

# The destabilization of Burma: made in Washington and London

by Linda de Hoyos and Joseph Brewda

The sudden appearance of Rep. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) in Rangoon, Burma Sept. 5 signaled that the violence and anarchy that has seized that country over the last two months is another "people's revolution" synthesized in Washington. As chairman of the House Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Solarz has played an instrumental role in support operations for the "Project Democracy" destabilization of U.S. allies—the Philippines, South Korea, and Pakistan—on behalf of Moscow.

In Rangoon, Solarz met with current Prime Minister Maung Maung and leading opposition figure Aung Gyi—whose "open letter" of protest to 26-year-long dictator Ne Win prompted the protests that began in late July. Solarz emerged from Rangoon with the pronouncement that the ruling Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) should dissolve its own government, or face a "massive bloodbath and civil war." The point was underlined from Washington by Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan (D-N.Y.), who introduced a resolution into the Senate against "human rights" violations in Burma, and called for the overthrow of the BSPP government. Moynihan also demanded that the United States "reconsider" its \$260,000 in annual military aid to Burma.

## Opposition disarray

The government of Maung Maung, formed on Aug. 19 after successive waves of violent protests had brought down the governments of Ne Win and the iron-fisted Sein Lwin, is not expected to last out the month of September. The opposition has rejected a Sept. 12 decision to hold multiparty elections within three months, and is demanding the creation of an interim government "acceptable to the people." However, the opposition has as yet been unable to come up with a unified platform or leadership.

On Aug. 29, the former prime minister, U Nu, who was deposed by Ne Win in 1962, joined with 20 other elite Burmese figures to form the League for Democracy and Peace. On Sept. 9, U Nu issued a declaration naming himself the head of a "provisional government" and calling for free elections within the month. However, two top leaders of the

opposition—the elderly Aung Gyi and Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of Burma's independence fight leader—told the press that the U Nu declaration was "preposterous." Neither is included in the "provisional government."

Meanwhile, the "people's power" revolt has brought the country to an absolute standstill. Communications systems no longer function; lack of transport for food is now causing shortages along the border areas; newspapers, government functions, schools, and airports are all in a state of disarray.

## Vortex for destabilization

The immediate result of the crisis is that Burma has been transformed into a vortex of destabilization threatening the entire region. The hallmark of the BSPP government has been to seal off Burma from the rest of the world, in fear of anti-national operations originating with Burma's former colonial master, Britain, and embroilment in the turmoil surrounding the 1964-75 Vietnam War.

Now, this profile has been reversed. There is fear in Bangkok and Malaysia that the unrest in Burma—riots, bloodshed, civil war—could easily spill over into neighboring countries and destabilization spread like wildfire in the region. There have already been demonstrations in Bangkok, organized by operatives linked to the World Council of Churches and social democratic Greens, in alliance with the Burmese "people's revolution."

In addition, if massive numbers of refugees leave Burma should full-scale civil war break out, then Thailand will be inundated from both sides—the other being Cambodia—with destitute and politically charged refugees. A third danger is the likelihood that chaos in Burma will heighten tensions among the ethnic groups that straddle the borders of Burma—India, Thailand, and Malaysia—causing an eruption of separatist violence.

## The economic program

The program for any new government coming to power in Rangoon has already been set by World Bank and other supranational agencies. The bankers' war cry against Ran-

goon is that it has shut the country off from investors, and thus prevented the commercialization of Burma's lucrative trade in teak, opium, and jade.

An adviser to the Committee to Restore Democracy in Burma is one David Steinberg, formerly Rangoon station chief for the Asia Foundation, former director of the U.S. Agency for International Development program for Burma, and now a consultant to the World Bank. Liberalization of the economy, Steinberg states, will proceed at all costs.

This was concretely spelled out in a guest article for the *Far Eastern Economic Review* by Tyn Myint-U, senior official on Asian economic affairs with the United Nations. Myint-U is the son-in-law of the late U.N. Secretary General U Thant.

Myint-U called for:

- "Liberalization and opening up of all non-strategic sectors of the economy to the private sector."
- "Restoration of confidence in the country's currency. . . . The introduction of free markets for domestically produced goods and with few exceptions, for imported goods . . . to help eliminate the black market."
- "Opening up of the economy to private foreign investment."
- An agreement based on federalism with the insurgents in the north.

In his article, U Myint-U also called for the BSPP government to step down, to be replaced by an "interim government."

With the imprimatur of the World Bank's David Steinberg and the United Nations, it can be assumed that the economic program of any "interim government" will therefore be acceptable, at least, to the international banks.

### Spontaneous generation?

The Western press has heralded the "spontaneous" revolution in Burma, although even the press has been forced to admit that protesters are taking their orders from messages sent out over the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news and the Voice of America. The associations of the leading opposition figures indicates their far-flung and significant international support:

**U Tin Aung Hein.** Chairman of the Council of People's Justice, Hein is the senior jurist of Burma. During mid-August, Hein formed an 11-man commission to plan economic reform, and proclaimed that his decision would not be dictated by the army. Hein, who was educated in the United States, is a favorite Project Democracy candidate for civilian leader in Burma.

**Aung San Su Gyi.** Daughter of revered Burmese World War II independence leader Aung San, Gyi is also touted as a potential civilian leader. In August, she was dispatched back to Burma from Oxford, England, where she lives with her husband, Michael Aris, an expert in "Himalayan studies" at Oxford University. According to the Aug. 28 *Daily Mail*,

"Aung San Suu Kyi . . . came to Britain in the 1960s after the British ambassador to Burma in 1953 befriended her widowed mother and offered them a home," although it is widely believed that the British had killed her father. "In his autobiography, Lord Gore Booth wrote, 'It remains our hope that Suu Kyi and her brother, both exceptional young people, will in time be able to do some service for their country.' "

**Ye Kway Thu.** General secretary of the Committee for the Restoration of Democracy in Burma, Thu has resided in McLean, Virginia, for the last 14 years, but in the last month has moved his base of operations to Bangkok. Thu has worked for years, according to his own testimony, with the insurgents in the north of Burma to persuade them to accept autonomy, rather than demanding totally independent states. Thu is a fellow of Robert White's International Center for Development Policy. Other "fellows" of CIDP include Project Democracy operative Kim Dae-Jung of South Korea and Philippines Foreign Minister Raul Manglapus. Thu believes that he and his fellow exile-students will ultimately form the new Burmese government.

**Aung Gyi.** A former general who had helped lead the 1962 coup which placed Ne Win in power, Gyi later became a dissident, and has been in and out of jail ever since. Gyi helped spark the recent uprising, and is another candidate for power favored by both the U.S. State Department, and the People's Republic of China.

**U Nu.** A wartime Burmese independence leader associated with Aung San, and later government leader, the now aged U Nu is being put forward as a figurehead leader by Ye Kway Thu and the Indian government.

**Bertil Lintner.** Correspondent for the Hong Kong-based *Far East Economic Review*, published by Dow Jones. Lintner has traveled widely in the Golden Triangle area over the last year. Lintner popped up as a speaker at a Bangkok forum on Burma Aug. 19, where he demanded that the international community raise the issue of the Burmese government's violations of human rights with the United Nations. According to Bangkok's *The Nation*, Lintner and the other panelists declared that the other nations must enforce an economic boycott and suspension of foreign aid against Burma until the BSPP government has stepped down. According to Thai sources, Lintner has close ties to the People's Republic of China.

**Bo Mya.** Head of the National Democratic Front, the coalition of ethnic insurgencies in northern Burma, which have been at war with the central government in Rangoon for the last 40 years. These groupings, along with warlord Khun Sa's Shan state, are the opium producers of the Burmese section of the Golden Triangle. Bo Mya has come out backing the opposition in Rangoon and calling for an interim government, apparently around the figure of U Nu. The groups of the National Democratic Front are laced with intelligence agents, including Chinese and French. Bo Mya himself is known to be an asset of Robert White's ICDP.