

Myanmar: a front-line state in George Soros's 'opium war'

by Michael and Gail Billington

During the late-July meetings of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad accused George Soros of mounting a speculative attack on the region's currencies, based on his "political agenda" of opposition to the induction of Myanmar into the regional association. To our knowledge, *EIR* is the only other agency that has zeroed in on Soros's political agenda when it comes to his attacks on Southeast Asia, and Myanmar, in particular. In the Oct. 25, 1996 *EIR*, we situated that agenda squarely in the context of Britain's historic use of "Opium War" geopolitics against Asia, aimed, principally, at containment of China, and preventing the coalescing of an alliance of nations stretching from the Indian subcontinent to China, and including the continental and archipelagic nations of Southeast Asia. Today, such an alliance for regional economic development is emerging in the effort being spearheaded by China, known as the Eurasian Land-Bridge. That October 1996 article also indicated the collusion between the Soros-funded operations against Myanmar and those run predominantly by the George Bush networks, through offspring of the National Endowment for Democracy in the United States.

As far as Asia is concerned, Soros serves in a long tradition of British Crown agents, although silly U.S. State Department spokesmen leapt to Soros's defense at the ASEAN meetings, contrary to the expressed views of the White House and its Office of Drug Policy. The Soros-funded Open Society Institute's "Burma Project," which aims to replace the current military government in Myanmar with a more malleable "democratic" regime, led by Nobel Peace Prize-winner Aung San Suu Kyi, head of the National League for Democracy, varies only in the technologies used, from British Foreign Office policy since 1947, when Lord Mountbatten deigned to concede independence to colonial Burma: to maintain the status quo in the opium fields of the Golden Triangle area of north and northeast Myanmar.

The British, then, as now, have two reasons for wanting control over this region, preferably covert rather than overt, due to the nature of the business at hand: first, control over the two southern routes of the Land-Bridge, linking the Indian subcontinent to China and Southeast Asia; and, second, con-

trol of the world's largest supply of high-grade opium and heroin, introduced by the British from their Indian plantations in the nineteenth century to finance the Empire and to bring China to heel, economically, politically, and culturally.

Today, Soros, the world's leading funder of the drive to legalize drugs, is also a partner with the British Commonwealth in attempting to undermine the military government, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), in Yangon, the capital of Myanmar, which over the past eight years has nearly succeeded in asserting centralized control over the integral territory of the nation, including the Golden Triangle, for the first time since the British colonized the area in the nineteenth century.

British policy since 1947

Newly declassified material on the 1947 murder of Burmese independence leader Gen. Aung San, father of Aung San Suu Kyi, underscores the British method for running the Golden Triangle through covert, rather than direct means. As reported by Fergal Keane in the July 19 London *Guardian*, the same British Lords who commissioned the murder of Prime Minister Aung San, also set up the British covert support apparatus among the ethnic hill tribes of the Golden Triangle, to set into motion civil war against the very government to which it was simultaneously granting independence.

As Aung San was concluding independence agreements with London in February 1947, an organization called Friends of the Burma Hill Peoples was created by Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the Conservative Party's wartime British governor of Burma, who ruled through his close friend, wartime Prime Minister U Saw. When Aung San was murdered five months later, U Saw, who had been promised the prime ministership in exchange for his part in the murder, became the expendable fall guy, and was hanged. A British officer, Capt. David Vivian, was charged and convicted of supplying the weapons for the assassination, but was soon "liberated" from jail by ethnic Karen secessionists, and joined forces with the hill tribe rebel armies. Sir Reginald's Friends of the Burma Hill Peoples and similar foreign-connected organizations have used several ethnic groups in the unmarked border areas to control Golden Triangle drug production until the 1990s,

when the SLORC either defeated or pacified 15 of the 16 ethnic insurgent armies that had been at war with the center in Yangon since shortly after independence. The one holdout remains the Christian Karen National Union, operating along Myanmar's eastern border with Thailand. The KNU camps serve as the forward command and training center of the armed insurgents and the "democratic" opposition, and enjoy the active support of the likes of Privy Councillor Lady Caroline Cox's Christian Solidarity International and George Bush's cousin, Elsie Walker.

Soros's 'get SLORC' project

The current manifestation of this historic British subversion of Myanmar is run, principally, through three interconnected networks: directly British or British Commonwealth (especially Canada); the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in the United States; and, keeping in mind Soros's impeccable British credentials, the Soros-funded Burma Project, which interfaces and facilitates activities of the other two. For our purposes here, we shall focus on Soros's Burma Project, and its incestuous relationship with the NED, which deserves special treatment in a future report.

"Open society" is Soros's agenda. As stated elsewhere in this report, Soros lifted it directly from his mentor Sir Karl Popper's passionate hatred of the sovereign nation-state. According to the Open Society Institute's Burma Project director, Maureen Aung-Thwin, Soros has funded pro-"democracy" efforts in Myanmar for almost ten years, largely through his Human Rights Watch-Asia. Aung-Thwin, who also sits on the board of HRW-Asia, was hired in late 1993 by Soros's Open Society Institute (OSI) as a consultant to map out an "open society" campaign for Myanmar. Aung-Thwin is the daughter of a minister in the cabinet of 1950s-era Prime Minister U Nu, who was ousted from power in 1962 by Gen. Ne Win.

She reports that in 1994, its first year of operation, the Burma Project awarded \$1.2 million in grants and scholarships. In 1996, that figure rose to \$1,843,153. Not included are recipients of the more than \$27 million in "Chair's Grants" and "Presidential Grants" given in 1996, the single largest component of the OSI's funding. Two beneficiaries of such grants, active in the anti-Myanmar campaign, are the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights, and Article 19, a London-based publisher and non-governmental organization (NGO). The Burma Project helped set up the Burma Donors Forum, which coordinates funders of programs targetting Myanmar worldwide. The Burma Donors Secretariat chooses those targets, stressing the ethnicity of Myanmar's 140-odd "races."

Activities directly funded by the Burma Project include:

- Democratic Voice of Burma, a Burmese-language radio station broadcasting from Norway into Myanmar;
- a bi-monthly magazine, *Burma Debate*, edited by Mary Pack, a board member of Refugees International;

- educational grants to place Burmese student activists in universities in Australia, Britain, Canada, India, the Philippines, Thailand, and the United States, where they have played a key role in setting up Burma Action Groups and Burma Information committees on campus, in support of economic boycott campaigns and lobby groups pressing for sanctions;

- an internship program for Burmese students in the United States, including tasking them to offices of members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate, private foundations, human rights and labor organizations, and NGOs;

- M.A. fellowship programs for Burmese students in U.S. and European universities, including, since 1991, a fellowship at Soros's pet project, the Central European University, in Budapest, Hungary.

Central to the Burma Project's operations is its internet home page, recently revamped, which functions as a central clearinghouse of information on who's doing what, where in the world, as part of the "get SLORC" global campaign. This is a very closely knit network, scratching each others' backs, reporting each others' lies, and serving as the main "informed source" of information for the media "of record" in the Western world. The Burma Project's New York headquarters is proud of its documentation resource center, set up to exploit every medium available.

A particular saw-horse of the global "Burma" offensive has been to accuse the SLORC of complicity in drug-trafficking. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright was apoplectic on this subject at the ASEAN meetings, but the best case that Burma Project Director Aung-Thwin can muster is, "Though the SLORC's direct participation in the drug trade is difficult to prove, there is credible evidence that the generals and their associates profit from it, according to a recent U.S. government report." One such report grudgingly acknowledged that the principal opium-growing areas remain *outside* Yangon's control. Curiously, neither the NCGUB "government in exile," nor Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD have *any* policy on drugs, nor any policy to speak of, except a fuzzy commitment to "multiethnic democracy."

On the "activist" front, Soros's Open Society Institute funds the Free Burma Coalition, which serves as a resource center for "how to" organizing by campus and community groups in support of the boycott and sanctions lobbying campaigns, provides media contact lists, and a speakers' list, including Burmese expatriates, many of them disgruntled ethnic royalty and offspring of former government officials, exiled students dependent on the Burma Project, and academics-journalists, many of whom are "old Burma hands," who have been actively involved in profiling the country, especially the hill tribes, for decades.

The economic and financial warfare components of the Burma Project's operations, through support for economic

sanctions and boycotting firms doing business in Myanmar, particularly energy-related infrastructure projects and railroads, are further evidence of the Open Society Institute's hostility to state-sponsored economic development, very much in line with the policy enunciated by Britain's Sir Leon Brittan at an April 1996 conference in Beijing on the Land-Bridge project. "Private enterprise" shall dictate investment priorities, intoned Sir Leon. Judging by Soros's snapping up key privatized state-sector firms, especially those involved in mining strategic raw materials in Russia and Ibero-America, surely George has ulterior motives in his targeting of mineral-rich Myanmar. For these and similar reasons, Soros has been *persona non grata* in China since 1989.

The "soros.org" home page is a window onto the incestuous working relationship between Soros's Burma Project and the Washington, D.C.-based nexus of the National Endowment for Democracy, and the latter's "sister" foundations in Canada, Holland, France, and Great Britain.

Agents of empire and dumb 'Yanks'

The National Endowment for Democracy was set up by act of the U.S. Congress in 1983, explicitly as a private entity receiving government funds, "to strengthen democratic institutions around the world through non-governmental efforts." Its chairman, former U.S. Senator John Brademas, states in his introduction to the 1996 annual report, that the NED "does not operate under the constraints of federal institutions that must (and should) serve U.S. diplomatic interests." NED funding is deployed through four surrogate "quasi autonomous non-governmental organizations," or "quangos," the "free market" Center for International Enterprise, the Free Trade Union Institute for Labor, and two organizations linked to U.S. political parties, the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs.

Since approximately 1994, the NED has shared its grant database with four international foundations: the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development (Ichrdd), in Montreal, Canada; the Fondation Jean Jaurés in Paris; the Alfred Mozer Foundation in the Netherlands; and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, in London. The Canadian, French, and Dutch organizations are all offspring of the international Social Democracy, while the Westminster Foundation was launched by Margaret Thatcher's Conservatives, much as the NED was the brainchild of the George Bush networks in the Reagan administration.

For Myanmar, the NED and the Montreal-based Ichrdd are the most important. Between 1992 and 1996, for example, the two organizations gave over a half-million dollars to the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB), the "government in exile" run by Aung San Suu Kyi's cousin, Sein Win, and the NCGUB's primary

Canadian support organization, Associates to Develop Democratic Burma (ADDB), approximately splitting the burden between the American and the Commonwealth providers. In 1996, the NED pumped \$1.3 million into a dozen organizations that dovetail precisely with Soros's Burma Project funding. It is safe to say that the Norway-based Democratic Voice of Burma is a shared asset of the NED and Soros, for instance.

But the Ichrdd is no ordinary institution. It is a Crown Corporation, created by an Act of the Canadian Privy Council, and voted up by Parliament in 1988. And, while its pattern of "Burma" funding is a Canadian version of Soros's funding, the emphasis is more radically in support of ethnicity and indigenous movements, not unlike Sir Dorman-Smith's Friends of the Burma Hill Tribes. Ichrdd is a major supporter of the Zapatista terrorists in Chiapas, Mexico, as well as funder of Lord Avebury's TAPOL organization, targeting Indonesia over East Timor.

It is Ichrdd that has direct links to the London-based Burma Action Group (BAG), headed jointly by Lady Gore-Booth and Evelyn Aris. Lady Gore-Booth is the widow of the late Lord Paul Gore-Booth, former head of the British Diplomatic Service and longtime British ambassador to India. Lady and Lord Gore-Booth befriended Aung San Suu Kyi's mother when she was Burma's ambassador to India in the 1950s, and sponsored Aung San Suu Kyi during her years at Oxford. The Gore-Booth's sons are prominent British Foreign Service officers in their own right: Hugh is currently High Commissioner to India, and David was deputy foreign secretary during Bush's bloody war on Iraq. BAG's co-chairperson, Evelyn Aris, is mother of Suu Kyi's husband, Michael Aris, an Oxford Don whose areas of expertise include Nepal and Bhutan, and whose mentor was Britain's longtime senior diplomat in Tibet, Sir Hugh Richardson.

The "BAG ladies," their links to the Crown Corporation Ichrdd, and the NED's "Bush-whackers" in the International Republican Institute bring us back to the historical line of disgruntled "Burma hands," who were quite put out at the uppityness of Gen. Aung San and his Group of 30 Comrades.

In February of this year, Soros unleashed his first round of speculative attacks on the highly vulnerable Thai economy and its currency, the baht, the same week that the Thai government closed the border to armed Karen insurgents, making it possible to quell the last of the British insurgencies, the Karen National Union. In June, Soros's Quantum Fund mounted a \$5 billion offensive to break the Thai economy, on the eve of Prime Minister Chavalit Yongchaiyudh's historic state visit to Yangon and days before ASEAN's foreign ministers were to announce their decision on Myanmar's entry into the association.

The legacy of Capt. David Vivian lives on in the global "Free Burma" movement, but the technology of warfare has changed.