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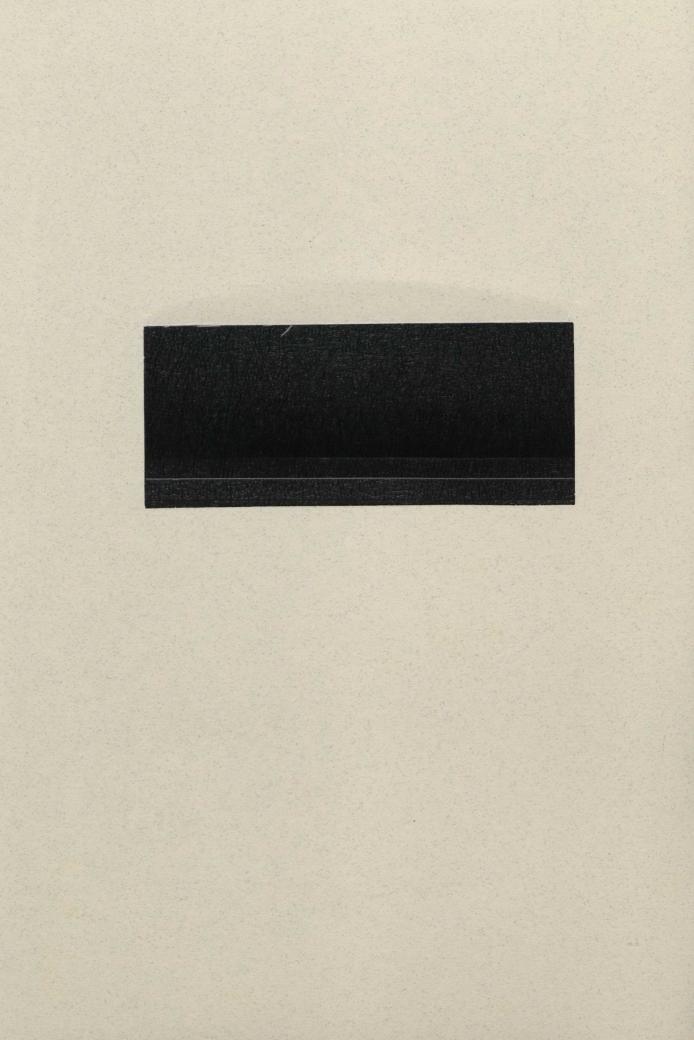
Centre canadien pour le développement de la politique étrangère

## BURMA: The South Africa of the 90's

Friends of Burma Carleton University



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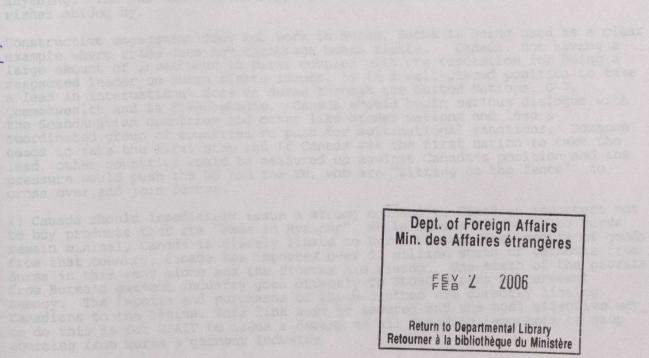


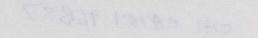
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Conference held on Nov 16, 1996 at Carleton University

A portion of the conference was allotted to discuss Canada's policy on Burma and to make recommendations. Some of the participants have worked on the Thai-Burma border, travelled within Burma and followed Burma issues extensively. The following items reflect what top recommendations were made:

1) Canada has to become more outspoken on Burma and put action to our words of condemnation. Though the reference to Burma is appearing more frequently in public speeches by the Minister, words will not help Burma gain democracy. Canada has a responsibility to follow the mandate of the elected democratic party within Burma. The National League for Democracy, led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has been repeatedly calling for an immediate and complete withdrawal of companies from Burma as foreign investment is merely entrenching the SLORC and providing them with a false sense of legitimacy. This call cannot be effectively answered unless the international community imposes trade sanctions on Burma. The hard currency gained from foreign investment is buoying the SLORC and allowing it to remain in power through force. The peoples of Burma are not benefitting from this trade but merely undergoing further oppression. This financial crutch needs to be removed immediately. The international community is being hypocritical if it repeatedly condemns The international community is being hypocritical if it repeatedly condemns the SLORC for its brutal form of rule and voices its support of Suu Kyi without respecting the wishes of her party, the NLD, and taking some form of concrete economic action. Words will not hurt the SLORC but the removal of hard currency will. SLORC will only react to harsh action and not merely by harsh words. It must be remembered that unlike other countries, a democratically-elected government exists in Burma and is ready to take over if SLORC can be removed. The existence of this elected body separates Burma from other countries where the international community feels helpless to do anything. The NLD needs to be supported in every way possible and their wishes abided by.

Constructive engagement does not work in Burma. Burma is being used as a clear example where trade does not encourage human rights. Canada, not having a large amount of investment in Burma coupled with its reputation for being a respected leader on human rights issues, is in a well-placed position to take a lead in international fora on Burma through the United Nations, G-7, Commonwealth and La Francophonie. Canada should begin serious dialogue with the Scandanavian countries and other like-minded nations and lead a coordinated group of countries to push for multinational sanctions. Someone needs to take the first step and if Canada was the first nation to take the lead, other countries would be measured up against Canada's position and the pressure would push the US and the EU, who are "sitting on the fence" to

2) Canada should immediately issue a strong command to Canadian importers not to buy products that are "Made in Myanmar". While Canada's exports to Burma remain minimal, Canada is closely linked to Burma through its imports of goods from that country. Canada has imported over \$7 million worth of garments from Burma in this year alone and the figures are rising. One-sixth of the profits from Burma's garment industry goes directly to SLORC's arms procurement agency. The imports and purchases of these clothes are directly linking Canadians to the regime. This link must be severed and the most effective way to do this is for DFAIT to issue a demand to all Canadian importers to stop Sourcing from Burma's garment industry.

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Through contacts, Canada should investigate with Daw Aung San Suu Syi what kind of financial assistance Canada could contribute and ways to give it. But Canada should not give financial assistance to the NGOs already existing in Burma as most are forced to work with SLORC-run organizations and are providing SLORC with a false sense of legitimacy while being allowed to provide only the most rudimentary form of humanitarian assistance to a minute portion of Burma's population. The health and education disaster that exists today is due to the political situation and the sooner the SLORC can be removed, the sooner the repairs to the basic foundations of life for the Burmese peoples can begin.

4) Canada should investigate into the idea of imposing a federal selective purchasing ordinance. The federal government should not issue contracts to companies that are in Burma.

5) SLORC should not be recognized in the United Nations but rather removed and have the elected members of the NLD who are living in exile replace them.

6) Strong attempts should be made to bring ASEAN on side. Suu Kyi has stressed that she does not want a dichotomy to exist between Western countries and ASEAN. Efforts should be made to find a common understanding with ASEAN on the issue of human rights being seen as a "western" concept.

7) Axworthy's proposal of a contact group has potential but it should not be the only Canadian contribution. It should be part of a series of steps that Canada will take to help bring democracy to Burma. 3) The ton-Hurma and India-Surve Student are section points of entry to give fibencial assistance to the descriptic appearent insule forma and along the borders. Canada should allocate - requirible sha of samey for Lumanitarian assistance to the 100 800 reducess on the Balevaire and a socie tumneled through MGGs for basen i of he border function and a samey for chike inside bines, the border areas give the international commanies an excellent opportunity to provide valuation is and and and a same is the people who, when the cas return to burne, would have the shousance in the eroger development of the country.

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