

Aung Gyi: Burmese reject govt plan

Rangoon (AP) — Burma's leading dissident, Aung Gyi, told a visiting US congressman yesterday that the entire country wants immediate democracy and has rejected the government's plan for gradual change.

Congressman Stephen J. Solarz met separately yesterday with Aung Gyi and two other protest leaders, former Defence Minister Tin Oo and Aung San Suu Kyi, daughter of late Burmese independence leader

Aung San. Solarz also had lunch at the Parliament building with President Maung Maung. There were no major rallies in the capital yesterday but protest leaders have called for daily demonstrations this week

leading up to a scheduled nationwide general strike and massive marches on Thursday.

Solarz, a New York Democrat, chairs the Asian and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. He has been an outspoken critic of repressive governments in Asia, and said on Saturday he was visiting Rangoon to see what the United States could do to encourage democracy.

Solarz asked Aung Gyi his reaction to Maung Maung's plan for the Burma Socialist Programme Party to meet on September 12 to consider a popular vote on whether to continue with 26 years of one-party rule.

"The whole country is against it," said Aung Gyi, who was recently released from a month of detention for speaking out against the party's harsh repression of dissent and its ruinous economic policies.

"Government employees are on strike, the administration has practically broken down, the situation has deteriorated very fast and is now beyond control," Aung Gyi said.

"The whole country demanded immediate formation of an interim government to ease the situation. The government has to face the reality," he said.

Aung Gyi told Solarz he believes long-time strongman Ne Win, who officially resigned in July, still wields "100 per cent" power.

Aung Gyi told Solarz the people had tolerated their government for many years, but recent months brought "a series of intolerable things."

He said these included the government's voiding of a large portion of the currency notes in circulation without compensation last September and rice shortages in a nation that once was the world's largest exporter.



Thais watch demonstrations taking place in Tachilek on the other side of the gate at the Mae Sai border checkpoint.



Burmese hold anti-government march in Tachilek to demand democracy.

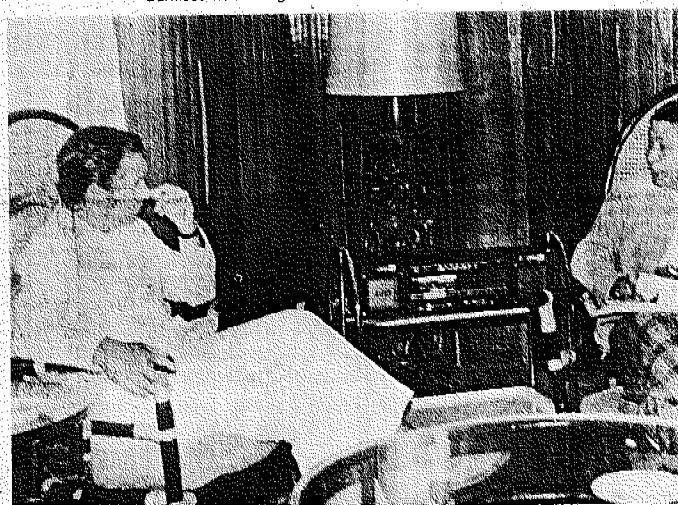
Oil refinery men sacked for striking

Rangoon (AFP) — The official *Vanguard* daily reported on Saturday that several high-ranking officials in the oil refining industry had been sacked for participating in a strike which has shut down all three of Burma's refineries since August 29.

Petroleum Industries Corp Transport Director Myat Kyaw, Myanmar Refinery Manager Myint Aung, Chief Engineer Win Maung and other refinery employees have all been fired, the *Vanguard* said.

Refinery workers went on strike on August 29 and said they would not go back to work until the country had achieved full democracy.

They said on Friday, however, that they were willing to return to work if the government would ensure that production reached consumers directly.



US Congressman Stephen Solarz talks with Aung Gyi, a leading opposition leader, during a meeting yesterday. — AP

Student union chief emerges protest leader

Rangoon (AFP) — Min Ko Naing has emerged as the first identifiable student leader after a year of protests which he says has brought the country's single-party system to the brink of collapse.

The 26-year old chairman of the Rangoon University Union told Agence France-Press he became an activist after being caught in a police crackdown on student demonstrations in March.

His election last Sunday to head the first student union since Ne Win banned such groups 26 years ago culminated a process begun when student protesters urged him to leave his zoology classes to fight against authoritarian rule in Burma.

Min Ko Naing, who said he was the son of a simple Buddhist and had been naive about politics until a few months ago, predicted that the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) regime led by Maung Maung would eventually fall.

"We are totally united to remove the opposition... those who say we are not must be government spies," he said.

"The people are behind us and other nations are sympathetic to our cause. Victory will be ours," he said, adding that students would not allow themselves to be manipulated by any political groups.

"We would like a government that has the interests of the people at heart... a genuine people's democracy," he said.

Min Ko Naing said students hoped to eventually form a nationwide union of university, high-school and middle school students.

He said headquarters had been opened at Rangoon General Hospital and they had received a tremendous response from students wanting to join the group.

Min Ko Naing said he was in a laboratory on March 15 when students from the Rangoon Institute of Technology arrived, shouting: "Your brothers are being killed. Are you just going to stand by and watch?"

He said he went out and began timely distributing pamphlets. He and four friends then organized a group of students inside the campus and, despite warnings from teachers to stay, left the university.

They marched along Prime Road until they were stopped by a barbed wire barricade and soldiers near the US ambassador's residence, he said.

The captain in charge told them not to go forward. They obeyed. But riot police who came on the scene started beating them without warning, he said.

Min Ko Naing said he tried to escape by climbing an embankment but was struck several times on the back by police. He was kicked into a ditch where a female student fell on top of him, unconscious.

He said he carried the woman to a nearby residence where he left her. He then made his way to Insein Road, which runs parallel to Prime road, where he found students destroying state-owned buses.

He said he spontaneously climbed on top of a bus and began to preach about student resistance against the government, removing for the first time the handkerchief he had been wearing over his face to disguise his identity.

Min Ko Naing said a riot policeman emptied his revolver in his direction while he was speaking. He was chased into a small lane where a family hid him until he escaped.

At that time he made a pledge to fight to the end, the student leader said.

Signs of sinking morale in Burmese military,

ONLY small anti-government demonstrations were held in Rangoon yesterday, but diplomats said there were signs of sinking morale in the military as the protests continue and supplies of rice for soldiers dwindled.

"Military morale has been falling as every day the government shows itself unable to respond to the challenge," said one Western diplomat contacted by telephone from

Bangkok.

Analysts said the military was particularly concerned about the government's ability to collect rice from the Irrawaddy river delta area where harvesting is set to begin shortly.

Like many areas of Burma the rice-rich delta area is out of government control, with most towns run by committees made up of monks, students and civil servants sympathetic to the anti-government protesters.

The army itself is believed running short of rations due to months of unrest, a rail strike and long-standing low government rice procurement prices.

"At the front line there are reports of soldiers with only a thin rice gruel to eat," one analyst said.

The diplomat said military commanders met on Friday to discuss the situation.

He denied, however, a report that

10 battalions of army troops and air force unit at Hmawbi, 40 north of Rangoon, had gone over the demonstrators.

"We have reports that some military people have joined the demonstrators in that area, but it does appear correct to say that whole units and their commanders have done so," he said.

An analyst in Bangkok said an army unit at Hmawbi is the batt