

BURMA

# KAREN REVOLUTION IN BURMA

THAILAND

K. H. THOOLEI



by Michael Mansdale





Gen. Saw Bo Mya, President of the Karen National Union. He takes over this position in 1975. Saw Bo Mya is regarded as being the strongest leader, and he is also beloved by his soldiers as well as the people.



## INDEX

- \* Forwards ..... 3
- \* Reference Books ..... 3
- \* Introduction ..... 4
- \* Chapter I, Background to the Revolution..5
- \* Chapter II, Immediate causes of the Revolution ..... 8
- \* Chapter III, The beginning Insein .....11
- \* Chapter IV, How the Revolution is being conducted .....14
- \* Chapter V, The Karen State granted by the Government .....15
- \* Chapter VI, Analysis of flexibility of the Karen claims ..... 16
- \* Area, and population ..... 18
- \* Chapter VII, Peace or War ..... 19
- \* Chapter VIII, Conclusion ..... 21

### APPENDIX

- \* The origin of the Karens ..... 22
- \* The First migration of Karens into Burma ..... 22
- \* The Karen Tribes ..... 23
- \* Chronology ..... 23
- \* Bibliography ..... 23
- \* The Karens under the Feudal Masters.... 24
- \* The Karens under the British Colonial Rule ..... 24
- \* The Karen movements under the British Colonialism ..... 25
- \* During the Japanese Occupation of Burma ..... 25
- \* The Karen National Movements, (1945 - 1948) ..... 26
- \* Chronological order of the Karens effort for Seperate state ..... 26
- \* The Suppression of the Karen Mass by the Burmese government ..... 26
- "THE FOUR CUTS" .....26
- \* To cut the lines of supplying provisions ..... 26
- \* To cut the lines of contact between the Karen mass and the Kawthoolei Army. 27
- \* To cut the lines of communication ..... 28
- \* (To cut)Beheading the Revolutionists.... 28
- \* Chronological order of the Karens effort for a seperate state ..... 28



## FORWARDS

For  
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Chiang Mai.

This Book has been written to present in brief and easily digestible form of the motives that inspired the Karen Revolution in Burma, and what ends the Karens hope to gain by this means. It is, first of all, a modest attempt to tell the Karen side of the story an aspect which has achieved little or no publicity, This being so, the issue between the Burmese government and the Karens has been the subject of doubt, speculation and confusion from which general conclusion, not always accurate, have been drawn.

The writer has tried, in the pages that follow, to set down what he believes to be a fair narrative of the history of the Karen movement. He does not wish to pretend a detached interest in this matter nor does he claim to be wholly unbiased. The facts he relates are strictly true though his personal interpretation of them may actually appear to be tinged with prejudice. He makes no apologies for what are only his natural inclinations and he expects merely to give the reader new gist for the mill of his personal judgement. This does not mean that what follows is just propaganda. It means simply what is the writer's view, no active participant in any aim can qualify as a completely impartial critic or judge. The writer is no more than a witness ; his book no more than a testimony to be judged on its credibility and merit by the outsider.

In compiling this book the writer has made use of the material from his own personal contact with events related. Besides this he has had recourse to the books mentioned below, has been given free access to official documents and files in the possession of the Government of Kawthoolei and has had talks with many prement Karen leaders and other Karens of different sorts and conditions.

To the Government of Kawthoolei the writer wishes to express his acknowledgement and gratitude for having been allowed the rare privilege of auers to State documents and files. To those others who have assisted him in many ways by their frank opinions freely expressed the auther tenders his sincere thankfulness.

Lastly, he wishes to make it understood that he alone bears full responsibility for the opinions he expressed which are not necessarily those of the Government of Kawthoolei.

### Reference Books; —

1. ' The Loyal Karens of Burma ' ----- By Donald F. Smeaton. ?
2. ' Grandfather Long Legs ' ----- By Ian Morrison
3. ' The Imperial Gaxetteer of India, Province Sries - Burma 1906. '
4. ' Documents and Files of the Kawthoolei Government. '
5. ' Reports on the Proceddings of the Frontier Areas '  
Committee of Enquiry. ' ---- Govt. of the Union of Burma Press.
6. ' Constitution of the Union of Burma. '  
Population and area statistics were taken from Collin's Pocket Dictionary.

# INTRODUCTION

The first thing that must be realised about the Karen Revolution against the Government of the Union of Burma is that it is not just another chapter in the history of the struggles for emancipation of a people from foreign rule. Neither is it true to say that it is a struggle undertaken solely to fulfil national aspirations.

The Karen Revolution has distinct characteristics that set it apart from the other struggles in South East Asia-it has an originality completely its own.

India, Pakistan, Ceylon, Indonesia, Burma-all these countries achieved, in one way or another, independence from foreign rule. It really did not matter unduly whether that rule was benign and tolerant or harsh and despotic. These countries objected to the principle of being ruled by a foreign power and wished, understandably, to rule themselves: Their objection was to a principle rather than to a particular type of rule. They felt, and presumably still do feel, that self government, whatever its short Comings and uncertainties, is preferable to even the most enlightened foreign rule. Their attitude, in its extreme form, might be summed up in the words, 'better by far to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.' This is a philosophy which can only be understood by long-dominated subject peoples.

The Karens, on the other hand, have never objected either actively or passively, to foreign rule as a principle. Indeed, there were no more amenable, loyal and contented subjects of the British Crown anywhere in the Empire. Never once, by word or deed, during the century of British rule in Burma did the Karens take part in any schemes or redemonstrations against that rule. On the contrary, when the rest of the country, in 1947, was in energetic agitation against the British government, the Karens maintained in recorded and documented evidence before the Frontier Area's Committee of Enquiry that they still desired to remain under British rule. One single reading of the re-

port on the Proceedings of the Frontier Areas' Committee of Enquiry will convince the reader that the Karens were quite happy and willing to continue to be ruled by Great Britain. Therefore it cannot be said that the Karens began fighting the Burmese principally because they were against the principle of being ruled by any race other than Karen or because they were seeking expression of a national consciousness.

The Karen Revolution should also not be compared with the Chinese Communist Revolution, for there is no similarity between the two except the one feature that all revolutions in any age in any part of the world have in common-that they were, or are directed against the established authorities in the countries concerned. There the resemblance ends. The Chinese Communist Revolution was, in essence, a political revolution in which one section of the populace fought against another section of the same populace to gain power of control over the whole country. The Karen Revolution is one in which two different races are involved-it is a battle between a minority race and a majority race, not for the whole country, but for certain limited territories and objectives. It will also be shown later that unlike the Chinese Revolution the Karen Revolution is not political in character but psychological.

If there must be a comparison with the Karen Revolution, then the only near example is the division of the Indian subcontinent. The minority and racial problems that caused Pakistan to break with India are the only ones which can stand some comparison with the problems of the Karens in relation to the Burmese.

This introductory chapter has been necessary to offer proof to illustrate that the Karen Revolution was not begun from purely nationalistic motives and to provide the right perspective for viewing the chapters and events that follow.



## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND TO THE REVOLUTION

Since the causes that contributed to the Karen Revolution lie much deeper in history than is generally understood some harking back to the pages of Burma's history is indispensable if a clear and complete picture is to be presented. This will show the gradual evolving process through which the relationship between the Karens and the Burmese had to pass before it erupted into a Civil War. The story of the Karen Revolution starts from the days when Burma was first settled.

The Karen, who are Mongoloid in origin, came from Western China and Yunnan into Burma. They were the first migratory group into Burma and they settled in the fertile plains of Lower Burma. Here they lived characteristically simple, uneventful and peaceful lives until the advent of the Burmese.

The Burmese entered Burma much later than the Karens. They entered the country as a mixed Indo-Tibetan race with a borrowed language, culture, tradition and religion which exhibited a pronounced Hindu influence. They came in much greater numbers than the first migration consisting of the Karens. These two facts - difference in origin and disparity in numbers are profoundly significant for they are two main factors which have contributed to the development of Karen/Burmese relationships through the ages.

The Burmese, ingrained perhaps with the singular intolerance that the caste system of Hinduism breeds could not live in amity with the Karens. Indeed, amounts of Karen blood in discord and the early pages of Burma's history are crammed full of the blood & thunder of tribal feud, party vendettas, dynastic, massacres and such other instances of complete anarchy. Envy - the comparatively easy & comfortable lives of the Karens in the fertile valley & fortified by the strength of their superior numbers the Burmese began to commit depredations upon the Karens. Bloody clashes ensued between the two races, for

the Karens fought back, but gradually the Karens were driven out of their original buildings and forced into the hilly regions where a large collective number of them still live today. In these early clashes prolific amounts of Karen blood were shed and the Karens suffered all the horrible indignities and terrible humiliations that the barbarous conquerors of those early days were accustomed to inflict upon the vanquished. This oppression of the Karens by the Burmese continued without respite until the annexation of the country by the British in the mid-nineteenth century.

When the Anglo-Burmese wars began prior to the Annexation of Burma the Karens fought on the side of the British against the Burmese. Apart from the fact that the Anglo-Burmese wars gave the Karens an opportunity for revenge against the Burmese for what they had previously suffered, Karen participation on the British side was largely due to the Christian Missionary influence. Missionaries had been active a good decade or so before and the large majority of their early converts were Karens to whom the Christian (or rather, Baptist) religion appeared in complete conformity with their own simple morals and ethics. The Karens (one supposes like most other primitive races) were by inclination feudalistic - not in the sense that they held hand on lease from feudal lords but in the sense that their obedience and allegiance were largely given to one elder of the village. It therefore happened that once a Karen elder or village leader became a Christian and fought for the British the other villagers almost automatically followed his lead. But whether one ascribes to Karen participation on the British side motives of pure revenge or something more noble and less primitive is of little concern except from a strictly academic view - the fact is that since the Karens fought for the British against the Burmese, Karen/Burmese relationships not by any means cordial before then, rapidly deteriorated.



Finding the Karens on the side of the British whetted the hate and indignation of the Burmese. However, no further opportunities were offered them to indulge their antipathy. Because British rule brought to the country for the first time in its history the law and order that results from an effective Central Authority, and progress took the place of persecution in Burmese affairs.

Yet there is gentle irony in the fact that the British, though they did not allow clashes between the two races, unconsciously added more fuel to the smouldering embers of racial animosity. For, having implicit trust in the Karens, as also in the Kachins, who had already proved their loyalty to the Crown, they recruited only Karens and Kachins into the first army and police units to be formed in Burma. The Burmese were not brought into military or police service till very much later. This aggravated the Karen-Burmese situation for it infuriated the Burmese to see the despised Karens in positions of authority. But though the embers of racial hatred were stoked they were prevented from bursting into furious flame by careful fire-watching on the part of His Majesty's Government.

Then came the sorry day when Japan overran and occupied Burma in 1942. The British had to withdraw and gather their strength and resources before they could again enter the country in triumph in 1945. This period from 1942-45 was the blackest and most bitter in Karen history. Deprived of the protection of the British Government the Karens were once again extremely vulnerable to the possibility of renewed Burmese persecution. It was not long in coming. The tables were now turned with a vengeance. Many Burmese, including the Burma Independence Army (hereafter B. I. A.) commanded by the late U Aung San wholeheartedly supported the Japanese Regime and now occupied positions of authority under the Japanese, used this authority and power with a merciless tenacity and ruthless singleness of purpose.

The B. I. A. was originally sponsored by

Japan as a kind of armed fifth column and its officers were trained in Japan even before she attacked Burma. This army which did not number in its ranks the most distinguished characters in the country soon began a reign of terror against the unarmed and utterly defenceless Karens. They were joined in this design by other unruly elements of the Burmese citizenry. The Japanese did nothing to restrain or curb this outbreak of Burmese hostility towards the Karens for they knew, as the Burmese claimed with every justification, that the Karens were still loyal to the British. The B. I. A. and other Burmese killed Karens, looted their homes plundered their barns, laid waste to their property, desecrated and destroyed their churches, murdered their pastors, raped their women and altogether made them the victims of grisly and bestial outrages.

These massacres of the Karens by the Burmese were not just deplorable isolated incidents. To dismiss them as no more than the regrettable results of frayed tempers is an acknowledgement of the desire to run away from unpleasant facts rather than face them. The murder of Karens by the Burmese during Japanese rule was done with the cold calculation of planned persecutions. It is not overstating their tribulations to say that for three years the Karens lived through terror and torture amounting to a hell on earth.

Yet in spite of what they suffered the Karens never lost faith in an ultimate Allied victory against Japan. When Force 136 was organised it was organised by British officers willingly and eagerly assisted by Karen leaders, into a capable, silent, swift-striking guerilla unit composed entirely of Karens and based in the Karen hills. These Karen levies helped to win the war in Burma for the Allies and they, like the Maquis in France, caused havoc, confusion and demoralisation behind the enemy lines.

The B. I. A. on the other hand, worked and fought side by side with the Japanese until it became obvious that the writing was on the wall. Then and then only, they changed with the tides and fortunes of war and deserted the Japs for the British. The



contribution of the B.I.A. to the winning of the war against Japan can be somewhat discounted for by that time it was obvious that the Japs were thoroughly beaten. The Burmese Patriotic Forces, as the B.I.A. re-styled itself, merely turned round and kicked the victim after the Allies had knocked him down.

The contempt felt by the Karens for the Burmese support of Japan's 'Co-prosperity Sphere' can best be shown by the narration of the following incident.

Just before U. Aung San and his B.I.A. changed sides, U Aung San approached Captain Kya Doe a Karen officer in the British forces who had been left behind in Burma when the British retreated. Aung San proposed to Kya Doe that the latter should join the Burma Independence Army. Kya Doe's reply was classically blunt and succinct. 'I'm not a bloody traitor' he replied. Only after Aung San explained to him that his unit was being re-dedicated to fight the Japanese did Kya Doe overcome his repugnance and consent to join

So in the same way as the Karens and Burmese had been on opposite sides in the Anglo-Burmese wars they found themselves once more in opposition in the Allied-Axis war. What the Karens had to go through in those days has left an indelible imprint upon their memories and provided much of the initial driving force of the Karen Revolution.

The psychological impact upon the Karen and of the resurgence of Burmese brutality against the Karens was tremendous and too sharply etched to be lightly dismissed and forgotten. Coming on top of the already long record of Burmese persecution before British rule it engendered in the Karens a deep distrust and wary watchfulness of Burmese intentions and sentiments regarding them.

However, the British returned in 1945 and the Karens confidently expected, as did most others, that swift and strict British justice would be dispensed to the traitors. It was certainly not unreasonable to

suppose that U Aung San and other Burmese leaders who had been unquestionably, treacherous to the British cause would get their just desserts. But for reasons best known to the British Labour Government and not divulged by then in any understandable form for this was not to be. Indeed between 1945-47 it became increasingly evident that the very man and party whom the Karens had most reason to fear and the British to distrust-U Aung San and his followers were being groomed to take over the power which was going to be relinquished by the British Government.

The Karens were shocked and horrified at this, to them, dangerous development. They could not regard with equanimity the prospect of Burma's being ruled by their erstwhile oppressors and their being the subjects of that rule. The Karens became really alarmed and displayed their fear before the Frontier Areas' Committee of Enquiry (F.A.C.E.).

This F.A.C.E. under the chairmanship of Col. Rens-williams, M.P., was formed in 1947 by the British Government to ascertain the views of the frontier peoples of Burma regarding the grant of independence. After its sittings it published a full and verbatim report of every question and answer asked of and given by every witness. To the question, 'Why do you not wish to be under an independent Burmese Government?' or 'Why do you want your own state?', the Karen reply in almost every single case was, 'We do not trust the Burmese.'

It was absolutely clear from Karen evidence before the F.A.C.E. that the whole Karen demand for a separate state sprang from a total absence of trust or confidence in the Burmese. Actually, not a single political, economic, cultural or other reason was advanced by any Karen witness for desiring to have a Karen state. The motives that guided the Karens were suspicion and fear.

This was the state of mind of the Karens conditioned by centuries of persecution at the hands of the Burmese when Burma got her independence on the 4th of Jan-



uary, 1948. For the Burmese the fanfare of trumpets, the bell-ringing and notes of jubilation that heralded the day in were no doubt appropriate. But to the Karens the fanfare of trumpets sounded like the Last Trump, the bell-ringing like a death-knell and the notes of jubilation like the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Soon after Independence Day the Karens began to urge the Burmese Government to take up the matter of a Karen state, while the government was engaged in putting off consideration of these Karen claims the Communists started a rebellion to be followed in close order by the People's Volunteer Organisation and two battalions of

the Burma Rifles. In a mere matter of six or seven months after independence, the country was in a turmoil of strife. But in the midst of this angry flood of violent dissention Karen and Kachin units of the Burma Army stood like rocks and shielded the government from the worst fury of the torrent which would have swept it to destruction. Had the Karens not stood by the Burmese Government in those desparate days nearanarchy, if not absolute disintegration of authority, would have been the inevitable result. The survival of Burma's first independent Government through the first year of its rule was therefore due in large measure to the loyal support accorded it by the Karens.

## CHAPTER II

### IMMEDIATE CAUSES OF THE REVOLUTION

There could have been no more seasonable or propitious moment than this for the Burmese Government to exercise diplomacy and goodwill in dealing with the Karens. The Karens had shown admirable restraint and good sense in helping the Government instead of adding to its discomfort at a time when any increase in the Government's already heavy burden would have spelt its ruin. Yet there is good reason to suspect that the Government instead of using diplomacy and goodwill used duplicity and bad bargaining in attempting to dispose of Karen claims.

It called into being the Boundary Commission under the chairmanship of Sir Ba U, charging the Commission with the duty of drawing up recommendations about the size and limits of a Karen State within the Union of Burma. Consisting of Burmese and Karen representatives the Commission's main problem was to try to strike a balance between what the Burmese were prepared to give and when and what the Karens wanted.

According to the Constitution of the Union of Burma the paragraph pertaining to the Karen State (to be known provisionally

as 'Kawthulay') was to consist of the Salween District only, with the provision that later, adjoining areas which were predominantly Karen might be incorporated if plebescites held there indicated that the people so desired. That is all the Constitution accepts 'in principle.' There is no mention about what sort of political status the Karen state is to enjoy nor other relevant details.

Besides, what is the Salween District? It is an area of under-developed or undeveloped hill tracts whose normal population is 60,000. Barren and bare of resources it just about manages to provide a life of Spartan hardihood for those already living there (80 % Karens) and that, only because the people work like Trojans. Its jungles and swamps are a paradise for mosquitos and a malarial hell.

Yet it was into this area that the Burmese Government hoped to persuade 3½ - 4 million Karens to jam themselves and live happily ever after. Had it succeeded in this purpose the Karens would have died like flies of malaria, malnutrition, maladjustment and madness.



This was what the Boundary Commission wrangled about. The Burmese representatives wished the Karens to accept the Salween District only and later talk about other areas while the Karens wanted immediate concrete proposals about these other areas and not airy promises. After weeks of fruitless debate the Boundary Commission confessed failure to make any progress. The only thing that had progressed was time. But time was of priceless consequence to the Burmese Government which had all along intended using delay-tactics.

With an almost diabolical sense of ill-timing the Burmese press chose this moment to introduce an ugly and ominous note into the proceedings. Instead of subjecting to verbal castigation the Communists, F.V.Os. and Army deserters who were in active revolt, the papers began to flay the Karens with words. With what one is forced to consider malicious and evil intent, the Burmese press accused the Karens of subterfuge, villainy, treachery and similar nefarious designs. It is difficult to see what other purpose this kind of unscrupulous and malevolent journalism was supposed to serve except the deliberate intention of inciting Burmese public opinion to violent aggression against the Karens. Or perhaps it was expected in this sordid and repugnant manner to be able to unite dissident Burmese parties against the whipping boy the Karens. Altogether it had odious and distasteful implications.

The fact is that the Burmese press, whatever its misguided motives, certainly succeeded in inflaming Burmese opinion and arousing Karen misgivings.

By the end of July, 1948 there was a decided and almost palpable tension in the air. This was soon followed by some incidents of isolated clashes between Burmese and Karens. Small and limited though these incidents were, they were magnified out of all proportion and assumed definitely alarming size. It was the atmosphere of passion and hate which fostered this entirely disproportionate growth. Certainly the Burmese Government itself was thrown into a panic and state of fear hardly war-

ranted by a situation which though disturbing was not irremediable. On an imperfectly-judge impulse arising out of the general suspense the Burmese Government started to arrest Karen leaders for no valid reason except a recourse to the Public Order Preservation Act. Under this act anyone can be tucked away in jail for months or years without being specifically charged except on the general and very loosely-defined grounds that his detention is necessary to preserve public order. The Burmese Government has put it to indiscriminate use and many a supposed enemy of the state or Government has disappeared into the forgotten Limbo of P.O.P.A. Karens were made the victims of this act. In addition to the jailing of Karens under this convenient and thin pretence of preserving public order, the Burmese Government also began to disarm Karen village defence units.

All this coming on top of the lamentable press abuse of the Karens, and let it not be forgotten, on top of what the Karens had endured at the hands of the Burmese in the past caused Karen District leaders to act in their own defence.

Under their direction, Karens occupied Thaton, and Muolmein in August 1948 without firing a single shot. They simply walked in and took over the two towns with very little fuss or bother and without spilling a drop of blood, either Karen or Burmese. In Moulmein the Karens took some 55 lakhs of rupees from the Government treasury (a little over 400,000/-).

The immense bargaining power that this put into the hands of the Karen leader, Saw Ba U Gyi can be better imagined than explained. Moulmein is the second port in importance to Rangoon and the third city in size and population. It was a powerful lever with which Saw Ba U Gyi could have applied severe political pressure. But showing a sense of pure statesmanship carried nearly to the point of quixotry he went to Moulmein and persuaded his Karens to give the city back to the Burmese government. And with Moulmein 45 out of 55 lakhs was handed back. The deficit was



made good later.

No other single act so unsordid and devoid of subtlety can be found in the history of Burma. It was loyalty, earnest good will and a highly-developed sense of responsibility combined in one gallant gesture. Yet there was no reciprocal good will on the part of the Burmese Government nor any attempt to imitate this statesmanship.

Instead, the Burmese press and public became more incensed at the humiliation of this losing and begging back of Moulmein. Gratitude appeared to be the last sentiment they wished to express. There was more vilification of the Karens from the press and more outcry against them from the public.

In the natural order of things this built up ill-feeling and tension and produced more incidents of clashes between the two races. These clashes became more frequent and widespread than before and the situation was looking increasingly grave. Still, even up to the end of 1948, it would have been possible for the Government by making very limited concessions to repair the situation. It is extremely doubtful, however, if much could have been done to avert catastrophe after the 24th December 1948.

On that day occurred the tragedy at Palaw in the Mergui district. There on Christmas Eve was perpetrated a dastardly and sacrilegious massacre of Karens. Palaw is a large Christian Karen village and the villagers were in the church to celebrate Watch-Night Service. While the congregation was praying, a party of Burmese troops crept up and lobbed hand grenades into the church. Panic-stricken, people rushed for the exits. They were met by bayonet or bullet. They died, shot or bayoneted. Some who fled into the bushes were mown down by automatic fire. The dead, dying and wounded lay strewn in and around the church.

The death-roll in this heart-rending massacre can now be put safely and accurately at between 30 and 40. But in these

days when everything was looked at out of perspective it was reported in Strait Settlement papers and the local papers at over 100.

To accuse the Burmese Government of originating and planning this atrocity would not be fair. At the same time it is not unfair to conclude that the Government condoned the outrage since it did nothing to punish the troops concerned. It professed to deplore such barbarism but did not administer any chastisement. From this it is not inaccurate to infer that the government was at least an accessory after the fact. Progovernment apologists have sought to excuse the government on the plea that it was in such a chaotic and impotent mess that it could not afford to employ heavy-handed disciplinary action against its forces for fear of antagonising them. To put it mildly, this is a feeble-minded and preposterous suggestion. If a government cannot maintain law and order and effectively control its own armed forces it has no business to remain in power.

What impression this negligence on the government's part to take preventive measures must have made on the Karens can be easily understood. Deeply suspicious of the Government's intentions before, they were now confirmed in their belief that the Burmese Government planned their eventual extermination. A bad situation had by this time arrived at the point of an impending crisis.

There are limits to which stress and strain upon human relationship can be built up and maintained. There is a breaking point. When the Karen quarter at Sanchaung was attacked and when the Karens at Thaming and Insein were being surrounded by Burmese forces the tightly-stretched chord of Karen Patience and forbearance snapped with a tearing violence.

When Insein was attacked by Government forces on the 31st of January, 1949 there began a bloody, senseless, wanton and wilfully-provoked Civil War which has caused the whole country needless suffering



and harrowing hardships. And all this has been due to the Government's unimaginative and unrealistic policy of trying to steam-roller itself over Karen wishes instead of attempting to smooth over and iron out the differences.

This is how and why the Karens first

### CHAPTER III THE BEGINNING INSEIN

From the battle of Insein the Karen Revolution proper began. Enough publicity was given to the Insein seige to make it an epic. But some account of the seige must be given here, for the stubborn character of the Karen defence there has an important role on the story.

It will be readily accepted that the defence of Insein showed an intensely savage and unconquerable determination which defied and contradicted generally-held and proved military theories on logistics. Comparable strength, fortifications, preponderance of armaments and so on. It defied human laws, primitive laws, natural laws and the law of averages. Observers from the British Military Mission in Rangoon who watched the scale of the Burmese bombardment by land, sea and air gave it as their considered professional opinion that Insein could not hold out for more than a fortnight. In retrospect this judgement seems a little silly when in fact Insein held out for almost four months.

The Insein seige was a lacerating and cruel test of guts, morals, fortitude, endurance and similar human qualities in adversity. The fact that the Karens, heavily out-numbered and out-gunned, stuck inside their perimeter for 112 days against the combined might of the Burmese army, navy and air force proves a point that no amount of foggy argument can obscure. The point is that the Karens believed with a simple and direct conviction that they were fighting for their very lives. Only

began their struggle. They were convinced and sincerely believed that they either had to stand up and fight or lie down and die. It will be seen therefore that the Karen Revolution has its roots in psychology rather than politics; in incompatibility rather than intransigence; in self-preservation rather than self-expression.

such a primitive driving instinct can explain the inhuman, almost animal stoicism towards pain, danger, death and acute privation displayed by the Karens in the months of the bitter, attritive fighting at Insein.

It must be remembered that the Karens who fought at Insein were neither trained nor seasoned troops. In the beginning they were a mixed handful of students, young working men, old men and even women with a motley collection of 12-bore guns, ancient muzzle-loaders and flintlocks, sporting rifles, and some odd few rifles and carbines. It was not till battle was fully joined that Insein was reinforced by a succession of detachments of Karen National Defence organisation personnel with more suitable weapons. Even so the odds against the Karens were stupendous.

An ex-British officer who went through the Insein battle with the Karens was to say later that he would never have believed it possible that ordinary, everyday human beings could withstand and triumph over conditions that would have appalled the best-trained and disciplined troops in the world. His admiration for the Karen defence was profound and lasting and he was especially awed by the superb gallantry and bravery of the women nurses under fire. No exchange of shot and shell was too hot, no situation too dangerous for them. Wherever and whenever they were needed to attend to the wounded they were there. He says that women even went out between the two lines into no-man's land



during engagements to retrieve wounded and dead. 'At first' he says, 'the Burmese troops fired on them but after witnessing their cold, disdainful courage even they withheld their fire. 'One remembers Macaulay's 'and e'en the ranks of Tuscany could scarce forbear to cheer.'

Such was the character of Insein and it cannot be understood except as a primeval instinct of the Karens to fight against death rather than submit to it tamely. Indubitably, discretion is the better part of valour in most sticky situations but at Insein the Karens obviously believed that a death glorious was preferable to a death ignoble. It is difficult if not impossible to see Insein as having been defended by a people fiercely clinging to an abstract political ideal.

The unyielding nature of the defence of Insein can be put on a par with the fantastically heroic defence of the Warsaw Ghetto by the Poles during the last war. And the thing that inspired both these examples of superhuman courage is the same the urge for self-preservation and the fearless refusal of free men to submit tamely to tyranny.

After the fighting at Insein had been in progress for about two months the Burmese Government became really perturbed about the inability of its massed forces to dislodge these relatively few Karens from a position less than 10 miles from Rangoon. Government forces had saturated the Karen positions with mortar and artillery fire from the land, strafed and bombed them from the air and bombarded them from the sea. They had made repeated frontal assaults in huge force employing every known military device and had set a scorching, searing cracking pace. All they had succeeded in doing was burning themselves out. The Karens remained in Insein undaunted and indomitable. sleep at night for the Karens was impossible and rest by day unthinkable. When bombs, shells and bullets are hurtling around you every minute of the day and night you don't exactly enjoy peaceful rest and slumber. But far from unnerving the defenders each successive day only seemed to bring them fresh fire and vigour. It was

the morale of the attacking forces that was beginning to crack and crumble.

Realising this, the government decided to give its troops a much needed respite. It approached the British, Pakistani and Indian Ambassadors in Rangoon and Bishop West, asking them to use their good offices to get the Karens to agree to truce talks, to be followed by negotiations. The Ambassadors and Bishop West agreed to try and approached the Karen leader Saw Ba U Gyi. A man who never once through the days of his leadership of the Karens spurned an opportunity to settle differences peacefully than otherwise, he readily agreed. A truce or cease-fire was arranged and accordingly Saw Ba U Gyi went into Rangoon to 'negotiate'.

He had hardly left Insein when the Burmese troops in flagrant violation of the truce terms began to move into dominant and commanding positions around Insein which they had never been able to occupy by orthodox military action. The Karens had to watch in silent and frustrated fury this base dishonouring of the truce by their enemies. They dared not dispute these enemy moves though the extreme provocation entitled them to, because they feared that the enemy would accuse them of being the first to open fire and use this as an excuse to arrest Saw Ba U Gyi and the other Karen leaders at the conference table. The Karens had to watch in impotent indignation while their enemies drew the net of encirclement tighter around their position at Insein

Meanwhile, Saw Ba U Gyi arrived at the place of meeting in Rangoon and was greeted by Thakin Nu. The pleasantries demanded by social etiquette on such occasions were hardly over when Thakin Nu blandly presented Ba U Gyi with a written demand for the surrender of the Insein garrison laying down in minute detail where and how the arms were to be piled for collection by government forces. No mention was made about discussing terms for a negotiated settlement. When Ba U Gyi asked how far the government was prepared to go



in satisfying Karen claims he was told that the Government would enter into no talks on the subject until the Karens first laid down their arms. Questioned by Ba U Gyi what guarantee could be given the Karens that they would not all be jailed or shot if they did, Nu could provide no satisfactory warranty. Finally asked what the government intended to do if the Karens refused to surrender their arms, Nu told him in that case the Government would be forced to carry on the war against the Karens.

In order to appreciate the stupid arrogance and incredible audacity of the Burmese government's emphasis on a surrender instead of a settlement by negotiation it is well to state the following facts. At the time, the Karens were in control of Thaton, Pa-an Hlaingbwe, Kawka-reik, Shwegyin, Kyaukkyi; over 120 miles of the Rangoon-Mandalay trunk and rail road including Toungoo, Pyu, Nyaunglebin, Daik-U; Karen forces had captured and left Mandalay, Maymyo, Meiktila, Pyinmana. Up to then the Karens had suffered not a single military reverse. They had pitched battles with government forces all over the country and in every case had registered the most un-expected and resounding victories imaginable. The Burmese forces on the other hand were in a state of hopeless disorganisation and had received a thorough drubbing. Yet the Burmese government had the temerity to demand a surrender of arms from the Karens.

There is little need to say that quite naturally the meeting between Saw Ba U Gyi and Thakin Nu produced no result and so ended possibly one of the most farcical and briefest 'negotiations' in history.

If all this is not a record of the Burmese government's ineptitude in dealing with the Karens then it is difficult to find the right words to apply.

The fight at Insein went on and the Karen Revolution is going on as this is being written.

It has conceded the Salween District, area 2,666 sq. miles, Hlaingbwe township, Pa-an township, Thandaung township, Kawka-reik township and Kya-in township.

The Salween District is one of the smallest and most pitifully unproductive districts in Burma as may be seen from the following extracts taken 'The Imperial Gazetteer of India, Province Series-Burma' published in 1908.

'The whole country is, in point of fact, a wilderness of mountains and the valleys may more properly be described as long, winding gorges. Salween is essentially a hill tract.'

'The climate in the valleys, generally speaking is moist, hot and unhealthy and has a peculiarly enervating effect on persons not acclimatised to it.'

'The soil is uniformly poor, except here and there in the Bilin and Yunzalin valleys where loamy alluvial deposits have been formed. The rainfall is always ample and seasonable but the extremely hilly nature of the country and its poor soil afford little scope for agri-cultural development. Cultivation had steadily increased year by year but it cannot be expected in a rugged country like Salween to attain anything like the important position it holds in other districts.'

'It' (Papun village, the chief village in Salween) is confined between two ranges of hills and has the reputation of being extremely unhealthy.' Its notoriety for insalubriousness is well-deserved. So much for the single district that has been given to the Karens.

As for the townships that have been granted it may be said that they are called 'townships' purely for administrative purposes. In point of fact this classification gives them an undeserved dignity, for, not one of them is anything more than a humble, unpretentious village.

Even a worse example of exaggeration is to lump these pathetic little areas together and give them the dignified title of 'State,' unless one has a tendency to accept comic opera 'states' like San Marino and Manacao as such. The incongruity lies in the fact that and a fairy-tale or

pantomine Princess, Grace Kelly, And San Marino, in keeping with its 'Chocolate - Soldier' tradition, was recently the victim of the pranks of Italian college students who made a night excursion into its territory and pilfered some old brass cannons more suitable for firing state salutes than for any serious lethal barrages.

The present Karen State has nothing as remotely attractive or romantic to offer. At best it can put on an inferior sort of puppet show, spiritless and inept. It is indeed a puppet state manipulated not by strings but by iron cables held in tough steel fingers.

If the foregoing levity is out of order in an otherwise serious atmosphere indulgence is pleaded, It is difficult to be serious about the present Karen State.

Actually there are, as well as can be judged from a fairly broad and representative cross-section of Karen desires, three main objectives by the Karens to the State conceded.

These are, in order of importance ; -

(1) The uncompromising stand taken by the Burmese government that it will not discuss any terms with the Karen rebels unless they first surrender their arms.

(2) The areas are far too small and far too incapable of supporting even an austere economy and

(3) Its limited political status which puts Defence, Foreign Relations and Finance into the hands of the Union Government of Burma.

## CHAPTER IV

### HOW THE REVOLUTION IS BEING CONDUCTED

The word 'rebel' or 'insurgent' conjures up in most people's minds an unfortunate and not always accurate picture. One thinks of an unlovely, fierce, unprepossessing and altogether undesirable character who spends his days in dark caves or thick jungles and his nights in crawling around and foraging for herbs and edible grasses to stuff ravenously into his empty stomach. Whether this is indeed true of rebels or insurgents anywhere else is not definitely known but it is certainly not even a remote picture of the Karen rebels.

The Karen forces are anything but the kind of rabble army that Burmese government propaganda and peoples' imaginations picture them. The Kawthoolei Armed Forces, as the Karen troops are called, are organised and disciplined right along the command chain from Supreme Headquarters Command Headquarters, Divisions, Brigades, Battalions, Companies, Platoons and Sections. They are commanded by men of experience, intelligence and professional training and among them are many who were

officers in the Burma Army of British days. Quite a few of them have British decorations for gallantry and distinguished service like the Order of the British Empire, the Military Cross and so on. The troops have uniform, live in barracks, have recreational advantages, are trained in their duties and behave much the same as soldiers anywhere.

There is a government and administrative machine to control, direct and co-ordinate the revolution and everything is run if not with smooth efficiency at least with a very fair degree of order and method. It would be idle to pretend that either the governmental or administrative machinery is complicated or excessively cumbersome. Naturally, the circumstances being what they are, things occasionally get a bit snagged up but, all in all, the government and administration run with commendable utility.

In the early days due to the spontaneous outbreak of the revolution and the



repidity with which it moved along, there was little that could be done to achieve cohesion of effort and direction between the widely-flung areas. It ran for nearly two years as a series of small group movements instead of a unison of the activities of the whole force. But with dogged patience and determination the leaders gradually got hold of the loose ends and succeeded in tying them together. By trial and error mixed with a sprinkling of 'by guess and by God' they started to knit the revolution into a co-ordinated pattern.

But the two years it took the Karens to reach this state was sufficient to allow the Burmese Government to recover from the early hammer-blows inflicted upon

it by the Karens and to react in good time to stave off disaster.

This short chapter has been inserted in order to point out that contrary to Burmese propaganda the Karen Revolution is not merely banditry on a large scale or a refined species of organised dacoity. But unless one actually sees for himself the order that prevails here it will be difficult for him to get a proper idea of the extent of that order. It would be purposeless therefore to go into exhausting detail about the organisation and administration. The preceding brief outline is judged sufficient if it serves to convey the impression that some kind of regularity is present in the affairs of the Karen Revolution.

## CHAPTER V

### THE KAREN STATE GRANTED BY THE GOVERNMENT

A pretty fair question that may be asked by those not intimately connected with the facts of the case is - 'Since the government has already given the Karens a state, why do they go on fighting?'. Before this question is answered let us examine what the Burmese government has granted.

Taking first things first, objection No. 1 cannot be brushed aside lightly. Unless the Burmese Government adopts a less whimsical attitude about negotiations the Karens must not and surely will not be blamed for carrying on the fight. To insist that the rebels must first lay down their arms and then talk terms is trying to impose unconditional surrender. The Karens will not accept this invitation to commit virtual suicide. Beside, it is a general custom having almost the force of law in International situations for a cease-fire or truce to be called, then talks begun and finally the question of laying down arms settled if the negotiations are acceptable. But what the Burmese Government has always attempted to do is to reverse the whole process. This shows dismal igno-

rance of the ABC of statesmanship, for the Burmese Government can never hope to restore by armed force the shadow of peaceful conditions.

The second objection is completely reasonable and justifiable to any observer who considers the following figures

Assuming that the Karen State, as it is now, comprises 6000 sq miles and that is a liberal estimate; the area of Burma is 232000 sq. miles. That makes the Karen State approximately 1/40th the size of Burma. Burma's total population is 18,000,000. Even if only one third of the Karens in Burma wished to reside in the Karen State that would make 1,000,000 Karens at least. So what it amounts to in simple mathematics is that 1/18th of the population of Burma is expected to keep body and soul together in just 1/40th of the territory of the country. Again of the 6000 sq. miles of the Karen State, Salween District has an area of 2666 sq. miles but a population of less than 60,000. Density just over 20 persons to the sq. mile. From the extracts previ-

ously quoted about Salween it cannot hope to support many more people than those already in it. That means that the rest of the Karen State, about 3,4000 sq.miles will have to bear the burden of the remaining 940,000 Karens. Density would then be 270 to the sq. mile- ridiculous impossibility on geographical and economic grounds. Therefore the second Karen objection is certainly realistic.

Objection No.3 calls for rather a deeper analysis for it poses a pretty question to which it is:impolitical at this stage of the Revolution to give an unqualified reply. The question is 'Do the Karens want a completely, sovereign independent state?' It would be committing no one to say that that is the summit of Karen hopes and desires. But whether the Karens will insist at all cost upon full sovereignty is the sort of question not only impolitical to answer now but also too closely linked with other questions to answer off - hand. For instance, 'Is the government prepared to extend the Karen State boundaries a propos objection(1)?' 'Is it prepared to include a seaport in the Karen State' and other pertinent questions. Only if answers to these are forthcoming can one hope to consider the question of whether or not to stand or fall by the strict demand for full self-rule. This, one feels, would be the sort of position that any reasonable and responsible leader would take up on such an issue. Apart from this, any premature declaration of rigid objectives at the present stage would do little good and could do much harm. Allied statesmen have been known to express a kind of rueful regret over their early decision during the last World War to declare and publish pub-

licly their determination to demand Germany's 'unconditional surrender.' This some of them admit, was possibly a 'faux-pas' which may have caused much of the trouble of the post-war area. Be that as it may, experience in politics has illustrated the truth of the proverb 'Look before you leap'

Another thing which should not be lost sight of in the impulse and mood of the moment is that eventually some settlement through negotiations may yet have to be made. However dim such a prospect may seem in the present circumstances it is well not to dismiss it as improbable. If therefore, the Karens were to make a clear, unequivocal and forthright declaration of policy now, It would irreparably prejudice and possibly rule out any hope of a negotiated settlement. On the other hand, the Burmese government seems to have paid scant attention to this important detail and for its own part has made an inflexible expression of its intentions. It has publicly asserted that it will never negotiate with the Karen rebels but will fight till the bitter end. It is problematical at the present moment as to whose lot it will fall to drink the gall of defeat Too, having to eat your words is having to swallow a most unpleasent medicine. It would be advisable for the Burmese government to remember that only 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread.'

These three objections of the Karens do at least call for sober reflection and fresh thinking on the part of those, who without fully understanding the facts, are prompted to ask the question with which this chapter began.

## CHAPTER VI

### ANALYSIS OF FLEXIBILITY OF THE KAREN CLAIMS

In the preceding chapter it was said that the summit of Karen hopes and desires was a sovereign independent state. To what territory do they aspire?

Here again, one must not be led into error by regarding their territorial ambitions as a set of cardinal principles from which there can be no deviations. It may



well be that at conference table they might be prepared to make generous concessions if these would help to bring about a final settlement. This is more than mere likelihood since it is common practice in political negotiations for disputing parties to wrangle and bargain over issues and for each party to give itself plenty of space in which to manoeuvre. This is not an idle indulgence in cynicism; It is what happens everywhere; it is the acceptance of realities without letting the stars get in one's eyes.

According to the Moulmein Congress the Karen territorial claims consist of Tennasserin Division, Toungoo District east of the Sittang and portions of the Delta. No commitments can be made as to whether or not these claims will be pressed to their full extent-everything depends on the balance between the political status of the state and its extent. What is meant is this. Perhaps it may be the case that the greater control over their own affairs that they are granted, the lesser will be the area they would be willing to accept. Conversely it may happen that the less control they are given the more area they would claim. A proper balance between these two features will have then to be struck.

When considering the validity of their demand for full sovereignty it must be remembered that the Karens have some pretty strong reasons for it.

One thing is certain. The Karens have for centuries, been compelled to eat humble pie forcibly rammed down their throats by then numerically more powerful Burmese. They have been sickened to surfeit by the taste of it. It has always been their sorrowful experience that power in the hands of the Burmese has been used to oppress, subjugate and persecute them. They will stand no more to be brow-beaten and bullied.

Then too, they have always found the political habit of Burmese leaders disingenuous and distasteful. They can never clearly understand how and why the Burmese leaders managed to play so successful a

game of 'general post' in the last war, changing sides with adroit and rapid political facility. First the Burmese Independence Army commanded by the late U Aung San fought for the Japs against the British. They helped the Japanese into Burma and assisted in pushing the British out. Then when Nemesis began inexorably to overhaul Japan they promptly closed ranks behind the British and followed in their wake when the British were driving the Japanese out. Finally, they turned the British out once again after they had served their purpose. These changes were all made by the same man and the same party. Changing horses in mid-stream is a manoeuvre popularly supposed to call for the most intricate calisthenics whether as a diplomatic or physical feat. Yet Aung San and his party accomplished their successful equine change-over in midwar with astounding and remarkable confidence. Such inconsistency is abhorrent to the Karen nature as the renowned 14th Army Commander, Field-Marshal Sir William Slim testified when he asserted, 'The Karens are no fairweather friends' and he minced no words when he, also recalled, 'I was chased out of the country by the Burmese.' The Karens are afraid and would be ashamed to be governed by the Burmese in Foreign Relations on this account.

Another reason why the Karens want complete control over their own affairs is education. Into Burma's schools and colleges politics has insinuated itself and manifests itself off and on in noisy and unruly demonstrations and in strikes when students stay out on some imagined grievances, ostentatiously academic, but in reality political. Student unions which should have been designed to preserve the integrity and high quality of their respective 'Alma Mater' are fashioned instead to wield a political whip which they crack at every opportunity, Karens who are keen on education, indeed intensely and earnestly keen, feel that for students in schools and colleges to indulge in political acrobatics at the expense of learning is an abuse of educational facilities. Though unwilling, Karen students have to stay out when strikes are on because pickets prevent them from attending classes.

There is another feature of education in Burma which the Karens do not like. This is having to take as a compulsory subject, Higher Burmese, which they consider a frittering away of time which could more properly be spent on subjects of wider general interest; also, if they fail to pass the Higher Burmese examination they are denied the privilege of being selected as State scholars for further studies abroad even though they may be brilliantly equipped in other subjects. It is on very rare occasions that a Karen gets the benefit of a State scholarship.

Economically, the Karens are oppressed and discriminated against by not being given Jobs commensurate with their talents or qualifications whereas less qualified Burmese get the plum posts. The shade of one's politics too, governs employment. This is resented by Karens and Burmese alike.

Then there is the widespread bribery and corruption that is rife in politics, government departments import and export licenses and so on. The Karens have often been the victims of this ubiquitous evil in Burma. Karens have a national dignity, though they are not a proud race and it injures their self-respect to have either to fawn or offer graft to secure employment or other benefits.

Added to all this are wide cultural and characteristic differences between the two races which differ in ethnical origin.

These are some of the powerful reasons why the Karens do not wish to remain under a Burmese Central Authority.

There are bound to be some people who while admitting the soundness of these reasons, will say that Burma is too small a country to be divided. Others, thinking of the tragedies of previous post-war divisions may regard this as another parallel case-an unfunny pun.

But is Burma too small to be divided? For purposes of convenient reckoning let us suppose that Burma were tomorrow to be

divided thus. Tennasserin Division (with - 3,000,000 Karens area roughly 30,000 sq. miles) for the Karen State and Burma proper (200,000 sq. miles-15 million population). Let us take the smaller entity, the Karen state and make some comparisons from statistics.

#### AREA.

Karen State .....	30,000 sq. miles.
Israel .....	8,080 '
Luxembourg .....	1,000 '
Panama .....	29,000 '
San Marino .....	38 '

#### Population.

Karen State .....	3,000,000.
Israel .....	1,390,000.
Luxembourg .....	291,000.
Panama.....	802,000.
San Marino .....	13,500

Other states with larger area but less population (Pop. figures only). Denmark (16,580 sq. miles), Holland (13,500-sq. miles), Switzerland (16,000 sq. miles).

These are some comparative figures which illustrate that Burma is quite roomy enough to be divided.

What about the tragedy that pessimists might expect to follow upon yet another carving up of a country? The old slicings are familiar-Germany, Korea, Indo-China and the Indian Sub-continent. We shall make a superficial examination of these comparisons.

Germany, Indo-China and Korea have one thing in common. They are all unnatural division of the same race of people. The trouble in Germany began because the divided portions were each ruled by a different outside government. In Korea the cause of the upheaval was the fact that though North and South Korea were each with its own government, each came into the



orbit of hostile spheres of influence. In Indo-China it was the question of an independence movement against a colonial power by Nationalists gone sour through Communist domination. In the Indian sub-continent religion was the original issue which divided the continent and later the boundary dispute over Kashmir became the bone of contention.

What would or would not the division of Burma have in common with these examples. First the same race of people is not involved. Second neither would be ruled by an outside government. Next there would be no immediate question of spheres of influence although it cannot be denied that these may later arise. Next again, there is no resemblance to Indo-China's case and finally there would be no buffer state to cause a dissention over boundaries.

The only plausible reason that can be advanced for the Burmese Government's not agreeing to the principle of a sovereign independent state for the Karens is that the Kachins, Chins, Shans, Mons and Arakanese may also want fully independent states

of their own. Certainly the Mons and Arakanese are now in active revolt with this end in view. However, the Kachins, Chins and Shans already have local state governments and enjoy one great advantage denied to the Mons and Karens, they live in remote areas in which the Burmese are in negligible quantity and are therefore free from governmental and collective and individual Burmese interference. They can thus be well content with their virtual if not factual independence. The Arakanese, too, while not having a state live mostly in the Arakan Division where there is a Burmese minority. The Karens, however, although there are strong colonies of them in many parts of the Tennasserin Division and the Irrawaddy Delta, have to live in close and intimate contiguity with the Burmese and this familiarity has bred mutual contempt. It sounds ugly put like that but the truth is seldom pleasant.

If this reasoning in analysing the feasibility of Karen claims is appreciated the reader may feel in a position to understand the Karen Revolution.

## CHAPTER VII

### PEACE OR WAR?

There is a paramount need in Burma today for some thorough and earnest soul-searching if the country is to regain any semblance of stability. This should, if diligently and sincerely indulged in produce a fresh outlook. Almost eight years have gone by and the situation of the country is going from bad to worse with the worst surely to follow unless something is done.

The government cannot crush the Karen Resistance by force. The idea is absurd if for no other reason than the country's physical features in which hills and dense forests, are commonplace features. If pressure is piled on in one area by the government, the Karens off-set this by themselves putting on pressure somewhere else. It is

a grim and deadly game of hide and seek in the jungles and mountains in which type of warfare, the Karens are in their element for this is their natural setting. They can go on for years like this and are determined to do so. The fighting qualities of the Karen soldier and his conviction in his cause are his main weapons apart from conventional ones. The Burmese soldier has a vastly inferior morale quotient, cannot stand the rigours of jungle campaigning and has little else to sustain or fortify him except his pay. It is common knowledge in Burma that the Burma army cannot be relied upon-it lacks 'esprit de corps'. Its battle efficiency is being pushed way below par by Karen use of mines and booby traps which may lie concealed almost anywhere.

The measure of success that mine warfare has achieved for the Karens may be acknowledged when it is known that for the past 2 years the enemy have stopped using tanks, armoured cars, bren carriers. They have lost too many Sherman's armoured cars and carriers, so they don't risk them any more. In short, the Karens are more than holding their own and will continue to do so. There is no solution in armed force. Neither side can defeat the other outright and this weary stalemate can go on indefinitely.

The answer is a truce, to be followed by talks which should have a better chance if the recommended soul-searching is done. It is not for the Karens to make the first move in seeking a truce since the Burmese government's unyielding instance upon an arms surrender and refusal to negotiate publicly stated and vowed, has effectively killed the possibility of settlement through negotiations. It is up to the Burmese government to decide whether or not it will continue to let the country go to rack and ruin or whether it will revise its stand on this issue.

Burma is in a desperate plight. It is torn apart by a hotch-potch of internicine strifes; its economy has been strangled; debts hang around its neck like millstones, its capacity to resist invasion is dangerously feeble and its chaotic condition open to exploitation by Communism.

The whole country wants peace, needs it desperately, cries out in hunger for its abundant blessings to return.

The volume of Burma's exports which was once more than ample to make and keep the country rich and prosperous has now shrunk to diminutive proportions which constitute but a shadow of its former glory. Teak, petroleum, tin, wolfram, rice - the export figures for all these tell a sorry tale and more than that, prove that the country's internal situation is far from encouraging. No government intent upon the country's welfare and progress should be able to ignore the destruction of its eco-

nomy by internal complications. Force has been tried and has failed. It will continue to fail.

It is not prestige that is being maintained by the government in its absolute refusal to deal with the rebels in the country. It is an empty and senseless pride and a rancorous disposition which are being preserved at the expense of peace and progress.

And as for Burma's place and position in the International situation, little that is good can be said. Its capacity for defence against outside aggression has been lowered to a dangerous degree and the government has been forced to adopt a shoddy and tattered neutrality with which it strives to cover its exploitable weakness. In fact it is not a firm and outspoken neutrality based on a strong set of principles. It is the kind that has to walk on the tight rope of extreme caution, leaning one way or the other as pressure dictates in order to preserve a precarious balance. This means that the government can win neither the respect and admiration of the world in general nor the confidence and trust of either bloc of powers between whose policies it yaws like a ship in a heavy, following sea.

The Karens recognise the country's desperate situation and realise that only peace can restore the conditions necessary to rescue it from oblivion and provide the impetus to force it ahead to stability again. But willing as they would be to talk things over with the government, they will reject any attempted overture which insists upon a surrender of arms before a settlement. This condition they will never accept.

Everything, therefore, depends on the government. If it desires peace as earnestly as its Prime Minister preaches peace to the outside world, it has only to seek it. If it wants war it already has it and if it likes it there is still lots more to be had. War is one commodity that Burma could very easily export without feeling the pinch she has a generous surplus of it.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

This has been a record of the Karen case and it is hoped that it may at least cause the reader to re-examine his views and opinions in respect of the Karen Rebellion. The Karens have been much-maligned and much-denounced by the propaganda of the Burmese government. Calumny is a disagreeable word but it has been committed by the Burmese government against the Karens. The practice in propaganda of marshalling together and dressing up all the facts which support your own side of the story while omitting those that are injurious to it is pardonable. It is more than pardonable - it is a practice hallowed by history. But to invent deliberate falsehoods and give those an imposing air of veracity is to exceed the limits of propriety and fair play.

It was not the Karens who first resorted to arms-it was the government's inability to restrain its armed forces when they went berserk and ran amok among innocent Karens that was responsible for the uprising. It was also the Burmese press and in this connection government organs were as culpable as others that kept hate and racial dissatisfaction alive and gave no chance for sanity and moderation to prevail.

It is not the Karens who insist upon carrying on the war. It was they who first made the first genuine and reconciliatory effort to replace enmity by amity when Saw Ba U Gyi gave back Moulmein without trying to capitalise on its capture. It was again Saw Ba U Gyi who

agreed to truce talks at Insein against the angry protests of his followers who refused to believe that the government was sincere and suspected treachery on its part. It was the fault of Thakin Nu that those talks were fruitless as he insisted upon a surrender and not a settlement.

It is not the Karens who are intransigent and stubborn and contemptuous of negotiations. It is the Burmese government who has repeatedly and publicly affirmed its decision not to come to any terms with the Karens but to crush Karen resistance by force. This is one of the planks of their policy platform in the elections being held this year.

It was the Burmese government who, against all constitutional legality, dishonoured its commitments regarding constitutional safe-guards for minority rights and who imposed upon the Karens a tyrannous rule.

Finally it was the Karens who revolted against that tyranny from motives of self-preservation and not national ambition. Now that they are locked in battle they will fight on until they can be assured that their lives and future are not in jeopardy.

'Tyranny like hell is not easily conquered,' but it can be punished so severely that its creators will yet regret its cost in life and limb. This is the lesson the Karens hope to teach the Burmese government. Once it is learnt, peace can come into its own again.

### THE END



# The origin of the Karens

According to tradition the home-country of the Karens was the land called by them-- 'Htee-Hseh-Meh-Ywa' 'Water pushes sand flows'. It means that it was a land that Sand Moves or Flows as a river- 'The River of Sand'. Perhaps it might be the Gobi desert, which is directly towards the north. That region is in Mongolia. Thus it seems that the Karens came from Mongolia, and they were a tribe of the Mongolian race. It was as such that the Karens were described by a great many historians as an off-shoot of the main race the Mongolian race.

## The First migration of the Karens into Burma.

All western historians and the missionaries, working among the Karens had mentioned that the home of the Karens was in what (to the Karens) was known as 'Kaw-Si' or the 'Country-Si' probably Sinkiang, a region in western China. That was before they came into Burma. The Chinese and the Shans have stated that the river Yangtse (which means the Yang river) came from the country of the Yang (the Yang or the Karen). This plainly shows that the Karens or the Yangs or the Carians had lived some where in the west of China, in the region where the Yangtse takes its source.

The Karens entered Burma along three routes-

- (1) The Mekong valley route.
- (2) The Irrawaddy valley route.
- (3) The Salween valley route.

(1) The Mekong river rises in Tibet and flows through China down south through Laos, Cambodia and enters the Gulf of Thailand. Some history books mentioned that the Karens established cities and government in Chiang Mai, but they were over-

thrown by the Thais, and Karens moved into the mountains, to Mae Sariang and across the other side of the Salween.

(2) The second migratory group followed along the valleys of the Shwe-li and the Irrawaddy. The Pwo Karens built the town of Prome (Pwo-Wai'-meaning the Pwo-town). Some went down south to the Irrawaddy Delta-to such places as Ma-u-bin, Bassein, Myaung-Mya, etc.

(3) The third group entered what now is known as the Shan States, moving down to southern Shan State. They are here known as the Pa-o Karens, some stayed on in Karenni State (the Red Karens). Some of this group went westward to Toungoo, Shwe-Gyin, Thaton, Moulmein, Tavoy and Mergui saw these Karens settling on these places.

Karen tradition has it that the first migration of the Karens was in the year B.C. 1125 and the second one was in B.C. 739. They were the first migratory group to arrive in this region now called Burma. In those days according to Karen tradition the sea shore was at Prome (then called Pwo-way). The Karen calendar year is (739/ the year of our Lord A.D. 1939)-1939 was the year the Government of Burma recognised and confirmed it. Thus the Karen year this time will be (739 / 1977) 2716 year-the 739 was the year 739 B.C. when the Karens came into Burma in their second migration into Burma. Professor Luce of the Rangoon University and Professor Pearn of the Eastern Historical Research Society endorsed the statement of the Karen calendar year.

The Karens came in earlier than the Shans, and due to the dominance of the Shans, the Karens moved down south towards the delta regions of the great river valleys along which they came. The Karens moved down south at the time over two hundred years before the Mon and the Burmese came over from India.



When the Karens first settled down they called this land 'Kaw Lah' - the Green Country' and they were then a free people but gradually the Mons (a new group evolved from the mixed marriage of the Indians and the people of the land in Tavoy and Moulmein regions) and the Burmans (the people emerging from the inter-marriage of the Indian 'Bramin' and the people in the country) pushed into the Karen settlements. These Karens being peaceful and self-effacing had again to move away into the mountain fastness or away from established settlements, which became the possessions of these later settlers who had all the traits or (mostly all) of the Indian culture, statescraft and other attributes of the so-called civilization.

The present day Karens are found in-

(1) The Delta of the Irrawaddy-

Bassein, Myaung-mya, Ma-u-bin, Pya-pon, Henzada, Tharawaddy and some in the Prome district.

(2) The Eastern Hills-

Toungoo, Papun, Thaton, Moulmein, Pa-an, Tavoy, Mergui and Pegu districts, and also in Karenni, southern Shan States and in Pyin-ma-na hills.

(3) The western regions-

The Pwo and Sgaw Karens here live amongst the Burmese and thus having come in contact in most of their dealings with the Burmese, these Karens can speak the Burmese language well, but in the eastern hills they live apart and have very little contact with the Burmese, resulting in having very little command of the Burmese language. The Karens both living in the deltas and the eastern hills are behind the Burmese in their standard of living.

### The Karen Tribes

A nation has its own characteristics, there being four-

(1) It's tradition,

(2) It's language, character and culture,

(3) The Land in which it settles down

(4) It's individualistic policies of economy, the Karens have all these characteristics, and though a nation, there are many tribes.

On May 6, 1936, the governor of Burma issued a statement, announcing that there are eleven Karen tribes-

(1) Sgaw (2) Pwo (3) Pa-O (4) Paku (5) Mon-Ney-Bwa (6) Bwe (7) White Karen (8) Padaung (9) Eastern Bwe (Ka-renni or Kayah) (10) Con-Ker (11) Geh-Bah.

### Chronology

1. Migration of the Karen from Mongolia B.C. 2617
2. Arrival of the Karens in East Turkistan B.C. 2013
3. Migration of the Karens from East Turkistan B.C. 1866
4. Arrival of the Karens in Tibet B.C. 1864
5. Migration of the Karens from Tibet B.C. 1388  
(The Karens settled down in Tibet for 476 years)
6. Arrival of the Karens in Yunnan in China B.C. 1385
7. Migration of the first group from Yunnan to S.E. Asia B.C. 1128
8. Arrival of the first group Karens who entered S.E. Asia B.C. 1125
9. Migration of the second group of the Karens from Yunnan to S.E. Asia B.C. 741
10. The last arrival of the second group to enter S.E. Asia B.C. 759

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### The Karens under the Feudal Masters

The Karens are agriculturists and like peace and quietness. They dislike rowdiness and so the majority would rather stay away from big cities with their activities and noises. For over two hundred years they enjoyed a free life under the leadership of their own patriach of the village, here in this land they has seen built up from mere islands in the sea, into an alluvial-filled land of mountains, and rivers. But when the Mons and the Burmese came in, there started frictions and disagreements in temperament of different cultures. Thus the Karens moved away leaving their settled lands to these new comers. This went on time after time and the Karens avoided strifes by moving away.

During the time of the Mon and the Burmese monarchical rule, the Karens were ill-used to work in the building of pagodas, and digging channels for irrigational water courses. They had been told when young about how their forefathers were carriers earth and stones in baskets which the Burmese kings had them special-made. The woven strings attached to the baskets had harness of wood or bamboo, which harness could be hooked on to the shoulders to relieve the strain on the head. The special harnesses were sickles, and the baskets must be loaded till the straps became so taut they twanged like the strings of a violin. Any one incapable of fulfilling the alloted was beaten to death. In certain cases the women met un-sightly deaths and the children were put into wooden and pounded to death or else, were thrown up with a sword or a spear pointed to receive

them as they dropped back to earth. These are not fancies but facts handed down through the various generations. The Karens could not expect any mercy or understanding from those in powers (The book 'The Karens and their travails' by Thra T. Thanbya, had been banned from publication but might still be in an American Missionary Library).

The Karens had been made to feel so un-worthy being ill-treated, oppressed and massacred all through these centuries, that have developed an inferiority complex. The more enlightened ones have reservation about trusting of the Burmese who ever are in power. Perhaps the genes of the Karen babies in their mothers wombs had undergone so drastic a change that a Karen born of woman, naturally had an ingrained sense to be wary of a Burma. In spite of such terrible physical frustrations, the Karens are still holding on to some national characteristics a sense of honesty, a desire to entertain visitors, a willingness to take part in the communcal activities. In this modern world of permissiveness, the Karen family is a closely-Knitted unit. They still remain loyal to their people and their country.

### The Karens under the British Colonial Rule

After the Anglo-Burmese war of 1825, the British took the Arakan and Tenessarim states. In 1852 lower Burma fell into the hands of the British. In the third Anglo-Burmese war of 1886, the whole of Burma came under the control of the British. Christian missionaries followed the British rulers. Christianity preaches love, deliverance from bondage (of sin) and blessings to the poor and the oppressed. These attributes of Christianty closely correspond to the Karen traditional ideals. Naturally the Karens were easily converted to Christianity.

Under the British rule, the Karens were allowed to learn their language and the government recognised the students of the tenth standard sitting for a Karen



language in their school examination. Some Karens students could go for further study in foreign countries. During the British rule the life for the Karens was easier but they have not that complete advantages of a free Nation.

### **The Karen movements under the British Colonialism**

During those years to receive the freedom of national rights, the Karens tried to work within the parliamentary constitution. In 1881 the Karen elders, Thra T. Thanbya, Thra Myat San Po Kwe, U Loo Nee, Thra Saw Tay and U San Lone formed Karen National Association (K.N.A.). This association worked towards the Karens having national rights and took part in the general political elections to become members of parliament in which the Karens could present their case. This organization was concerned in national affairs and religion. In its efforts through the media of newspaper, the Karen youths managed to enter the university to go for further study in foreign land, the Karen language could be taught right up to the tenth standard, and the Karen new year and the Karen national flag were recognised by the then British government. Before the second world war, this association tried to bring about the statehood of the Karen nationals. But the efforts were without any result.

### **During the Japanese Occupation of Burma**

In 1942 the Japanese occupied Burma with the collaboration of the Burmese thirty comrades. The Karen army about 2000 strong went along with the British when the latter withdrew to India. At this crucial period the Burmese fanned into flame the dormant racial conflict between the Burmese and the Karens. The Burma independent army (B. I. A.) was created and on trumped up cards, went to Karen villages looted properties, raped the women folk and burnt down the dwellings on the pretext that Karens were spies for the British.

Thus went the report to the then Japanese authorities in command of Burma, the Karens then compel to take up whatever they had in hand and made a resistance for their survival. The first six months of the Japanese occupation saw the terrible persecution of the Karens some without the knowledge of the Japanese officers at the higher level. The Japanese realized the true state of affairs after the B. I. A. had played havoc in the Papun area, east of the Sittang (the area of Karen settlements where the British, the Burmese or the Japanese seldom visited) and the Delta region, in places like Bassein, Myaung-mya, Maubin and Henzada. These were days of atrocities wreaked on the whole Karen populace, the unfortunate families whose men had gone with the British government as well as the innocent people. The Karens had no source to turn to for help or for fair treatment. In Myaung-mya hundreds of Karens women and children were put into prison, and every day 50 (fifty) were taken out to be beheaded (It seemed to equal the days of the French Bastille terror of 1789, and now in the twentieth century, in an age of enlightenment, an age of scientific, technological advancement, people in authority are still behaving like wanton destructive un-reasonable children). The Japanese in command happened to learn the truth and the Karens had a breathing spell. It was and is no wonder that the Karens took and take up arms to protect house and home and the honour of their women folks.

From 1942 to 1945, the Karens were little better than slaves. The Japanese made them porters, workers in the construction of airfields, built the Burma - Siam railway, and to contribute towards the provisions of these workers, to supply rice, paddy and live-stock. Meanwhile many were imprisoned, beaten or killed. So there was no sense of any personal rights or of self-determination. Things were determined for the Karens.

Though their tribulations and persecutions, the Karens became more united in their aspirations for a Sovereign Independent Karen State with full self-determina-

tion, realizing that unless they have their own country, their fate would be eternal misery.

The Karen armed personnels who evacuated to India along with the British troops were organised as paratroopers and were assigned to drop and contact their Karen people in Burma to fight against the Japanese. Thus contact was established between the Karens in Burma and the British troops with the result that the Karens in the Delta area and east of Sittang, rose up against the Japanese till the war was over.

The rising up of the Karens against the Japanese and the Burmese people instigated the spirit of patriotism, flooding racial consciousness to all the Karens like a mighty wave which nothing can stop.

### **The Karen National Movements**

1945 - 1948

After world war two, the Karen National Union (K.N.U.) descendant of K.N.A, which was formed in the year 1947, Feb, 5 gathered strength. To realize their desire to have again a country of their own, an opportunity presented itself through The Atlantic Charter "Which stated that ' All people should be free to choose the kind of government they want ', encouraged the Karens in their struggle to have freedom of self-determination. Some of the members of the British Conservative Party, who realized the true state of affairs in the Burmese politics, sympathised with the Karens. The frustrating factors that bar the efforts of the Karens to have a free sovereign state are as follows.

Record of efforts for the Karens to have an Independent State.

Please see the attached statement entitled;

' CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE KARENS EFFORT FOR A SEPERATE STATE '

### **The Suppression of the Karen Mass by the Burmese government**

The Ne Win regime maltreated, suppressed and killed the Karen mass with it's ' Four Cuts '. From the Karen resistance date January 31st 1949 to the present days in 1977, the Burmese chauvinistic leaders in power allowed their soldiers to harass the Karens in their villages, and even into the remote fastness of the mountains, to pillage and to abuse the women folks. What could not be taken away were destroyed or burnt and often times timid villagers were killed for not co-operating due to fear or language barrier. When they came into the Karen territories, the Karen Liberation Army offered stubborn resistance ( as in the case of the Wan-Kah ) battle in which the Burma Army suffered such a loss of lives and limbs that the government of Burma changed it's tactics into what is known as. ' The Four Cuts '

(1) To cut lines of supplying provisions.

(2) To cut the line of contact between the Karen mass and the revolutionists.

(3) To cut financial sources.

(4) To cut the heads off any revolutionaries (This is a literal cutting off of heads)

#### **(1) Cut number One**

##### **To cut the lines of Supplying provisions**

The place where the Burmese army go, they try to make an assessment of the number of people, the homes all household properties) paddy fields and hill tract cultivation with their yields, in the plains or in the hills wherever their party members or the soldiers manage to have a toe-hold.

-At an army post, the people of the surrounding area (near or far) must bring all the provisions in one particular place (at the post) and the people have rations issued to them for three or five days or a week.



-In the hills and the foot hills, the village provisions are taken to one particular spot and what cannot be taken away are destroyed.

-In places which are occupied, the people are penned in like animals. They cannot leave without permission. If these do not return at the agreed time, the punishment is death.

-People who do not come into the area appointed by the army, are found outside they are killed straight away. In 1975, during the period of 'The Four Cuts' the people of the village called 'Kaing-Chaung' in Pegu Yoma province, including women and children numbering 37 (thirty seven) were killed. The men responsible for the death of these people belong to the Burma army, special force 101. This is again another brand to set fire to the racial conflict.

-The provisions which have been hidden in the jungles were searched for and when found are taken away or destroyed. At the time of writing, the growing plants in the paddy fields are destroyed, even to the extent of plucking each new plant or crushing each individual plant with their army boots.

-Articles such as, salt, fish-paste, medicine and tea-leaves are not allowed to these people.

-Will such harassing tactics bring about the desired result or they boomerang?

## (2) Cut number Two

### **To cut the lines of contact between the Karen mass and the Kawthoolei Army.**

In places where the Union soldiers can have a hold, the villagers are not allowed to go out gather such food as vegetables, fish or games at the surrounding area. If those, who prefer to live freely and do not comply to being herded, are found out they are quickly dispatched to Red Indian's 'happy hunting ground.

The families of the Kawthoolei Army

are given heavy tasks to perform or made to go away join their husbands or away from government held areas.

Those who go to stay in the allotted area are not free to find food as the hill and plain Karens are used for searching for their daily vegetables, fish and meat. Then in times of active duties, the army ask the men to carry provisions and ammunitions, each given at least 30 viss in weight. While during their operation, the soldiers find that the porters are too weak or fall sick, the soldiers killed them, kicking and beating these stubborn Karens to their hearts content. If enroute, the Burma soldiers find some villagers in possession of some tablets of asperin or a few ampules of pen-i-cil- lin or quinine, these villagers are accused of storing these for the Kawthoolei ( Karen ) soldiers, and for aiding and abetting the enemies of the Burma government these unlucky Karens are killed off. If more than a tin of rice is found in the home of a Karen, he is accused of feeding the rebels. If women are found in the jungle, they fare a worse fate than their men folks. Their bodies are defiled before they are killed. If villagers think they can hide in the wooded mountains, there if they are found, they are surrounded and shot dead-- old, young, men, women, children. Whatever the dead left, these living henchmen of the the Ne Win government,, help themselves with such little silver, gold, clothes and what not!

The people at the head of such an army must aid and abet them for so long since the present ruling clique came into power. It seems as though the present Brumese government is a well-organised, well - polished gentlemenly cut-throats (slightly better than the rebels), since the men in power are behind a recognised government. Since the Ne Win government came into power, the Christians in Burma (especially the Karens) are loosing the privilege of human rights. The printing of hymnals and bibles are not allowed any more. The village Christians in Burma, especially those in the rural areas have to treasure the old torn Bibles and hymnals for their services whather in church or at home.

The socialist Ne Win government appears to go to the extent of persecuting not only the Karens, but even the Christians (they might even be recruiting the Buddhist Karens) to fight the Kawthoolei Karens who are all of mixed religions, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, and animists. We had an inkling of this at the Wan-ka fight. The Burmese soldiers were talking Pwo Karens and hurling abuses at the Kawthoolei (Karen) soldiers.

**(3) The third Cut - Cut number Four**

If there is no contact between the Karen mass and the Karens revolutionaries, there will be less income in taxes and other source of income towards the Karen cause. Then they block the routes, cut the line of communication with their troops, thus implementing their 'Cut number four'

**(4) Cut number Four**

**Beheading the Revolutionists**

Those influential leaders of the Karen revolution had their names listed in

the 'Black Book' of the present government of Burma. Their heads were cut off and taken away for exhibition so as to strike terror into the hearts of the on-lookers. Such acts are intended to stop any contact between the masses and those fighting for human rights and human dignity.

These are the aids adopted by the Ne Win government to bring the plan of the 'Four Cuts' into fruition.

- (a) The Burmese way to Socialism Programme Party (B.S.P.P.) unit.
- (b) The National Intelligence Service
- (c) Interception messages sent through the air and reconnaissance plane.
- (d) Military Intelligent Service.
- (e) Fifth columnists among the revolutionaries.
- (f) Information from war prisoners.

These are the methods adopted by the Burmese chauvinistic Ne Win, San Yu-military regime to suppress, intimidate and exterminate the Karens.

## CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE KARENS EFFORT FOR A SEPARATE STATE

**1. First State:-** Demand by the Karens for a separate state from the British Govt.

(1) 1927-Sir San C Po published a book 'Burma and the Karens' in which he argued about the grant of Tenessarim Division as a separate Karen State.

(2) 1928 -Sir San C Po carried his argument a step further and asked the British government to consider the question.

(3) 1928-No development occurred in relation to Sir San C Po's suggestion.

(4) 1943-A memorandum sent to the British Government by about 2000 Karen fighting men serving with the allied forces in India, requested the British Government to give attention matters relation to the demand of a separate state.

**2. Second State:-** Political struggle by the Karens for their national liberation, through a peaceful means, within the Parliament. (1945-49)

(1) 29th. June 1945 to 5th. July 1945-Karen mass organization.

(a) Formation of the Karen political organization called K.C.O. (The Karen Central Organization)

(b) Demand for Tenessarim Division to be considered as a separate Karen State.

(c) Decided to send the delegates to United Kingdom.

(2) The Karens on the east bank of the Sittang River were demanding the Tenessarim Division to be considered as a Karen State.



3. 3-2-46. Karen National Congress was held in Rangoon. Former resolution changed. Tenessarim Division and Irrawaddy Division were demanded to be considered as a separate Karen State.

4. The Karen Goodwill Mission was sent to United Kingdom from Aug. 1946 to Dec. 1946, to explain and outline the Karen affairs to the British Govt. and the British people. On 11th. Nov. 1946, the Mission put up a leaflet case for the Karens which contained an appeal to H.M.G. and the British people to give assurance to the Karens that they would be granted a state including seaport.

5. 2-1-47 Aung San- Atlee agreement.

Nothing contained about the affairs of the Karens.

6. 4-2-47. Karen National Congress was held in Rangoon (All the Karen political parties attended)

(1) 5-2-47. K.N.U. the Karen National Union was formed as a National Front, for the precise undertaking of the Karen National affairs.

(2) Resolution was passed for the demand to include the affairs of the Karen separate state and its rights in Aung San-Atlee agreement and materialise its contents. If there were no response, it was further decided that :-

(a) Saw Ba U Gyi was to resign from his office as Cabinet Minister.

(b) To Boycott the country's constitutional election.

7. 17-2-47. K.N.U. leaders out their case before Mr. Bottomly.

8. 20-2-47. The Karen urged the Burmese govt. to accept in principle, the idea of Karen State.

9. 28-2-47. Karen leaders met the Council of Ministers led by Aung San. The Karens were told that the issue of the Karen State was a thorny problem which could probably thrashed only by the country's Assembly.

10. 4-3-47. Saw Ba U Gyi resigned from his officer. Due to the calumination of A.I.F.P.F.L, Saw San Po Thin and his colleagues

put up their resignation from K.N.U.

11. 7-3-47. The Karen received a letter from the Secretary of State for Burma in which he appeal to them to join the election and to work for the state through the constitution.

12. 10-3-47. Due to the calumination of A.F.P.F.L, the K.Y.O. (Karen Youth Organization) was recognised and San Po Thin accepted a minister post.

13. March 1947. Rees William Commission-- K.N.U. demanded for Tenessarim Division the Irrawaddy Division as Karen State. U Tin Rtut (The Secretary of state) threatened that K.N.U. should be punished.

14. 6-4-47. The Karen National Union (K.N.U.) was re-organised.

15. 16-7-47. The Karen National Defence Organisation (K.M.D.O.) was organised.

16. 19-7-47. Assassination of Aung San and six other Cabinet minister. AFPFL Social Democrats Apportunistes seized power and employed facism.

17. 29-8-47. Letya-Freeman agreement.

18. Sept. 1947. Listowell met the Karen leaders. K.N.U. demanded for the demarcation of the Karen State. On the other hand K.Y.O., undoubtedly steared by AFPFL behind, announced that it is not necessary to demarcate Karen State as demanded by the K.N.U. Listowell expressed his inability to act on behalf of the Karens as, in his opinion, they are not sufficiently united.

19. 10-10-47. Moulmein Congress. The following resolution is passed :-

(1) A demanded Karen State must be comprised of :-

- (a) Old Tenessarim Division,
  - (b) Irrawaddy Division,
  - (c) Insein and Nanthawaddy District,
- and,
- (d) Nyaunglebin Sub-Division of Pegu district.

(2) To boycott the constitutional election.

20. 17-10-47. Nu-Atlee's independent agreement allowing the British to maintain

a power in holding defence and economic affairs.

21. 10-11-47. Constitutional election.

A successful general strike was held by the Karens.

**Third State:-** Karen demands for a state from the Independent Burmese Govt.

22. 5-1-48. One day after Burmese Independent Day. Karen Independent Day was declared as a counter-declaration to the Independence of Burma.

23. 11-2-48. A country wide demonstration of more than four hundred and fifty thousand Karens all over Burma was held, demanding Karen State.

24. 3-3-48. The Karen National Union Congress was held. Demonstration for denouncing San Po Thin was also held. U Nu declared words of reprisal to the Karen National Movement, to create racial conflicts. (Actually fifty battalions of Burma Levies and U.M.P. had already been established, to crush the Karen National movement.)

25. March 1948. With the cunning intention to make the Union election impossible, U.Nu's AFFF.L. Govt. begun to create the Karen-Burmese racial conflicts through widely publicized newspapers and radios.

26. Sept. 1948. Burmese U.M.P. began to recaptured arms from the hands of the Karens. K.N.D.O. invaded Thaton, Moulmein Shwegyin and Kyaukkyi. These towns were returned to the Burmese govt. after compromise was reached.

27. Dec. 1948. The Karen U.M.P. in Tavoy and Mergui were disarmed and sent to Rangoon.

28. 23rd. to 25th. Dec 1948. Tavoy-Maubin crisis.

Burmese levies fully equipped with arms unexpectedly attacked the innocent Karen people, while observing a watchnight

istmas service in the church at Palau village, Mergui district. More than a hundred of men, women and children were killed. Similar incident of mass-massacre was also happened during this time at Maubin. Burmese armed personnel looted villages, raped Karen women killing villagers and burnt down houses. This inhumane atrocities were aggressively committed by the Burmese armed personnel with which the Burmese govt. was behind, designing the episodes.

29. Jan. 1949. The Karen arms were confiscated, Karen leaders were also captured

30. 20-1-49. Tha Nat Chaung crisis.

Merciless mass massacre committed again by the Burmese levies, These Burmese looted the village of Tha Nat Chaung, committing inhumane offence by raping Karen women, killing all the villagers that were unable to run away from the incident and burnt down houses.

31. Jan. 1949. Burma Navy officer Saw Jack and some Karen navy personnel, together with one (Sa Bay) ship, one M.L. boat and one U.B. boat went underground.

32. 30-1-49. Ahlone-Sanchaung crisis.

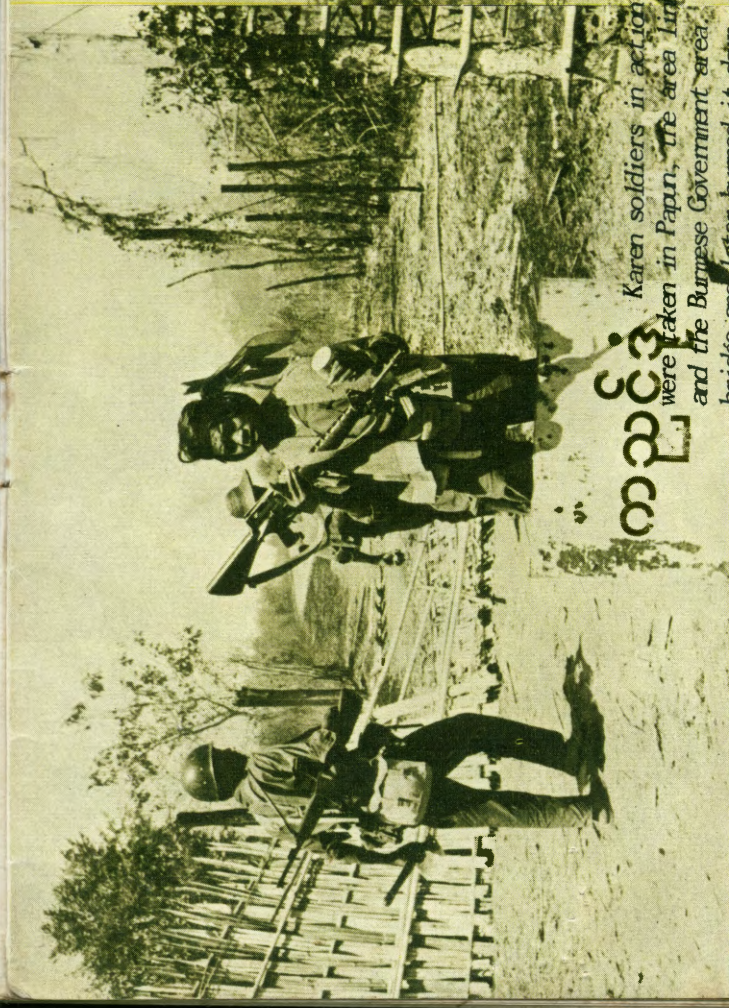
The final assault of the Burmese govt. towards the innocent Karen people living in Ahlone-Sanchaung, at Rangoon. The assailants were Burmese armed force personnel. Women were raped, children were shot dead, properties of the Karen people were looted and their house were burnt down leaving the whole Karen quarters a barren ground.

33. 31-1-49. The Karen Revolution broke out.

The assault continued to spread to the Karens living in Thamaing and Insein. Enemy forces began to attack a Karen quarters in Thamaing and Insein. As there was no alternative for the Karen people, the Karen revolution had to be inevitably broke out.

**(Published by Sam Art, Singapore)**



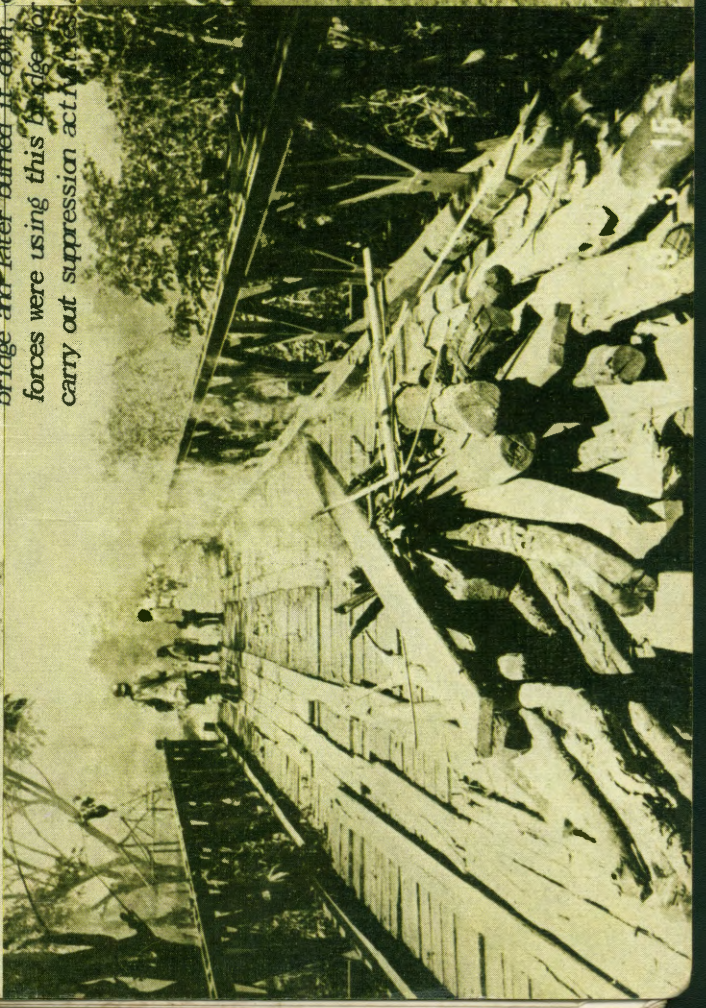


ကပူင်ဒီ

Karen soldiers in action were taken in Papan, the area lying up the Karen tribal area and the Burmese Government area. The Karen soldiers destroyed the bridge and later burned it down, claiming that the Government forces were using this bridge for the transportation of soldiers to carry out suppression activities against them.



The pictures shown here are taken in the Karen tribal area. The Karen soldiers destroyed the bridge and later burned it down, claiming that the Government forces were using this bridge for the transportation of soldiers to carry out suppression activities against them.







Karen soldiers patrolling along the route in Tan-Sing-khom opposite to Prachuap Khirikhan Province. This route was constructed when the Japanese military forces passed through this land to Burma during the Second World War. Behind the soldiers can be seen a road used by the British.