

# **KAOWAO NEWS NO. 128**

**Newsletter for social justice and freedom in Burma**

**May 17 – June 2, 2007**

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## **Readers' Front**

**Burmese military expansion spawns violence and displacement in Karen State**

**Illegal checkpoints close down due to row over their control**

**Prostitution thrives as young girls struggle in Mon State**

**For rural school children in Burma, an uncertain future**

**Global Warming: Late Monsoon hurting betel nut farmers**

**World leaders' letter to Burma was remarkable: By Nehginpao Kipgen**

**Act Now or Regret Later with the Unholy Alliance**

**Ethical Issues forgotten by the Burmese Media: By Siri Mon Chan**

**Courts cannot allow bullshitting with justice**

**Globalization And Democracy: Some Basics**

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## **Readers' Front**

Dear readers,

We invite comments and suggestions on improvements to Kaowao newsletter. With your help, we hope that Kaowao News will continue to grow to serve better the needs of those seeking social justice in Burma. And we hope that it will become an important forum for discussion and debate and help readers to keep

abreast of issues and news. We reserve the right to edit and reject articles without prior notification. You can use a pseudonym but we encourage you to include your full name and address.

Regards,  
Editor  
Kaowao News

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## **Burmese military expansion spawns violence and displacement in Karen State**

Kaowao: 2 June 2007

At least four thousand Karen villagers have been displaced in the east of Kyauk-Kyi Township, Pegu Division and in Karen State, according to a member of the FTUK (Federation of Trade Union- Kawthoolei).

An eyewitness, who is a member of the FTUK, said that people from 18 villages have been hiding in the forest to avoid detection from the Burmese army since April 2007.

Burmese military expansion in April led to the displacement after a military unit under Brigade 88 constructed a road between Paul-Kaw and Bu-Zar-Khi villages for a road development project. The army sets up camps in the villages to force people to work under forced labour conditions to build infrastructure including roads. If the people stay in the camps they will become easy targets for the soldiers and so the villagers decide to flee from the area.

According to a report from the Free Burma Rangers or FBR, the most recent attack appears to be tied closely with the Burma Army's road construction plans in Northern Karen State. These villages lie directly in the path of a new road the Burma Army is constructing which is intended to connect Toungoo District and Papun District.

Agriculture is the principal form of the villager's livelihood and the displacement is threatening the food supply in the area. Villagers are now preparing their fields for the planting season and are worried that continued Burma Army attacks will make it impossible to grow crops.

There has also been food wastage as the people feel too insecure to return home to get food, now the displaced people are running out of food supplies and medicine and some children have suffered from malnutrition, the FTUK member explained. The people are in need of medical, food supplies, and mosquito nets the source said, "If these people are in this situation for two weeks more, they will face serious trouble".

There is fear of malaria due to environmental exposure and makeshift shelters are not sturdy enough to protect them.

The villagers attempted to walk to the Thai-Burma border, where there are Karen refugee camps. But the geography of eastern Burma, Karen State during the rainy season makes it difficult to travel through heavy jungle vegetation and frequent rain make it difficult if not impossible to reach the border.

As well it is difficult to access and get supplies to these people, where there is an estimated 1 million internally displaced people (IDP) in rural areas. Since the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) does not authorize the monitoring of the displaced it is difficult to get reliable statistics and implement proper relief programmes.

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### **Illegal checkpoints close down due to row over their control**

Kaowao: May 31, 2007

Sangkhlaburi -- Two illegal toll checkpoints that collect money from traders and travelers run by the Burma Army located at the Three Pagodas Pass border town have been closed down due to a row over who controls them.

Since the closure of the main checkpoint to prohibit Thai goods from entering into Burma, the BA had illegally opened two other gates to allow the smuggling of goods to pass into Burma for the purpose of collecting illegal money.

However, the two gates were closed on May 30, 2007 after Col. Saw Lay Aung of the Karen cease-fire group quarreled with Lt. Col Hla Min from the Burma Army's Battalion No.18 on the opening of these gates. The two check points are situated near the Tai Ta Yar Monastery and Palai Japan village.

"These are illegal taxes collected by the Burma Army, they are not taxes for the treasury, but money taken for the military's coffers, the ceasefires group are not happy with them opening up the two gates in their area since they are not given the

same chance of doing so. So the Karen Peace Force leader took photos of the gates to address this matter to the capital (Nay Phyi Daw)" said Ko Chan Yin who has close connections with the KFP.

The BA made extra cash by allowing traders to bring in their smuggled goods through their checkpoints and will not share the money with other cease-fire groups, according to a source from the area. The two illegal check points operated by the BA were closed because they are worried that the ceasefire groups would bring this case to the capital.

Following the closure of the gates, the SPDC convened a meeting to discuss the managing and operating of toll gates between the local SPDC authorities and other ceasefire groups, namely (NMSP, DKBA, KPF).

"They are not letting motorbikes or cars cross over but are allowing walking passengers. After they have closed the Palai Japan gate, even the local villagers are not able to pass through this gate which is the daily route fro them," said a village headman who lives near there.

According to Nai Tun, a businessman from the Three Pagodas Pass, if they prohibit exports from Thailand, many consumers will face difficulties. "Now we are approaching the rainy season, if they (SPDC) restrict this gate, consumers will have problems getting Thai consumer products."

Meanwhile Burmese workers fear they will lose jobs if they cannot cross over to work in Thailand. Since the closure of the main checkpoint in March, the furniture industry at the border has suffered and many people have been laid off.

There are hundreds of such checkpoints operating with impunity in all the states throughout the country in a similar manner that restrict people from traveling freely. The SPDC encourages its military personnel to seek ways to raise funds from the local community in which they are stationed for their own use. People passing through the gates often are harassed and risk having much of their goods taken by the BA if there is a disagreement.

The operating of illegal toll checkpoints also places a heavy burden on a people facing poverty and dire economic times. Burmese farmers and traders cannot make a profit having to pay bribes, if they decline to pay the guards they may face harassment and be forced to hand over some of their goods.

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## **Prostitution thrives as young girls struggle in Mon State**

Reported by Lawiweng, Kaowao: May 27, 2007

Beer gardens have become popular hangouts of entertainment for men in the sprawling rural community in Mon State, southern Burma.

In a country whose government is fearful of public gatherings, open-air beer gardens have sprung up as fast as the government's billboards on peace and prosperity. Along with pitchers of the locally brewed beer or "Myanmar Zee Beer" and live music, beer gardens also offer 'extra services' to local drinkers, and now the sex industry has become a booming business in Mon State, in Ye township alone there are over fifty beer gardens offering sexual services for money, reported a businessman from Ye.

According to a local resident, sex work is spreading rapidly in rural Mon State, and it seems to go hand in hand with drinking spots and according to a social worker from Moulmein, men are offered a body massage and sexual services in most of them.

Social workers say that the girls are discouraged from wearing condoms by the men and have little say in the actual business arrangement as most of the time they are drunk during the encounter, especially the younger ones who are more vulnerable. On the domestic side, wives are put at risk of contracting diseases due to their husband's sexual activities and residents say they are accusing their husbands of seeking out prostitutes. "Some house wives hear their husbands talking about the service girls (prostitutes) at the beer gardens while they are out on a drunk, and at home there have been problems with domestic violence."

A beer garden owner of Kwan Hlar village, Mudon Township says he earns more money by hiring young girls to serve beer to attract customers. Itinerant workers such as truck drivers and young men who have returned from neighboring countries such as Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore as migrant workers are the usual patrons who frequent many of the beer gardens.

A beer garden owner, Mr. Pa Jai Oung from Mudon said it is easy to get a permit from the SPDC to open a bar. A permit for one year costs 2.8 million kyat and is easily granted by the authorities after waiting for six months. However, prostitution is technically illegal in Burma but the practice is widely tolerated by the community.

Rural areas in Burma face big challenges in addressing the problems of prostitution and HIV/AIDS, NGO work and self-help groups are much needed but

the political environment is not conducive to these sort of local outreach programmes. According to UNAIDS country office estimates, Burma spends less than \$0.01 per person on HIV. Yet, there is no clear legal stance nor effective public policies or programmes to deal with prostitution.

According to UN estimates, HIV prevalence is higher among migrant and itinerant workers in the 15-49-age range with a rate of 1.5 %, but this figure could be much higher due to underreporting in remote areas where there is a highly mobile population and figures could be at epidemic levels such as it is in the Golden Triangle and on the border.

A student in Mawlamyine University said some people pay a higher tip to young girls to give them extra services. Bars open until well after midnight; at 1 am, the customers can take the girl of their choice to another place. “Some girls are very young around 15 to 20-years-old. They are not to sit with others if the customer pays them more tips. When you go to the bar she will sit with you and then you can negotiate for sex. Many girls are coming in from Yangon where many have lost their jobs due to rising unemployment. It seems like no one is looking after them, they are unskilled and are unsuccessful in finding work. It is difficult for these girls to find other jobs in the city, they need requirements like a computer certificate, speaking English, or a degree,” explained the student.

Sex work is a last resort for girls who are trying to survive in desperate times, the girls complain they have to fend for themselves and their families and have no other means to make any money and so turn to the sex industry.

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### **For rural school children in Burma, an uncertain future**

Reported by Lawiweng, Kaowao: May 26, 2007

Many of Burma’s children are waiting for the beginning of the new school year which begins this week with many students’ parents crowding into schools to register their children. But every parent is worried about his or her children’s future: what will my child do after graduation?

Most students can hardly afford to buy exercise books and pencils, like Thu Ra who is in the ninth grade at Kamarwat village, Mudon Township, his family are farmers who are feeling the pinch and can barely afford the fees to send their boy to school. Holding his big brother’s hand, he is happy today because his brother has come up with the fees for his education. Thu Ra says he feels sad sometimes because he does not know what he will he after he finishes school, many graduates

wind up working on farms, migrate to the city or leave the country illegally as migrant workers.

Like all parents in Asia who place a high priority on education to achieve a high position in society, Burmese parents are no different and want to see their children enter university to achieve a degree. Many students, who have graduated from universities in the last two decades, have difficulties finding a decent job to bring in enough income to support their family. In post independence, the Burmese government which had started on a socialist path had vigorously made education available to all children throughout the country, but nowadays the Burmese government is grappling to bring in much needed foreign direct investment amid trying to develop a blueprint for education in matching the educational needs of its population to ‘the changing economic and political situation.’ The priority in its stated goal to bring education to all people now is not as important as controlling the ethnic nationalities and instead pays little attention to children’s education and health who live in rural or remote communities.

The Burmese military spends US 1\$ per person on education as opposed to the 40% spent on the military and focuses on more on controlling social unrest as seen reflected in the structure of the universities layout on the Yangon University campus. For example, departments and disciplines are physically separated into separate universities and undergraduates and graduates are taught in separate facilities. A UNESCO report stated that while universities have sprung up, the quality of education is mediocre, with low quality infrastructure, no technical or up to date technology for students to learn to meet the demands of a globalized world. Meanwhile those who study overseas are most likely not to return, thus further impoverishing the country’s position in the world.

For years now, the country has grown more poor and people are not able to focus on their children's education and instead have to concentrate on providing for their family, a rural teacher explained. “But also the main shortcoming is lack of funds, also, we have no electricity, poor infrastructure and committed teachers are not able to get an adequate pay to keep up their morale. Many pupils have to share textbooks and we don’t have a lab for science projects,” he added.

The economic meltdown of the country contributing to growing inflation and high unemployment continues to haunt the rulers of Burma, the second poorest the country in the world according to UN (United Nations) statistics. Shrinking industries and depleted agriculture land have forced many skilled and unskilled people to flee to search for better paying jobs. As problems deepen, the current pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is kept under house arrest and the world continues to urge the Burmese military to release her and reform the country's political situation.

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## **Global Warming**

### **Late Monsoon hurting betel nut farmers**

(Kaowao: May 25, 2007)

Ye -- Betel nut farmers are worried that their production levels will decrease due to the late arrival of the monsoon rainy and a long summer season.

"We are experiencing a very long summer and many wells in the village have dried up. Betel nut plants on the farm have also dried up and are not growing as they have in the past," said Nai Klaw from Durae Village.

Local farmers are beginning to plant rubber trees, which does not require wet weather like betel nut does. In the past, villagers in rural areas grew large quantities of betel nut every year. They searched for fertile land in southern Mon State where they planted betel nut and other tropical fruits.

"Deforestation has affected our traditional lives. Due to the late monsoon rain we cannot grow betel nut which is in increasing demand in the market," said Nai Shein from Ye.

Betel-chewing, a practice first recorded in Southeast Asia 2500 years ago, is an integral part of Burmese culture. Demand for betel nut in other parts of Burma has increased as well. Many wild lands in rural areas of southern Mon State, where old growth trees are being cut down to make way for production, have been cultivated for betel nut farming.

Mon State has a total cultivated area of nearly 4.5 million acres, most of which is rice paddies. The production of betel nut has been a productive and sustainable business for southern Mon State, especially in Ye.

A recent study on global warming by the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2007) stated that tropical forests are needed to keep the earth from warming and that it is vital to ensure they are protected. According to the report, Dr. Bala explained that tropical forests act like air conditioners that absorb carbon dioxide and produce cloud cover to cool the planet. When rainforests are ripped down there is a increase in temperature in the area. Mon State has a tropical climate, with mild weather year-round, as it is located in a low-latitude zone near the sea. However, due to deforesation and logging, much of its tropical rain forest

has been depleted, causing Mon State to experience a longer dry season than in the past.

In addition to a recent decrease in betel nut production, local people worry that flooding will occur more frequently as a result of diminishing forests.

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### Commentary

#### **World leaders' letter to Burma was remarkable**

By Nehginpao Kipgen

*[Written in response to May 15, 2007 Washington Post editorial page headline Letter to Burma: The world's senior statesmen call for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi.]*

The signed letter of 59 former heads of states, including the 3 living ex-presidents of the United States of America, sent to Burma's military supremo General Than Shwe and copied to the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on May 14 was a remarkable international response to the political conflicts in Burma.

This, exercised in one accord, may be one of the most popular and collective campaigns in modern world history and it happen on the backdrop of Burma and Russia signing an intergovernmental agreement on building a 10-megawatt nuclear reactor in Burma.

The letter was not only a symbolic one to demand the release of the world's only detained Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, but it was a catalyst to boosting the morale of hundreds of thousands of democracy activists who have so long wished to see such initiative from the international community.

The hopes of establishing a democratic Burma has been in the ups and downs' trend in recent years. Many believed the 1988 democracy uprising would have transformed the country. Then, there was a high hope with the holding of country-wide general elections in 1990, which was again nullified.

Despite what has transpired, there has been a steady progress in Burma's democratic movement. International community's awareness has also been widening. On September 29, 2006, Burma's democracy movement reached its culmination point at the United Nations Security Council as its permanent agenda. A drafted resolution was vetoed on January 12 this year.

Amidst diverse conceptual political theories and strategies, Aung San Suu Kyi has become a democratic icon and an eye of multi-ethnic democracy campaigners. Her passionate advocacy for instituting a democratic society through dialogue and non-violence has earned admiration from around the world.

It is now almost crystal clear to many erudite political scientists and analysts that any attempt to build a democratic Burma without Suu Kyi's role in one form or another would lack either the backing or recognition of the international community.

Meanwhile, Burma military regime with its basic principles of designed constitution is heading for a constitutional confrontation with the opposition groups. Parliamentary form of democracy in unitary government, with military reservations, is moving toward a head-on collision with proponents of a federal government.

May 14 historic intervention by world leaders is largely a positive and welcome move. However, it could have had more impact if the letter could have been signed and sent by the same leaders when they were in power.

*Nehginpao Kipgen is the General Secretary of US-based Kuki International Forum and a researcher on the rise of political conflicts in modern Burma (1947-2004).*

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## **Act Now or Regret Later with the Unholy Alliance**

Kanbawza Win

Menachem Begin, the then Prime Minister of Israel (1981) watched apprehensively for two years as Saddam Hussein appeared to be nearing a nuclear weapons capability. The centerpiece of his effort was a French-built Osirak-type nuclear reactor turning out plutonium at Tuwaitah. Then in June 1981, he ordered his aircraft to bomb it to derail the Iraqi nuclear bomb effort without any declaration of war or hostilities. Looking back this two and a half decades one could not stay applauding his decision for without it, the Middle East would have been dominated by Sadam's men. No doubt Begin had to make a very tough choice in making military decisions because he was once a guerrillas operating from relatively weak military positions. No present Western national leaders have had this hard experience or appear to share the jungle fighter mentality that might be required in a confrontation with a nuclear-armed and hostile radical regime. For Begin, a survivor of the Holocaust, Hussein was Hitler.

So also the Burmese in Diaspora, who has escaped the Junta's Holocaust of 1988 where nearly 20,000 were indiscriminately killed in six major, cities of Burma, Than Shwe and his henchmen is Hitler. Human Rights organizations and refugees testify that things are only getting worse in one of the world's most repressive regimes. Mass forced labor on state-run construction projects, arrests, imprisonment, torture, repression, land confiscations and sexual violence by soldiers are all on the rise. A mini-Darfur is underway on the Thai-Burma border, where the Burmese army has launched a major offensive, burning more than 200 villages and displacing tens of thousands of civilians. While the country molds and its prisons fill, the Junta spends hundreds of millions of dollars on the construction of a bizarre new capital, Naypyidaw, the Burmese version, of King Nero of Rome.

Now it seems that the American leadership is facing the same dilemma as Begin was in 1981. Would they have enough guts, wisdom and visions to make a fateful decision on the rouge Burmese regime is what the international community has been asking themselves. Tom Casey the US State Department representative said that it is opposed to a Russian plan to help design and build a nuclear research center in Burma because it has no safe handling of nuclear materials. But obviously the world is worried about nuclear fuel being diverted for use in a weapons program. The 10-megawatt light-water research reactor, as well as facilities for processing and storing radioactive waste now constructing near Anesakhan, in Pyin Oo Lwin, is located in a flat land surrounded on all sides by steep hills. In addition, the area remains shrouded in mist all round the year, an aspect which the project's planners believe will make it virtually invisible from the air. It is a foregone conclusion that it is clearly heading geared for nuclear weapons. The Defense Services Academy (DSA) training facility is situated there and the regime has just constructed a military airport with a single runway, a 3,000-meter-long airstrip where the Junta received India's army chief of staff J Singh. It seems that the jein is out of the bottle and will grow bigger and more dangerous if one cannot nib it in a bud.

Russia, helping Burma in building a nuclear reactor has aroused concern, as the record of both countries in the area of constructive international cooperation supports reasonable fear that the Burmese generals would surely inch open the door leading to the achievement of more ambitious nuclear aims. The statements declaring that the facility would be under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency, not only caught the organization by surprise, but all indications pointed out that it should be taken with a pinch of salt. Burma, even though a signatory to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, has never prevented the regime from breaking them up. The involvement of Russia opens a wide arena for possible misuse. Russia has never been shy to enter the illicit marketplace when hard currency is to be earned, and nuclear fuel rods are a sought-after commodity.

Russia's experience alone confirms that during the breakup of the Soviet Union fissionable material went missing. Some 30 years ago, uranium-enriched rods were stolen from a nuclear reactor in the Congo and found their way into the hands of Italian smugglers—a horror scenario that haunts governments in Washington and other Western capitals to this day.

Even, if the Junta were to follow the rules, allowing regular inspections by IAEA inspectors and resisting any temptation to work for a military application of its nuclear capability, the country's miserable record in the area of control and maintenance poses its own risk. Industrial installations in Burma are generally in a bad state of repair, security is lax, and to use it for health and education became a laughing stock in the international arena, when it had never invested in these two spheres. The regime's sad record in both these areas precludes any guarantee against misuse.

BURMA'S military junta has attempted to buy nuclear weapons technology from North Korea's rogue regime in an alliance that presents a frightening new threat to regional security. The prospect of the two pariah states of Asia joining together has alarmed the other peaceful countries. North Korea is believed to possess six or seven nuclear weapons, has engaged in tense brinkmanship with the US, recently threatening to launch a new generation of Taepodong missile. If the North Koreans are able to miniaturize their nuclear weapons sufficiently, they will eventually be able to place them on Taepodong missiles, which are capable of reaching some targets in the US with Burma aiming its nuclear missiles to the US naval base in Diego Garcia. Intelligence sources confirmed that the Burmese military had a booming relationship with the North Korean military. This was confirmed when the two countries reestablish their diplomatic ties a few days ago. Western intelligence agencies believe Burma gets surface-to-air missiles, artillery and small arms from North Korea. The Burmese have also asked the Koreans for Scud missile technology. The highly secretive Burmese state maintains the biggest army in Southeast Asia, with a regular military estimated at about half a million people and a paramilitary force of some 100,000.

The restoring of diplomatic relations with, North Korea has provided the international community, with an example of how to successfully Korea and Burma can flout international disapproval, by testing a nuclear device last year. Burma is equally adept at defying world opinion, and assurances that its nuclear program threatens nobody should be given as much credence as its constant, blatant rejection of well-documented evidence of appalling human rights abuses.

Both Burma and North Korea have their chief external strategic relationship with China, who sees Burma as an important strategic asset. Much Chinese diplomacy has centered on energy security and Burma offers China substantial oil and gas

reserves. Burma also offers China strategic reach into the Indian Ocean through access to its naval ports, and also provides China with enhanced intelligence capabilities through intelligence establishments, especially on the Burmese border with India.

Even though India made no secrets of its arm deal with the Junta, reports that both Russia and China have recently sold and delivered fighter jets to the base seem to be confirmed by satellite images downloaded using Google Earth, which clearly show a number of olive-green Chinese Chengdu F-7M Airguard and light-khaki NAMC A-5C military aircraft along with blue Russian MiG-29s - all recent additions to Burma's air force. At the nearby Meiktila Airfield, Google Earth images also show a number of Russian Mi-17 helicopters. It is a well known fact that the, Chinese and Russian aeronautical experts have been training the Burmese military men.

Highlighting the military significance of the new facility, Than Shwe said during a 2004 visit, "Only when the university produces future technicians in aerospace and engineering fields for the state will the nation is able to keep pace with others." The military has also relied on Chinese and Russian assistance to help build other significant military installations in and around Meiktila. In April 2004, the Junta signed a US\$500 million deal with Ukrainian state arms company Ukrspets Export to build an APC (armored personnel carrier) factory. The facility is designed over a 10-year period to receive about 1,000 70%-assembled BTR-3U APCs.

It seems that in the past that the Junta felt most threatened through its vulnerability at the Bay of Bengal. In 1988, the US moved navy vessels into the area, apparently in the event of the state collapsing during the democratic uprisings. When the Junta abuse the Rohingya Muslim in Arakan state, it prompted the wrath of Saudi Arabia, whose army chief Prince Khaled bin Sultan bin Abdul Aziz called on the United Nations to intervene and help the minority Muslims.

The signature letter of 59 former heads of states, including the 3 living ex-presidents of the United States of America, sent to Burma's military supremo General Than Shwe and copied to the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on May 14 was nothing to the Junta. Obviously, this accord may be one of the most popular and collective campaigns in modern world history and boost up the morale of hundreds of thousands of democracy activists who have so long wished to see such initiative from the international community. The Junta would take no notice of this appeal pretending to be uncivilized because it is a much desired goal.

The Burmese Generals have no limits which they would go to preserve their control over the country. No sacrifice has been too large, and no brutality too

unjust. They have bartered the future of the Burmese people by pandering the energy lust of Burma's greediest and most politically accommodating neighbors. Burma's natural gas generating millions of dollars are use in modernizing the military and solidifying their position instead of restructuring the educations and health systems or the economy of the country. It seems to the international community that only force can prevent the Junta from acquiring weapons.

The vetoing by China and Russia blocking a faster democratization process in Burma might not be a big surprise for most of us. Both of them have rightly utilized their ultimate power to back the regime in order to maintain their already established economy tie with Burma. Burma's Asian neighbors, who prefer 'constructive engagement', meaning lucrative trade deals will look at the other way when China take the initiative of propping another dictatorship at his back door If President and the General Secretary of the CPC, Hu Jintao were to sign one letter other than the former 59 head of states the problem has been solved long ago.

U.S. President George W. Bush on last Thursday told the U.S. Congress that the Burmese generals have in recent weeks increased attacks on ethnic groups, arrested students and harassed democracy activists, against a backdrop of ongoing grave human rights violations, including the use of rape as a weapon against civilian populations and conscription of child soldiers. As the Burmese Junta is becoming only more brutal, more repressive and more indifferent to the concerns of its neighbors and the international community, it is high time that the US should take a leaf out of Begin's book with a swift and drastic action.

*(Dr. Kanbawza Win is the incumbent Dean of the Students and International Director of the AEIOU Programme, Chiangmai University, Thailand. He is also serving as a Professor of the School of International Studies, Simon Fraser University, of British Columbia, Canada. The writer can be reached at [profwin@gmail.com](mailto:profwin@gmail.com). The views expressed here are solely the opinion of the author. Kao-Wao Editor)*

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## **Ethical Issues forgotten by the Burmese Media**

(By Siri Mon Chan)

I am quite disturbed to by Nai Htaw Weang's article "Burmese Media-in-Exile: Is it Biased, too?" with regard to the failure of Burmese media-in-exile like the Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) to be fair, unbiased and to make great contributions toward the emergence of peace and democracy in Burma. The examples raised by Nai Htaw Weang highlight two important issues: 1) whether

media groups are ethical in their presentation of true, fair and unbiased news, and 2) which media policies and guidelines have a significant influence on day-to-day reporting. The first issue relates to media personnel and the second relates to the degree of independence media organizations have in reporting true, fair and unbiased news.

In view of Nai Htaw Weang's media analysis on the DVB and my own personal perspectives, the second issue is of particularly great concern. However, I see the first—ethical issues faced by media personnel—as being no less important. As Nai Htaw Weang highlighted, the coverage of news by the DVB appears to be greatly influenced by the Burmese government in exile, National Coalition Government of Union of Burma (NCGUB) and other Burmese activists. As almost all of the NCGUB members are members of the National League of Democracy (NLD), the DVB has become merely a tool for propaganda; a pawn of the NUGUB and the NLD.

I follow the DVB news online almost everyday. I have seen that over 80% of news coverage by the DVB is about the activities of the NLD and groups supporting them. I don't want to criticize the DVB for favoring pro-democracy groups, because I recognize that their activities and campaigns inside Burma will be crucial to the emergence of peace and democracy. But as we all are aware (fortunately even the UN and the international community are increasingly aware) that lasting peace and democracy in Burma cannot be achieved by the democratic movements of the NLD and its associates alone. Reasonable solutions to the problems faced by ethnic nationalities must also be found.

Although the NCGUB, the NLD and most Burmese activists in exile and inside Burma claim to support ethnic nationalities, it appears as if they are not placing appropriate emphasis on the issues. In reality, they highlight their party politics and movement toward achieving a regime change through a democratic process. For most Burmese, the regime change and the emergence of democracy is sufficient. However, for our ethnic nationalities, the change of regime and the emergence of democracy in Burma alone cannot guarantee the fundamental rights of our people. Experiences in our not-too-distant past have alarmingly and consistently reminded us that when Burma gained independence from Great Britain in 1948, Burma became a Parliamentary democracy. The government at the time was democratically elected. However, this did not guarantee the rights of ethnic nationalities. Consequently, most ethnic groups like the Mon and Karen were forced to take up arms for their rights. Other ethnic groups followed suit and transformed the newly independent Burma into a civil war between the people and the government.

We cannot rely solely on a regime change and the emergence of democracy in Burma. We must be certain that the rights of ethnic people are fully realized, in addition to the individual rights embedded in democracy. Otherwise, like our painful experience since 1948, we will have to start our movement for fundamental ethnic rights from scratch. We must not be fooled by propaganda from the NLD and Burmese activists. They claim that a foundation of federalism based on eight states having equal political power will be guaranteed when Burma has a regime change. I believe they have a similar attitude toward all ethnic nationalities. They are "the same wine with a different bottle."

We have seen this sort of attitude when the Shan in exile declared their independence. In a shock that made people sick to their stomachs, the SPDC and the NLD Central Executive Committee came out in unity for the first time and denounced the Shan people. In the Burmese language, "A Yay Kyi Yin, Thway Nee Thi"—whenever there is crisis, all Burmese, including the SPDC and the NLD, will be united in blood.

Now and always, we must respond promptly to these acts of discrimination and marginalization of ethnic nationalities. Mon and others are offended by the DVB and other biased media organizations. In addition to Nai Htaw Weang's letter, Mon organizations and the (Overseas Mon Coordinating Committee (OMCC) should write a formal letter addressing groups that fund the DVB, including the Danish government. We should also strengthen our cooperation with other ethnic organizations such as the ENC when working on our campaign. If Mon people can be united, we will automatically be closer to all other ethnic nationalities who share our plight, and our efforts will make an even greater difference.

*(Siri Mon Chan holds Bachelor degrees in Politics, Economics and Master degree in Administration. The author is currently doing Graduate Studies in Defence and Strategy; the International and Development Economics at the Australian National University in Canberra, Australia. The views express here are solely the opinion of the author.)*

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***A Paper by the Asian Human Rights Commission***

**Courts cannot allow bullshitting with justice**

(A comment on the Indian Supreme Court judgment on the Best Bakery Case)

Basil Fernando: May 2007

*...bullshitters, although they represent themselves as being engaged simply in conveying information, are not engaged in that enterprise at all. Instead, and most essentially, they are fakers and phonies who are attempting by what they say to manipulate the opinions and the attitudes of those to whom they speak. What they care about primarily, therefore, is whether what they say is effective in accomplishing this manipulation. Correspondingly, they are more or less indifferent to whether what they say is true or whether it is false.*

--Harry G Frankfurt, *On Truth*, (Alfred A Knopf, New York; 2006).

The Supreme Court of India's 2004 judgment in what is popularly known as the Best Bakery case is a great intervention to deal with the manipulation of information, a common feature of criminal trials in many countries where basic elements of criminal justice--police investigation, prosecution and judicial decision making--have become dysfunctional to varying degrees. The historical importance of the judgment lies in that India's apex court decided it could not sit and watch the bullshitting of the three institutions responsible for the administration of justice. The court rightly noted that, "The present appeals have several unusual features and some of them pose very serious questions of far reaching consequences." These consequences relate to the issues of witness protection, improper conduct of trial by the public prosecutor, the role of the investigating agency and the judiciary being a 'passive recorder'.

Far from an exercise in bullshitting, a criminal trial involves questions of great importance for the individuals involved as well as the whole society. For the individual complainant, witness or accused, the trial is a matter of justice. If information is manipulated during the trial, resulting in a distortion of what has actually happened, injustice is served. For society, the trial is a test of faith in the justice system. If the system is seen to deal with crimes through the manipulation of information rather than a committed statement of facts, the credibility of the system is undermined. Moreover, manipulative habits enter into the process of criminal investigation, prosecution as well as judicial intervention. The trial in such cases becomes nothing but a game, a parody. When this process of criminal trials is commonly understood in society, unscrupulous individuals will take to crime. Organized crime then becomes an important and decisive factor in societies, to the extent that attempts to reform both the process and the institutions are hampered. Ordinary citizens gradually lose faith in the judicial process. From what we have witnessed in many countries around Asia, this leads persons to make use of extralegal avenues to settle their grievances. It is inevitable that the criminal justice system breaks down under these circumstances, and it is no easy task to restore it again.

It is this process of bullshitting--manipulation of information--that the Supreme Court tried to confront in the Best Bakery case, which stems from one of the greatest tragedies in the recent history of India. It began with an incident of a fire, which was manipulated to create the impression that there was a deliberate attack on the Hindus by Muslims. This manipulated information was used to ignite an organized political campaign, which included committing horrific crimes with the support of organized criminal elements. The ensuing violence in the state of Gujarat led to the death of over 2000 Muslims, as well as serious damage to the property of many others. This well-crafted crime soon came to the attention of the Indian and international community. The entire state of Gujarat came under severe worldwide condemnation.

This condemnation led to the second stage of information manipulation, which took place through subtle and secret forms of interfering with the investigation into the violence, followed later by interference into the prosecution as well. The entire criminal investigation procedure indicated an attempt to influence the outcome of the trials through ensuring an absence of evidence. As the Supreme Court remarked in its judgment, 'witnesses are the eyes and ears of a court'. If witnesses are prevented--through direct or indirect police action--from providing relevant information, the court is deprived of an essential component of the criminal justice procedure. Many persons who could have given details of what happened during the Gujarat pogrom were not interviewed and nor was all the material evidence gathered.

In fact, many witnesses were too intimidated to come forward. Among those who had come forward, some--such as Zahira, key witness in the Best Bakery case--retracted their initial statements. There was no witness protection mechanism in place by either the police investigators or the prosecution. Instead, the message sent to the witnesses was that they would be taking grave risks by speaking out.

The public prosecutors in Gujarat, as in many Asian countries, took this manipulated situation as an unavoidable circumstance and pleaded that the prosecution defects were due to the absence of evidence; what could they do if witnesses did not come forward to give evidence? They seem to have overlooked the principles of justice that allow prosecutors to question investigators about their submitted reports and to spotlight any flaws. The prosecutors also had an obligation to look into witness protection, especially after witnesses turned hostile. It was their responsibility to ask whether witnesses were told they would receive state protection or if practical measures were taken to protect those witnesses who did come forward. Prosecution officials genuinely committed to searching for the truth could do much to ensure that justice is served, including asking for the trial to be transferred to a more secure location and seeking the assistance of medical professionals in dealing with traumatized victims. If the prosecution is part of the

process of manipulation however, it is enough to simply blame the witnesses and investigators.

In a similar manner, courts of law can also avoid responsibility by buying into the no evidence game. On the surface this can come across as impartiality, which is one of the basic requirements of the judiciary. To silently witness the investigation and prosecution's neglect of their basic duties cannot however, be claimed as impartiality. Instead, it indicates cynical partiality towards falsehood. To use the final power of the courts to declare the accused innocent on the basis of an inherently manipulated process is radically different from the basic function of the judiciary. It is unfortunate that political power often leaves the judiciary a silent partner to its crimes in many Asian countries. The courts before which the Gujarat massacres were tried were such partners.

India's Supreme Court could have easily taken part in this manipulation of information. It could have taken refuge under legal technicalities, such as a delay in the filing of appeals. Or, it could have reverted to the no evidence argument. Such decisions would cause little surprise, given the number of cases decided by apex courts throughout Asia in this manner. The Supreme Court of India however, firmly established that excusing the manipulation of information is not what courts are for, be they trial courts or apex courts. The Supreme Court took on the duty of a trial judge to actively participate in the trial before him. This involved questioning the retraction of witnesses, the absence of cross examination on the part of prosecutors and the faulty police investigation. Such questioning would make the court an intelligent umpire at the trial rather than a disinterested or passive recorder. Any disinterest or passivity is in fact only a façade; a judge cannot be truthfully unaware of the manipulated information that is being placed before the court. If the court wants to prevent an erroneous result, it will interfere with such manipulation.

The Supreme Court judgment in the Best Bakery case is of profound importance because the reality it tries to counter is common not only in India, but in many parts of Asia. Deliberately flawed trials conducted by the very institutions meant to ensure fair trial is a major threat not only to justice, but also to human security. The bullshitting of these institutions must be exposed by all concerned with justice as well as organized crime. While in many countries there is much talk and a few brave promises on defeating organized crime, in fact the issue has yet to be seriously addressed. It is simpler than usually imagined. The solution to crime does not lie in the streets. It lies in the justice process; in saving the criminal investigation process, the prosecution process and the subsequent trials from acquired habits--often institutionalized--in manipulating information.

*The Asian Human Rights Commission is a regional non-governmental organisation monitoring and lobbying human rights issues in Asia. The Hong Kong-based group was founded in 1984.*

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## **Globalization And Democracy: Some Basics**

By Michael Parenti: 26 May, 2007

The goal of the transnational corporation is to become truly transnational, poised above the sovereign power of any particular nation, while being served by the sovereign powers of all nations. Cyril Siewert, chief financial officer of Colgate Palmolive Company, could have been speaking for all transnationals when he remarked, “The United States doesn’t have an automatic call on our [corporation’s] resources. There is no mindset that puts this country first.”[i]

With international “free trade” agreements such as NAFTA, GATT, and FTAA, the giant transnationals have been elevated above the sovereign powers of nation states. These agreements endow anonymous international trade committees with the authority to prevent, overrule, or dilute any laws of any nation deemed to burden the investment and market prerogatives of transnational corporations. These trade committees—of which the World Trade Organization (WTO) is a prime example—set up panels composed of “trade specialists” who act as judges over economic issues, placing themselves above the rule and popular control of any nation, thereby insuring the supremacy of international finance capital. This process, called globalization, is treated as an inevitable natural “growth” development beneficial to all. It is in fact a global coup d’état by the giant business interests of the world.

Elected by no one and drawn from the corporate world, these panelists meet in secret and often have investment stakes in the very issues they adjudicate, being bound by no conflict-of-interest provisions. Not one of GATT’s five hundred pages of rules and restrictions are directed against private corporations; all are against governments. Signatory governments must lower tariffs, end farm subsidies, treat foreign companies the same as domestic ones, honor all corporate patent claims, and obey the rulings of a permanent elite bureaucracy, the WTO. Should a country refuse to change its laws when a WTO panel so dictates, the WTO can impose fines or international trade sanctions, depriving the resistant country of needed markets and materials.[ii]

Acting as the supreme global adjudicator, the WTO has ruled against laws deemed “barriers to free trade.” It has forced Japan to accept greater pesticide residues in imported food. It has kept Guatemala from outlawing deceptive advertising of baby food. It has eliminated the ban in various countries on asbestos, and on fuel-economy and emission standards for motor vehicles. And it has ruled against marine-life protection laws and the ban on endangered-species products. The European Union’s prohibition on the importation of hormone-ridden U.S. beef had overwhelming popular support throughout Europe, but a three-member WTO panel decided the ban was an illegal restraint on trade. The decision on beef put in jeopardy a host of other food import regulations based on health concerns. The WTO overturned a portion of the U.S. Clean Air Act banning certain additives in gasoline because it interfered with imports from foreign refineries. And the WTO overturned that portion of the U.S. Endangered Species Act forbidding the import of shrimp caught with nets that failed to protect sea turtles.[iii]

Free trade is not fair trade; it benefits strong nations at the expense of weaker ones, and rich interests at the expense of the rest of us. Globalization means turning the clock back on many twentieth-century reforms: no freedom to boycott products, no prohibitions against child labor, no guaranteed living wage or benefits, no public services that might conceivably compete with private services, no health and safety protections that might cut into corporate profits.[iv]

GATT and subsequent free trade agreements allow multinationals to impose monopoly property rights on indigenous and communal agriculture. In this way agribusiness can better penetrate locally self-sufficient communities and monopolize their resources. Ralph Nader gives the example of the neem tree, whose extracts contain natural pesticidal and medicinal properties. Cultivated for centuries in India, the tree attracted the attention of various pharmaceutical companies, who filed monopoly patents, causing mass protests by Indian farmers. As dictated by the WTO, the pharmaceuticals now have exclusive control over the marketing of neem tree products, a ruling that is being reluctantly enforced in India. Tens of thousands of erstwhile independent farmers must now work for the powerful pharmaceuticals on profit-gorging terms set by the companies.

A trade agreement between India and the United States, the Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture (KIA), backed by Monsanto and other transnational corporate giants, allows for the grab of India’s seed sector by Monsanto, its trade sector by Archer Daniels Midland and Cargill, and its retail sector by Wal-Mart. (Wal-Mart announced plans to open 500 stores in India, starting in August 2007.) This amounts to a war against India’s independent farmers and small businesses, and a threat to India’s food security. Farmers are organizing to protect themselves against this economic invasion by maintaining traditional seed-banks and setting up systems of communal agrarian support. One farmer says, “We do not buy seeds

from the market because we suspect they may be contaminated with genetically engineered or terminator seeds.”[v]

In a similar vein, the WTO ruled that the U.S. corporation RiceTec has the patent rights to all the many varieties of basmati rice, grown for centuries by India’s farmers. It also ruled that a Japanese corporation had exclusive rights in the world to grow and produce curry powder. As these instances demonstrate, what is called “free trade” amounts to international corporate monopoly control. Such developments caused Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad to observe:

We now have a situation where theft of genetic resources by western biotech TNCs [transnational corporations] enables them to make huge profits by producing patented genetic mutations of these same materials. What depths have we sunk to in the global marketplace when nature’s gifts to the poor may not be protected but their modifications by the rich become exclusive property?

If the current behavior of the rich countries is anything to go by, globalization simply means the breaking down of the borders of countries so that those with the capital and the goods will be free to dominate the markets.[vi]

Under free-trade agreements like General Agreements on Trade and Services (GATS) and Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), all public services are put at risk. A public service can be charged with causing “lost market opportunities” for business, or creating an unfair subsidy. To offer one instance: the single-payer automobile insurance program proposed by the province of Ontario, Canada, was declared “unfair competition.” Ontario could have its public auto insurance only if it paid U.S. insurance companies what they estimated would be their present and future losses in Ontario auto insurance sales, a prohibitive cost for the province. Thus the citizens of Ontario were not allowed to exercise their democratic sovereign right to institute an alternative not-for-profit auto insurance system. In another case, United Postal Service charged the Canadian Post Office for “lost market opportunities,” which means that under free trade accords, the Canadian Post Office would have to compensate UPS for all the business that UPS thinks it would have had if there were no public postal service. The Canadian postal workers union has challenged the case in court, arguing that the agreement violates the Canadian Constitution.

Under NAFTA, the U.S.-based Ethyl Corporation sued the Canadian government for \$250 million in “lost business opportunities” and “interference with trade” because Canada banned MMT, an Ethyl-produced gasoline additive considered carcinogenic by Canadian officials. Fearing they would lose the case, Canadian officials caved in, agreeing to lift the ban on MMT, pay Ethyl \$10 million compensation, and issue a public statement calling MMT “safe,” even though they

had scientific findings showing otherwise. California also banned the unhealthy additive; this time a Canadian based Ethyl company sued California under NAFTA for placing an unfair burden on free trade.[vii]

International free trade agreements like GATT and NAFTA have hastened the corporate acquisition of local markets, squeezing out smaller businesses and worker collectives. Under NAFTA better-paying U.S. jobs were lost as firms closed shop and contracted out to the cheaper Mexican labor market. At the same time thousands of Mexican small companies were forced out of business. Mexico was flooded with cheap, high-tech, mass produced corn and dairy products from giant U.S. agribusiness firms (themselves heavily subsidized by the U.S. government), driving small Mexican farmers and distributors into bankruptcy, displacing large numbers of poor peasants. The lately arrived U.S. companies in Mexico have offered extremely low-paying jobs, and unsafe work conditions. Generally free trade has brought a dramatic increase in poverty south of the border.[viii]

We North Americans are told that to remain competitive in the new era of globalization, we will have to increase our output while reducing our labor and production costs, in other words, work harder for less. This in fact is happening as the work-week has lengthened by as much as twenty percent (from forty hours to forty-six and even forty-eight hours) and real wages have flattened or declined during the reign of George W. Bush. Less is being spent on social services, and we are enduring more wage concessions, more restructuring, deregulation, and privatization. Only with such “adjustments,” one hears, can we hope to cope with the impersonal forces of globalization that are sweeping us along.

In fact, there is nothing impersonal about these forces. Free trade agreements, including new ones that have not yet been submitted to the U.S. Congress have been consciously planned by big business and its government minions over a period of years in pursuit of a deregulated world economy that undermines all democratic checks upon business practices. The people of any one province, state, or nation are now finding it increasingly difficult to get their governments to impose protective regulations or develop new forms of public sector production out of fear of being overruled by some self-appointed international free-trade panel.[ix]

Usually it is large nations demanding that poorer smaller ones relinquish the protections and subsidies they provide for their local producers. But occasionally things may take a different turn. Thus in late 2006 Canada launched a dispute at the World Trade Organization over the use of “trade-distorting” agricultural subsidies by the United States, specifically the enormous sums dished out by the federal government to U.S. agribusiness corn farmers. The case also challenged

the entire multibillion-dollar structure of U.S. agricultural subsidies. It followed the landmark WTO ruling of 2005 which condemned “trade-distorting” aid to U.S. cotton farmers. A report by Oxfam International revealed that at least thirty-eight developing countries were suffering severely as a result of trade distorting subsidies by both the United States and the European Union. Meanwhile, the U.S. government was maneuvering to insert a special clause into trade negotiations that would place its illegal use of farm subsidies above challenge by WTO member countries and make the subsidies immune from adjudication through the WTO dispute settlement process.[x]

What is seldom remarked upon is that NAFTA and GATT are in violation of the U.S. Constitution, the preamble of which makes clear that sovereign power rests with the people: “We the People of the United States . . . do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.” Article I, Section 1 of the Constitution reads, “All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States.” Article I, Section 7 gives the president (not some trade council) the power to veto a law, subject to being overridden by a two-thirds vote in Congress. And Article III gives adjudication and review powers to a Supreme Court and other federal courts as ordained by Congress. The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution states: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.” There is nothing in the entire Constitution that allows an international trade panel to preside as final arbiter exercising supreme review powers undermining the constitutionally mandated decisions of the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

True, Article VII says that the Constitution, federal laws, and treaties “shall be the supreme Law of the land,” but certainly this was not intended to include treaties that overrode the laws themselves and the sovereign democratic power of the people and their representatives.

To exclude the Senate from deliberations, NAFTA and GATT were called “agreements” instead of treaties, a semantic ploy that enabled President Clinton to bypass the two-third treaty ratification vote in the Senate and avoid any treaty amendment process. The World Trade Organization was approved by a lame-duck session of Congress held after the 1994 elections. No one running in that election uttered a word to voters about putting the U.S. government under a perpetual obligation to insure that national laws do not conflict with international free trade rulings.

What is being undermined is not only a lot of good laws dealing with environment, public services, labor standards, and consumer protection, but also the very right to legislate such laws. Our democratic sovereignty itself is being

surrendered to a secretive plutocratic trade organization that presumes to exercise a power greater than that of the people and their courts and legislatures. What we have is an international coup d'état by big capital over the nations of the world.

Globalization is a logical extension of imperialism, a victory of empire over republic, international finance capital over local productivity and nation-state democracy (such as it is). In recent times however, given popular protests, several multilateral trade agreements have been stalled or voted down. In 1999, militant protests against free trade took place in forty-one nations from Britain and France to Thailand and India.[xi] In 2000-01, there were demonstrations in Seattle, Washington, Sydney, Prague, Genoa, and various other locales. In 2003-04 we saw the poorer nations catching wise to the free trade scams and refusing to sign away what shreds of sovereignty they still had. Along with the popular resistance, more national leaders are thinking twice before signing on to new trade agreements.

The discussion of globalization by some Marxists (but not all) has focused on the question of whether the new “internationalization” of capital will undermine national sovereignty and the nation state. They dwell on this question while leaving unmentioned such things as free trade agreements and the WTO. Invariably these observers (for instance Ellen Wood and William Taab in *Monthly Review*, Ian Jasper in *Nature, Society and Thought*, Erwin Marquit in *Political Affairs*) conclude that the nation state still plays a key role in capitalist imperialism, that capital-while global in its scope—is not international but bound to particular nations, and that globalization is little more than another name for overseas monopoly capital investment.

They repeatedly remind us that Marx had described globalization, this process of international financial expansion, as early as 1848, when he and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto* wrote about how capitalism moves into all corners of the world, reshaping all things into its own image. Therefore, there is no cause for the present uproar. Globalization, these writers conclude, is not a new development but a longstanding one that Marxist theory uncovered long ago.

The problem with this position is that it misses the whole central point of the current struggle. It is not only national sovereignty that is at stake, it is democratic sovereignty. Millions, of people all over the world have taken to the streets to protest free trade agreements. Among them are farmers, workers, students and intellectuals (including many Marxists who see things more clearly than the aforementioned ones), all of whom are keenly aware that something new is afoot and they want no part of it. As used today, the term globalization refers to a new stage of international expropriation, designed not to put an end to the nation-state

but to undermine whatever democratic right exists to protect the social wage and restrain the power of transnational corporations.

The free trade agreements, in effect, make unlawful all statutes and regulations that restrict private capital in any way. Carried to full realization, this means the end of whatever imperfect democratic protections the populace has been able to muster after generations of struggle in the realm of public policy. Under the free trade agreements any and all public services can be ruled out of existence because they cause “lost market opportunities” for private capital. So too public hospitals can be charged with taking away markets from private hospitals; and public water supply systems, public schools, public libraries, public housing and public transportation are guilty of depriving their private counterparts of market opportunities, likewise public health insurance, public mail delivery, and public auto insurance systems. Laws that try to protect the environment or labor standards or consumer health already have been overthrown for “creating barriers” to free trade.

What also is overthrown is the right to have such laws. This is the most important point of all and the one most frequently overlooked by persons from across the political spectrum. Under the free trade accords, property rights have been elevated to international supremacy, able to take precedent over all other rights, including the right to a clean livable environment, the right to affordable public services, and the right to any morsel of economic democracy. Instead a new right has been accorded absolutist status, the right to corporate private profit. It has been used to stifle the voice of working people and their ability to develop a public sector that serves their interests. Free speech itself is undermined as when “product disparagement” is treated as an interference with free trade. And nature itself is being monopolized and privatized by transnational corporations.

So the fight against free trade is a fight for the right to politico-economic democracy, public services, and a social wage, the right not to be completely at the mercy of big capital. It is a new and drastic phase of the class struggle that some Marxists—so immersed in classical theory and so ill-informed about present-day public policy—seem to have missed. As embodied in the free trade accords, globalization has little to do with trade and is anything but free. It benefits the rich nations over poor ones, and the rich classes within all nations at the expense of ordinary citizens. It is the new specter that haunts the same old world.

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*Our motto is working together for change and lasting peace.*