

The Mon Forum

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Some Acronyms in This Issue

- SPDC- State Peace and Development Council,
SLORC- State Law and Order Restoration Council,
IB - Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
LIB- Light Infantry Battalion (of Burmese Army),
USDA- Union Solidarity and Development Association,
KNU- Karen National Union,
ABSDF- All Burma Students' Democratic Front,
NMSP- New Mon State Party,

News

Government's Agricultural Products Trade Department is Busy in Forcing Farmers to Give Promise for Selling Paddy

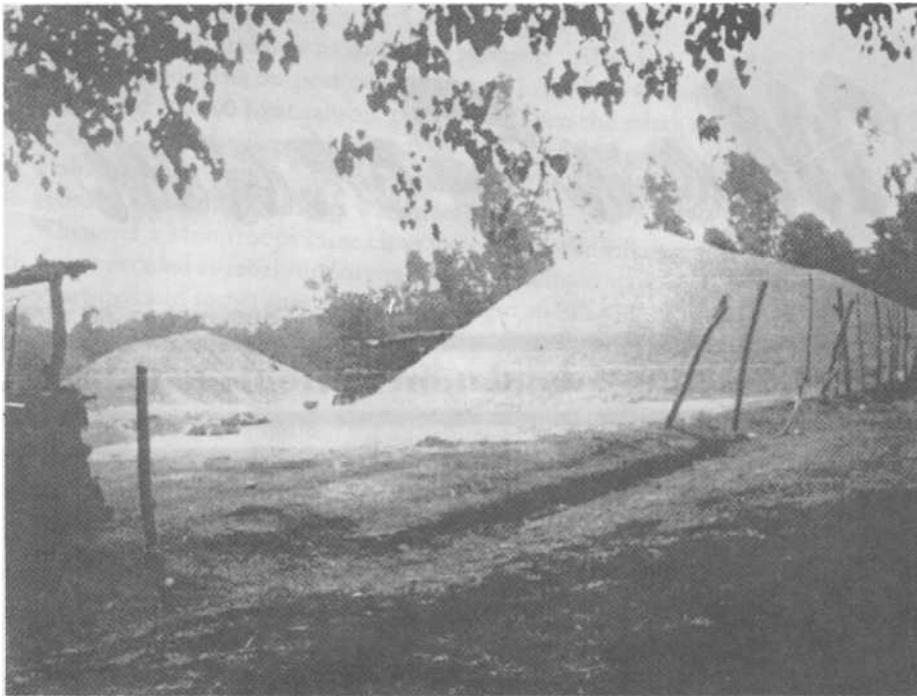
(September, 1999)

In September, 1999, when the paddy crops are not properly produced in the rice-growing farmers' farms, a main government department, Agricultural Products Trade Department in Mon State has tried to lend or pay advance of some fund to farmers and forced them to give promise to sell the set amount of paddy to government paddy-buying center when their crops are produced in December. By the help of Myanmar Agriculture Bank, the authorities from the department has forced the farmers to take advance payment lent from bank and sign the contract to sell their paddy at low price.

According to village headmen source from rural villages, the government's Agricultural Products Trade Department have formed a paddy-buying managing committees and informed the headmen and village farmers that they would lend 2,000 Kyat for one acre of land. Every farmer must have to take this advance payment and they must have



The paddy field flooded in July: Due to heavy rain and flood, the paddy crop products could be reduced. But the government has not examine the real situation and forced the farmers to sell their crops.



A paddy-buying center in Mon State: Now, the authorities in Mon State prepare to pressure the farmers to sell their paddy at low price again.

to sell 15 baskets of paddy per acre with price 350 Kyat in average per basket.

Before the Department started to arrange lending money and force the farmers to sign the contracts, the Township authorities also decided to create paddy-buying centers in the townships and appointed the purchasing manager for each center. Then paddy-buying managing committee was formed with authority of the Department. In Mudon Township, there are 4 Town sections and 42 villages totally in administrative area and the authorities set up 11 paddy-buying centers. The managing committee is led by Second Manager of Mudon Township Agricultural Products Trade Department, U San Hlaing, and formed with 11 managers from all centers. This managing committee plans to buy about 1.3 millions baskets of paddy from this township alone.

Similarly, in Thanbyuzayat Township, there are 4 Town sections and 38 villages totally in administrative area and the authorities decided to set up 6 paddy buying centers. The managing committee is led by Thanbyuzayat Township Agricultural Products Trade Department's Manager, U Shwe Yin, and formed with 6 managers from 6 paddy-buying centers. This managing committee plans to buy 800,000 baskets of paddy from this township alone.

Likewise, other Townships' Agriculture Products Trade Departments are similarly managing to force the farmers to accept their lending money and to sign the promised contract to sell 15 baskets of paddy per acre of land. Majority farmers would not like to take any advance payment and they like to sell all crops in the

markets. They lost about 550-750 Kyat per basket when they sell their paddy crops to government paddy-buying center, because they receive only 350 Kyat per basket while the paddy price in the market is 800-1,000 Kyat per basket. However, since the farmers in Burma lose economic rights and the selling of their crops at low price to government is likely they have to serve for tax to the government.

In July, 1999, because of heavy rain and flood in Mon State and Karen State, some thousands acres paddy-fields were sunk under water and the paddy plants

died. Thus, many farmers lost the crops. The government authorities have not examined this situation and made a decision to buy 15 baskets of paddy per acre from farmers. If those farmers could not sell the set amount of paddy to paddy centers, they would be accused that they have not completed selling the set amount of paddy or failing to give yearly paddy tax. Then, the punishments to those farmers are detention and confiscation of their belongings like the the authorities had committed in the previous years.

Student Numbers Drop in Government Schools in Mon State Due to More Expenses

(September, 1999)

According to educational servant source of the government, the student numbers in most schools in Mon State have been gradually lessen and nearly 12% of students are less than estimated numbers who are expected attending schools in this 1999-2000 school year. Since the student joined schools in June, because of various types of expenses to get access to education, about 5% of students have left from schools.

In Burma, the basic education schools for children less than 16 years old, started in June while most universities collages and institutions were closed for several months. Soon the students joined the schools, the government authorities collected school fund, which may have to pay SPDC authorities in Townships, the

different grades of students have to pay different amount of fund. The 5 years old new students who joined the schools had to pay 1, 000 Kyat fund, while Standard One to Standard Two had to pay 300 Kyat, Standard Three and Standard Four had to pay 400 Kyat, Standard Five and Standard Six had to pay 500 Kyat, Standard Seven and Standard Eight had to pay 700 Kyat and Standard Nine and Standard Ten had to pay 800 Kyat respectively. These were school entry costs and the teachers explained to students that they would give the fund to Township authorities and the fund will be used in education service.

Besides the entry fund at the beginning of school year, the government teachers also collected fund for Student Sport, which is planned to be held in December, 1999 in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State. In July and August, every student whether they were at low grades or high grades, they had to give fund with 300 Kyat per head. This fund collection was made by teachers and Township authorities also collected another 300 Kyat from every house in every township in Mon State for this Sport.

Since the government has used little budget in education, the school construction and materials are not much provided by SPDC education departments and the schools have remained on "self-help" situation. Whenever the school buildings or materials in schools are damaged, the teachers have to collect funds from civilians or students. If the school building was damaged, the civilians in the school area had to provide large amount of fund to teachers. Depending on how large of the schools, one family had to provide at least 1, 000 Kyat. If the school materials such as blackboards, chairs, tables, desks and others are damaged in schools, the students have to provide fund to repair them or to make them new. Depending on how many types and numbers of school materials are damaged, the students have to provide fund at least 100 Kyat. It is a

burden for poor students and parents to provide this amount of fund.

Other main expense for student is the costs for special classes. The creation of special classes in the whole country is also occurred because of the government's low monthly salary paid to teachers. A primary schools teacher received only 1,200 Kyat (about 3.5 US Dollar) and this amount of salary could buy only 25 pound of polished rice which is not enough to eat for one month. Thus, the school teachers have found the ways to get outside income besides government salary. Since 1990, many teachers in both urban and rural areas have opened special classes and organize their students in schools to attend these special classes. The teachers work in government from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and open the special classes in evening time continuously after schooling time. The students who attend the special classes receive more favors from the teachers in school classes or in monthly exam or final exams. Without attending these special classes, the students are hard to pass the final exams. Thus, many students try to join the special classes. The students has to pay 200-300 Kyat for one subject in special class and one student who would like to join the special classes of all subjects according to curriculum has to pay about 1500-2000 Kyat per month. The students' parents also have to support all these costs.

Later, because of such expenses to give various funds to schools and costs for special classes, the poor parents are unable to support their students and at the end, they had to take their children from schools. The more higher education their children reached, the more expenses the parents had to pay and so over 40% of students left from schools before they passed the primary schools (Standard Four) because their parents could not pay the expenses. For Middle School and High School students, they are always forced to attend government's sham ceremonies very regularly and forced to join USDA. Without attending these ceremonies and participating as an USDA member, the students could not easily pass the exams. In this disappointed situation and no education institutions after they passed high schools, some students in middle schools and high schools also left from schools. In conclusion, the education for new generation has been slowly deteriorated in Mon State alike the whole country.



Mon students go to Mon National School in a rural village: *The Mon national school and education is always under oppressed situation by SPDC.*

Besides some stu-

The Mon Forum (Issue No. 9/99, September 30, 1999)

dents left from schools due to high expenses, some students also moved to Mon National Schools in Mon State where they have to spend less. Since NMSP-SLORC ceasefire in 1995, the Mon community in Mon State created many Mon National Schools and have provided Mon National Education. After the Mon parents could not pay for much expenses for their children in government schools, they also moved them to Mon schools. The community itself supports the Mon education and the system is gradually grown in the recent years. The Mon students do not have to join the special classes and the teachers provided full time teaching to students. Although their salary slightly higher than the government teachers, the community provides all necessary foods for them.

After more Mon schools are operated in Mon areas, the authorities also tried to close down Mon schools and prohibited the running of Mon education. Such oppression against the Mon national schools and education, such as closing down Mon schools, arresting Mon teachers and pressuring the students' parents to withdraw their children from Mon schools, have been regularly happened in areas where the Mon schools are operated.

More Security Beefed Up In Mon State Due to Fear of 9-9-99 Uprising

(September, 1999)

In August and September, in order to halt the uprising or due to the fear among the SPDC authorities of the possible pro-democracy uprising on September 9, which is known as 9-9-99, the Mon State PDC authorities have beefed up security and conscripted the civilians to provide the security or to serve as informers for them. Although the uprising has not occurred until the end of September, the local civilians are constantly instructed to participate as unpaid labourers working for authorities for many days as a result.

It is shown that the authorities are in fear of that the uprising must be initiated by students. Thus, since the second week of August, the teachers are called by authorities and asked for promise that they would not participate in or encourage the uprising and additionally to keep their students to not participate in any uprising against the government. The government teachers were asked for a signed promise from the authorities and they also received two months food supplies ration in advance.

At the same time, since August, the government beefed up more security forces in towns in Mon State and closed the towns by setting up check-points in every entrance to towns. Inside the towns, the Township authorities also instructed the town section leaders to conscript the civilians in their own section and

to set up security outposts respectively to watch the activities of civilians and students in town sections closely for 24 hours a day. Normally, those security members had to walk around in their responsible sections and watched who were putting posters for 9-9-99 uprising and distributing documents encouraging for uprising. Similarly, the authorities also ordered the villages close to towns to set up security outpost like in the town sections. As the SPDC authorities believed that KNU and ABSDF members would bring the documents and declarations for 9-9-99 uprising, all roads were also blocked and the local military battalions also made checking along the roads. The authorities declared for curfew orders and had not allowed anyone to walk on roads at night time. In August, some civilians were arrested due to their late return to homes from their rice-farms or plantations at night time.

The members from USDA, Myanmar Red Cross Society and Fire Departments were also instructed by Township PDC authorities to supervise the closest security outposts and to watch around the Town section or village areas to check the situation of the civilians and informers. In August, authorities arrested many former student leaders and ordinary NLD members already to keep them to not lead the uprising.

On August 14, the Ye Township PDC authorities ordered the respective town section leaders to set up 3 security outposts in the town and another 4 outposts in villages close to town. According to civilian source, each three town sections had to set up one outpost, such as Yan Gyi Aung, Yan Myo Aung, Thiri Nanda sections set up the security outpost No. 1, Thiri Zayar, Thiri Mingala, Aung Mingala sections set up the security outpost No. 2, Thiri Khayma, Thiri Mala, Aung Thukha sections set up the security outpost No. 3 respectively. Similarly, the nearer two village tracts, Duya village tract and Tu-Myaung village tract also set up the security outpost No. 4 and outpost No. 5 respectively. And, LIB No. 343 also had to take security along Ye-Tavoy railway road in the part belonged to Mon State while IB No. 106 also takes security in area along Thanbyuzayat-Ye Motor road.

The similar conscription of civilians into security forces and in watching the activities the residents and students also took place in other township areas. According the civilians in Paung Township, each family had to provide one person to be security member in outpost and stayed for at least two days each round and had to go and stay at outposts at least two rounds within one month. In Thaton township, IB No. 24 battalion had taken the civilians together with them such as putting them in security outposts and bringing them as porters when they went and checked security along railway and motor roads. The other townships in Mon State also did the same to prevent the pro-democracy uprising during August and September.

Report

Conscription of Forced Labour, Looting of Villagers' Belongings and Tax Collection Continues in Mon State and Tenasserim Division

I. Introduction

In the earlier of this year, 1999's dry season, from January to May, some thousands of local villagers in Yebyu township area have been conscripted into unpaid labourers in building the widening Ye-Tavoy road by Burmese army or SPDC local battalions. This road is a strategic road for SPDC troops in the area to get better communication between Mon State and Tenasserim Division. The better communication could provide the troops in the area to move easily from one place to another and could provide more safety for foreign investment. (*The Conscription forced labour in Ye-Tavoy motor road widening construction was already described in The Mon Forum No. 5/99, May 1999*).

Besides the conscription of forced labour in this motor road, the local villagers in this area of Ye and Yebyu township are continuously suffered from other types of forced labour such as contribution of free labour in dike construction, farming of paddy crops and permanent or front-line porters for the army. As the southern part of Thanbyuzayat township area, most part of Ye and Yebyu area are recognized as "Black Area", the SPDC soldiers have opportunity to loot the villagers belongings and collect various types of tax or fund from the town residents and rural villagers. Such collection of tax and fund by the local army battalions are not described in laws and regulations of the government or the constitution, but this violation has been a habit of local military battalions in enjoying in corruption. These conscription of forced labour, looting and tax collecting have made the village communities to be more poorer and additional population displacement.

II. The Continued Conscription of Forced Labour

Under the command of military command from Operational Control Division No. 8, the local military battalions in Yebyu township are encouraged to create fruit plantations and paddy farms to get crops and to be able support themselves. After this encouragement, thousands of villagers in Yebyu township areas have been regularly forced by the military battalions in exploring new lands for paddy farms and fruit plantations. Generally, the local military battalions in Yebyu township of LIB No. 410 to 410, LIB No. 273 and LIB No. 282 has partly or fully participated in conscripting the villagers to explore the new lands.

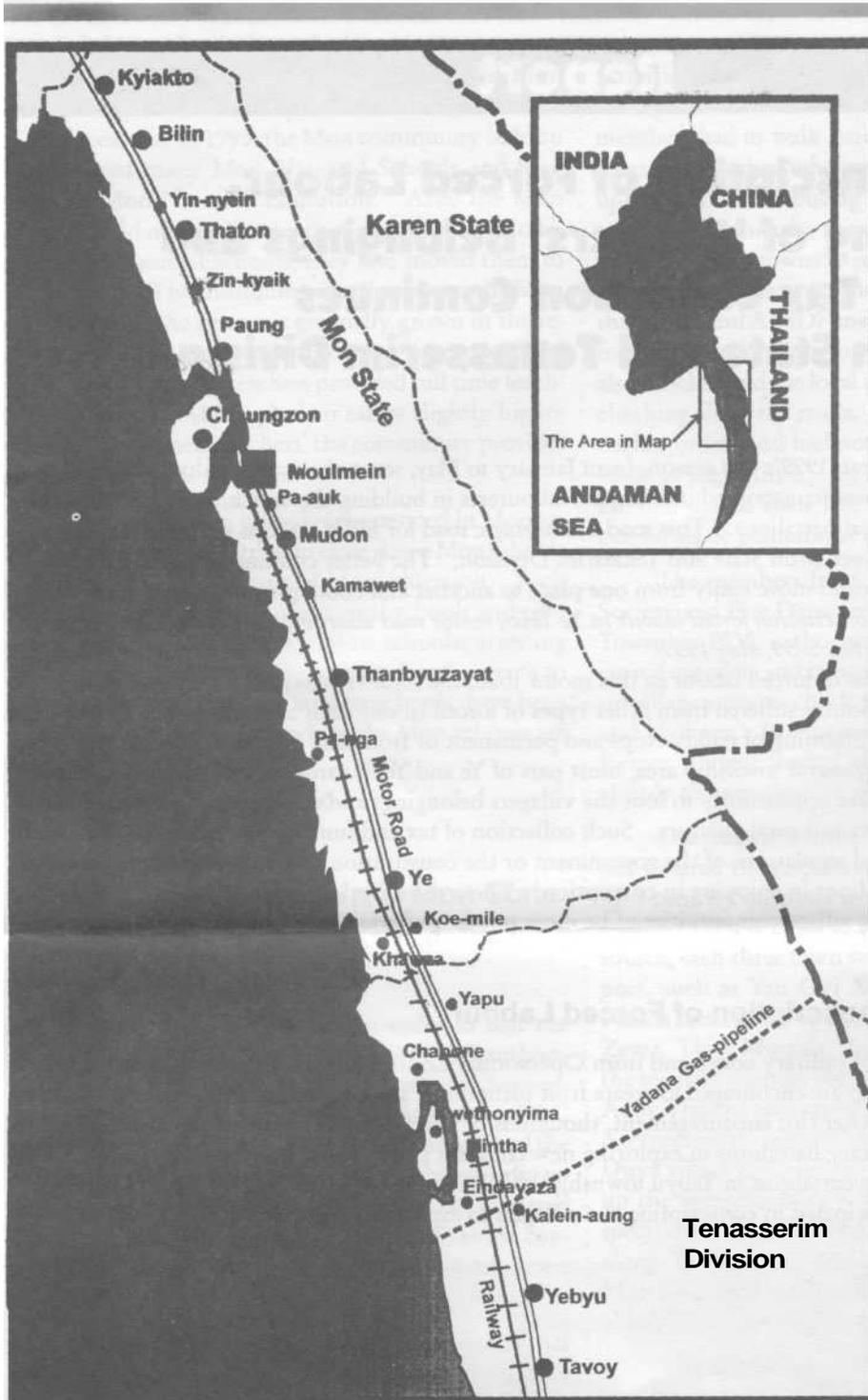


Conscription of Forced Labour in Ye-Tavoy Motor Road: *The local villagers along this motor road had been forced to contribute unpaid labour in widening Ye-Tavoy motor road from January to May, 1999.*

Since nearly one year, the local military battalions shared the forest lands in east part of Ye-Tavoy motor road in the area between Yapu and Kalein-aung-villages (*see in the map*). Under the command of Operational Control Division No. 8, about 4,000 acres of lands were taken by the battalions. As the military division or command could not provide enough food rations to their soldiers and have ordered the

respective battalion commanders to find the required themselves to feed

foods by



The location map of Mon State and Yebyu Township in Tenasserim Division

of 1999), the local military battalions forced the local villagers to clear the lands in "Layin-gwin" area which is close to Yapu village (see in the map). The villagers from over 20 villages of three village tracts of Yapu, Mintha and Kalein-aung have been forced to work in clearing the trees, bushes and grasses in new lands to be ready to grow fruit trees. Estimatedly, about 25% households in each village had to send at least one person from one house to work in clearing and preparing the lands in Layin-gwin area. According to a villager in the area, nearly 2,000 acres (half of the total) of lands have been cleared roughly. The rough clearance of the forest is normally to cut all small and big trees, take bamboo groves, and clear all small trees. After the rough clearance of the lands, the villagers will be instructed again to take out all tree roots.

An experienced villager, who have forced by army to work in exploring the lands said to our human

the soldiers. For the battalion commanders, if they failed to manage according to order or if the soldiers in the battalions have no foods, those commanders must be dismissed from their position. As the punishment to the commanders is quite hard, all commanders tried to find lands to grow paddy or find cash from the villagers to buy foods. Whether a battalion explore the land and grow paddy or collect tax or fund, the local villagers are always instructed to contribute unpaid labour.

After the lands were taken by battalions, the commanders had planned to prepare the lands to create them as paddy growing farms or fruit plantation. As the lands are far from the coastal area and some lands are in hilly area, the army planned to create most parts as fruit plantations. They could grow rubber, betel-nut, cashew nut, lime and other types of fruits. These are the big plan for the local battalions to raise funds for longterm.

Therefore, in the whole rainy season (from June to September

rights worker that:

"We had to work for 7 days in August (1999) and another 7 days in the next month (in September) for LIB No. 406's land exploration to grow rubber in Layin-gwin area. The main works in the work-places are to cut down some trees, clear the small bushes and bamboo groves. It is quite hard work when we cut big trees and cut all bamboo trees.

"The soldiers did not guard us, but sometime they came and looked around the situation of land exploration. Sometimes they talked and shouted to village headmen. The work-duties are shared to headmen by battalion commander. Before we were asked to work in this land clearance work, the village chairman and one village committee went and met with LIB No. 406 commander in a meeting and then the commander shared work-duties to our villagers. In each round, about 50 villagers went to work-places together with a village headman and he showed which place we might have to clear the lands. A group of our villagers must have to complete about 10 acres of land spaces to be cleared within 7 days."

During the rainy season, the villagers were however busy with their own works in rice farms or fruit plantations, but they could not refuse the works instructed by army. The village headmen who asked for the reduction or work-duties were always shout or beaten by commanders or junior officers. The army commanders always would not listen to any complaint or argument by village headmen or villagers.

Besides conscription of forced labour in farming and creating of fruit plantations in the area, the local villagers are always permanently used as "permanent labourers" in the battalions mainly to help working every thing for soldiers. All battalions in Yebyu township took such permanent labourers in the battalion headquarters or military outposts by demanding the local village headmen.

As an example,

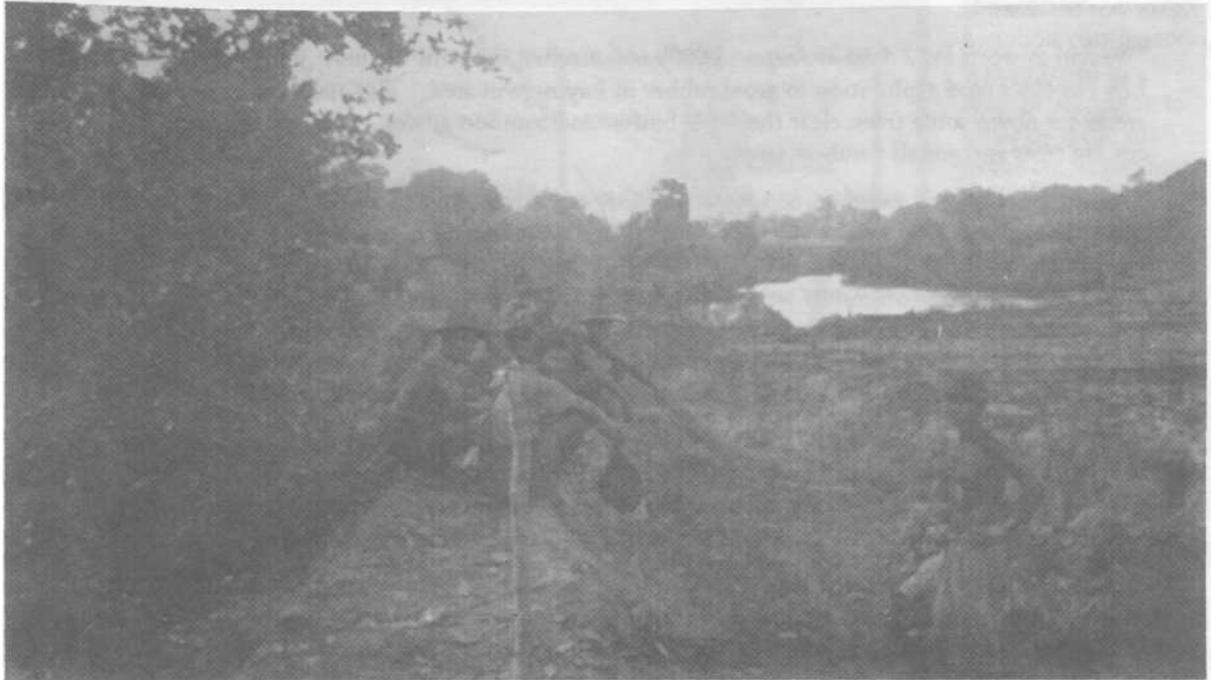
A military outpost of LIB No, 401 led by Lt. Col. Thakaman that bases in Kalein-aung village always demands permanent about 20 labourers from the near 8 villages to work in their battalion. Thus, the village headmen have to always manage to send at least 2-3 villagers from each village to this outpost. The main work in the outpost are varied. The villagers were instructed by a sergeant in the outpost to mainly work growing vegetables and fruit trees, making charcoals, making foods, carrying water and etc. Normally, the villagers were instructed to grow vegetables in the outpost's compound and sometimes, the soldiers brought the villagers to grow fruits in another places outside of outpost where the battalion owns a piece of land. These large amount and various types vegetables grown by unpaid labour are not only providing for foods to the battalion's soldiers but these are also sold by a responsible officer in Kalein-aung market for battalion fund. Similarly, while the villagers make a lot of charcoals, these are not all used by outpost, but are sold for battalion fund also.

As mentioned above, some battalions also used some hundreds of forced labourers in "Layin-gwin" area to clear the lands and create fruit plantations. If these plantations are completed, the battalions could get fund from selling fruits from the plantations. Some fruit trees will take for five years to get fruits.

Another type of conscription of forced labour is to use the villagers in clearing farmlands for soldiers near the newly built dikes. There are four main dikes in coastal area of Kwethonyima and Mintha village tracts and the military battalions planned to clear the lands and create farms. Those four dikes were built with forced labour since 1998 rainy season until the dry season of 1999. Some dikes took too long time, the battalion used minimum 200 villagers in each round conscription for each dike. The villagers built embankment along the set routes and wooden walls in all streams to become a dike keeping water in higher side of the land. While the villagers were building the embankment, some parts of embankment were also destroyed because of rainwater and flood in the last rainy season. Thus, in the last rainy season, the villagers were forced to re-build some parts of embankment again.

After these dikes are built, the military battalions have planned to clear the possible lands to use them as paddy growing farms. Thus, the villagers from about 30 villages of Mintha, Eindayaza and Kwethonyima village tracts were forced to clear the lands in this rainy season. After the water is kept in dike, the battalion commanders instructed the village headmen to clear the lands to explore the farmlands in lower pan or other side of the dikes. According to instruction, the lands in the lower part of the embankment are cleared and prepared them to be a paddy growing farmlands. In exploring these lands, the villagers are shared with a space of land to each family to be cleared as a work-duty.

As an example of conscription of forced labour in exploring paddy-growing lands is described about the land exploration near Kwethonyima dike.



The unpaid labourers in building an embankment for Kwethonyima dike: *The dike was built in the last rainy season and then the villagers are continuously forced to explore the farmlands.*

In exploring farmlands, the villagers from about 7 villages such as Kwethonyima, Chattaw, Mae-than-taung, Mae-taw, Chabone, Ahbyu and Abyaik are conscripted to be labourers. Those villagers are instructed to clear the lands for about four months from June to September 1999, to complete clearing the lands. LIB No. 273 has taken responsibility in conscripting the villagers to be unpaid labourers in exploring the lands. However, this battalions' soldiers have not guard in the work places, and all work-duties are shared to the respectively village headmen of the 7 villages. Among 7 villages, Kwethonyima is the biggest village and it had more work-duties than other villages.

However, the work-duty is shared to each family and the army commanders did not set how many days that family must complete a piece of work. But most families tried to complete their pieces of works as quick as possible because they have jobs to work in their farms or fruit plantation. In Kwethonyima dike's land exploration, LIB No. 273 shared some work-duties to the respective village headmen and those headmen have to share pieces of work to their villagers. Each family from the 7 villages received a piece of work with 35 meters in length and 20 meters in width space to complete clearance of the land. If a member from one family went and worked clearing this space of land, they must have to spend for 15 days to 20 days. Therefore, after the work-duties are shared, at least two members of each family went and worked in the work-sites. The 'work-duties are shared village by village. After one village complete4 large space of land clearance, another village was instructed to continue and work.

The main works in clearing the lands are to cut all small trees, clear bushes and grasses, burn all rubbish to be ashes and level the lands. The villagers have to dig and take all tree roots and it is a hard work. During rainy season, the burning of the garbages is impossible because of wet and flow of water. So the villagers had to bring them from the work-site to streams and rivers to throw them away. It was also a hard work in the rainy season to carry a large amount of garbages to rivers.

According to a village headman, LIB No. 273 expects they will receive about 400 acres of farmlands after all designated in lower part of Kwethonyima dike is totally cleared. Similar to Kwethonyima dike's land exploration, other villagers from Mintha and Eindayaza village tracts also suffered the same. Near Mintha, Singu and Hmawgyi dikes, the military battalions also forced the local villagers to clear the lands for paddy growing farms. The local military battalions from LIB No. 406, 409 and 410 have respectively supervised the exploration of lands near these three dikes and have used forced labourers like Kwethonyima dike.

According to villagers' source, LIB No. 273 also plans to build another dike near Chabone village (see map) and explores the new farmlands. The commanders have looked and make a survey in this area and after an embankment and a dike are built, the battalion could receive another 200 acres of farmlands and the villagers must be used as unpaid labourers again in building embankment, dike and clearing the lands. Now,

the villagers are still worrying about the conscription of forced labour in the building of new dikes.

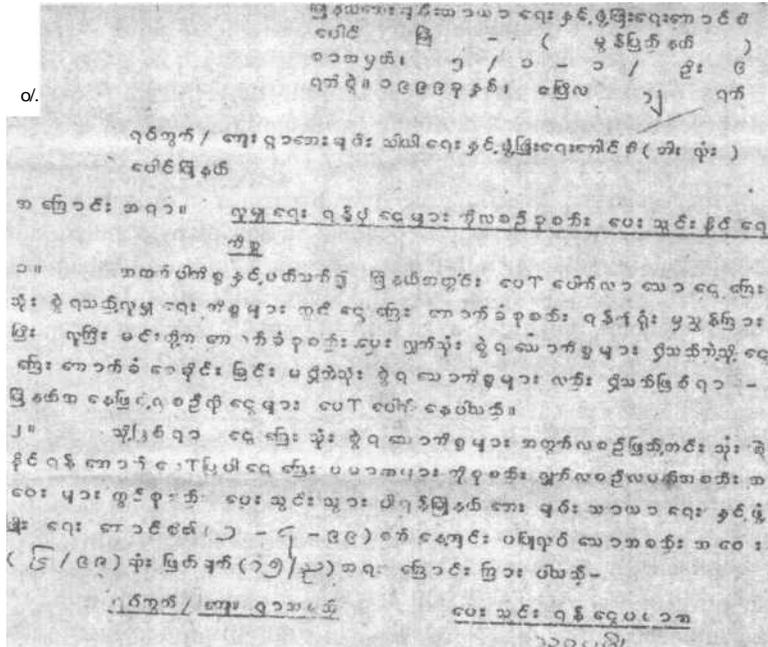
III. Cash Collection for Battalions' Fund and Looting Cases

Following the order to support themselves in the battalions, the collection of fund from the civilians have been gradually grown in both "white" and "black" areas. During from August to September, Mon State Peace and Development Council (Mon State PDC) and Southeast Military Command also ordered the respective Township PDC and the local battalion to collect fund from the civilians by any way they could to support the battalion fund and the planned "Student Sports" which is to be held in Moulmein, the capital of Mon State.

Thus, the military battalions such as IB No 210, IB No. 31, IB No. 32 which bases in Mudon, Thanbyzayat and Ye township areas had staged some concerts and boxing the respective town halls and managed selling tickets to civilians. The township instructed town

ward and village leaders to sell these tickets to every family in the township area whether the civilians would like to watch the concerts and boxing or not. The civilians have to buy 100 Kyat or 200 Kyat for each tickets and they could not refuse even they would not like to watch stages. From these staging concerts and boxing, the above mentioned battalions could raise about 10 millions Kyat fund from these three township areas.

In other townships, sometimes Township PDC authorities directly order the village headmen, government servants including school teachers and health workers to collect fund for battalions or for townships. On September 22, Paung Township PDC orders the village headmen to collect and send 40, 000 Kyat fund in average from each village to Township. Therefore, some small village had to provide fund about 20,000 while



(Translation)

Township Peace and Development Council
Paung Town (Mon State)
Letter No. 5/1-1/U 6
Date: April 12, 1999

To

Town Section/ Village PDC (All)
Paung Township

SUBJECT: Informing to collect and give monthly social fund.

1. As the subject mentioned above, due to expenses in the Township area for social case, that we have instructed you to collect, and meanwhile, we have used both some your fund and other fund which is not collected by you. So the Township expenditures show the deficit fund every month.
2. Thus, to provide monthly expense for all matters, you must collect the following amount of fund and give it in the monthly meeting of Township PDC. We inform you this according to Township PDC meeting held on April 1, 1999, the meeting no. 6/99, and decision 15/J.

The names of town section/ village

The amount of fund to give
13,000 Kyat

Signed/-
Chairman, Paung Township PDC

The order in Burmese version and its Translation: *This is the official request for fund for Paung Township and the army in township*

some big village had to provide about 200, 000 Kyat. Besides this instruction, the village headmen also collected fund from the families who owned TV set. Depending on the sizes of TV, the owners have to pay fund or tax 1, 500 Kyat, 2, 000 Kyat, 3, 000 Kuant and 4, 500 Kyat respectively. The township also showed the reason about collecting fund as supporting Township Buddhist Association and Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA). From this fund collection, the Township PDC could get fund about 3 million Kyat.

For the regular tax collection, the Township issued an order to every village and town section that to regularly send these types of tax. Depending on how many population in a village or a town section, the demanded regular fund or tax is different. Although they put the name of the tax is as social fund, these funds are used for the expenses of army and SPDC authorities. In Paung Township, even a small village with 100 households, it has to give tax with amount 15, 000 Kyat per month. (*See the order in Paung Township, issued by Township PDC in April and the villages are still giving the requested amount of fund as monthly tax.*)

In Thaton Township area, Township PDC instructed the village headmen to collect 250 Kyat from each family. The fund collection was started on September 25. Thaton Township has about 59 villages and some villages have over 1, 000 households. The Township PDC authorities had shown that they have required some fund to support the military training of village militias and the fund must come from town sections and villages' civilians. At the same time, the township authorities also collected fund from the houses in villages to pay 2, 000, 3, 000, 4, 000 Kyat respectively by showing the reason they will connect electric wires and set the poles in the villages. From this fund collection, the Township PDC received about 2.5 millions Kyat from the civilians.

Besides fund collection, sometimes the local authorities including police, custom officers also looted the villagers' belongings for their own organization fund or private income. The police and custom officials have rights to search every thing in trains, trucks, passengers and boat ferries. In most situations, whenever they met illegal materials or unofficial goods from Thailand, they seize those goods without sending the traders to trails according to existed laws. They took those goods and sold them for their organization fund or share the cash among the officers and staff.

As an example,

On February 4, 1999, when a group of Mon traders returned from a border town with Thailand, Myawaddy, they also took goldwares from Thailand for sales. The group of traders, of 4 men and 11 women, came by truck from the border to Kya Inn Seiky town, a small town in Karen State. They hired a boat ferry and flew from Kya Inn Seiky to Moulmein. When they arrived near Moulmein, a group of police and custom officers stopped their boat ferry and their whole bodies were searched. The authorities met about-15 kilograms of gold-wares from those traders and looted them all. Those traders were accused by the police that they were participating in illegal business and that was why they confiscated all of their gold-wares. Actually, they must be brought to a court for a trail. However, the authorities did not follow according to law procedures and looted their belongings.

The looting of villagers' belongings including foods and demand of tax from the villages in the "Black Area" like Yebyu Township area of Tenasserim Division have been more brutal and have been remained as a common case. The problems of intensive looting of villagers' foods is also related to "self-support" policy adopted among the military battalions that take base in rural area. According to reliable source, the military battalions from LIB No. 401 to 410, LIB No. 273 and LIB No. 282 that base in Yebyu Township area have to find fund to support their own soldiers. If the battalion commanders could not manage to support themselves, they must be dismissed from their position and replaced with second commander. Thus, the battalion commanders have to try hard to get enough fund to feed their soldiers. Each battalion must try to get about 200, 000 Kyat funds each month to be enough supporting their soldiers, military services and general expenses. For the whole year each battalion must have to stockpile about 4, 000 baskets of paddy to feed the soldiers and their families.

Due to this instruction from Operational Military Command.No. 8, whenever the battalion soldiers went into villages, they always to collect the lots amount of fund from the villagers by showing various reasons such as porter fees, security fees, border area development fund and others. Furthermore, those battalions also looted paddy from the local farmers by saying they would buy it, during dry season while all village farmers stockpiled their crops at houses to be eaten for the whole rainy season. Sometimes, one village's paddy was looted by two battalions or three battalions.

The examples of looting foods by battalions are:

On January 19, 1999, a column of LIB No. 410 troops led by Captain. Thaw Min went into Chabone village and looted about 250 baskets of paddy totally from paddy growing farmer families. They said they would buy the paddy and pay 400 Kyat per basket, the villagers have not received any payment later. In addition, the troops also collected fund from the villagers who have no farms. Then, on January 21, 1999, the same troops led by the same commander went into Kwethonyima village and looted about 270 baskets of paddy without payment. As a conclusion, LIB No. 410's battalion commander also gave restricted duty to Maj. Thaw Min and his column to loot the villagers' paddy for battalion foods.

Similarly, on February 9, 1999, two columns of LIB No. 273 troops led by battalion second commander Maj. Kyaw Soe went into Chabone village and looted 120 baskets of paddy from farmers.

For the porter fees, the big or small villages are collected as a normal tax to pay the battalions. In some rural areas, there are two or three battalions have come into their villages and asked porters or porter fees. The headmen always have to manage for porters to provide the battalions, which arrived to their village and if they delayed in managing, they must be beaten or receive a harsh punishment. Some battalions also demanded both porters and porter fees. For example, a battalion requires totally 3 porters from a village, but when the battalion actually takes them, just takes two and asked for cash for remaining one porter. Depending on how many days that the porters have to stay the battalion to serve porter works, the headmen may have to pay 2,000-5,000 Kyat per one porter. The battalions always calculate that for the fees of hiring a porter is to pay 500 Kyat per day. The battalions show the reason of collecting porter fees is that they will have to hire substitute porters for the ones whom they do not take from the villages. Actually, no battalion hire any substitute labourers.

Similar to porter fees, the battalions also demand for labourer fees to pay. Like mentioned above, when a battalion conscripted civilians as unpaid labourers in construction sites such as motor road, railway and dikes, and as permanent labourers to do works in battalions, they also demanded labourer fees from the villages. When LIB No. 401 conscripts permanent labourers in its outpost in Kalein-aung, which bases mainly to take security Yatana gas-pipeline, it always requests 2-3 porters from each village. When the headman from a village could not the requested number of permanent labourer, that headman has to pay labourer fee with 3,000 Kyat per head. However, the battalion commander Lt. Col. Tha Kaman never hires any substitute labourers and uses only the labourers he has in the outpost.

Now, the new existed tax collection is development fund. When some battalions in Yebyu township built dikes and explore farmlands, or the government rebuild the Ye-Tavoy motor road, these are named under the border area development program, and the rural villagers also have responsibility to provide some fund for these construction projects. As an example when LIB No. 273 built a dike with forced labour near Kwethonyima village, the battalion has collected 4,000 Kyat fund as development fund from the whole village of Kwethonyima.

Not only for the building of motor road, railway and dikes in the area, when the SPDC deployed a new military battalion, LIB No. 299 in southern part of Ye township, the Ye Township SPDC authorities and IB No. 61 also collected about 30 million Kyat from the whole Ye Township area. The Mon people in both villages and town sections have to pay a burden of fund for this new battalion deployment. Some big village over 1,000 households have to pay about 0.5 million Kyat for this fund.

Besides the requested fund by the battalions, the local troops who regularly go into village are also depending on food supplies provided by villagers. According to villagers, whenever the SPDC troops, a small number or even a battalion, went into villages, the commanders always ordered the headmen to find foods especially rice and curry for their troops. And the headmen also have to provide liquor, cigarettes, and beer. After the troops left from villages, the headmen collected fund from the villagers. The commanders say the villagers may have to provide such foods and others to soldiers, because they believe their troops provide security for villagers.

The other type, of cash extortion is related to accusation of rebel-supporters. Some villagers were brutally beaten because of this accusation and later the army commanders always demanded a ransom for release of the arrested people. There have been many incidents happened in southern part of Ye Town after a Mon armed group has launched military activities in the area or other robbery cases.

The examples were:

On January 13, 1999, after a passenger bus was robbed by a group of robbers near Koe-mile village (look in map). After robbery incident, some villagers from Koe-mile village who were accused by the army as relatives or friends of the robbers were arrested and tortured. LIB No. 343 arrested six villagers includ-

ing one woman and detained them in a battalion outpost detention near the village. They were inhumanely and brutally tortured by soldiers for 5 days to admit they had cooperated with robbers to commit a robbery. After five days detention, the outpost commander of LIB No. 343 also demanded 20, 000 Kyat ransom per head. Then the relatives of those arrested villagers gathered 120, 000 Kyat and gave cash to army commander as' ramson. After the commander received ransom, all villagers were released.

Whenever a Mon troops came close to a village, the villagers were always accused as rebel-supporters and the headmen were always tortured and sometimes they were brought to SPDC battalion and were asked ramson for a release. If the SPDC troops lost arms or soldiers died in the fighting, the villagers had to pay the costs for the loss of arms and soldiers. Normally, the army asked about 100, 000 Kyat ransom for an arm and about 500, 000 Kyat for a soldier from the nearest villages if they lost in the fighting.

IV. Conclusion

After NMSP-SLORC ceasefire agreement in 1995, although the majority Mon people in rural area have been less suffered from the gross human rights violations such as killing, torturing, forced relocation and displacement, sexual harrassment and other abuses related to accusation of NMSP-supporters, but have been still suffered by other types of abuses including conscription of forced labour, tax collection or cash extortion, unlawful looting and others. As a racial discrimination, the government authorities or their troops have always tried to close down Mon schools established by Mon community and prohibited Mon education system.

Since NMSP and the current military regime SPDC have not agreed on any political solution from a dialogue, the NMSP officials could not protect the civilians from violations committed by government soldiers. Or, sometimes when the NMSP officials argued about human rights- situation of the Mon people, SPDC authorities ignored about the cases and never gave promise to change their behaviour or their local troops' abuses against the people.