West must provide aid to the border areas to lay the foundation for democracy. (AP)

15 September

State Department's 6th annual report on International Religious Freedom renames Burma among Countries of Particular Concern. (Press Release)

18 September

Win Aung, Foreign Minister, replaced by Maj Gen Nyan Win.

4 October

Aung San Suu Kyi selected as 2004 Asian hero. (Time Asia)

9 October

Asia and Europe move towards closer cooperation today by not referring to the release of Aung San Suu Kyi, though leaders encourage stakeholders to work together to ensure that the national reconciliation process is successful. (Bangkok Post)

11 October

EU foreign ministers agree to tighten sanctions against Burma's military leadership. (Reuters)

Burma's strongman Than Shwe



welcomed by India, the world's biggest democracy. (AFP)

20 October

Transparency International lists Burma among the bottom ten of the most corrupt countries in the World. (AP)

26 October



"For the Lady" album: a tribute to Aung San Suu Kyi launched. (Reuter)

28 October

UN Security Council discusses sexual violations in Burma. (DVB)



Thai-Burma Relations

21 October

PM Thaksin Shinawatra orders state-bank to review its lending exposure in Burma. (AFP)

Politics

2 September

UNA welcomes Kofi Annan's 17 August message to Burma. (DVB)

19 October

Gen Than Shwe issues statement permitting Gen Khin Nyunt to retire for health reasons, replaces him with Lt-Gen Soe Win, who in turn is succeeded by Lt-Gen Than Sein as Secretary 1.

22 October

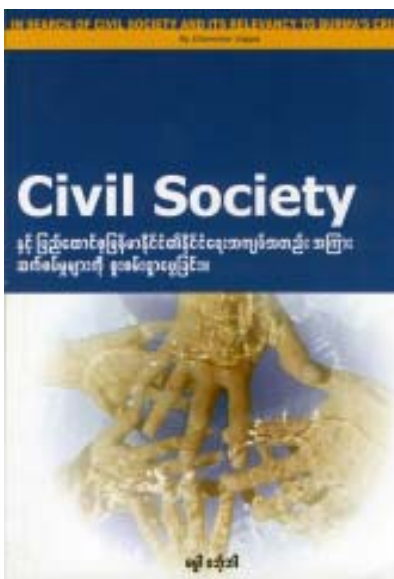
Rangoon announces abolishing of National Intelligence Bureau.

28-30 October

Ethnic Nationalities Council hold strategic consultation meeting. Urges ceasefire groups to stick to their guns. (S.H.A.N.)

Shans

September



"In search of Civil Society and its Relevancy to Burma's Crisis," a book in Burmese by a Shan with a penname Dhamma Vappa released. (S.H.A.N.)

9 September

Shan and Karen "ambassadors" meet Dutch foreign ministry officials. (S.H.A.N.)

7 October



Shan and Karen representatives meet Portuguese foreign minister, Dr Antonio Monteiro. (S.H.A.N.)

20-21 October

Maj-Gen Myint Hlaing, Commander, Northeastern Command, meets ceasefire leaders. The message is two-fold: only personnel change, no policy changes; and to deal with the Army directly henceforth. (S.H.A.N.)

Human Rights

September

Many students passed this year's matriculation exams with distinctions. The reason: The passing mark has been lowered to 20 from the usual 40 and the distinction mark from 80 to 65. (NEJ)

4 September

Women's League of Burma re-

leased *System of Impunity*, a new report on sexual violations committed by the Burma Army. The recorded 26 cases include one which took place in Burma proper.

14 September



Sheila Sisulu, deputy executive director of World Food Programme, following a 4-day visit to Burma, says one reason for impoverishment in the border regions is the government that restricts free movement of agricultural products. (IPS)

28 September

UN rights expert on Burma Pinheiro's report to the General Assembly says he has received credible and detailed reports of violations in certain areas. (UN News)

25-26 October



Exiled Burma Media Association holds meeting to establish increased cohesion for increased protection. (S.H.A.N.)

30 October

Rangoon launches countrywide crackdown on unlicensed cars.

Environment

8-13 October

Thailand has offered to implement Salween hydropower project investing \$ 4.8 billion (B 20 billion), say embassy officials on 1 October. (Myanmar Times, Burmese)

Drugs

31 August

Chinese officials say most of the

70 plus tons of heroin produced annually in Burma make their way to China. (The Nation)

16 September

President Bush removes Thailand from the list of major transit or producer countries, which includes Burma. (Press Release)

21 September

Daoming Zhang of Interpol says poor sharing of information is hobbling Asian counties' efforts to fight rise in the use of amphetamine-type stimulants. (Reuters)

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3 October

Thailand declares a new round of full scale war on drugs. (Bangkok Post)

War

31 October

Rosoboroneksport, Russian enterprise that specializes in defense hardware export, has plans to open new offices in Belgium, Burma and Uganda. China and India remain its chief markets. (BBC) □

Politics

Making non-Burman issue easy

The opposition's exiled Shan and Karen lobbying duo, Sai Wansai and Saw Sarky, since 2001, have made 8 trips together, meeting foreign ministry officials and, from time to time, ministers from the European Union in their quest to bring more pressure on Burma's present rulers.

to the host countries described in concise forms who they were, what they proposed to discuss and a brief report on the present situation as well as maps, photos and relevant background, "which never failed to impress our hosts," says Wansai, General Secretary of the Shan Democratic Union. "The

contents and the maps which we used in explaining the situation were factual, clear and short to the point. They even commented that it was a 'complex situation made easy' presentation."

One of the items highly commended is the map reproduced here by S.H.A.N.

◆ Their slogan is three-fold: For Democracy, For the Right to Self Determination and For Human Rights

◆ Their presentations highlight the role of Burma's non-Burmans labeled even by not a few enlightened Burmese scholars as "minorities"

Both have claimed satisfaction in their self-funded ventures and attributed their success to their dossier-files that were painstakingly prepared before the start of each trip.

The files that were presented



Sai Wansai



Saw Sarky



Area		
261,228 square miles		
Burma Proper	117,578	square miles (45%)
Other states	143,650	square miles (55%)
Population:		
	50	million
Burman	30	million (60%)
Non-Burman	20	million (40%)

"It explains, in a nutshell, why the fight in Burma is not a simple one-against-one setting, but that of two-against-one," he pointed out.

The struggle to explain this to both Burmans and foreigners alike appears to be a never-ending story for the non-Burman activists. Among them, a clarification by

135 races in Burma. The military is exaggerating to gain support for its continuation in power in the name of holding the country together. In fact, 65 of the so-called 135 races are all from the Chin State, which makes up about 3% of the population and live in an area that makes up about 5% of the whole nation.

Harn Yawngwe, Director of Euro-Burma Office, based in Brussels, and the youngest son of Burma's first President Sao Shwe Thaik, is generally accepted as the most convincing and can be summarized as follows:

■ **Non-Burmans are not minorities.** They make up about 40% of the approximately 50 million population, and occupy 55% of Burma's land area.

■ **They are not tribes or hill tribes either.** The Burmans are not the only civilized people in Burma.

■ We cannot really talk about ethnic peoples and the Burmans, because **Burmans are also one of the ethnic groups.**

■ **E t h n i c nationalities is the term** most non-Burmans prefer to denote themselves.

■ **There are no**

■ In political terms, **there are only 8 constituent states**, namely: Arakan, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Karenni (Kayah), Mon, Shan and Burma Proper.

■ **The problem is constitutional not ethnic.** Our problem is not a horizontal one like the former Yugoslavia, but a vertical one. Very persuasive, one might say. But still it wasn't enough to convince some of the Burman exiled academics, as evidenced by one complaint S.H.A.N. received from a Karen representative returning from the United States last month:

"I thought he was a man of letters," he recalled, "until he was referring to us as 'our ethnic minorities'. As if we are not only minors, but we belong to them also. Such expressions should be avoided unconditionally if they really want to keep this former British possession in one whole piece."

He should not, however, feel let down by such a careless remark, some Burmans say drawing attention to a recent statement made by a conference in Fort Wayne, USA, (30 October – 1 November 2004):

- There must be equality for all ethnic nationalities
- Burman nationality is one ethnic group
- The military in Burma does not represent the Burman nationality
- A committee representing all ethnic nationalities should be formed
- There must be mutual respect among ethnic nationalities



their own good, appear to be moving closer to each other, much to the delight of those who have supported their cause for freedom, democracy and human rights:

Gone were the days when they struggled more among each other than against their common enemy, Rangoon. "Until 1996, when Khun Sa surrendered, we seemed to be fighting against everybody", remembered a retired commander.

He wasn't far too wrong. Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army, then considered the strongest resistance group, had fought almost every other group in the Shan State:

- Pa-O National Organization of Aung Kham Hti, whose headquarters at Mae Aw, across from Maehongson, he had dislodged
- The Ex-Kuomintang, whom he could otherwise have persuaded to cooperate, thereby pushing them, incredible as it was, to the Communist Party of Burma and later to the United Wa State Army
- He struck up an alliance with Shan State Nationalities People Liberation Organization, led by Tarklay, and ended up fighting against it. Then came the others:
- The Communist Party of Burma
- United Wa State Army
- Shan State Army

- Burma Army
- Shan exiled groups
- His own commanders

Many claimed that it was Thailand's blockage to his landlocked territory that had brought his downfall. But many others have not hesitated to point out that had Khun Sa been at peace with other groups, he could have either prevented or withstood the Thais' border closure. What's more, he might even have been able to carve out a striving free territory area that would eventually widen out to every corner of the Shan State.

Spilt milk cannot be restored however and no one knows it better than the Shans. Whenever they talk about the unity of Shan State, the ever-stinging response from the non-Shans would be, "We are ready if only you Shans are."

But since his departure in 1996, the one good thing that could be said is that the fighting, except against the Burma Army, has stopped. Shan factions, even both ceasefire and non-ceasefire, signed a merger in 1996, but the effort was made null and void by Rangoon that had wielded its clout over the ceasefire armies. In doing so, the regime also allowed the opportunity to establish peace all over Shan State slip away.

The effort nevertheless was not altogether a misspent exercise. The alliance of the ceasefire Shan groups: Shan State Army "North" and Shan State National Army had held out and under the leadership

of Shan Nationalities League for Democracy, the party that had won in Shan State in the 1990 elections, formed the Joint Action Committee, that has also survived the test of time.

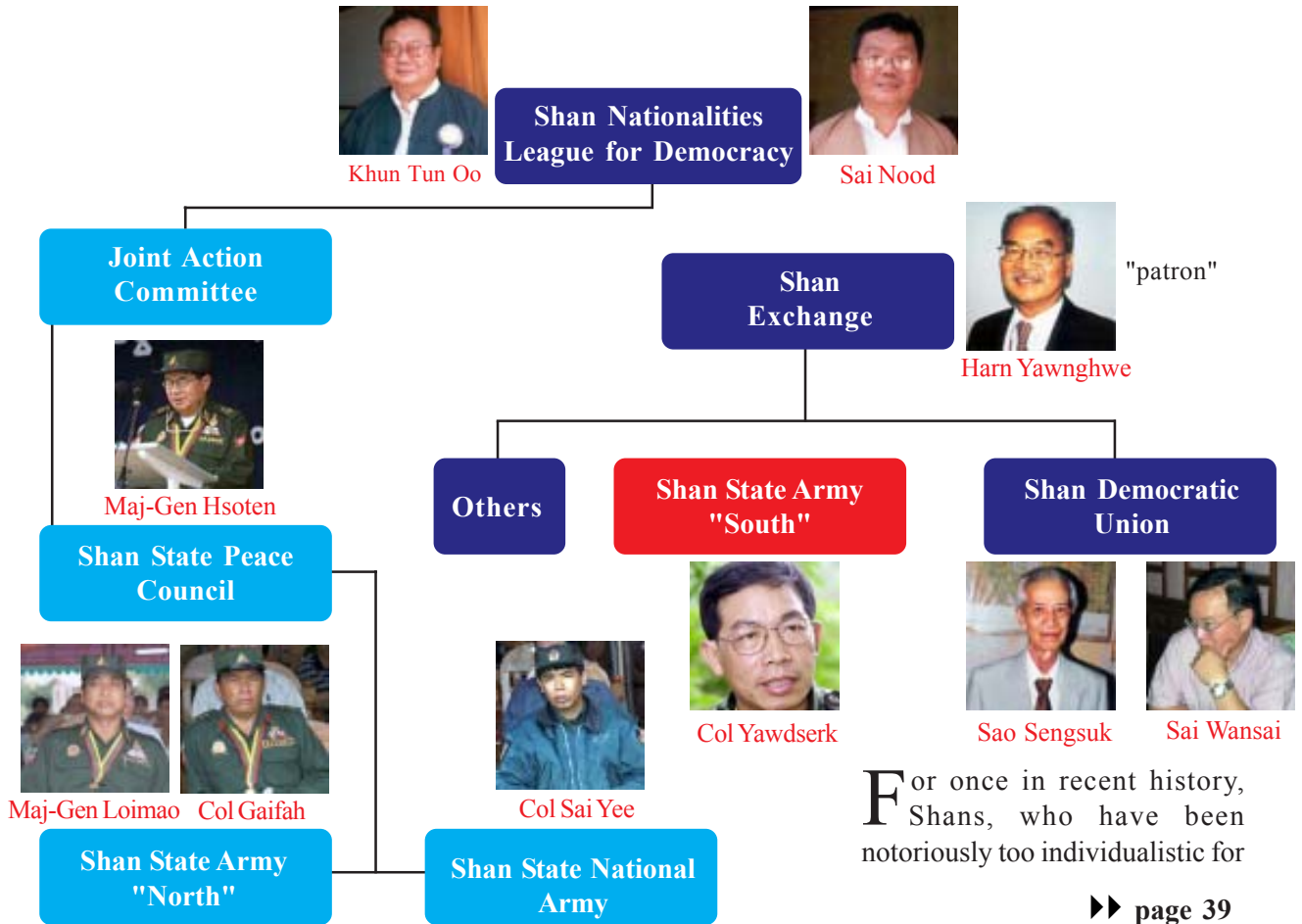
For groups outside Rangoon's sway, on the other hand, it was another matter. The two main organizations: Shan State Army "South" and the Shan Democratic Union were unable to agree on how best they could work together. One side proposed a united front similar to the JAC set up by the groups inside the country, while the other insisted on a complete fusion or nothing else.

Meanwhile, groups in exile continued to meet together in answer to tireless exhortations by the late Chao Tzang Yawnghwe and his brother, Harn, to cooperate by the principle of "Common aims and Diverse actions."

Persistence finally paid off. On 4 November, a resolution was passed by all Shan groups in exile to hold regular meetings for closer and effective coordination. As yet no high sounding names have been given for these get-togethers "For the time being, 'Shan Exchange' will do," said an organizer.

It remains to be seen how these gatherings will actually work out. "Naturally, we hope for the best," said a Shan youth, "and that in time we will become tigers as well," alluding to the Shan adage: Tigers succeed tigers when they die. □

Shans in solidarity

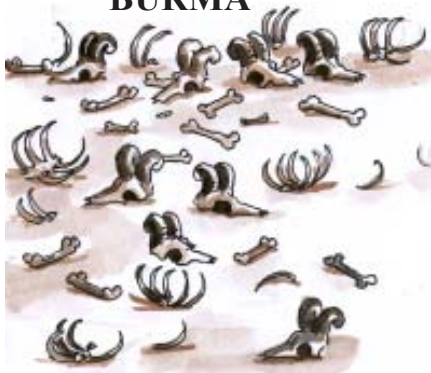


For once in recent history, Shans, who have been notoriously too individualistic for

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What's the matter?
Can't you see I'm one of you?

BURMA



The International Community

HARNLEE
05/12/2004