

KILLING THE SHAN

The Continuing Campaign of Forced Relocation in Shan State

An Independent Report by the Karen Human Rights Group
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*This report aims to provide a picture of the current situation in central Shan State, where the military junta ruling Burma has forcibly uprooted and destroyed over 1,400 villages and displaced over 300,000 people since 1996. This campaign against civilians is still continuing, and the number of villages destroyed is increasing each month. In this report, some of the villagers who have fled in 1997 and 1998 describe their experiences. Further background and detail on the campaign to uproot the Shan can be found in the previous Karen Human Rights Group report “**Forced Relocation in Central Shan State**” (KHRG #96-23, 25/6/96), and in the April 1998 report “**Dispossessed: Forced Relocation and Extrajudicial Killings in Shan State**” by the Shan Human Rights Foundation.*

This report consists of two main parts: first a summary description of recent developments in the forced relocation campaign illustrated by quotes from interviews with villagers, and secondly the full text of interviews with villagers conducted by the Karen Human Rights Group in 1997 and 1998. The names of all of those interviewed have been changed and other details omitted where necessary to protect people. False names are indicated in quotation marks, while all other names are real. Please note that there are many ways to transliterate Shan village names and people's names into English, so spellings here may vary from those in other reports on the subject. For example, Murng (which can also be spelt Mong, Mung, Merng); Nong (Nawng); Pang Long (Parng Lawng); Nam Zang (Nam Sang, Nam Sarng); Lang Kher (Larngkher, Lang Ker); Kay See (Ke See, Keh Si); and many other names. In most cases we have tried to keep our spellings close to those used by the Shan Human Rights Foundation as well as those used by KHRG in our previous reports. KHRG would like to thank the Shan Human Rights Foundation for providing information which has been very useful in the production of this report.

Abbreviations

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| SPDC | State Peace & Development Council, military junta ruling Burma |
| SLORC | State Law & Order Restoration Council, former name of the SPDC until Nov. 1997 |
| SURA | Shan United Revolutionary Army, formed by former MTA commander Yord Serk after the MTA surrender; main group which is fighting SLORC/SPDC. In September 1997 allied itself with SSA and SSNA to form 'new' SSA. |
| SSA | Shan State Army, which had a ceasefire with SLORC/SPDC. In September 1997 allied itself with SURA and SSNA to form 'new' SSA. |
| SSNA | Shan State Nationalities Army, which has a ceasefire with SLORC/SPDC. In September 1997 allied itself with SURA and SSA to form 'new' SSA. |
| MTA | Mong Tai Army, commanded by Khun Sa, surrendered to SLORC in 1996. |
| IB | Infantry Battalion (SLORC/SPDC), usually about 500 soldiers fighting strength |
| LIB | Light Infantry Battalion (SLORC/SPDC), usually about 500 soldiers fighting strength |
| LID | Light Infantry Division (SLORC/SPDC); one Division consists of 10 LIB battalions |
| Kyat | Burmese currency; US\$1=6 Kyat at official rate, 200+ Kyat at current market rate |
| Baht | Thai currency; US\$1= approximately 36 Baht at time of printing |

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Relocations in Central Shan State

“Not a single village is left unmoved east of the Nam Teng except Wan Sang. The soldiers are shooting at innocent people, killing livestock for food and taking whatever they want. All villages in the area from Wan Sang up to Murng Nong and Kay See have had to move. From July 7th to 10th [1997] all had to move to the town, including Wan Sang, except Parng Pone relocation site where SLORC troops have their base. Some have already been moved 3 or 4 times. From Nong Kaw to Tard Mok, from Tard Mok to Zai Lai [Kun], from Zai Lai to Wan Sang and finally from Wan Sang to the town [Lai Kha]. ... All of that includes no less than 40 or 50 villages. ... Many don’t have enough to eat. Some have to beg along the road, and people are crying all the time. Some people take refuge in the monasteries, some are staying at their relatives’ houses, and some have built tents out of plastic sheets under trees. Many people are begging around for food. ... [The SPDC soldiers] don’t give anything. Furthermore they even take all the cattle and the belongings left in the old villages. They take rice for themselves, they kill the cattle and make dried meat, and then their wives and children sell the meat to the villagers.” - “Phra Zing Ta” (M, 29), a Shan Buddhist monk describing the situation in the Lai Kha region (Interview #5)

In November 1997 the State Law & Order Restoration Council (SLORC) military junta ruling Burma changed its name to the State Peace & Development Council (SPDC). However, there was no change in the four key leaders of the junta, and judging by the testimonies of villagers throughout Burma and the continuation of all of the regime’s military operations, there has been no change in policy. In order to remain in power and “hold the country together”, the junta feels that it must control every inch of territory and the daily lives of every civilian in Burma. This is done through the Four Cuts policy, which aims to undermine both the nonviolent pro-democracy movement and the armed resistance groups. The policy involves identifying regions of potential armed or unarmed resistance, and systematically uprooting and impoverishing the civilian populations in these areas so that there is no way they can provide material support to any opposition groups. Direct attacks on the civilian population, characterised by mass forced relocations, destruction of villages and the village economy, and completely unsustainable levels of forced labour, have now become the central pillar of SPDC policy in non-Burman rural areas of Burma. In the past, the regime would strategically destroy 2 or 3 villages at a time when there was resistance. Now when they perceive a possibility of resistance, they delineate the entire geographic region and forcibly relocate and destroy every village there is, as many as hundreds of villages at a time. In many cases, these villages have had little or no contact with resistance forces and do not even understand why they are being targeted.

The most serious case of forced relocation and village destruction currently occurring is in central Shan State, where over 1,400 villages have been relocated and destroyed by SLORC and SPDC since 1996. This report provides an update and further interviews on this relocation campaign. It follows up on the Karen Human Rights Group report ***“Forced Relocation in Central Shan State”*** (KHRG #96-23, 25/6/96). For a comprehensive analysis, detailed maps and a township-by-township breakdown of the forced relocation campaign, the April 1998 report ***“Dispossessed: Forced Relocation and Extrajudicial Killings in Shan State”*** by the Shan Human Rights Foundation is highly recommended reading.

In the first 2 years of this campaign, over 1,400 villages have been ordered to relocate and destroyed, an estimated 300,000 people have been made homeless, and at least 80,000 of these have fled to Thailand - yet the armed resistance is far from being wiped out. This campaign

against civilians is supposed to undermine the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), a group which used to be part of Khun Sa's Mong Tai Army (MTA) until Khun Sa surrendered to SLORC in 1996. In September 1997 the SURA united with two other groups, the Shan State Army (SSA) and the Shan State Nationalities Army (SSNA), which had ceasefire deals with SLORC. The new combined force named itself the Shan State Army (SSA) and has been trying to negotiate with the SPDC, but the junta refuses to recognise them and vows that it will crush them militarily. The SLORC/SPDC campaign to undermine the SURA and the SSA by destroying civilian villages has been a complete failure, but the junta's response to this failure has simply been to keep expanding the region where its troops are ordered to relocate and destroy every village. This region already spans 7,000 square miles in the heart of Shan State, and it is still spreading like a cancer over the map as more and more villages are destroyed with each passing month of 1998.

"They came with guns and ordered us to move by pointing their guns at us. They came many times. The first time, they said if they found Shan soldiers in a radius of 10 miles they would kill us. We had to sign four times to say there were no Shan soldiers. Every tract had to give money, and we had to sign an agreement that if the SLORC found any Shan soldiers in the area, they would kill villagers. Then after we signed with those soldiers, other groups of soldiers came! ... We had to give money to every group [of SLORC soldiers], then even after we had given money to one group we had to move anyway." - "Loong On" (M, 58) from Nam Toom village, Murng Nai township (Interview #2)

"They gave the villagers only five days to move, and they said that after those five days they would burn the village. I myself went to talk to the soldiers and asked them not to make us move. I went directly to the commander. He said, 'You are all supposed to move for as long as the opposition group stays in your village.' The Shan soldiers never come to the village, but according to the commander they do. ... Five days after they ordered us to move they came to the village to see if anyone was left, but they saw that nobody was left there and then they burned down the village." - "Nang Sep" (F, 22) from Khok Sang village, Kay See township (Interview #12)

"We were ordered to move three months ago [in December 1997]. Within 17 days the village was supposed to move completely but before these 17 days were finished, after only 7 days they came and burned down the village. ... My grandfather was killed in the fire. My grandfather was around 89 years old so he couldn't carry himself. His name was Loong Tchai. My parents had already moved to Pang Long and the two of us were left in the village." - "Sai Ti" (M, 24) from Bang Nim village, Loi Lem township (Interview #11)

In mid-1996, KHRG estimated that at least 450 villages in 8 townships had been forcibly relocated. By the end of 1996, the Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) estimated the number to be at least 605 villages in 8 townships. The numbers rapidly increased, and by the end of March 1998 SHRF had compiled a list of 1,478 villages in 11 townships which have been relocated and destroyed: the initial townships of Kun Hing (185 villages), Nam Zang (181), Lai Kha (201), Kay See (364), Murng Kerng (186), Murng Nai (99), and Lang Kher (31), and townships where relocations started in 1997 and 1998, including Murng Pan (61 villages), Murng Peng (24), Loi Lem (129), and Ho Pong (17). In Murng Hsu township, relocations occurred in 1996 but then were discontinued because SURA troops were not operating there.

Through 1997 and 1998, the SLORC/SPDC has expanded the relocation area to the east (across the Salween River into Murng Peng township), to the south into Murng Pan township, and to the

west of Murng Kerng, Lai Kha and Nam Zang, into Ho Pong and Loi Lem townships (see the map accompanying this report). The relocation area already covers over 7,000 square miles, and new refugees arriving in Thailand report that throughout April 1998 the SPDC has been relocating more villages further and further west of Loi Lem, expanding the relocation area almost as far west as Taunggyi, capital of Shan State. There is no sign that the relocations will abate anytime soon. Furthermore, many of the sites to which people were forced to move in 1996 and 1997 have now been forced to move again, and some villagers report that they have been moved from one relocation site to another 3 or 4 times since 1996 as the SPDC attempts to consolidate the population further and further.

“Last year around Keng Kham tract, 5 tracts were moved: Keng Kham, Nar Teng, Koon Bu, Loi Keng, and Nar Boi. The SLORC troops forced the tracts of Koon Bu, Loi Keng and Nar Boi to move into Keng Kham and our village, Wo Long. But this year they forced us to move too [as well as all the people who were forced to move there in 1996]. Keng Kham had over 200 households before people were forced to move there. In our village and in Keng Kham village there were almost a thousand [relocated] families. In our village alone there were more than 300 [relocated families].” - “Loong Seng” (M, 60) from Wo Long village, Kun Hing township (Interview #1)

“They told us by mouth. We had to be moved completely by the last week of the month. We had to move from Na Tsen to Pang Long. They said if we weren’t able to move completely they would burn the village. Four houses from Hoi Her were completely burned down, and in San Khan they burned three houses. Many villages were ordered to move at the same time as ours: Bang Hoo, Sanen, Na Tek, ... I can remember Look Koi, Mak Khee Noo, Bang Yang, Huay Koot, Lang Ka, Wan Tam, Kho Tong, Khok Lao, Sak Pung, Loi Lam ... all the villages in Ho Pong township and in Bang Hoo village tract [of Loi Lem township]. There are no more villages in the area.” - “Sai Tan” (M, 35) from Na Tsen village, Loi Lem township, which was relocated in February 1998; SPDC only began destroying villages this far west in January 1998

In mid-1996 KHRG published a list of 14 Battalions which had been involved in the relocations. Since the beginning of 1997 at least 21 SLORC/SPDC Battalions have been involved: Infantry Battalions #12, 43, 64, 99, 246, and 248, and Light Infantry Battalions #331, 332, 376, 378, 424, 442, 513, 515, 516, 517, 518, 520, 523, 524, and 525; in addition, troops from Light Infantry Divisions #44, 55, and 66 have participated. This list is by no means complete. At the same time, villagers have been used as forced labour to build several new major Army bases, and a new military air base right in the heart of the relocation region at Nam Zang; this base is the largest military air base in Shan State and is now operational. The villagers who did the forced labour building it are no longer allowed anywhere near it.

“Our village is also close to the air base. Before, they forced the villagers to build the air strip and the air base, but now it’s finished. They finished it last year. Now the villagers can’t even get near the air base. It’s very strict around the air base.” - “Sai Kyawng” (M, 40) from Wan Ba Lek village, Nam Zang township (Interview #7)

“Now the military bases are all around the towns. There are about 10 bases, including the air base and all that near Nam Zang. Now our village has not much workable land. The military has confiscated it and they want to build a base there.” - “Sai Lai Kham” (M, 36) from Wan Jong village, Nam Zang township (Interview #6)

Some villages have been issued written orders to move, but in most cases the order is just given orally by the local military officer or a passing patrol. Sometimes village leaders of several villages in an area are summoned to meetings and given orders to relocate. The order generally allows them 3 to 7 days, sometimes longer, to get out of their village, after which they are told that all belongings will be destroyed and all villagers shot on sight. The officers give reasons for the relocation, usually accusing the villagers of harbouring Shan soldiers or telling them that the civilians must be cleared out so the Shan soldiers can be killed, though in many cases these villages have had little or no contact with Shan soldiers. In the earlier relocations, many villages were ordered to move to more central 'consolidation villages', and many others were simply driven out without being told where to go. More recently, most villages being relocated are being ordered to empty fields beside Army camps, motor roads, or large towns such as Kun Hing and Lai Kha, rather than to other villages. Most villagers begin moving their belongings immediately, making several trips to save as many of their food supplies and possessions as possible before the deadline. Those without bullock carts or 'trolologies' (small motorised Chinese tractors which can haul small carts) find it very difficult to save their possessions in time, particularly if it is a full day's walk or further to the relocation site. In some cases, SPDC troops have confiscated everyone's rice supplies just before the move, then redistributed only a small part of it back to the villagers once they arrive at the relocation site.

"May 9th [1997]. This was the deadline. If we didn't move by then, we would be killed. They gave us 3 days. We were all ordered to go to a temple in Keng Kham, and we were guarded there in a group. Then the SLORC commander told us we had just the next day and the day after that to move all of our things. He said that the last day was May 9th, and if we did not move by then we would all die. He said it to us in the meeting just like that - but it wasn't really a meeting, because we were all guarded like prisoners! That afternoon, we older people over 60 years old were released. The younger people had to sleep there for one night. Then in the morning they took some of them as porters. Just imagine - they had just ordered us to move within 3 days, and yet they still took people as porters! How could people have time to move their things? Some of their wives even cried. So when the deadline came on May 9th, some people hadn't been able to complete their move because they were still porters." - "Loong Seng" (M, 60) from Wo Long village, Kun Hing township (Interview #1)

"They said the Shan soldiers were staying in our village. They [SLORC] shelled three times. There were about 10 or 20 days between each shell. The first time it didn't explode. The second time it exploded to the south of the village, in a field. The third time it fell very close to the west side of the village. The Burmese claimed it was the Shan soldiers who did the shelling. They wanted us to move. After each shell was fired, they came into the village the next morning, they searched around the village and asked questions and threatened that we would have to move. They arrested one person. They said if we were shelled three times, we would have to move. Our headman had given money many times so that we wouldn't have to move, but other villages around ours had already been moved and burned down, so they wanted us to move. They had ordered every village in Murng Kerng township that was further than 500 'wa' [armspans] from the road to move." - "Sai Kham" (M, 27) from Bong Murng village, Murng Kerng township (Interview #8)

"There were about 200 troops wearing no badges or numbers. When they were going around our tract and crossed the river, 2 of their guns fell in the river. Then they asked who could dive under the water - they said anyone who could dive underwater would not have to be a porter. So the leader of the village found 3 people who could dive underwater, and they got back their ammunition and guns. Then the commander asked the village headman, 'What do

you want as a reward?’ The headman told him, ‘If we don’t have to move that will be fine. I’ll be satisfied.’ The commander said, ‘If you don’t want to move that’s okay.’ And then they left. After those troops left our village, some other SLORC troops came and ordered the villagers to move within 3 days. They said, ‘If you don’t move we will burn your whole village and kill all the villagers.’” - “Loong Seng” (M, 60) from Wo Long village, Kun Hing township (Interview #1)

“We had 7 days to move, they said that after 7 days they would burn down the village. There were about 50 households in the village. We were allowed to carry our belongings only during these 7 days. After that we were no longer allowed, and they burned down everything.” - “Sai Pan Ta” (M, 22) from Sanen village, Loi Lem township (Interview #9)

Most villagers either move to the relocation sites as ordered or flee toward Thailand; very few risk staying in their villages or hiding in the nearby forests, because SLORC/SPDC patrols move through the areas, shooting villagers on sight and often destroying the remains of villages. In some areas military helicopters have been used to search areas the day before armed columns arrive there. Hundreds of villagers have been shot on sight, beaten or stabbed to death, suffocated with plastic bags, drowned, or burned alive in their homes upon being found in their villages or fields after relocation deadlines. The Shan Human Rights Foundation has documented the killings of 664 villagers in the relocation region by SLORC and SPDC forces during 1997 alone, and even this list is far from complete.

“The SLORC troops arrested these villagers and interrogated them, asking where were the SURA and where the SURA are based. They said these villagers had given food to the SURA. They arrested the men and then beat them for 3 days. And then they arrested women and raped them. After that the SLORC troops covered their heads with plastic and suffocated them, then threw some bodies into the Nam Pang River.” - “Loong Seng” (M, 60) from Wo Long village, Kun Hing township, after listing 94 villagers from 12 villages who were killed by SLORC troops (Interview #1)

“Last year we could go back to work our fields, but this year the situation’s a lot worse. ... Before I came, 5 or 6 people were killed to the north of our area. To the west several groups of 2 or 3 were killed. I was very afraid! There were 2 people who died right in our Keng Tong area. They were working at their farms and SLORC came and shot them. Then the soldiers went to the village and demanded money, blaming the villagers for letting people go to their farms. This was west of Nong Par. One [of those killed] was called Loong Ong, about 45 years old, and one was called Loong Ti Ya, about 46. ... They were both really good men. They were both married and had lots of children. Loong Ong had 5 or 6 children. They were just clearing their fields. Now their families are in Ton Hoong. When I came here no villagers were daring to hide around their villages, because they would be killed.” - “Loong On” (M, 58) from Nam Toom village, Murng Nai township (Interview #2)

“One of my brothers died [just before they moved]. He was killed by the Burmese because they believed that he was supplying the opposition army. He worked in the forest so he had his things in the forest, and that is why they accused him of supplying the opposition groups. They accused him and said, ‘Why haven’t you moved yet? Do you want to keep on feeding these opposition groups?’ After that he tried to take his belongings and start moving but it was too late. They beat him and his friend to death. Then they used a knife and chopped their bodies into pieces. His name was Sarng Hung. He was my eldest brother, he was more than

40 years old.” - “Sai Kaw” (M, 26) from Wan Murng village, Murng Kerng township (Interview #13)

“There were two men at Wan Bang, in Wan Heng tract, Lai Kha township [Wan Bang had been forced to move to Tard Mok]. They were staying at Tard Mok. They went to find their cattle at their old village. SLORC soldiers found them at that village and arrested them, tied them up with bundles of hay and set fire to them. One of them died instantly. I don’t know his name. But the other, Kay Li Ta, came to receive treatment at Zai Lai for a while, and died there after ten days. He was 32 years old. It took place in the second week of May [1997]. It was soldiers from #515 [Light Infantry Battalion] from Lai Kha that did it. Kay Li Ta had a family. Now his wife and children are begging around in Lai Kha town.” - “Phra Zing Ta” (M, 29), a Shan Buddhist monk from Lai Kha (Interview #5)

“They came very low. Some people were very frightened. They ran away from their houses without even gathering their things. ... I don’t know what the helicopters were looking for, but if they came one day, then the next day soldiers would come to the area. This also happened before they relocated our village. One helicopter would come about twice a month. But I’ve heard that now they are coming every two or three days to the area.” - “Loong Seng” (M, 60) from Wo Long village, Kun Hing township (Interview #1)

On June 16th 1997, two different SLORC columns massacred villagers at Sai Khao and Tard Pa Ho in Kun Hing township. The villagers had been forced to the relocation site at Kun Hing town. They obtained SLORC travel passes to return to their villages to fetch their rice, and set out in convoys of bullock carts. On their way back to Kun Hing they were stopped along the road by SLORC troops. Their passes were ignored. At Sai Khao 29 villagers were tied up and machine-gunned, and at Tard Pa Ho 27 villagers from a different convoy were similarly executed; both groups included women and children. The Sai Khao column was led by the region’s Tactical Commander himself, and one SLORC officer told a woman whom he secretly released from the massacre that they had received specific orders by radio the night before from higher levels to conduct the massacres.

“I was sure I would be killed too! I was shaking, shaking! I was sitting and shaking all the time. My blood was hot all over my body. I could not think properly. I would have run away, but they were standing there guarding me. There were 3 or 4 of them. There were 6 of us: 4 girls and me and my baby. ... Then to the west I heard bursts of machine gun fire. We heard the shots. The soldiers did the shooting. We heard tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!! Shooting like that. They were killing the 16 people. Then after a just a bit I heard gunfire just nearby [killing the group of 10 or the group of three]. But it was all overgrown, so I couldn’t see. It was only about 7 or 8 armspans away, but they wouldn’t let me go and see. There were so many - the place was black with soldiers. Wherever you looked, there were soldiers. Some were doing the killing. Some took the carts to be burned. They took and killed the cattle to eat, and they let some of the cattle go. ... After the shooting had stopped in both places I asked if I could go, but they said I had to wait. We were allowed to go about half an hour after all the shooting. Then they said I could go, but I should run, and not to go on the main road. ... I was the only adult survivor in my group. The rest were all killed, except for the 3 women who were released and ran away before the shooting started. I think I would be dead if I hadn’t had my son with me. One of the other women left her baby at home and her baby was even younger than mine. She squeezed out milk from her breast to show them that she had a baby at home, but the SLORC commander, the tactical commander himself, just said that her baby must have died, and that was why she hadn’t brought it with her. They killed her. The captain [who was

guarding her group] said to us that the soldiers had been ordered to kill any woman with children over 7 months old. ... They'd taken away and burned all our carts, shot all our bullocks and shot dead all the others. Only the children and I were left under a tree. ... I had to walk to Keng Kham with the children, carrying my son on my back, all night and all the next morning. The children were too young and we had to keep resting under the bushes. While we were resting, a man walking like a drunk came after us from the same direction. He was Nan Ti from Sai Moon, and he was seriously wounded. One of his arms was almost severed, and there were two bullet holes here in his upper right chest and two holes in his lower right chest. I was terribly sick at the sight. I asked him if the others were all killed and he said yes. And I asked what about him, and he said he'd fainted and when he came to he just walked away. With blood gushing out of his wounds he asked me to help him, but I just couldn't. I told him I would go ahead and ask other villagers to come and help him and he said yes. I did tell the villagers when I got to a farming camp, but it was raining all night and no one dared to go to his rescue. He died later, about half an hour's walk away at Kho Sai Moon bridge." - "Nang Sai" (F, 27) from Na Kha Orn village, Kun Hing township; she was the only adult survivor of the massacre at Sai Khao, where SLORC troops killed 29 Shan villagers on 16 June 1997. A SLORC officer secretly released her because she was holding her 2-year-old son (Interview #3)

Tens of thousands of villagers are struggling to survive in the relocation sites, where they are constantly used as forced labour by SPDC troops who give them nothing and even demand part of whatever little food or money they still have. Many are starving, unable to return to their villages or fields for fear of being shot on sight. Some eventually have no choice and have to risk returning to their villages to try to salvage some of their rice supply, and many of these people have been shot on sight when sighted by SPDC patrols. People in the relocation sites and those who have fled to the towns are now reduced to begging in the streets or along the rural motor roads. Refugees arriving at the Thai border in April 1998 report that in the relocation sites at Lai Kha town, people are dying every day due to lack of food and unsanitary overcrowded conditions. Most of the dead are young children and the elderly.

"They gave us nothing. At first when we moved we took all the rice we could and then we shared it among us, but then the soldiers took what was left. In our family, six of us had to survive on one 'tang' of rice: my 2 parents, myself, my wife, and the children. All of our crops were taken by the soldiers before we left the village, and when we arrived [at Pang Long] they gave us back some but very little. ... Life was very hard, we had to work for the Burmese all the time, #513 Battalion [LIB]. We had to erect electrical poles because they were trying to build another camp. When we were there we also had to carry wood from the forest to build the camp. We had to clear the camp area and dig their bunkers and their toilets." - "Sai Ti" (M, 24) from Bang Nim village, Loi Lem township (Interview #11)

"I was in that place for one and a half months. It was on the outskirts. They provided nothing to the villagers in that place ... When we arrived there we had to build a shelter for ourselves. Before building the shelter we had to clear the bushes from the ground. We were not allowed to bring our building materials [from their old house] so we had to find some new building materials at Kay See, and it was very hard to get them. There were many other villagers there, at least 30 or 40 from each village came - altogether four or five hundred. The soldiers just told us where to stay and where we could build the houses. ... Five or six people from each village got sick, so altogether there were about 25 or 30 sick people there all the time. They had malaria and diarrhoea, but I didn't see anyone die. Some of us didn't have enough food so we had to share food, and we were not allowed to go back to farm our fields.

Some people went to their farms anyway, because if they didn't go they'd have nothing to eat. When they did that they avoided the soldiers, because sometimes the soldiers shot at people." - "Nang Sep" (F, 22) from Khok Sang village, Kay See township (Interview #12)

"We stayed three months in Ham Ngai [Army Camp relocation site]. There were very many people there, about 2,000. Everyone was newly arrived. It was different from our own village. We had to buy everything we needed to eat. Sometimes we had to borrow from other people to eat. We were not allowed to go and work in our own fields. We had to grow vegetables to get income, but we didn't have enough space to grow them. We also worked as day labourers and got 100 Kyat per day. They [the soldiers] didn't give us any food. Sometimes they demanded cattle and buffaloes for meat but sometimes they didn't even ask, they took them by force. Some people got sick. Some died of malaria, some died while giving birth." - "Sai Kaw" (M, 26) from Wan Murng village, Murng Kerng township (Interview #13)

"They lived all round the village, and near the army base. It was difficult for people to bring all of their possessions. They've built little huts. Two or three families live together in each hut. If they have money they can afford to buy straw roofing and live separately. If not, they have to share a hut. They came and took everyone's rice, including paddy [unmilled rice]. Then they rationed it out to everyone in Ton Hoong." - "Loong On" (M, 58) from Nam Toom village, Murng Nai township (Interview #2)

"They built little huts and lived in the huts and then they made a living doing day labour. They worked for whoever needed some work done. They didn't have any steady jobs. They worked for one family, then another, making 50 or 60 Kyat a day. That's not enough, because they had to buy rice from Kun Hing town. They lived there for only one year, and then they had to move again." - "Loong Seng" (M, 60) from Wo Long village, Kun Hing township (Interview #1)

"They were watching us all the time. If they saw someone trying to go out to his farm they would shoot him. ... After 6 months in Ton Hoong they beat 7 people from Kher Nim nearly to death. They beat people with sticks, and sometimes they used a rifle butt or a knife to slash them. ... The 7 people were Saw Tang, 35; Pan Sik Tha, 26; Saw Ling, 70; Pan Ti, 23; Loong Aw, 50; Sai Shwe, 25; and Sai Luen, 30. All of them were from the same village, Kher Nim. Later 2 of them died. After they were beaten they became weak, bled, lost weight and then died." - "Sai Aw Ta" (M, 24) from Nam Hoo village, Nam Zang township (Interview #14)

"The relocation camp was surrounded by a fence, and we had to build that fence ourselves. We also cut the wood for the Army camp fence, and we had to carry things. We had to work often, especially carrying. I myself didn't carry as a porter, but older people from our household had to do it an uncountable number of times. ... More than a hundred soldiers were guarding us. They came and took our belongings. Sometimes they arrested some people and detained them at their place, they beat and tortured them and then they released them - especially the headmen of the villages because they were all suspected of providing things to the opposition army." - "Sai Kaw" (M, 26) from Wan Murng village, Murng Kerng township (Interview #13)

“The Burmese Army just kept on collecting money. The Burmese soldiers demanded everything they wanted and so did the Shan army, so the rich became poor and the poor became poorer. We were not allowed to go out of the town to farm. If we did, they would say we have contact with the Shan army and they would shoot us. The soldiers didn’t give any permission at all to go, not even for one or two days. If we went outside to find things to do we might be raped by the soldiers, not only that but after raping women they often kill them. Nang Nu was raped but not killed. That was in December [1997]. Nang Nu was my friend. Oh! Life was very hard in that place. I was afraid, so I ran to Thailand.” - “Nang Harn” (F, 23) from Nong Yang village, Murng Kerng township, describing life after forced relocation (Interview #10)

People at the relocation sites are constantly being used by SPDC troops for forced labour portering supplies, building and maintaining Army camps, guarding the motor roads, clearing the roadsides and maintaining the roads. Those in the Lai Kha, Nam Zang and Loi Lem areas were used as forced labour to build the new military air base near Nam Zang which is now completed, and they have also been used to build railways: first from Shwe Nyaung to Nam Zang, which is now essentially complete and has a small train running on it, and now from Nam Zang southward to Murng Nai and from Shwe Nyaung up the hills to Taunggyi.

“[The railway is] from Taunggyi to Nam Zang, but people in the area from Lai Kha, Loi Lem and Murng Kerng had to take turns working on the railway construction site. Now it’s finished to Nam Zang. The train is already running from Taunggyi to Nam Zang - it runs from Shwe Nyaung [west of Taunggyi]. They brought the locomotive by truck and then put it on the railway and they run it this short distance. Now they are making a railway up to Taunggyi from Shwe Nyaung, but it’s not finished yet. It’s not running yet. ... Mostly it’s used to carry soldiers, and supplies and weapons for the soldiers.” - “Phra Zing Ta” (M, 29), a Shan Buddhist monk from Lai Kha (Interview #5)

“The soldiers often came and we had to work for them. We had to cut wood and work on the railway. The railway goes from Nam Zang to Murng Nai. I had to work there over a period of about 7 or 8 months. We had to sleep there. They didn’t supply anything. Women and children about 12 years old also had to work. When we were working, if we worked slowly they beat us with a rifle butt. There was beating and killing. I saw someone die, and I myself was beaten there 4 months ago, before we went to the relocation site.” - “Sai Pan Ta” (M, 22) from Sanen village, Loi Lem township (Interview #9)

“The situation in Taunggyi is totally different from before. The situation of the farmers is bad. If we work 2 days for our job, we have to work 5 days for them!! Now there is railway construction work between Shwe Nyaung and Taunggyi. As far as I know, 17 or 18 people have already died on this railway construction site. Three people were hit by a rock and some were suffering from fever and died. It is a very miserable situation. Each family had to work 9 days. If a person can’t go, he has to pay 900 Kyat.” - “Mahn Htay” (M, 43) from Taunggyi town (Interview #16)

“Any time they needed porters you had to go. If people wouldn’t go they came and arrested and beat them. The things they had to carry were very heavy, and if you couldn’t climb the mountains they beat you with a bamboo rod. Usually the men had to carry and the women had to serve as guides to show the way [the women were most likely being used as human minesweepers and shields]. ... [W]e also had to work for the Burmese soldiers at their camp.

We had to clean their camp and to build fences. For 3 months we had to dig bunkers for the soldiers.” - “Nang Harn” (F, 23), Nong Yang village, Murng Kerng township (Interview #10)

“They’re also forcing the villagers to grow a kind of bean for the Army. Each 10 households has to grow about 10 acres of beans. Our village has to work on 10 acres. Altogether there are thousands of acres like that. They took away all the land from the outskirts of the village to the edge of the town, no matter whose it was. There are no fences around that land, and if our cattle enter those fields then they’re shot by the Army. ... If the cattle put one foot inside the plot of land, the owner has to pay 500 Kyat for one hoofprint. If we tell them who the owner is they’ll fine him 500 Kyat, and if we don’t tell them who the owner is, they shoot dead the cattle.” - “Sai Lai Kham” (M, 36) from Wan Jong village, Nam Zang township, describing life at his village, which is used as a relocation site (Interview #6)

“We had to dig ditches and build buildings at the Army camp near Murng Kerng at least once or twice a month. ... Some months it was every day. People took it in turns. ... About 40 or 50 people had to go at a time from our village. You couldn’t refuse. If you didn’t go one day, you would have to go for two days.” - “Sai Kham” (M, 27) from Bong Murng village, Murng Kerng township (Interview #8)

“All year round people are being forced to do one thing or another, mostly building roads. They have to work on the main road, fixing it where it’s gone bad. About 10 people from each village tract have to go, so there are usually 80-100 people there all the time. We have to go about 24 miles away, and work there for 5 days. Mostly it is splitting rocks and spreading gravel on the road, and digging ditches along both sides of the road. We have to sleep beside the road, under small shelters built of leaves. All have to go, including old people, women and children. ... [T]hey give nothing. Instead they give a beating to those who do not work hard enough.” - “Sai Wa Ling” (M, 40) from Loi Leng village, Murng Kerng township (Interview #4)

“People are being forced to guard the main road, to prevent Shan soldiers from crossing and to protect travellers from robberies. If any robberies occur anywhere, the villagers responsible for that spot or area will be punished. Along each mile of the road there are four points where they have to stand guard. Two persons at each point. They build a little hut or tent beside the road. They have to guard for one week, day and night. This is all along the road from Lai Kha to Murng Nong. ... And at night, townspeople have to guard their towns. They have to come out to the outskirts of the town. About sixteen people, two people at each entrance, though there is no fence. ... People who are living around the vicinity of the [Army] camps or the base are always being forced to do one thing or another. They have to grow beans, soy beans, and maize for the Army. They have to make fences for the plots of land where they cultivate for the Army. And they have to dig ditches and trenches around their bases for them. They fetch water for them and gather firewood, and all sorts of things. All the time. It has become a routine for the villagers. Mostly they use the new arrivals [those who have been relocated] to guard the roads, and to dig the ditches they use people who already lived there. The villagers get nothing in terms of wages, and they have to provide their own food. They are forced to work for the Army for three days and then they can return to work for themselves for three days. It’s very difficult for them to make a living.” - “Phra Zing Ta” (M, 29), a Shan Buddhist monk from Lai Kha (Interview #5)

When the mass relocations had clearly failed to undermine the Shan armies, SLORC/SPDC not only expanded the area of relocations, they also began ordering people at relocation sites to move yet again, this time to sites which were even more central, crowded, and controlled by the Army. After one SURA attack on a SLORC military unit, the SLORC troops even retaliated by firing mortar shells without warning into Kho Lam relocation site. The shelling occurred on 21 February 1997. Two Shan families hiding from the shells in a ditch were hit; six of them were killed, including 3 children aged 4, 5, and 7. Some villagers first had their villages relocated in 1996, and have had their relocation sites moved again 3 to 4 times since then. Others had managed to avoid relocation by paying bribes of hundreds of thousands of Kyat to SLORC/SPDC officers, but have now been forced to move regardless.

“A relative from there came and told me that in June or July, after the villagers had planted their rice, the Burmese soldiers came and spread straw over their fields and burned the seedlings. So they couldn’t harvest their fields.” - “Sai Kham” (M, 27) from Bong Murng village, Murng Kerng township (Interview #8)

“If they found someone outside they’d shoot him. When the crops were ready to be reaped, they burned them down.” - “Nang Mawn” (F, 18) from Sanen village, Loi Lem township (Interview #9)

“[N]ow I’ve heard news that in Lai Kha people will have to give their rice to the Army and the Army will give it back to them on a daily basis. But not yet. Wherever there is any activity by Shan soldiers they will do it. If it’s in town, they’ll also do it in town. Now they are already ordering people to take their rice and put it in a warehouse in Lai Kha.” - “Phra Zing Ta” (M, 29), a Shan Buddhist monk from Lai Kha (Interview #5)

An estimated 80,000-100,000 Shan, Pa’O, Palaung and Lahu refugees have fled to Thailand because of these relocations and related abuses. In some areas more than half the population has already fled to Thailand. Currently, most families who still have any money left for the trip are attempting to flee. If they have no money then young people or middle-aged couples walk the entire distance, leaving their families behind if necessary in the hope of getting work in Thailand and returning with money to survive. Most people pay the drivers of passenger trucks to get them to the border, and the entire trip takes 3 or 4 stages. Fares are exorbitant, because the drivers have to pay off the soldiers at every SPDC checkpoint along the road. It is common for each passenger to have to pay 5,000 Kyat or more for a trip of less than 100 kilometres.

“How could we move there? We had no money, so how could we buy food there? Some people had some money, and they came to Thailand immediately while they still had it. We knew that if we came to Thailand we could work and get money, but if we went to Kun Hing we would starve. So I came to Thailand.” - “Loong Seng” (M, 60) from Wo Long village, Kun Hing township (Interview #1)

“Many Shans are coming to Thailand. Even very old people were coming when we came. They were from Kun Hing and Kali. From our village whole households have come. Lots. Or sometimes if a house has 7 or 8 people, then just the old people are left. All the young ones leave.” - “Sai Kyawng” (M, 40) from Wan Ba Lek village, Nam Zang township (Interview #7)

“From Si Por to Murng Ton, we had to pay 3,500 Kyat for each person. From Murng Ton to Bong Pa Kyem [near the Thai border] we had to pay another 1,000 Kyat each. The driver said he would guarantee we would get through safely if we paid that much. From Bong Pa Kyem

to here there was no problem. We walked through the jungle to Bang Ma [in Thailand]. ... We had to hire a Shan guide to lead us past the border checkpoint, at a cost of 400 baht each.
- “Loong Seng” (M, 60) from Wo Long village, Kun Hing township (Interview #1)

As long as they are paid, the SPDC soldiers generally allow the trucks to pass even though they know the people are fleeing to Thailand. This has been the case since the relocation campaign began in 1996, and it appears that the SPDC is happy to see the Shans leave for Thailand. The Shans, who call themselves Tai Yai, are closely related to the Thais and have always been hated by the rulers of Burma. Not only are they related to the traditional enemies of the Burmans, but the Burman kings never succeeded in subjugating the Shan princes. With their population of at least 9 million the Shan are Burma’s largest ethnic group next to the Burmans, and they are still seen as a threat to Burman domination of the country. By uprooting the Shans and allowing many to flee to Thailand, the SPDC may feel they are finally starting to wipe out the Shan as a people. In late 1997 or early 1998, SPDC troops at the last checkpoints before Thailand began confiscating the National Identity Cards of all Shans heading for Thailand. The cardholders are given a receipt and told that they can reobtain their cards when they return to Burma. This is a very disturbing development, because a similar method has been used since 1992 to strip Muslim Rohingya refugees of their identification when they flee from Arakan State to Bangladesh. If the refugees later try to go home, the SPDC can deny that they ever lived in Burma.

“I had to avoid the Burmese soldiers or they would have taken our ID cards and our money, and they wouldn’t return them to us so that we wouldn’t ever be able to go back to our village.” - “Nang Harn” (F, 23) from Nong Yang village, Murng Kerng township (Interview #10)

“They [SPDC soldiers] checked whether we had ID cards or not but they didn’t stop us [National Identity Cards (NIC) are supposed to be carried by Burmese citizens at all times, but many non-Burman villagers do not or cannot obtain one]. If you couldn’t produce your ID card you could not pass the checkpoints to go to Thailand. They took our ID cards at Ho Murng and they said on our way back to Shan State we’ll get them back. We’ll have to pay something to get our ID cards back. Some didn’t have any ID card with them, and if you didn’t have it you couldn’t get to Ho Murng.” - “Sai Kaw” (M, 26) from Wan Murng village, Murng Kerng township, describing his flight to Thailand (Interview #13)

“I had to leave my ID card at Pan Taw Wet, just before Ho Murng. On our way back we’re supposed to show them this receipt to get it back, so I must not lose this receipt [he showed a ‘receipt’ signed by an immigration officer named Win Khaing] and I have it all the time with me. I will stay longer than the time limit allowed so I’ll have to be fined. They didn’t tell us anything when they took our ID cards. They didn’t tell us what the reason was, they just told us that we could get them back later with the receipt.” - “Sai Tan” (M, 35) from Na Tsen village, Loi Lem township (Interview #15)

The Shans are crossing into Thailand at 4 main crossing points, the two main spots being Nong Ook in Fang Province, and through the mountains west of Fang. Others cross from Tachilek into Mae Sai and from Ho Murng into Mae Hong Son province. Throughout the dry season from November to May, 100 to 300 people per day cross the border covertly at the main crossing points. They generally arrive on trucks or on foot near the border in Shan State, and then must pay large sums of money to hire guides to take them through the forest around the Thai checkpoints. On arrival, unscrupulous Thai motorcycle-taxi drivers and others usually rip them

off for several hundred Baht to get to the nearest town or worksite. By the end, most people have spent their life savings and no longer have the option of going back.

“Just the two of us came, oh no sorry, the three of us, because I was 4 months pregnant. We took a truck from Kay See to Lang Kher, then we walked two days and then we took another truck from Nam Lin. Oh! We were almost dying on the way. From Kay See to Murng Kerng it was 500 Kyat per person, from Murng Kerng to Pang Long 1,000 Kyat each, from Pang Long to Lang Kher 1,700 for two persons. ... We had some money with us, 26,000 Kyat. When we arrived in Thailand only 420 Kyat were left and we changed them into Thai Baht. Then we took a truck and our employer had to pay for the truck because we didn’t have enough. In return we had to work for him. ... Now we have found some daily labour but only my husband works because I can’t work [she has a 4 month old baby]. He gets only 50 Baht per day and sometimes he has no job.” - “Nang Sep” (F, 22) from Khok Sang village, Kay See township (Interview #12)

On arrival in Thailand, the Shan refugees must evade capture and forced repatriation by Thai authorities. Those who are forced back are often handed across the border to SPDC Army units, who then take many of them as porters. In Thailand they are not recognised as refugees and there are no refugee camps for them, so they have no choice but to enter the dangerous market for illegal labour. Thousands of them can now be found doing cheap labour in the lychee orchards and other plantations of northern Thailand, as construction workers building luxury subdivisions while they live in the shantytowns of Chiang Mai, household servants to the Thai upper middle class, workers in small factories, sweatshops, and the bonded labour brothels of Chiang Mai, Bangkok and other parts of Thailand. Many of them are exploited and ripped off by their Thai employers or end up as bonded labour. Their situation has become even worse since the collapse of the Thai Baht in late 1997. Many construction companies have stopped paying them for work done, and thousands more have been laid off as Thai authorities pressure employers to replace illegal foreign labour with unemployed Thais. Police have stepped up their roundups and deportations as part of a nationwide campaign to get rid of illegal foreign labourers. There are very few paying jobs anymore, and at the same time the flow of refugees has continued as the SPDC destroys more and more villages. Thousands of Shan refugees are now stuck in Thailand without work or food, living in hiding, unable to stay and unable to go back. In April 1998, new Shan and Lahu refugees arriving in Thailand reported that thousands of people have fled the Thai clampdown back across the border into Shan State, but they are living just inside the Shan State border, internally displaced but afraid or unable to return to their destroyed home areas. They are reportedly suffering severe food shortages, and many have committed suicide.

“We just walked to Thailand. It took us more than 10 days. ... I came on my own because my children and my parents couldn’t come. I’ve been thinking that maybe after about 5 months I can try to bring them here with me. ... I’m working digging sand along the riverbanks [for sand and gravel]. I can’t save any money and I’m in a hard situation - I have a debt of 2,000 or 3,000 Baht and I have no idea at all how I can pay it back. For now I myself am okay, but when I think about my children or about my mother I cannot imagine how they are surviving now.” - “Sai Ti” (M, 24) from Bang Nim village, Loi Lem township (Interview #11)

“Now I work as a day labourer. If you’re old like me, that’s very hard! I came with my wife and children, and they’re all working too. If we are lucky and the situation improves in Shan State, I pray to the spirits that we can go back several years from now.” - “Loong On” (M, 58) from Nam Toom village, Murng Nai township (Interview #2)

“I arrived here about one month ago. We have nothing. Life here is also miserable. I owe some money to many people already and my parents keep on sending messages calling me to go back to them. I really want to go back home, but I can’t until I have enough money. The money that we earn now is not enough, it is just enough for survival.” - “Nang Harn” (F, 23) from Nong Yang village, Murng Kerng township, who arrived in Thailand in January 1998 (Interview #10)

In March 1998 SPDC troops crossed into northwestern Thailand to attack a group of Shan refugees who had fled fighting between SPDC and the SSA near Ho Murng. After the attempted attack and the international concern expressed for these refugees, Thai authorities for the first time allowed a group of over 200 Shan refugees to move into an existing Karenni refugee camp. If this leads to further recognition of the Shan as legitimate refugees it could be a very positive move. However, current Thai policy is to deny asylum to all new refugees except in the case where they are “temporarily fleeing fighting”, so there are still serious concerns that Thai authorities may decide to force these Shan refugees back across the border once they decide the “fighting” around Ho Murng has stopped and the SPDC indicates its willingness to “accept the refugees back”.

At present there is no sign that the SPDC has any plan of letting up on its campaign against the Shan civilian population. The regime has already rejected the possibility of negotiations toward a ceasefire with the SSA, and apparently plans to continue wiping out the civilian population in the hope of eventually wiping out the opposition militarily. There is no telling how far the forced relocations will reach in the end, whether they could extend as far as Taunggyi in the west, to Kengtung in the east, or to Lashio in the north. Right now the area being wiped out is growing larger week by week and month by month. For the farmers of central Shan State, life in their villages has become impossible, life in the relocation sites means forced labour and starvation, and nothing but exploitation and eventual arrest and forced repatriation awaits them in Thailand. If they are to survive, this must be stopped.

“We had no house or land anymore, so we left our children with an aunt and came here. ... One is 10 and one is 4. They’re living with my elder sister in the relocation site. I don’t know if the people in the site are being allowed to go back to their fields or not. I worry about them. My wife often cries. ... My wife worries about everyone back at home, and whether they can plant rice or not. She wants to go home as soon as possible. ... But now we’re just living on a construction site, so we can’t call them [his children] here.” - “Sai Kham” (M, 27) from Bong Murng village, Murng Kerng township (Interview #8)

“Out of the people who have been forced to move, about 80% have come to Thailand. Only about 20% went to the town. There are many people from Shan State now working in lychee orchards, in cultivation, in construction sites, and also in shops, washing dishes... almost every shop, every house has Shan servants now. There are many young women who have just disappeared. They have been sold to the flesh trade. Many people have been exploited by their employers. No one gets proper wages. The refugees from Shan State have to suffer in this way.” - “Phra Zing Ta” (M, 29), a Shan Buddhist monk from Lai Kha (Interview #5)

“They just kill us Shan whenever they want. For them, a Shan life is less valuable than a chicken’s. The SLORC soldiers announced that wherever shooting breaks out, all the villagers in that area will be killed. I was too afraid to stay on. I had to leave.” - “Nang Sai” (F, 27), Na Kha Orn village, Kun Hing twp, only adult survivor of the Sai Khao massacre (Interview #3)

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*Notes: All names of those interviewed have been changed, and village names are omitted for protection where necessary. **FL** = Forced Labour, **FR** = Forced Relocation.*

| <u>#</u> | <u>Pg.</u> | <u>Name</u> | <u>Sex</u> | <u>Age</u> | <u>Village / Township</u> | <u>Subject</u> |
|----------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|---|
| 1 | 19 | "Loong Seng" | M | 60 | Wo Long / Kun Hing | FR of other villages to his village, then FR of his village, FL portering, demands for horses, Sai Khao & Tard Pa Ho massacres, torture, rape and killings of 94 other villagers from 12 villages, helicopter searches, flight to Thailand |
| 2 | 23 | "Loong On" | M | 58 | Nam Toom / Murng Nai | FR in 1996, then again in 1997, burning of houses, extortion of horses and money, life in relocation sites, confiscation of rice, villagers shot on sight |
| 3 | 25 | "Nang Sai" | F | 27 | Na Kha Orn / Kun Hing | Survivor of Sai Khao massacre; FR to Kun Hing, trying to get rice, arrest and detention, description of massacre, death of relatives, women and children, release and flight, finding the bodies, flight to Thailand |
| 4 | 30 | "Sai Wa Ling" | M | 40 | Loi Leng / Murng Kerng | Other villages forced to move to his village, rice confiscation, FL on roads, exodus to Thailand |
| 5 | 31 | "Phra Zing Ta" | M | 29 | Lai Kha town | Shan Buddhist monk who returned to Lai Kha area on a visit; situation in Pa'O ceasefire area, FR and re-relocations in Lai Kha area, living conditions of villagers, SPDC looting, FL as sentries and at Army camps, FL farming for the Army, FL on Shwe Nyaung - Nam Zang and Shwe Nyaung - Taunggyi railways, killings on sight of villagers, rice confiscation, exodus to Thailand |
| 6 | 34 | "Sai Lai Kham" | M | 36 | Wan Jong / Nam Zang | Others forced to move to his village, living conditions, land confiscation for Army bases, FL building bases and farming for the Army, FL on Shwe Nyaung - Nam Zang railway, problems as a labourer in Thailand |
| 7 | 36 | "Sai Kyawng" | M | 40 | Wan Ba Lek / Nam Zang | FR of other villages, re-relocations, FL building Army camps and as porters, FL on Nam Zang airbase, exodus to Thailand, difficulties in Thailand |
| 8 | 37 | "Sai Kham" | M | 27 | Bong Murng / Murng Kerng | FR of other villages to his village, burning of villages, payment of extortion to avoid FR, subsequent shelling of his village to force it to move, hunger and death of relocated villagers, systematic destruction of crops, FL at Army camp, flight to Thailand without his children, worries about his family |
| 9 | 40 | "Sai Pan Ta" | M | 22 | Sanen / Loi Lem | FR, burning of their village, rice mill owner |
| | | "Nang Mawn" | F | 18 | Sanen / Loi Lem | burned to death, survival at Pang Long relocation site, burning of crops, FL farming for the Army and on Nam Zang - Murng Nai railway, flight to Thailand |

| <u>#</u> | <u>Pg.</u> | <u>Name</u> | <u>Sex</u> | <u>Age</u> | <u>Village / Township</u> | <u>Subject</u> |
|----------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|---------------------------|---|
| 10 | 42 | "Nang Harn" | F | 23 | Nong Yang / Murng Kerng | FR to Murng Kerng, extortion and difficulties in the relocation site, rape, FL as porters, minesweepers and human shields, FL at Army camp, flight to Thailand, difficulties in Thailand |
| 11 | 44 | "Sai Ti" | M | 24 | Bang Nim / Loi Lem | FR to Pang Long, burning of village, grandfather burned to death, life at Pang Long, confiscation of rice, FL as porter and building Army camp, FL on Shwe Nyaung - Nam Zang railway, refugee life in Thailand |
| 12 | 46 | "Nang Sep" | F | 22 | Khok Sang / Kay See | FR to Kay See, burning of village, people hiding in forest, survival at Kay See, sickness, trying to get food, FL as porters, flight to Thailand, problems in Thailand |
| 13 | 48 | "Sai Kaw" | M | 26 | Wan Murng / Murng Kerng | FR to Ham Ngai, execution of his brother, food shortage, sickness, and deaths at Ham Ngai, FL building fence around the site, FL as porters, looting by soldiers, flight to Thailand, confiscation of ID Card by SPDC troops on the way |
| 14 | 50 | "Sai Aw Ta" | M | 24 | Nam Hoo / Nam Zang | FR to Ton Hoong in 1996, looting of food by troops, beatings, deaths, flight to Mak Kok, FL on roads and as a porter, FR from Mak Kok, lack of food and sickness at Ho Pai, FL farming, clearing roadsides, as porters and at Army camp, beatings at Ho Pai, flight to Thailand |
| 15 | 53 | "Sai Tan" | M | 35 | Na Tsen / Loi Lem | FR to Pang Long in Feb. 1998, burning of houses, no time to move belongings, lack of food, flight to Thailand, confiscation of ID Card by SPDC troops |
| 16 | 55 | "Mahn Htay" | M | 43 | Taunggyi town | FL on Shwe Nyaung - Taunggyi railway, deaths during railway labour, FL on Shwe Nyaung - Nam Zang railway, FL on Nam Zang airbase, extortion of 'fishing taxes' on Inle Lake, execution of 2 fishermen for failure to pay tax, clampdown on Inle Lake fishermen, FL clearing weeds from Inle Lake, taxation on Inle Lake 'floating gardens' and resulting difficulties for farmers, tourism on Inle Lake, SLORC/SPDC clampdown on Taunggyi Water Festival activities |

Interviews

#1.

NAME: “Loong Seng”
Shan Buddhist farmer

SEX: M

AGE: 60

FAMILY: Married, 5 children

ADDRESS: Wo Long village, Keng Kham tract, Kun Hing twp **INTERVIEWED:** 30/8/97

[When interviewed “Loong Seng” was staying as a refugee in a village in northern Thailand.]

Q: How many households are in your village?

A: 32 houses. Most of us are rice farmers.

Q: Was your village one of those ordered to move?

A: Yes, that’s why I came here. They ordered us to move on the 9th of May 1997.

Q: Last year were any villages around yours order to move?

A: Yes, but it wasn’t as bad last year. Last year the SLORC troops only ordered the villages around our village to move into our village. Last year around Keng Kham tract, 5 tracts were moved: Keng Kham, Nar Teng, Koon Bu, Loi Keng, and Nar Boi. The SLORC troops forced the tracts of Koon Bu, Loi Keng and Nar Boi to move into Keng Kham and our village, Wo Long. But this year they forced us to move too *[as well as all the people who were forced to move there in 1996]*. Keng Kham had over 200 households before people were forced to move there. In our village and in Keng Kham village there were almost a thousand *[relocated]* families. In our village alone there were more than 300 *[relocated families]*.

Q: 300 families? How had those 300 families been surviving in Wo Long?

A: They built little huts and lived in the huts and then they made a living doing day labour. They worked for whoever needed some work done. They didn’t have any steady jobs. They worked for one family, then another, making 50 or 60 Kyat a day. That’s not enough, because they had to buy rice from Kun Hing town *[which is cheaper than local rice and not as good]*. They lived there for only one year, and then they had to move again.

Q: Since all these people were moved to your village, have soldiers come very often?

A: They always came. Many groups of soldiers were always coming and going through our village. Sometimes they came from one direction, sometimes from another. Sometimes about 60, sometimes 100, sometimes 200, sometimes so many I couldn’t count them. They stop and ask for porters and ask for bullock carts. The villagers have to go with them and carry their things. Some porters have to go with them for about 5 days, some for 10 days. And when that’s not enough for them, sometimes they ask for horses. In Keng Kham they asked for 5 horses, and the villagers had to buy horses for them. The SLORC troops said that if we bought horses for them they would stop asking for porters. Then for a while they didn’t take any porters, but later they came and demanded porters again and again. They said, “The horses you gave us were not for our group, but for another group”. They took the horses away, but I think they still have them. But when they came to take porters again the villagers asked where the horses were, and they said, “Oh! You gave them to that unit, not our unit!” And after that they still asked for

more horses. One time they demanded 3 horses, then the last time they demanded 5 horses. Horses cost 25,000 up to 36,000 Kyat - that's how much I've paid for them in the past. Both the relocated people and the original villagers had to pay for the horses and go as porters. They also always demand chickens, pigs and cattle. Last year we also had to build a military base for them at Keng Kham, but they don't stay at that base. They come on patrol, and then they stay there. When they are at Keng Kham they also come to our village. It is only 3 miles away. They come and camp at the base for a while and then go away, and then another group comes along.

On March 23, 1997 while we were celebrating a festival, about 200 SLORC troops came into Keng Kham and stayed one night. They passed through our village. Then they stayed in the jungle for 3 days and came back again, and they ordered all the villages to move into the towns. There were about 200 troops wearing no badges or numbers. When they were going around our tract and crossed the river, 2 of their guns fell in the river. Then they asked who could dive under the water - they said anyone who could dive underwater would not have to be a porter. So the leader of the village found 3 people who could dive underwater, and they got back their ammunition and guns. Then the commander asked the village headman, "What do you want as a reward?" The headman told him, "If we don't have to move that will be fine. I'll be satisfied." The commander said, "If you don't want to move that's okay." And then they left. After those troops left our village, some other SLORC troops came and ordered the villagers to move within 3 days. They said, "If you don't move we will burn your whole village and kill all the villagers." So within 3 days, by March 26, 1997, all of the villagers had to move. This was the first time we were ordered to move. But we didn't actually have to move at that time.

Q: So when did they really force you to move?

A: May 9th [1997]. This was the deadline. If we didn't move by then, we would be killed. They gave us 3 days. We were all ordered to go to a temple in Keng Kham, one person from each house, and we were guarded there in a group. Then the SLORC commander told us we had just the next day and the day after that to move all of our things. He said that the last day was May 9th, and if we did not move by then we would all die. He said it to us in the meeting just like that - but it wasn't really a meeting, because we were all guarded like prisoners! That afternoon, we older people over 60 years old were released. The younger people had to sleep there for one night. Then in the morning they took some of them as porters. Just imagine - they had just ordered us to move within 3 days, and yet they still took people as porters! How could people have time to move their things? Some of their wives even cried. So when the deadline came on May 9th, some people hadn't been able to complete their move because they were still porters. They came back after the deadline.

Q: So did they get into trouble?

A: No, they were just ordered to go to Kali and Kun Hing like the rest of us. Keng Kham also had to move. But in Kali and Kun Hing, there was nothing for most of us. How could we move there? We had no money, so how could we buy food there? Some people had some money, and they came to Thailand immediately while they still had it. We knew that if we came to Thailand we could work and get money, but if we went to Kun Hing we would starve. So I came to Thailand. Actually I didn't even have enough money to come to Thailand, so I had to borrow some from relatives.

We all moved. We came straight to the Salween River. We had to carry our things for a distance of 5 miles. I didn't carry things myself because I'm old, but my children carried them for me. We crossed the Salween at Ta Long, to Ho Ta. Then we came to Si Por, then by truck to Murng Ton. When we travelled to Murng Ton there were 6 trucks travelling together in a group, all from our area. We waited in Murng Ton for a long time to hear news from our village. We had to ask permission from the Chairman of Murng Ton to stay there. We were permitted to stay and build huts on the outskirts of the village. In Murng Ton, there were also people staying in the temple. They hadn't asked permission to stay there. They were all staying on top of each other, there were so many people. We waited there and asked people from our area who came later if we could go back to our village, and I was told: "You can't go back, Uncle, because a lot of people are being killed. I wish you could see it for yourself. People are being killed here and there." When we heard that we couldn't go back there, we came to Thailand. It took us 2 months to travel *[to Thailand, from the time when they first left their village]*.

Q: You said earlier *[before the interview]* that your relative was killed in one of the massacres?

A: Yes, some of my relatives who had moved to Kun Hing. They had been allowed to go and get rice from their old villages. It was after our village was relocated. SLORC said, "If you want to go, you can", so they got written permission to go. There were about 60 ox-carts with one or two people in each cart. They all reached Keng Kham. Some went to get rice, and some went to get timber and other things from their old houses. They loaded up and then set off to go back. There were two groups of villagers. One group of villagers stopped at the Sai Moon bridge to have some food. The other group went on ahead. The first group, with more than 30 carts, reached a climb near Sai Khao at 7 in the evening. SLORC troops were waiting for them on the road, at the top of the climb. They arrested all of them and put them under guard in empty houses. When the next group of villagers was coming, a kind-hearted SLORC soldier warned them: "If you keep going you will be caught and you will all die. The first group has all been caught and killed. So go back if you don't want to die." So this group let their bullocks go free, abandoned their carts, and then ran off into the forest. If they hadn't, then more people would have died. There were about 33 carts belonging to people in this group, so about 66 cattle, and altogether about 36 people, including 4 women.

The first group was massacred. All of them. They caught the villagers and then tied them up. They kept the women in the house and the men outside of the house. Then they tied up the villagers together in groups, facing outwards *[back to back]*, and shot them dead. The woman who was freed from this massacre had a young baby. The Captain of the SLORC troops pointed his pistol at her, and her baby cried. Then the woman raised her hand at the Captain, and the Captain said, "I will let you free if you go to Kho Lam relocation site. If you don't go, you will die." That woman had never seen Kho Lam. She said, "Are you letting me go?" and then she ran away. At that time there were another 2 girls, aged 8 and 9, who cried and ran after that woman. She and her baby and the other 2 girls ran into the forest. She stayed 1 night in the forest and then went down to Keng Tong, to her old village, and then she went to stay at Kun Hing town. The other villagers were tied up in groups, dragged away to different places and then shot dead. They dragged away the men first and the women after, and they put the men and women together and shot them dead. My ex-son-in-law was one of those killed. 36 *[sic: 29]* people died. *[See Interview #3 for further details.]*

There were two other places where a lot of people were killed. There was also another group that came along the Nam Pang *[River]*, about 30 people. They all died. *[He is referring to the June 16th massacre at Tard Pa Ho.]* They had come from Par Hu and Kali. They were caught, tied up and killed. When the SLORC comes and finds anyone in the old villages, they kill them. Three or four of us from our area have died in this way. I was so scared, so I decided I didn't want to live there anymore. Things have become so terrible in our land. I couldn't stay. In Keng Kham and Wo Long they are killing people, they shoot at people whenever they find them in the deserted villages.

Q: How many do you think have died like that?

A: *[He began reading from his notes]* On July 1, 1997 SLORC Major Htun Myat of LIB #524 led about 250 soldiers to search the area from which villages had been relocated in the tract of Keng Kham. They found villagers in the deserted villages and shot them dead. The villagers killed were from the following villages:

- | | | |
|-----|-------------|----------------|
| 1) | Keng Kham | 2 men, 1 woman |
| 2) | Koong Mee | 4 men, 1 woman |
| 3) | Wo Long | 5 men, 2 women |
| 4) | Nar Tor | 5 men, 4 women |
| 5) | Wan Berng | 3 men, 4 women |
| 6) | Ho Ha | 5 men, 6 women |
| 7) | Nar Boi | 4 men, 7 women |
| 8) | Kan Na | 3 men, 2 women |
| 9) | Wan Nar Bao | 2 men, 3 women |
| 10) | Soon Sang | 5 men, 4 women |
| 11) | Na Kha Orn | 7 men, 4 women |
| 12) | Na Kha Long | 8 men, 3 women |

The SLORC troops arrested these [94] villagers and interrogated them, asking where were the SURA and where the SURA are based. They said these villagers had given food to the SURA. They arrested the men and then beat them for 3 days. And then they arrested women and raped them. After that the SLORC troops covered their heads with plastic and suffocated them, then threw some bodies into the Nam Pang River.

In another incident, the SLORC troops went back to the relocated villages and saw villagers. They commanded the villagers to come and gather together, and then they shot dead 96 villagers. One person was freed; his named is Ai Var Ring. The SLORC troops said these villagers had given food to the Shan soldiers, so they shot them dead.

Q: Where did you get this paper *[the above notes]* from?

A: They *[his relatives]* sent it to me. And I heard about the killings in Sai Khao in detail from my former daughter-in-law, after I'd arrived in Thailand.

Q: When they ordered everyone to move to Kun Hing did most people go to Kun Hing?

A: More people went to other places, or to Thailand, than the number of people who went to Kun Hing. I just arrived here about 15 days ago, with my whole family. In Murng Ton I sold off some possessions I'd brought along to support myself, and when nothing was left I came here. Now I am very old and I don't know what to do. I'll have to rely on my children and relatives to work and support me. If we look at the situation now, I don't think we will be able to return. I've heard that the SLORC found a group of 5 villagers who were hiding, 4 women and a man, they tied them all together and forced them to go along with them to search for Shan soldiers. If they couldn't find any, then the SLORC said they would shoot them. This was around Koon Bu and Loi Keng.

Q: Do you know if Sai Khao, Wan Lao and Keng Lom *[former relocation sites in Kun Hing township]* were also ordered to move to Kun Hing?

A: Yes, all had to move. There are not any villages left even along the main road.

Q: Before you were forced to move, did you ever see SURA troops in your area?

A: Once in a while. Maybe once a month. Only about 4 or 5 people at a time. Not many. We never heard the sound of a gun.

Q: Did you hear of any helicopters being used to find people?

A: A lot. They came very low. Some people were very frightened. They ran away from their houses without even gathering their things. They ran to the banks of the Salween. I don't know what the helicopters were looking for, but if they came one day, then the next day soldiers would come to the area. This also happened before they relocated our village. One helicopter would come about twice a month. But I've heard that now they are coming every two or three days to the area.

Q: This year, is the SLORC trying to stop anyone from coming to Thailand?

A: When I came, the driver guaranteed that I would get here. But I had to pay more. From Si Por to Murng Ton, we had to pay 3,500 Kyat for each person. From Murng Ton to Bong Pa Kyem *[near the Thai border]* we had to pay another 1,000 Kyat each. The driver said he would guarantee we would get through safely if we paid that much. From Bong Pa Kyem to here there was no problem. We walked through the jungle to Bang Ma *[in Thailand]*. From Bang Ma we had to pay 400 baht each to get here. We had to hire a Shan guide to lead us past the border checkpoint, at a cost of 400 baht each. But some people even walked from Si Por to Murng Ton during the nights. *[The SLORC soldiers demand money to let the passenger vehicles pass but otherwise don't stop people; if you want to avoid paying, the only way is to walk by night and avoid their checkpoints.]*

#2.

NAME: "Loong On"

Shan Buddhist farmer

SEX: M

AGE: 58

FAMILY: Married, 4 children

ADDRESS: Nam Toom village, Nong Hee tract, Murng Nai twp **INTERVIEWED:** 30/8/97

[When interviewed "Loong On" was staying as a refugee in a village in northern Thailand.]

Q: Was your village ordered to move last year or this year?

A: We were relocated last year, but then we were also relocated this year. It was twice. Last year and also this year. Last year we had to move to Wiang Kao. Wiang Kao is west of Ton Hoong. Seven villages were ordered to move: Ter Hoong, Koon Nar, Nam Toom, Na Yok, Nong Par, Na Sarn, and Ba Sar. All of those villages had to move. The SLORC troops burned 10 houses in Par Sar village. That was in May 1996. We all had to move to Wiang Kao, and then this year we had to move from Wiang Kao to Ton Hoong near the military camp.

Q: How many people had already been forced to move to Wiang Kao before it was moved?

A: Wiang Kao had at first 50 or 60 houses. After they relocated 2 or 3 villages there, there were about 120 houses there. Our village had 70 houses. About 30 of them moved to Wiang Kao, and the other 40 went to Ton Hoong. Some had to live with relatives and some had to build small huts.

Q: Did they have any land assigned to them?

A: No. They just had to live near their relatives. From Nam Toom to Wiang Kao is only about 10 minutes' walk, but they just wanted us all gathered in one place. We could still work our old fields, but there were floods last year so the crops were spoiled. There were also 500 or 600 acres in other places which were just left fallow because people weren't allowed to plant them last year.

Q: So this year [1997] when were you ordered to move again?

A: June 23. They said we were giving rice to the Shan soldiers. One of the SLORC soldiers told us to move. He said they could still hear the voices of Shan soldiers talking to each other on their walkie-talkies all the time, so we had to move. They came with guns and ordered us to move by pointing their guns at us. They came many times. The first time, they said if they found Shan soldiers in a radius of 10 miles they would kill us. We had to sign four times to say there were no Shan soldiers. Every tract had to give money, and we had to sign an agreement that if the SLORC found any Shan soldiers in the area, they would kill villagers. Then after we signed with those soldiers, other groups of soldiers came! The SLORC always came and demanded porters and horses, and they collected money. Our tract had to give 200,000 Kyat. They collected porters and horses, and some groups collected money. 100,000 or 200,000 Kyat per tract. They asked for everything: Horses, 2 or 3 per tract; money, 100,000 or 200,000 per tract. In Keng Tong there are 4 tracts, and three of them had to give money. We had to give money to every group [of SLORC soldiers], then even after we had given money to one group we had to move anyway.

Q: Did you ever see Shan soldiers in Wiang Kao or Nam Toom?

A: There were lots! We saw them all the time! Sometimes they [SLORC] found them, in the jungle or in the fields.

Q: When you were ordered to move, how many days did they give you?

A: Last year we were given 15 days, but this year we were given only 5 days. The deadline was June 29th. That order was for everyone there [including the original villagers of Wiang Kao]. Ton Hoong is about 1 hour's walk away. A lot of people went, over 200 households. But I didn't go there. I came to Thailand.

Q: What kind of a place did people have to live in at Ton Hoong?

A: They lived all round the village, and near the army base. It was difficult for people to bring all of their possessions. They've built little huts. Two or three families live together in each hut. If they have money they can afford to buy straw roofing and live separately. If not, they have to share a hut. They came and took everyone's rice, including paddy [unmilled rice]. Then they rationed it out to everyone in Ton Hoong. It was just before we were relocated [from Wiang Kao to Ton Hoong] that they came and took all our rice. The soldiers stored it under the temple, and then that night we had to leave.

Last year we could go back to work our fields, but this year the situation's a lot worse. Now there are a lot of Shan soldiers in the area, so if anyone goes back to their houses they will be shot by the SLORC immediately. A lot have died. If people are caught working in their fields, they are arrested and have to pay 2,000 Kyat to be freed. A lot of people have had to pay this. Before I came, 5 or 6 people were killed to the north of our area. To the west several groups of 2 or 3 were killed. I was very afraid! There were 2 people who died right in our Keng Tong area. They were working at their farms and SLORC came and shot them. Then the soldiers went to the village and demanded money, blaming the villagers for letting people go to their farms. This was west of Nong Par. One *[of those killed]* was called Loong Ong, about 45 years old, and one was called Loong Ti Ya, about 46. Both men. They were both really good men. They were both married and had lots of children. Loong Ong had 5 or 6 children. They were just clearing their fields. Now their families are in Ton Hoong. When I came here no villagers were daring to hide around their villages, because they would be killed.

Q: Did other relocation sites also have to move this year?

A: Koon Mong didn't have to move. There are about 500-600 houses there. And Ho Ta didn't have to move. It's at the river crossing. Some other villages around Wiang Kao were moved to Koon Mong.

Q: Did you leave as soon as you were ordered to move to Ton Hoong?

A: Yes. It was difficult. I came via Nong Tao and Lang Kher. I took a truck at Murng Pan to come to Murng Ton, and then came to Lak Teng, and I arrived about 2 months ago. Now I work as a day labourer. If you're old like me, that's very hard! I came with my wife and children, and they're all working too. If we are lucky and the situation improves in Shan State, I pray to the spirits that we can go back several years from now.

#3.

NAME: "Nang Sai"
Shan Buddhist farmer

SEX: F

AGE: 27

FAMILY: Married, 5 children aged 2 to 14

ADDRESS: Na Kha Orn village, Nar Teng tract, Kun Hing twp **INTERVIEWED:** 30/8/97

[When interviewed "Nang Sai" was staying as a refugee in a village in northern Thailand.]

Q: Where is your village?

A: It's to the west of Wo Long. There is only a rice field between them. There were about 50 households there *[originally it had about 30, but others came to stay there from surrounding villages]*.

Q: Was your village ordered to relocate last year?

A: No. Only this year. On the 25th of May *[1997]*.

Q: Where were you ordered to move to?

A: We were told to go to wherever our relatives are. Anywhere. Some people tried to hide in the forest because they didn't have any carts or money, and some had too many children to

travel. My stepchildren came straight to Thailand with my elder sister. My husband and I and my youngest child were left. We wanted to sell our cattle, so we didn't come straight away. But before we had a chance to sell the cattle we were ordered to move to Kun Hing. Three or four households from our village moved there. In Kun Hing it was hard to tell who was who. Sometimes people we knew had been moved there, but we didn't know where they were until we met them by accident in the market. In Kun Hing we couldn't do anything except try to go back and get our paddy and rice. After we were moved, if we wanted to go back to our houses we had to ask for a permit from the SLORC. A lot of people got passes for this. We went back twice to get our rice, because we had a lot left there, and nothing happened. But the third time, the killing happened.

A lot of people went back to get rice, mostly from Keng Kham. As for the people from Wo Long and Na Kha Orn, most of them had gone to Thailand - 2 out of every 3 households. The third time we went there were over 30 carts. Some were actually people from Kun Hing just going to buy rice cheaply from the relocated areas. One *lang* of rice was only 300 Kyat. There were maybe about 40-50 people altogether, going to different places. Some went only as far as Sai Khao, some went to Keng Kham. They were all going to their own houses, mostly to get paddy.

Q: Usually when you went on these trips did you see SLORC soldiers on the way?

A: Yes. Sometimes they arrested people and then released them. The second time we were captured at Sai Khao and held for 2 nights and then released. We were arrested at 7:00 at night at Sai Khao. The village was already deserted [*it had been forced to move*]. When we arrived there, we were told to stop. About 20-30 Burmese soldiers came and surrounded our cart. We had our ID cards and our written passes, but they didn't ask to see them. We were told to go and give our names to the commanding officer, so my husband went and reported our names. He then came back and we had to wait at our cart. We were told we couldn't go yet. We had to stay at Loong Heng Banda's house. He used to be the headman of Sai Khao. We were guarded by soldiers on either side of the door, and also two at the foot of the front steps of the house. They also guarded around the house. It was solid with soldiers' uniforms! There was no way we could escape.

Someone said the soldiers were #246 Battalion. Some SLORC military column had not arrived, and it seemed that they wanted to use our carts if the column didn't arrive. But then the column arrived so we were released after two days.

Q: The third time, when the killing happened, were you going to the village or on the way back?

A: We were on the way back. Our carts were full of paddy. On that trip, when we reached Keng Kham we all went in different directions, each to our own houses, and the people who were buying rice went to buy it somewhere. We didn't all come back at the same time. About 30 of our carts were together on the way back, and there was another group behind us too. When we reached Sai Khao they made us get off our carts and go to give our names. Then they made us stay in a house. It was the same house we were kept in before. All the men and women were kept in the same house. The soldiers were surrounding us.

There were 3 women who were released at Sai Khao, including Nai Hoo and Nang Non. They were allowed to run away. They were not brought to the cemetery like us. They ran to Khok Ha Lar. They had been forced to come to the house of the headman, and they were brought out with us, but they were not taken with us. They were kicked into the bushes along the way and allowed to run away. They were told, "Run if you don't want to die!"

Q: Why did they choose those 3 women? Were they young or old?

A: They could speak Burmese. But I couldn't speak it. They could have killed me, but they took pity on my child. The captain even said to me, "I pity your child".

We were captured on the evening of June 15th [1997], and the next day they killed the people. They called people away in groups, chosen one by one. They came to the door and called out the people's names one by one. First they called away 16 people, 12 men and 4 women. Then they came and called another group of 10, all men. When they called the first group out, they didn't tie them up. They just called them out. When they called out the next group, which included my husband, they tied them up. They tied them up at Sai Khao temple. The rest of us were also called out straight after they'd called out the 10 people. They walked behind us with their guns. There was myself and my baby son, and 4 other girls.

The others were taken and tied up and killed in the cemetery. They took women too. They didn't say anything, they just took them away and shot them. Just to the west they killed the 12 men and 4 women, and the 10 people in the other group were killed at the old cemetery on the road to Keng Tong. There were also 3 people who were caught grilling beef in Sai Khao village - they were not even tied up, they were shot straight away. They hadn't come with our group, they were just there. They were the sons-in-law of Loong Noom.

The soldiers were waiting there with us. There was a young girl of about 12, who came with us. Then there were also two other girls who ran later with us. The soldiers said they would let us go. They didn't let us leave the same way we came, they made us go another way. They said, "If the soldiers up there catch you, they will kill us too!" They were secretly releasing us. "We were ordered to kill all of you!", they said. They said we shouldn't go to Kun Hing. I said if I didn't go to Kun Hing, where was I supposed to go? They said, "Go to Kho Lam!" I said I'd never seen Kho Lam and my child was still so small! I'd never even seen the road to Kho Lam! So they told me to go back to Keng Kham. I said, "Can I really go?" Then I leaned back against a tree with my child. The soldier said, "No, you can't go yet because they haven't fired yet. If you go now, you will get shot too!"

So I sat and waited there for about 15 minutes. I was sure I would be killed too! I was shaking, shaking! I was sitting and shaking all the time. My blood was hot all over my body. I could not think properly. I would have run away, but they were standing there guarding me. There were 3 or 4 of them. There were 6 of us: 4 girls and me and my baby. There were quite a lot of children who had come with us. You see, they wanted to come along with their parents.

Then to the west I heard bursts of machine gun fire. We heard the shots. The soldiers did the shooting. We heard *tat-tat-tat-tat-tat!!* Shooting like that. They were killing the 16 people. Then after a just a bit I heard gunfire just nearby [*killing the group of 10 or the group of three*].

But it was all overgrown, so I couldn't see. It was only about 7 or 8 armspans away, but they wouldn't let me go and see. There were so many - the place was black with soldiers. Wherever you looked, there were soldiers. Some were doing the killing. Some took the carts to be burned. They took and killed the cattle to eat, and they let some of the cattle go. The officer who released us did not go and watch the shootings. There were two officers guarding us. I don't know how many soldiers altogether did the shooting. But the tactical commander went with the group of 16, and in that group none of the 4 women survived.

After the shooting had stopped in both places I asked if I could go, but they said I had to wait. We were allowed to go about half an hour after all the shooting. Then they said I could go, but I should run, and not to go on the main road. I said I would go to Keng Kham, but the soldier said I should make sure that I didn't let anyone see me or I would die. I was very scared.

I went to Keng Kham and then back to Kun Hing with my child on my back. I went by night. When I was at Keng Kham I met a man called P--- who used to be a government official in our village. We went together. Sometimes the grass was very high. We didn't go into Wan Lao.

Q: How old were the 4 children who were released?

A: About 14-15 years old. Two of them were quite young, about 11-12 years old. The oldest one, Ee Mya Zing, was 15 and was the younger sister of my husband. The other 3 were quite young and they ran after me because their parents had been killed. They were Ee Nyunt, Ee Non - daughter of Nai Zern, and Ee Kham Awng. One of them was about 9-10 years old and the others were about 11 or 12 years old. I was the only adult survivor in my group. The rest were all killed, except for the 3 women who were released and ran away before the shooting started. I think I would be dead if I hadn't had my son with me. One of the other women left her baby at home and her baby was even younger than mine. She squeezed out milk from her breast to show them that she had a baby at home, but the SLORC commander, the tactical commander himself, just said that her baby must have died, and that was why she hadn't brought it with her. They killed her. The captain *[who was guarding her group]* said to us that the soldiers had been ordered to kill any woman with children over 7 months old.

Q: What is your baby son's name?

A: Sai Seng Sa.

Q: So 29 people died altogether?

A: Yes, 29 died. In the group of 10 my husband died. In the group of 16 my younger sister and her husband died. My sister was called Nang Zarm. My brother-in-law was called Wa Lik Ta. My husband was called Pin Nya. There were only 7 left alive *[the 3 women who could speak Burmese, and her, her son, and the two other girls who were released at the end]*.

Q: Can you name some of those who were killed?

A: My husband's name was Pin Nya. He was 41 years old. My husband's sister's name was Nang Zarm and she was 39 years old, and her husband was Wa Lik Ta, 43 years old. Only these 3 were my close relatives. Loong Ka Ling could also be called a relative but a bit distant. I also know some of the others. I know Loong La, Loong Aw, and Loong Pan Ta, all from Keng Lom. Loong Ka Ling and Ai Ing Ta I mentioned earlier, and Ai Ook Ta Ma and Loong Pan Ta.

Q: Among the people who were killed, what were the ages of the youngest and the oldest?

A: My husband was 41, his brother-in-law was about 43 and his sister was 39. The oldest in the group were about 48 or 50 at most. The youngest was a boy named Ing Ta, he was about 15 years old.

Q: Was this group of soldiers the same group that had detained you the time before?

A: I don't know. I was too scared. I don't remember. They had red badges on their arms! *[Burmese Army badges are red.]* The officer with us could speak Shan. He looked like an Indian. He was hairy. He could speak Shan very clearly.

Q: You said earlier that there was a second group of carts that were coming behind you. What happened to them?

A: Yes, I know. Pi Nang Mya was in that group. As soon as they were warned *[the SLORC soldiers just down the road warned them not to go any further or they might be killed]*, they turned and drove away and hid themselves in the forest not very far away. They even heard the gunfire and thought we were all killed. When the shooting died down for a while and they believed the soldiers had gone, they quickly drove to Kun Hing taking the same route. They said many carts were still burning when they passed the killing site. It turned out that one of the *[SLORC]* soldiers was accidentally shot and wounded during the killings, so the soldiers had left to carry him away as soon as they thought we'd all been killed.

They'd taken away and burned all our carts, shot all our bullocks and shot dead all the others. Only the children and I were left under a tree. After the shooting, they kept me for awhile and then told me to go. I was not allowed even to go back to Kun Hing, so I had to walk to Keng Kham with the children, carrying my son on my back, all night and all the next morning. The children were too young and we had to keep resting under the bushes. While we were resting, a man walking like a drunk came after us from the same direction. He was Nan Ti from Sai Moon, and he was seriously wounded. One of his arms was almost severed, and there were two bullet holes here in his upper right chest and two holes in his lower right chest. I was terribly sick at the sight. I asked him if the others were all killed and he said yes. And I asked what about him, and he said he'd fainted and when he came to he just walked away. With blood gushing out of his wounds he asked me to help him, but I just couldn't. I told him I would go ahead and ask other villagers to come and help him and he said yes. I did tell the villagers when I got to a farming camp, but it was raining all night and no one dared to go to his rescue. He died later, about half an hour's walk away at Kho Sai Moon bridge.

I walked towards Kun Hing, by way of Ho Ha and Nar Nam Pu. I took short-cut routes wherever possible because there were SLORC soldiers at every bend and crossroads. Now the road from Kun Hing to Keng Tong is completely deserted. They shoot at everyone they see. Even when they use carts to transport military rations they change carts at Sai Khao - troops from Kun Hing escort the carts to Sai Khao, and troops from Keng Tong bring carts there to meet them. They transfer the loads and return immediately after.

Q: Weren't you afraid to stay in Kun Hing after you'd been told not to go there?

A: Yes, I was terribly afraid. I felt as if the soldiers would turn up anytime to get me. I was startled even in my dreams. I stayed in Kun Hing for some time, making offerings at the funeral rites for the dead. Everyone who came to the funeral rites held for my husband and my brother and sister-in-law cried. Even some of the SLORC soldiers at the killing site had told me that they had killed all our men and we should conduct funeral rites for them when we got home.

Q: Do you know what the SLORC did with the bodies of those they'd killed?

A: They did not try to do anything. They just left the bodies to rot. Some time afterwards someone from our village said the shooting could have been a trick of the Burmese soldiers, that maybe they just took our men away as porters. So we hired a Burmese Army veteran to go and have a look. He had to be an ex-soldier because no one else would dare do it, and even then he had to go with a group of carts that were being forced to serve the Army. No one dared go to bury them. He found their skeletons all over the place, and 4 piles of long hair from the 4 women victims. The man could only take a quick look when he was with the bullock-carts that were carrying supplies for the Army. Otherwise anyone found in the area would be shot at. No one was allowed to go more than 3 miles beyond the perimeter of Kun Hing. Some people who went to collect bamboo shoots were shot dead in a bamboo grove. They just kill us Shan whenever they want. For them, a Shan life is less valuable than a chicken's. The SLORC soldiers announced that wherever shooting breaks out, all the villagers in that area will be killed. I was too afraid to stay on. I had to leave. You never know when and where fighting will break out.

I just got here 7 days ago, on the 23rd [August 1997]. I came with my husband's parents. They are old and have no one to care for them back there, so they just came with me. We came by trucks and we had to give money to the drivers who in turn gave it to every checkpoint.

Q: What do you plan to do now, how will you survive here?

A: I have no specific plan. I can only think of working as a day labourer.

Q: What about the situation in Kun Hing and Sai Khao now? Will it get better or worse?

A: It can't be getting better because SLORC troops are still roaming around shooting at everyone they see. Even people in Kun Hing cannot go out to tend their farms and fields.

Q: Do you think you will be able to go back?

A: I don't think so in the foreseeable future.

Q: Do you know about the incident at Tard Pa Ho? [*where a similar massacre occurred the same day*]

A: We heard that the SLORC soldiers killed people, pushed their carts into the river and shot some of the bullocks and let some loose. Either way, they will kill all the cattle at one time or another when they pass through. 26 people were killed altogether at Tard Pa Ho.

#4.

NAME: "Sai Wa Ling"

SEX: M

AGE: 40

Shan Buddhist farmer

FAMILY: Married, 1 child aged 21

ADDRESS: Loi Leng village, Murng Kerng township

INTERVIEWED: 30/8/97

[When interviewed "Sai Wa Ling" was staying as a refugee in a village in northern Thailand.]

Q: Which way is Loi Leng from Murng Kerng?

A: It is about 2 miles north of Murng Kerng, close to the main road. Loi Leng has about 120 houses. The SLORC camp is in the *[Murng Kerng]* town.

Q: When did they start moving people to your village?

A: Sometime in June this year *[1997]*, after I came here. I arrived here sometime in April. When I left people were being ordered to move. Many had to move to the town and some to my village. They were ordered to move when I was still there, but they actually moved only after I left. Some people who came later told me about it. People in the countryside had to move to gather at some specified villages like Ham Ngai, and some had to move to the town. I never saw anything, but the Burmese were forcing people to move. There were no battles or even skirmishes but still they forced people to move.

Q: What made you decide to come here?

A: The situation had become so confused and too difficult to make a living. The villages are all becoming overcrowded *[due to the relocations]* and there is very little land to work, and at the same time the Burmese authorities keep asking for too much paddy. It has become insufficient to live on. So I decided to move. They ask for paddy every year. The amount they ask from each acre of land is almost as much as the amount the land can produce. Some people have to buy it *[they don't have enough rice for the SLORC quota so they have to buy it in the market]* and some cannot afford to have enough to eat. That is why people are coming to Thailand to earn money.

Q: Do you think you'll go back there any time soon?

A: I'm hoping to be able to return early next year because I still have my family there.

Q: Is anyone around there being used for any labour, like on the roads or army camps?

A: All year round people are being forced to do one thing or another, mostly building roads. They have to work on the main road, fixing it where it's gone bad. About 10 people from each village tract have to go, so there are usually 80-100 people there all the time. We have to go about 24 miles away, and work there for 5 days. Mostly it is splitting rocks and spreading gravel on the road, and digging ditches along both sides of the road. We have to sleep beside the road, under small shelters built of leaves. All have to go, including old people, women and children.

Q: Do the SLORC give anything, any pay or food?

A: No, they give nothing. Instead they give a beating to those who do not work hard enough.

Q: What is the price of rice in Murng Kerng now if you have to buy rice?

A: I'm not sure about now, but it was 600 Kyat per tin just before we left.

Q: Are many people still coming to Thailand?

A: Yes, many people are still coming. There are almost no young people left in some places. The people from Murng Kerng are mostly in Chiang Mai and Bangkok [Thailand]. I heard that most of them are doing construction. Myself, I'm picking chillies and onions. Some have come with their families. There are more people coming this year than last year. Only about half the people are left in Murng Kerng, even in the town. We cannot even do odd jobs or buy and sell things. Some have even sold their houses and property to come to Thailand with their families because of the hardship in earning a living. There is not enough land to cultivate near the town.

Q: What about here? Is it difficult to find work or can you find work and survive alright?

A: Though what we earn here is barely enough, it is better because we don't have to give some of our earnings to other people [i.e. SLORC] like back there.

#5.

NAME: "Phra Zing Ta"

SEX: M

AGE: 29

Shan Buddhist monk

ADDRESS: Lai Kha town

INTERVIEWED: 31/8/97

["Phra Zing Ta" is originally from Lai Kha in central Shan State, but now stays at a monastery in Thailand. When interviewed he had just returned from a visit to Lai Kha.]

Q: How long have you been a monk?

A: Nine years as a monk. But I became a novice when I was 12 years old. I am from Lai Kha.

Q: On this visit, when did you go back to Lai Kha?

A: I went back on 8 May 1997, and I came back here on 16 July 1997. I went to Lai Kha town itself and two village tracts south of Lai Kha, Wan Pung Tai tract and Na Mang tract, where a Shan literacy campaign was taking place. This campaign was organised by the monk community in Lai Kha at the monastery of xxxx in xxxx tract.

Q: What was the general situation in these village tracts?

A: Because these village tracts are under the control of the Pa'O ceasefire group, PNO, they are relatively peaceful. Most of the people there are Shan, with some Pa'O living in the mountain ranges. Once in a while the SLORC troops come and look at the situation and return quietly. Whenever they come they try to find out if there are any Shan resistance members in the area.

Q: What about the areas west of the Nam Teng River?

A: Village tracts like Wan Yerng, west of the Nam Teng, were warned that if any fighting breaks out in their area they will have to move to Nong Leng. Other village tracts like Pung Nur, Wan Phai and Wan Pan will also have to move, but I don't know where. Nothing has happened yet because there hasn't been any fighting. They even said that they will move towns as well as villages if they decide it is necessary.

Q: And what about the areas east of Lai Kha?

A: Very bad. Not a single village is left unmoved east of the Nam Teng except Wan Sang. The soldiers are shooting at innocent people, killing livestock for food and taking whatever they

want. All villages in the area from Wan Sang up to Murng Nong and Kay See have had to move. From July 7th to 10th [1997] all had to move to the town, including Wan Sang, except Parng Pone relocation site where SLORC troops have their base. Some have already been moved 3 or 4 times. From Nong Kaw to Tard Mok, from Tard Mok to Zai Lai [Kun], from Zai Lai to Wan Sang and finally from Wan Sang to the town [Lai Kha]. Some had to move directly from Zai Lai Kun to the town. All of that includes no less than 40 or 50 villages.

Q: So what is it like in Lai Kha town right now? Where are all these people staying?

A: Some people still have enough to eat, but many don't have enough to eat. Some have to beg along the road, and people are crying all the time. Some people take refuge in the monasteries, some are staying at their relatives' houses, and some have built tents out of plastic sheets under trees. Many people are begging around for food.

Q: Does the SLORC give them anything at all? Any food?

A: No, they don't give anything. Furthermore they even take all the cattle and the belongings left in the old villages. They take rice for themselves, they kill the cattle and make dried meat, and then their [SLORC soldiers'] wives and children sell the meat to the villagers.

Q: These people who have been forced to Lai Kha, do they have to do any forced labour?

A: People are being forced to guard the main road, to prevent Shan soldiers from crossing and to protect travellers from robberies. If any robberies occur anywhere, the villagers responsible for that spot or area will be punished. Along each mile of the road there are four points where they have to stand guard. Two persons at each point. They build a little hut or tent beside the road. They have to guard for one week, day and night. This is all along the road from Lai Kha to Murng Nong. Those who are close to Murng Nong have to do it there, and so on. And at night, townspeople have to guard their towns. They have to come out to the outskirts of the town. About sixteen people, two people at each entrance, though there is no fence.

People who are living around the vicinity of the [Army] camps or the base are always being forced to do one thing or another. They have to grow beans, soy beans, and maize for the Army. They have to make fences for the plots of land where they cultivate for the Army. And they have to dig ditches and trenches around their bases for them. They fetch water for them and gather firewood, and all sorts of things. All the time. It has become a routine for the villagers. Mostly they use the new arrivals [*those who have been relocated*] to guard the roads, and to dig the ditches they use people who already lived there. The villagers get nothing in terms of wages, and they have to provide their own food. They are forced to work for the Army for three days and then they can return to work for themselves for three days. It's very difficult for them to make a living.

Q: What Army group is it?

A: 515 and 64 [Battalions]. But as far as I know it's not just these two bases, almost all the SLORC bases in Shan state make people do this kind of forced labour.

Q: What about the railway near Lai Kha?

A: The railway itself is not in Lai Kha. It's from Taunggyi to Nam Zang, but people in the area from Lai Kha, Loi Lem and Murng Kerng had to take turns working on the railway construction

site. Now it's finished to Nam Zang. The train is already running from Taunggyi to Nam Zang - it runs from Shwe Nyaung [*east of Taunggyi*]. They brought the locomotive by truck and then put it on the railway and they run it this short distance. Now they are making a railway up to Taunggyi from Shwe Nyaung, but it's not finished yet. It's not running yet.

Q: And this railway, what's it mainly used for?

A: Mostly it's used to carry soldiers, and supplies and weapons for the soldiers.

Q: In these areas east of Lai Kha are there still any people trying to stay around their villages?

A: Yes, there are still people trying to hide and trying to cultivate some plots of land because they cannot find enough food in the towns. They risk their lives and stay.

Q: Has SLORC killed or captured anyone in those areas?

A: Yes. I don't know exactly how many, but at least 40 people have already been killed in the Lai Kha area since last year, not to mention the areas around Murng Nong and Kay See. Most of them were killed by being shot on sight. Usually the SLORC didn't ask anything, they just shot people as soon as they saw them. There were two men at Wan Bang, in Wan Heng tract, Lai Kha township [*Wan Bang had been forced to move to Tard Mok*]. They were staying at Tard Mok. They went to find their cattle at their old village. SLORC soldiers found them at that village and arrested them, tied them up with bundles of hay and set fire to them. One of them died instantly. I don't know his name. But the other, Kay Li Ta, came to receive treatment at Zai Lai for a while, and died there after ten days. He was 32 years old. It took place in the second week of May [1997]. It was soldiers from #515 [*Light Infantry Battalion*] from Lai Kha that did it. Kay Li Ta had a family. Now his wife and children are begging around in Lai Kha town.

Q: I heard that up around Murng Kerng people are not allowed to transport rice and they are not allowed to buy more than one tin of rice. Is there anything like that in Lai Kha?

A: It's true about Murng Kerng. And now I've heard news that in Lai Kha people will have to give their rice to the Army and the Army will give it back to them on a daily basis. But not yet. Wherever there is any activity by Shan soldiers they will do it. If it's in town, they'll also do it in town. Now they are already ordering people to take their rice and put it in a warehouse in Lai Kha.

Q: When you came back from Lai Kha, which way did you come?

A: I came back via Kengtung. Along the road from Takaw to Nam Zang, SLORC soldiers had to escort the cars. They wait until there are about 20 cars, then they send soldiers to escort them as one group up to Kho Lam, and then in Kho Lam they switch and another group escorts them to Nam Zang. They do it once every two days. The condition of the road is very bad now. When I came it took me six days. There were landslides [*due to rainy season*]. Along the roads there were a lot of people. I can't count how many. From Nam Zang to Takaw there are many small villages, new villages, along the road [*relocated people*].

Q: What do you think the situation will be for those people in the next year or two?

A: I don't see any change coming in the foreseeable future. If SLORC is still holding power 20 years from now, I don't expect any change. They will keep relocating villages again and again. There will be no development or progress in the area.

Out of the people who have been forced to move, about 80% have come to Thailand. Only about 20% went to the town. There are many people from Shan State now working in lychee orchards, in cultivation, in construction sites, and also in shops, washing dishes... almost every shop, every house has Shan servants now. There are many young women who have just disappeared. They have been sold to the flesh trade. Many people have been exploited by their employers. No one gets proper wages. The refugees from Shan State have to suffer in this way.

#6.

NAME: "Sai Lai Kham"

Shan Buddhist farmer

SEX: M

AGE: 36

FAMILY: Married, 2 children

ADDRESS: Wan Jong village, Wan Boong tract, Nam Zang twp **INTERVIEWED:** 31/8/97

["Sai Lai Kham" was interviewed at a worksite in Thailand. His village in Shan State was used as a relocation site.]

Q: Where is Wan Jong?

A: Only about 3 miles west of Nam Zang. I left 5 or 6 months ago. There used to be about 50 houses. But I don't know exactly how many more have now been moved to my village.

Q: When did other villages start being moved to your village?

A: Last year it went on for almost the whole year. The first time it was people from Sarm Kha and Nam Wo - 2 or 3 villages. Now people from Ton Hoong Hai Lai have also come to the village. Ton Hoong Hai Lai is about one day's walk away. Even people from Kho Lam [*relocation site*] have moved to our village because there was no space left for them to live in the town. Over 30 new households have moved to our village.

Q: The people who have moved into your village, how are they surviving now?

A: They haven't had enough time to get work. They just build little huts and try to go back to get things from their old villages. Sometimes it is easy, sometimes difficult, because they have to go and come back secretly.

Q: Are there many Burmese troops in the area?

A: Yes. Now the military bases are all around the towns. There are about 10 bases, including the air base and all that near Nam Zang. Now our village has not much workable land. The military has confiscated it and they want to build a base there. They're also forcing the villagers to grow a kind of bean for the Army. Each 10 households has to grow about 10 acres of beans. Our village has to work on 10 acres. Altogether there are thousands of acres like that. They took away all the land from the outskirts of the village to the edge of the town, no matter whose it was. There are no fences around that land, and if our cattle enter those fields then they're shot by the Army.

Q: What about the farmers who lost their land?

A: The Army said nothing about that, and the villagers dared not say anything. The land they confiscated included only a few rice fields, it was mostly uncultivated land. So people still have some fields left to work on. But the trouble is they can't let their cattle loose, because if the

cattle put one foot inside the plot of land, the owner has to pay 500 Kyat for one hoofprint. If we tell them who the owner is they'll fine him 500 Kyat, and if we don't tell them who the owner is, they shoot dead the cattle.

Q: Do the people who have been forced to move to the village also have to farm for the Army?

A: Yes, together with the original villagers. They force not just our village to work, but all of the villages around our area. The villagers who stay the furthest away have to come and stay the night to do work for the Burmese Army. Villages close to ours didn't have to move because they have to work on the farm for the Army, but outside our area many villages had to move, four or five whole village tracts.

Q: Has the new Army base in your village been built yet?

A: Yes, but it's just temporary buildings of bamboo and thatch, and the soldiers there are always changing. It's combined forces of soldiers from many battalions. We weren't forced to move, but we had to move because we couldn't stand the Army. The soldiers ransacked our houses whenever there was no one in them. Bamboo, thatch and whatever they want, the soldiers cut and take from our houses.

Q: Can the villagers still keep all of their rice, or does the Army want to take it?

A: When I left the villagers could still keep their paddy, but the problem is that the Army wouldn't permit them to mill much, just enough at a time to eat.

Q: Why didn't you stay in your village?

A: In my area you could say that there is peace, but it's very difficult to make a living because of the forced labour of the Army. We have to work for the Army at least 10 days of every month, and if you fail to go or to give them whatever they want, you are arrested or beaten or tied up. Even our headman was tied up once. Whenever you make a little mistake you will be tied up. You can't even leave your clothes hanging outside your house, because the soldiers will take everything they like if you are not there.

People from our village are still coming here. Some came just 2 months ago. I was about to go back to our village, and they came and told me the situation was very bad. It's much worse. Before I left, the Army just came and announced they would confiscate some land and start building their base. But now they have confiscated a lot of land and forced people to build their base. I don't think my village will be moved because it's fertile land that feeds the town. So the Army didn't force them to move, but instead they came and built their base there. It's close to the main road to Loi Lem.

Q: Do you know anything about the railway to Nam Zang?

A: About 1 or 2 years ago I had to go and work there. The whole year, the year before last. Almost the whole year. In my village we had 20 houses. Ten people, one from each house on rotation, had to go to work for one week at a time. Every month. We are quite far from the railway. We thought that after the railway was done we would have time to do our own work, but then we had to do new work for them, and what will come next I don't know.

Q: Have many people from your area come here?

A: Yes. Here alone there are about 20 people from my village. Here there is a Shan village, so there are many Shans who have come here. Before we worked for the *[Thai government]* forestry department, but now for some reason we've been fired. They owe us 6 weeks of wages, but I don't think they're going to pay. *[This is a normal practice of Thai employers using Burmese labour; the workers are told they must work for months before being paid, then at the end of the period the employer sacks them or pays the police to arrest them instead of paying. In this case the government officials have probably written the wages down as expenses but just pocketed the money.]* Some villagers are still in the hills here.

Q: Do you have any plan to go back to your village soon?

A: I can't go back now, because I don't have any money. If it's possible and if I can afford it I want to buy a plot of land here, because I have my family with me here.

#7.

NAME: "Sai Kyawng"
Shan Buddhist farmer

FAMILY: Married, 2 children

INTERVIEWED: 31/8/97

ADDRESS: Wan Ba Lek village, Mak Mong Mon tract, Nam Zang twp

[“Sai Kyawng” was interviewed at a worksite in Thailand.]

Q: How long have you been here?

A: Nearly 2 months. I came because we often had to go and work for the Army as porters and other things. It's difficult to make a living.

Q: Was your village ordered to move?

A: No, but the villages east of my village all had to move. My village is closer to the town, just 7 miles east of Nam Zang. It has over 60 houses. About 10 villages just east of ours had to move. Loi La, Loi Ai, Wan Yorn, Koong Niu, Koong Lao, Hai Oi, ... that's all I can remember, but there were more. Everyone in Loi La and Wan Nong tracts. Our village is near the Nam Teng river, but not on the bank. Villages west of the Nam Teng didn't have to move, but those on the east side did. Some moved to Kho Lam, some to Wan Nong Koon Mong, and some to Nam Zang. It started last year, and right through this year they have still been moving everyone. Maybe even more this year, because if there is no military base they move all the villages.

Q: Which areas that weren't forced to move last year were forced to move this year?

A: East of Loi La, Loi Ai area. Last year, Wan Nong Koon Mong didn't have to move, but this year they had to move even though there is an Army base there. About 2 months ago. They moved out themselves *[without being ordered to move]* because the situation was so confusing and chaotic.

Q: Do you know if the villagers who were moved to Hai Neng *[a relocation site north of Nam Zang]* last year were moved again this year?

A: No, they weren't moved again, but there is hardly anyone left there. They don't dare stay there. There were a lot of Palaung and Tai Loi there. Also Shan. When they were first moved

there, there were a lot. But now there aren't many. A lot of Palaung have come to Thailand, not only the Shan.

Q: And is the relocation site of Ton Hoong Hai Lai [*near Kho Lam*] still there?

A: Yes, I think so. It hasn't been forced to move again because there is a military camp there.

Q: Are there many Shan soldiers in your area? Do you ever see them in your village?

A: I didn't see any myself, but SLORC soldiers said there were Shan soldiers.

Q: Did the SLORC often come to your village, or was there a base there?

A: They don't have a base at my village, but they often come and go and they have a camp at Wan Nong Koon Mong. I'm not sure which battalion it is. There are many battalions in Nam Zang. They forced us to do several kinds of work. Sometimes we had to build their camp on the hillside. We had to bring our own bamboo and materials and then build the camp for the Army. Sometimes they asked for bamboo or wood, and we had to cut it and carry it to the military base. And then they often asked for human porters and bullock carts as well. The Army has a base at [Wan Nong] Koon Mong, and our village is between that and the town [Nam Zang]. Whenever the troops go to town they take porters from our village to carry their things to and from the town, and when soldiers come out from town they also take porters from our village to carry their things to their camp.

Our village is also close to the air base. Before, they forced the villagers to build the air strip and the air base, but now it's finished. They finished it last year. Now the villagers can't even get near the air base. It's very strict around the air base.

Q: Did you come here directly from your village, or did you go somewhere else?

A: When I came, I came from my village, stopped for a night in the town and then came this way. I came through Nam Zang, Murng Nai, and Murng Pan. Many Shans are coming to Thailand. Even very old people were coming when we came. They were from Kun Hing and Kali. From our village whole households have come. Lots. Or sometimes if a house has 7 or 8 people, then just the old people are left. All the young ones leave.

Q: Have you had any news from your village since coming here?

A: No. No one has come from there since I came.

Q: Do you think your village will be moved?

A: I can't say. Some people are scared this will happen. Some are not sure.

Q: Do you think you will be able to go back some day?

A: Right now I have no money, I'm having a lot of difficulty. I can't say. Now we're working as day labour in a lychee, longan and bamboo shoot [canning] factory. My wife came before me, but when I got here I found out she'd already moved on. Now I've heard she's working somewhere in Bangkok.

#8.

NAME: "Sai Kham" **SEX:** M **AGE:** 27
Shan Buddhist farmer
FAMILY: Married, 2 children
INTERVIEWED: 2/9/97
ADDRESS: Bong Murng village, Ba Jed tract, Murng Kerng twp

["Sai Kham" was interviewed at a worksite in Thailand. His village is northeast of Murng Kerng and one day's walk south of Harm Ngai relocation site. It is 90 minutes walk east of the Murng Kerng - Kay See road. It is north of Wan Mai and west of Nar Khan.]

Q: In the village what did you do?

A: I farmed pineapples and rice. I had 30 *tong* of land.

Q: How long have you been here?

A: Over 5 months. I left because things were so difficult. A lot of the older people in the village had left. We had no house or land anymore, so we left our children with an aunt and came here. When I came, our village had not yet moved.

Q: How did you hear it was relocated?

A: They had relocated all the villages in our area, and only our village was left. Our village was ordered to move as well but it was the only one that hadn't been relocated, because we had given money to the SLORC [*villages can sometimes pay money to avoid relocation, though usually only temporarily*]. We had to pay about twice a month. I don't know exactly how much was paid altogether. There were three rates for people in the village. People who had no fields had to pay 200 Kyat per house. People with fields but who weren't rich paid 300 Kyat per house. People with fields who were rich had to pay 500 Kyat per house.

Q: When were all the other villages moved?

A: Last year. People from other villages were moved to our village. But the SLORC didn't want our village to be there anymore. It's been happening up to this year. [*Another villager added: "Last year, villages to the east of Bong Murng were relocated to Bong Murng. Then this year they were all forced to move starting in April."*] Two villages were ordered to move to our village. Then this year in Ba Jed tract, there were Bong Murng (60 households), Mak Lang (70), Mak Khe Nok (30), Nam Khi Sang (25), Nam Loi Lerng (30), and Koong Ban (50). They were all moved to Murng Kerng. This was in April this year.

Q: I've heard that all the villages east of Murng Kerng have been moved. Is this true?

A: Yes. All of them. There are none left. It's the same in Lai Kha. They've all been moved to the town.

Q: How many houses did your village have to start with?

A: 60. Two villages were ordered to move there - Koong Nim and Ho Ha [*a.k.a. Mak Lang*]. Koong Nim had about 30 houses. Ho Ha had about 5 houses. They were ordered to move last year in April. They weren't able to plant rice last year. It was very difficult for many of them. They had to sell their cattle. They sold their animals to get money and they also did labour. They made huts like this one [*he gestured to the tiny ramshackle temporary hut of scrap metal and signboards where he lives on the Thai construction site*]. They got sick. Two people died. They were 16 and 17. They were sick for 2 or 3 days and then died. Some people say it was the spirits. I don't know if more have died since I left. There was no clinic, only someone who used to live in the town who knew how to give medicine.

We had to dig ditches and build buildings at the Army camp near Murng Kerng at least once or twice a month. For one day at a time, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Some months it was every day. People took it in turns. It depended on the amount of work to be done. About 40 or 50 people had to go at a time from our village. You couldn't refuse. If you didn't go one day, you would have to go for two days.

This year Nam Let, Koong Ban, and Wan Gong villages [*in Yang Loi tract*] were burned. Last year they didn't burn the houses in the [*relocated*] villages, but this year as soon as the villagers

had taken their things out of the houses they [*SLORC soldiers*] burned them. That was in April. They burned the whole villages. The villagers hardly had time to move. When I was still there in April they shelled our village, but the first shell didn't explode.

Q: Why did they fire the shells?

A: Some Burmese soldiers came and got drunk to the east of our village and left their bottles behind. Then they claimed that the bottles were evidence that Shan soldiers had been there. They said the Shan soldiers were staying in our village. They shelled three times. There were about 10 or 20 days between each shell. The first time it didn't explode. The second time it exploded to the south of the village, in a field. The third time it fell very close to the west side of the village. The Burmese claimed it was the Shan soldiers who did the shelling. They wanted us to move. After each shell was fired, they came into the village the next morning, they searched around the village and asked questions and threatened that we would have to move. They arrested one person. They said if we were shelled three times, we would have to move. Our headman had given money many times so that we wouldn't have to move, but other villages around ours had already been moved and burned down, so they wanted us to move. They had ordered every village in Murng Kerng township that was further than 500 *wa* [armspans] from the road to move.

Q: What Army unit was this?

A: They were from a base just northwest of Murng Kerng. From the town to their camp is just half an hour's walk.

Q: Was anyone killed by the shells?

A: No. The first time it fell near the temple in the night but it didn't explode, so we didn't even know. One person who was tending his cattle found it and carried it back to the village. The people in the village decided it was the Burmese who fired it. We were afraid. We had given them money, but they still shelled us. We thought we would have to move.

Q: After you left, did you hear exactly when they were moved?

A: It was about May. They had to move near the town - near the hospital south of Murng Kerng, very close to the road. It is 1½ hours' walk from the village. The villagers were given 10 days to move, but they could still go back to plant their fields if they asked permission. Then a relative from there came and told me that in June or July, after the villagers had planted their rice, the Burmese soldiers came and spread straw over their fields and burned the seedlings. So they couldn't harvest their fields.

They made huts to live in. They also made small huts for their animals. They couldn't make houses because it was close to *Wa* [Buddhist Lent]. I don't know what they can do to live. They'll have to come to Thailand, like me. If people are not allowed to go and work on their fields, what can they do? All they can do is sell their animals and come to Thailand. Some people came straight to Thailand.

Q: You said you left your children there. Where are they now and how old are they?

A: One is 10 and one is 4. They're living with my elder sister in the relocation site. I don't know if the people in the site are being allowed to go back to their fields or not. I worry about them. My wife often cries. We are thinking of going back in October to see how they are. My wife worries about everyone back at home, and whether they can plant rice or not. She wants to go home as soon as possible.

Q: Why didn't you bring the children?

A: My sister didn't want us to. She was afraid it would be difficult for them along the way. My brother said that if we found a place to live and eat then we should go back and get them. But now we're just living on a construction site, so we can't call them here.

Q: What is your work here?

A: Construction. I'm a carpenter.

Q: Before you came, had many people from your village come to Thailand?

A: Lots. About 20-30 people. They came in families. And a lot more since then. About 50% of the people who lived east of Murng Kerng have come. Some people have already come to Thailand and then gone back to fetch the rest of their family.

I came via Lai Kha, Pang Long, Loi Lem, Nam Zang, Murng Nai, Lang Kher, Murng Ton, and Nong Ook. In Murng Nai [township] I saw the new villages, lots of them. Everyone was living along the road in small makeshift huts.

Q: Do you have any plan to go back to see your children?

A: I want to. I hope I can go back. I don't dare go alone, but if I go in a group I think I can. They [SLORC] didn't ask anything when I came. If I go back they will ask "Have you been to Thailand?" I don't think I can go back to stay. If I go back and live in the relocation site, it's not like my real home. If I go back, it'll probably just be for a visit. I'll have to come back to Thailand.

Q: Why do you think the Burmese are doing all this?

A: I don't know, but I think they're going to keep on doing this. They don't want us to support the Shan soldiers. The Shan soldiers passed through our village, but the Burmese never saw them there. Those villages that were burned - the Shan soldiers often passed through them.

#9.

| | | | |
|------------------------|--|----------------------|----------------------------|
| <u>NAME:</u> | "Sai Pan Ta" | <u>SEX:</u> M | <u>AGE:</u> 22 |
| | Pa'O Buddhist farmer | | |
| <u>NAME:</u> | "Nang Mawn" | <u>SEX:</u> F | <u>AGE:</u> 18 |
| | Pa'O Buddhist farmer | | |
| <u>FAMILY:</u> | Married, 1 child | | |
| <u>ADDRESS:</u> | Sanen village, Sanen tract, Loi Lem township | | <u>INTERVIEWED:</u> |
| | 25/2/98 | | |

["Sai Pan Ta" and "Nang Mawn" are married. When interviewed they were staying as refugees in northern Thailand. Their village is in the hills between Taunggyi and Lai Kha.]

Q: Why and when did you come to Thailand?

"Sai Pan Ta": We have been here for 20 days. We had problems earning our living because we had to move 4 or 5 months ago. After we received the order, we had to move and it was impossible to earn our living.

Q: How long did they give you to move?

“Sai Pan Ta”: We had 7 days to move, they said that after 7 days they would burn down the village. There were about 50 households in the village. We were allowed to carry our belongings only during these 7 days. After that we were no longer allowed, and they burned down everything.

“Nang Mawn”: Even if there was someone still at home they burned it all down. One old man, he was the rice mill owner, he went back to his rice mill after 7 days and they burned him to death inside his rice mill. His name was Sanaka.

Q: Did they tell you why you had to move?

“Sai Pan Ta”: They gave no reason in the *[written]* order, but they told us, “We have to kill all the rebels, so your village has to move because you are helping the rebels.” The Shan, Pa’O and Wa armies used to come to the village, the Shan army quite often. The Shan army was doing nothing, they just passed through, we didn’t need to give them anything. It is a ceasefire area.

Another villager: It is MTA area and a ceasefire zone.

Q: Where did you have to move to?

“Sai Pan Ta”: We had to move to Pang Long town. Around that area, every small village had to move. Pang Long is a big town.

“Nang Mawn”: All of Sanen tract had to move to Pang Long town. All the villages far from the town had to move to the town. Some fled to Thailand, but we ourselves moved to Pang Long first for one or two months and later we moved to Thailand.

Q: How was the life in that place?

“Sai Pan Ta”: The Burmese arranged for nothing, we had to take care of ourselves in everything. They gave no food. Not only did they not give any food, but they also made the price of the rice very expensive *[probably by extorting heavy “taxes” from anyone selling rice]*. You had to pay 200 or 300 Kyat for one *pyi* *[about 2 kg., which would normally cost less than 100 Kyat]*. There were so many people there, about 1,000 or 2,000 but I don’t know exactly. People got diseases there, malaria and also other diseases because of the lack of food. We were not allowed to go out farming.

“Nang Mawn”: If they found someone outside they’d shoot him. When the crops were ready to be reaped, they burned them down.

“Sai Pan Ta”: When we were there we had to cut firewood and sell it, and that way we could get 50 Kyat a day. Only that.

Q: At the relocation site did you have to do any work for the Army?

“Sai Pan Ta”: Yes, I had to work in the rice and corn fields of the Army. We got nothing from those fields.

Another villager: #513 *[Light Infantry Battalion]* was the unit number of the soldiers near the relocation site.

Q: How did you come to Thailand?

“Sai Pan Ta”: We couldn’t find work, we had no food and we couldn’t earn our living so we had to walk to Thailand. It took over ten days ...

“Nang Mawn”: Walking through the jungle and starving along the way.

“Sai Pan Ta”: There were Burmese soldiers on the way. They didn’t ask for anything, but we had to tell lies to them. If they had known that we were going to Thailand they would have sent us to jail. I told them that I was going to visit some relatives in the next village.

Q: Could you bring anything with you?

“Sai Pan Ta”: We could bring only clothes. Five people from our village fled to Thailand.

“Nang Mawn”: Many people went to Thailand but we don’t know where - some went to Chiang Mai, some to Bangkok, some to Pai ...

“Sai Pan Ta”: I don’t want to go back because if I go back they’ll kill me. So I dare not go back.

Q: How was the life in your village before all this?

“Sai Pan Ta”: The village was far from an army camp. The soldiers often came and we had to work for them. We had to cut wood and work on the railway. The railway goes from Nam Zang to Murng Nai. I had to work there over a period of about 7 or 8 months. We had to sleep there. They didn’t supply anything. Women and children about 12 years old also had to work. When we were working, if we worked slowly they beat us with a rifle butt. There was beating and killing. I saw someone die, and I myself was beaten there 4 months ago, before we went to the relocation site.

“Nang Mawn”: We also had to do farming for the soldiers.

“Sai Pan Ta”: So if there were 5 people in a family, two of them had to work on forced labour and three of them could work in their fields. But if a family had only two or three people, they had to leave their farm. Nobody was free to take care of what they needed for their living *[all the family members had to do forced labour]*.

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|------------------------|---|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| <u>NAME:</u> | “Nang Harn” | <u>SEX:</u> F | <u>AGE:</u> 23 |
| | Shan Buddhist farmer | | |
| <u>FAMILY:</u> | Married, no children | | |
| <u>ADDRESS:</u> | Nong Yang village, Murng Kerng township | <u>INTERVIEWED:</u> | |
| | 25/2/98 | | |

[“Nang Harn” just got married after arriving in Thailand as a refugee.]

Q: When and how did you have to move?

A: The soldiers ordered us to move in the 8th month *[on the Shan calendar, equivalent to July 1997; relocations to Murng Kerng began in April 1997]*, during the time we replant the rice *[from the nurseries into the fields]*. In my area they gave us only 4 days to move, and they said that after that they would burn down everything. We couldn’t go into our fields - if we had gone they would have shot us as well as our cattle. They gave the order only once. The villagers didn’t have time to take all their belongings with them to the relocation site, so some lost their things. The Army forced us to move to Murng Kerng. Some villagers moved to Murng Kerng town and some went to Thailand. Some of them did not want to move to the town so they went straight to Thailand. Only the rich went to the town, because they thought that they could continue their business there. The poor went to Thailand.

I am the eldest so I have to take care of my parents. I have one brother and one sister, but my brother and sister are still young. My brother is 16 and my sister is 14. We arrived in the town but we couldn't get any jobs there to earn money and support our parents. A lot of people were in the relocation site. There were people from 5 or 6 village tracts, it was very big.

Q: Did all the villagers in the area have to move to the same place?

A: They didn't necessarily have to go to Murng Kerng - if they wanted to go to other towns like Lai Kha they could go there. It depended on the villagers.

Another villager: The soldiers are LIB #517 and #513, they are from Pang Long area.

Q: How was the life there [*in the relocation site at Murng Kerng*]?

A: They didn't help us. They gave us nothing and they asked for everything they wanted. They ordered us to move but then they gave us nothing, so we had to work on a villager's farm and we earned 25 or 30 Kyat a day [*about 10 cents US at market exchange rate*] for that. But we still had to pay for the Shan Army [*SSNA troops who now operate as militia for SPDC*] and also for the Burmese soldiers. We were badly treated by the Burmese soldiers. The Burmese Army just kept on collecting money. The Burmese soldiers demanded everything they wanted and so did the Shan army, so the rich became poor and the poor became poorer. We were not allowed to go out of the town to farm. If we did, they would say we have contact with the Shan army and they would shoot us. The soldiers didn't give any permission at all to go, not even for one or two days. If we went outside to find things to do we might be raped by the soldiers, not only that but after raping women they often kill them. Nang Nu was raped but not killed. That was in December [*1997*]. Nang Nu was my friend. Oh! Life was very hard in that place. I was afraid, so I ran to Thailand.

Q: Did you have to work for the army?

A: Sometimes we had to do things for the soldiers, like carrying food or ammunition to the front line. It was very often. Any time they needed porters you had to go. If people wouldn't go they came and arrested and beat them. The things they had to carry were very heavy, and if you couldn't climb the mountains they beat you with a bamboo rod. Usually the men had to carry and the women had to serve as guides to show the way [*the women were most likely being used as human minesweepers and shields*]. When people didn't understand Burmese, they beat them until they were wounded. But I can speak Burmese, because I studied in the Burmese school up to 4th standard.

We had to carry southward from Murng Kerng, and then up the mountains to Murng Sang. From Murng Kerng to Murng Sang it took us two days' walk. To go to Murng Hsu from Murng Kerng is more than 10 days journey, but I didn't have to go there myself, only some of my relatives.

Q: Did you have to do any other kind of work?

A: Yes, we also had to work for the Burmese soldiers at their camp. We had to clean their camp and to build fences. For 3 months we had to dig bunkers for the soldiers.

Q: Why did you finally decide to flee?

A: I felt very miserable there. People couldn't stay there, especially women. Nothing was left, so we decided to come to Thailand, but we had no money for a car so we had to walk for 10 or 15 days. I had to leave all the money I'd earned before with my parents, because they are getting old. I had to walk to Ho Mung [*former headquarters of Khun Sa's MTA*] and then when I got there I hired myself out to get some money. After I had enough money in Ho Mung to pay for truck fare, I was able to come to Thailand. I had to avoid the Burmese soldiers or they would have taken our ID cards and our money, and they wouldn't return them to us so that we wouldn't ever be able to go back to our village.

Q: Did the soldiers try to stop you on the way?

A: On the Thai side it's okay, but the Burmese are stopping people and not letting them go to Thailand anymore. Even though they forbid people to come to Thailand, the villagers find some way to come to Thailand anyway. If you try to go to Thailand they might shoot you, but if we didn't come we don't know how we could survive there. So we had to come, even knowing that they'll shoot us if they see us. A lot of people [*from the relocation site*] came to Thailand but not together, they came many different ways. Some went to Chiang Mai, some went to Pai.

Q: How is your life in Thailand?

A: I arrived here about one month ago. We have nothing. Life here is also miserable. I owe some money to many people already and my parents keep on sending messages calling me to go back to them. I really want to go back home, but I can't until I have enough money. The money that we earn now is not enough, it is just enough for survival. I want to bring my parents here but I can't. If I'm able to go back to see my parents and if they're still in trouble, I will bring them back with me to Thailand. But if I don't have enough money I won't be able. The Burmese treated us very badly, they are very cruel. I cannot go back to Shan State yet, and if I do I will not be allowed to come back here again.

Q: How was your life in your village before the relocation order?

A: The soldiers gave us trouble. Very often they came and demanded rice, 2 or 3 pyi [*about 4-6 kg., per family*]. Even if we had nothing to give them we had to go to our [*foot-powered*] rice mill and take some rice there to give to the soldiers. Some people had some, and they went to take their paddy to pound it and give it to the soldiers. After they got the rice the Burmese soldiers didn't even eat it, they fed their horses with it. They also killed the villagers' farm animals to eat them.

Q: Did you have to work for them then?

A: We were forced to work in the soldiers' camp. Sometimes we got angry and we asked for something to eat, but they didn't give us anything. The soldiers gave us nothing to eat so we went to buy food with whatever money we had. 14 or 15 Kyat is not enough to buy food.

Q: Did opposition groups ever come to your village?

A: The opposition groups didn't come to our village, but they came to other villages.

#11.

NAME: "Sai Ti"
Shan/Pa'O Buddhist farmer

SEX: M

AGE: 24

FAMILY: Married, 2 children aged 4, 1, and 3 months

ADDRESS: Bang Nim village, Sanen tract, Loi Lem township

INTERVIEWED: 25/2/98

[“Sai Ti” was interviewed after arriving in Thailand as a refugee.]

Q: When and how did you move from your village?

A: We were ordered to move three months ago. Within 17 days the village was supposed to move completely but before these 17 days were finished, after only 7 days they came and burned down the village.

Q: Did anybody die in the fire when they burned the houses?

A: My grandfather was killed in the fire, nobody else. My grandfather was around 89 years old so he couldn't carry himself. His name was Loong Tchai. My parents had already moved to Pang Long and the two of us were left in the village. My father was about 67 years old.

Q: Why couldn't you get your grandfather out of the house when it was burning?

A: My father said just to leave him alone and not to let him bother anybody. My grandfather couldn't move anymore, he sometimes even urinated where he was. He couldn't stand up, he just sat down and urinated where he was. This is the nature of all people when they get old; they become senile and they lose control of themselves.

Q: Didn't you have a bullock cart?

A: We didn't have a bullock cart, we only had a horse, but Burmese Army battalion #513 had taken even that.

Q: After that how did you get to Pang Long?

A: It is one day's walk to Pang Long. We got up early in the morning at five, and we arrived at Pang Long at 4 p.m. I didn't have enough time to take my belongings, just some pots and things to cook and some necessary belongings and blankets. We couldn't gather everything. We could only take one *tang* of rice [*about 16 kg.*]. I was not able to carry the paddy I had, and I couldn't take my livestock because the Burmese soldiers had already taken it. The other villagers were like us, they could only take some of their belongings.

We moved from our village to Pang Long and stayed there for one month with some of our relatives there. We couldn't go out except when they ordered us to do something outside [*the relocation site*]. We could go outside only when they needed us.

They gave us nothing. At first when we moved we took all the rice we could and then we shared it among us, but then the soldiers took what was left. In our family, six of us had to survive on one *tang* of rice: my 2 parents, myself, my wife, and the children. All of our crops were taken by the soldiers before we left the village, and when we arrived [*at Pang Long*] they gave us back some but very little. In the village, they took all our paddy that we kept in our wooden barns and they never gave it back to us. Each barn contained about 80 *zaw* of paddy [*1 zaw = 4 large sacks, which would mill down to 100-150 kg. of milled rice*]. We couldn't even eat our own sticky rice. We had to buy some corn for ourselves to eat - it cost about 80 or 90 Kyat per *pyi*. The kind of corn that I used to feed to my animals.

Q: Did you have to work for the soldiers there?

A: Life was very hard, we had to work for the Burmese all the time, #513 Battalion [*LIB*]. We had to erect electrical poles because they were trying to build another camp. When we were there we also had to carry wood from the forest to build the camp. We had to clear the camp area and dig their bunkers and their toilets.

Q: What about before you had to relocate?

A: I had to go as a porter carrying food and ammunition to the front line. I had to carry for 10 days, and I had to go on a truck to Pang Hack in the fighting area for about 1 month. That was in 1993 or 1994. My mother had to work on the railway for seven days, the latest railway [*from Shwe Nyaung (west of Taunggyi) to Nam Zang, mostly completed in 1997*].

Q: How did you come here?

A: We just walked to Thailand. It took us more than 10 days. I came at the same time as them [*some other villagers present who arrived in Thailand 20 days earlier*]. We left from Pang Long

at the same time. I came on my own because my children and my parents couldn't come. I've been thinking that maybe after about 5 months I can try to bring them here with me.

Q: Can you manage in Thailand?

A: I don't know. I'm working digging sand along the riverbanks *[for sand and gravel]*. I can't save any money and I'm in a hard situation - I have a debt of 2,000 or 3,000 Baht *[about US\$75, which is one or two months' pay for Shan workers in Thailand]* and I have no idea at all how I can pay it back. For now I myself am okay, but when I think about my children or about my mother I cannot imagine how they are surviving now. In Thailand if you don't have money you can't go anywhere, you just go to work and come back to sleep.

Q: How do you see the future?

A: I'm just longing to call my family to bring them to Thailand. My brother is in Fang *[northern Thailand]* but I can't get there. One of my brothers is in Chiang Mai in a monastery. One of my sisters also went to Chiang Mai but I don't have any news from her. My plan is to go to see my brother in Chiang Mai, get some money, go back home and bring my family back here.

#12.

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|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---|--------------------|----|
| <u>NAME:</u> | "Nang Sep" | <u>SEX:</u> | F | <u>AGE:</u> | 22 |
| | Shan Buddhist nurse | | | | |
| <u>FAMILY:</u> | Married, 1 child aged 4 months | | | | |
| <u>ADDRESS:</u> | Khok Sang village, Kay See township | | | | |
| <u>INTERVIEWED:</u> | 27/2/98 | | | | |

["Nang Sep" was interviewed after arriving in Thailand as a refugee.]

My village is 12 miles east of Kay See, just near the main road. There are about 35 households in my village.

Q: When and how were you ordered to move?

A: The Burmese soldiers gave the order to move in June *[1997]* so we moved to Kay See. They didn't give the order officially with documents, instead about 25 or 30 soldiers just came and gave it orally. They spoke to the village headman. I can't remember their Battalion number because there are too many *[battalions]*, and that Battalion was not from Kay See but from the front line. When they passed through the village they ordered us to move.

They gave the villagers only five days to move, and they said that after those five days they would burn the village. I myself went to talk to the soldiers and asked them not to make us move. I went directly to the commander. He said, "You are all supposed to move for as long as the opposition group stays in your village." The Shan soldiers never come to the village, but according to the commander they do. He said, "You must move in order to prevent them coming into your village. We are afraid that the Shan soldiers come to your village, and that is why you must move."

Q: Were you able to carry your things?

A: At first the army gave us only three days to move everything but the villagers asked for two more days, so we had five days. Five days is better than three days. It gave us more time to take all our belongings, because it is pretty far to carry everything and some people had to sleep one night there [*in town*] before coming back the next day to the village [*to take another load*]. Those who had nothing [*no cart or horse*] had to carry their belongings on their shoulders. I was able to take everything, but some of the villagers had to leave their domestic animals behind in the jungle. Five days after they ordered us to move they came to the village to see if anyone was left, but they saw that nobody was left there and then they burned down the village.

Q: Did everyone go to Kay See?

A: About 15 people just moved into the jungle nearby. Not all the villagers moved to the relocation site because some still wanted to work in the village and work their own farms, so those people hid themselves in the jungle and built some small shelters there. The old people and those who were still unmarried also stayed there in the jungle.

Q: Were other villages also ordered to move?

A: The same order also came to all the other villages around. Loi Myat, Nam Pyaw, and Murng Kao had to move. Not only these villages, but all the village tracts around Kay See township.

Q: How was life in the relocation site at Kay See?

A: I was in that place for one and a half months. It was on the outskirts. They provided nothing to the villagers in that place but they didn't take our food and belongings. When we arrived there we had to build a shelter for ourselves. Before building the shelter we had to clear the bushes from the ground. We were not allowed to bring our building materials [*from their old house*] so we had to find some new building materials at Kay See, and it was very hard to get them. There were many other villagers there, at least 30 or 40 from each village came - altogether four or five hundred. The soldiers just told us where to stay and where we could build the houses. They separated the people village by village.

Five or six people from each village got sick, so altogether there were about 25 or 30 sick people there all the time. They had malaria and diarrhoea, but I didn't see anyone die. Some of us didn't have enough food so we had to share food, and we were not allowed to go back to farm our fields. Some people went to their farms anyway, because if they didn't go they'd have nothing to eat. When they did that they avoided the soldiers, because sometimes the soldiers shot at people. Usually they didn't kill those people, but they beat them.

Nobody worked in [*Kay See*] town, or very very few did. Mostly they collected firewood and sold it in town. I'm a nurse but nobody gave me money for treatment. How could I earn money from those who have nothing?

Q: Did you have to work for the soldiers there?

A: When the soldiers were about to go to the front line or move from place to place they made us carry their things. It happened very often and the villagers had to do it by turns. We didn't know where we were going, they never told us where we were going. I didn't carry their things, because I am the nurse who gives injections so they never asked me to go. Only my neighbours had to go.

Q: How did you come to Thailand?

A: Just the two of us came, oh no sorry, the three of us, because I was 4 months pregnant. We took a truck from Kay See to Lang Kher, then we walked two days and then we took another truck from Nam Lin [*close to Ho Murng*]. Oh! We were almost dying on the way. From Kay See to Murng Kerng it was 500 Kyat per person, from Murng Kerng to Pang Long 1,000 Kyat each, from Pang Long to Lang Kher 1,700 for two persons. We met about 15 other people on the way who were also coming to Thailand. They were from Lai Kha and we separated at Ho Murng, so we don't know where they have gone. We had some money with us, 26,000 Kyat. When we arrived in Thailand only 420 Kyat were left and we changed them into Thai Baht. Then we took a truck and our employer had to pay for the truck because we didn't have enough. In return we had to work for him.

Q: How is life in Thailand?

A: We have been here for six or seven months *[they arrived around August/September 1997]*. In the beginning we got robbed by someone, another Shan. We used to work at the same farm, close to the village where we stayed before. Some other people killed him when he went to another place. Now we have found some daily labour but only my husband works because I can't work *[because of her 4 month old baby]*. He gets only 50 Baht per day and sometimes he has no job. What I could do is clear fields, but there is no farm here. We want to go back when we get enough money but we can't go back until then, and our baby is still too young to travel. Our parents are still in Kay See, and my mother also wants to come here.

#13.

NAME: "Sai Kaw" **SEX:** M **AGE:** 26

Shan Buddhist farmer

FAMILY: Married, 1 child aged 4 months

ADDRESS: Wan Murng village, Murng Kerng township
27/2/98

INTERVIEWED:

["Sai Kaw" was interviewed after arriving in Thailand as a refugee.]

Our village is two hours by car east of Murng Kerng. The village had more than 200 houses. There were 500 households in the villages around.

Q: When and how did they order you to move?

A: Last year in May *[1997]*, they came to the village headman and said, "Everything must be moved in three months time". They came from Ham Ngai camp. Within three months the village had to move completely, everything including our domestic animals had to be removed from the village or they would burn whatever was left there. They came back to the village to check if anyone had stayed there, and if they saw anyone they would have shot him. Pan Niu and Ho Kai *[villages]* were also ordered to move at the same time.

As soon as we received the order we moved. Even if we'd had enough time we could never have moved everything so we didn't wait, we moved straight after we received the order. We were not ordered to move to Murng Kerng, instead they ordered us to move near Ham Ngai army camp. It was about three hours' walk to go to the camp.

One of my brothers died *[just before they moved]*. He was killed by the Burmese because they believed that he was supplying the opposition army. He worked in the forest so he had his things in the forest, and that is why they accused him of supplying the opposition groups. They accused him and said, "Why haven't you moved yet? Do you want to keep on feeding these opposition groups?" After that he tried to take his belongings and start moving but it was too late. They beat him and his friend to death. Then they used a knife and chopped their bodies into pieces. His name was Sarng Hung. He was my eldest brother, he was more than 40 years old. I don't know his friend's name, but he was from in Ho Kai village. They were killed in that same month *[when they were ordered to move]*. After they killed my brother, we moved to Ham Ngai. We took all the young people and all the older people of the village and ran away from there because we couldn't bear it anymore.

Q: Were you able to move your belongings?

A: We were able to move our belongings, but we had nothing *[to carry them]*, so we just walked. We lost only our paddy and peanuts, because we had stored paddy and peanuts deep in the forest and the Burmese soldiers set fire to the forest.

Q: How did you manage in Ham Ngai?

A: We stayed three months in Ham Ngai. There were very many people there, about 2,000. Everyone was newly arrived. It was different from our own village. We had to buy everything we needed to eat. Sometimes we had to borrow from other people to eat. We were not allowed to go and work in our own fields. We had to grow vegetables to get income, but we didn't have enough space to grow them. We also worked as day labourers and got 100 Kyat per day. They *[the soldiers]* didn't give us any food. Sometimes they demanded cattle and buffaloes for meat but sometimes they didn't even ask, they took them by force. Some people got sick. Some died of malaria, some died while giving birth. They were giving birth at home, then they got to a hospital and died in the hospital. I can't remember how many people died during the three months I was there.

Q: How did you manage to build a house there?

A: To build shelters at Ham Ngai we were supposed to go back to our village to get our used building materials *[by stripping their own houses]*. But when we got back to the village we didn't have a chance to get anything, because we couldn't stay the night in the village or we would have been shot. So we had to turn around and go back to the camp immediately, otherwise we would have been shot.

Q: Did you have to work for the Army at Ham Ngai?

A: The relocation camp was surrounded by a fence, and we had to build that fence ourselves. We also cut the wood for the Army camp fence, and we had to carry things. We had to work often, especially carrying. I myself didn't carry as a porter, but older people from our household had to do it an uncountable number of times. Each time it lasted two months. We younger people just ran away, and if we saw any Burmese soldiers we ran away immediately. Whenever we heard that the Burmese soldiers were coming to seek porters we just ran away.

Q: At Ham Ngai were there soldiers guarding you?

A: More than a hundred soldiers were guarding us. They came and took our belongings. Sometimes they arrested some people and detained them at their place, they beat and tortured them and then they released them - especially the headmen of the villages because they were all suspected of providing things to the opposition army.

Q: Did the opposition groups ever come to your village?

A: The opposition group came to the village sometimes, but only rarely. Once they came and stayed one or two months. They asked for some things to eat. We had to give a tax on our oranges and peanuts to the opposition group. Each year they collected a tax of about 100 Kyat per household. For the whole village tract it was about 200,000 Kyat.

Q: How was the trip to come here?

A: We couldn't do anything there and I couldn't find any way to earn my living, that's why we ran away and came here. I came just by myself. My family is still in Ham Ngai, but now my mother has come to Ho Murng. My parents don't want to come here. From Ham Ngai to Lang Kher there were many people fleeing. I came by truck from Ham Ngai to Lang Kher, then we had to walk for two days from Lang Kher to Na Kong. Then we got a truck from Ho Murng to Mae Hong Son *[northwestern Thailand]*. It was 5,000 Kyat from Ham Ngai to Lang Kher. Before we used to pay only 4,000 Kyat. That money includes the travelling taxes *[money which must be paid to the soldiers in order to pass]*.

Q: Did you have problems with the soldiers on the way?

A: They *[SPDC soldiers]* checked whether we had ID cards or not but they didn't stop us *[National Identity Cards (NIC) are supposed to be carried by Burmese citizens at all times, but many non-Burman villagers do not or cannot obtain one]*. If you couldn't produce your ID card you could not pass the checkpoints to go to Thailand. They took our ID cards at Ho Murng and they said on our way back to Shan State we'll get them back. We'll have to pay something to get our ID cards back. Some didn't have any ID card with them, and if you didn't have it you couldn't get to Ho Murng. *[The villagers will probably never be able to get their ID cards back; as in the case of the Rohingya refugees fleeing to Bangladesh, SPDC soldiers also strip Shan citizens of their ID cards because they want to drive all Shans out of Burma and then deny that they ever lived there.]*

Q: How do you manage in Thailand?

A: Before I was working in the rice fields and the onion plantations as a daily labourer. For the men the pay was 50 Baht a day. Now I am digging sand, and sometimes we can earn 100 Baht a day, sometimes only 50.

I don't really want to go back, I just want to send some money to my family whenever I can manage to save some. I've already had to run away from the Burmese soldiers not less than 5 times in my life and every time I've settled and made a new farm to work. But every time, two years after we've settled in a place they've come and pushed us away. So I'm not going to do anything anymore.

#14.

NAME: "Sai Aw Ta"
Shan Buddhist farmer
FAMILY: Single
ADDRESS: Nam Hoo village, Nam Zang township
INTERVIEWED: 27/2/98
SEX: M
AGE: 24

["Sai Aw Ta" was interviewed after arriving in Thailand as a refugee.]

Q: Where is your village?

A: I'm from Nam Hoo. From our place to Nar Poi it is 2½ hours' walk. Then from Nar Poi to Lai Kha it is a one day walk. There is no car road, when we go to Lai Kha we use bullock carts. *[His village tract is on the border of Lai Kha and Nam Zang townships.]* There were 36 households in my village.

Q: Can you tell us about the first time your village was relocated?

A: The first time they ordered us to move, we moved to Ton Hoong. That was on the 16th of the 4th [*Shan*] month in 1996 [*in the middle of March 1996*]. Soldiers came to the village and camped there. They just ordered us to move orally, no paper. They said, “Within 7 days you’ll have to move. If you don’t move we will burn down everything, including your crops and your farm animals...” The order was given by the 64th Battalion from Lai Kha, but the Battalion which came to the village was the 77th. Both of them are from Lai Kha. All the villages around were ordered to move at the same time. Our village headman tried to resist but couldn’t. His name is P---, he is about 38 years old. There was also another guy, S---, he was the youth leader.

Q: Did everybody move to Ton Hoong?

A: The soldiers wanted us all to move to Ton Hoong. Some who had relatives in Lai Kha town moved there. They were about 20 or 30 people, mainly old people. Most of the others moved to Ton Hoong and only moved some of their belongings to Lai Kha. Those who moved to Ton Hoong thought that they would have a chance to go back to work their fields [*because it is close to the village*]. Those who moved to Lai Kha were just the elderly.

Q: Were you able to take your things?

A: We tried to move as many of our things as possible, but there were things we couldn't carry so we had to leave them in the village, because the village was full of soldiers and they were watching over us. We were allowed to carry the used building materials from our old houses. Those who didn't want to pull their houses apart didn't have any roof in the new place, so they had to use mats. I was not able to move all our belongings. Some of our rice and peanuts were left behind in the village, and the soldiers just fed their horses with that.

Q: How was the place where you had to stay in Ton Hoong?

A: I stayed 6 months in Ton Hoong. The place was just a flat stretch of land and there was a lake. They gave each village a different place to live. We had to stay in the area that they gave us. They built nothing for us so we had to build ourselves. We used our carts to bring things and we made some posts. Some used mats for their roof and some used grass.

They didn't give us food. Instead of giving, they even took some food away from us so we had to buy food with our own money. The ones who had brought food just ate what they had, but those who had nothing had to borrow from the others. We had nothing to do at all, no job. We could only sleep and eat all the time.

Q: How many people were there?

A: Ho! There were an uncountable number of people there, I can't remember. Nam Hoo, Pon Lai, Nam Ha, Kher Nim, Wan Khei, Kong Sim, Nam Ma, Hang Min, Pong Garng, 10 villages altogether had to move there. There were three monasteries in these 10 villages. All these villages were close to one another, that is why I know them. I have visited all of them. Altogether there were at least 500 households in those 10 villages; the village of Kher Nim by itself had about 80 households.

Q: What about the soldiers?

A: They were watching us all the time. If they saw someone trying to go out to his farm they would shoot him. When we were in Ton Hoong they were just beating, not killing. After 6 months in Ton Hoong they beat 7 people from Kher Nim nearly to death. They beat people with sticks, and sometimes they used a rifle butt or a knife to slash them. The 7 people were Saw Tang, 35; Pan Sik Tha, 26; Saw Ling, 70; Pan Ti, 23; Loong Aw, 50; Sai Shwe, 25; and Sai Luen, 30. All of them were from the same village, Kher Nim. Later 2 of them died. After they were beaten they became weak, bled, lost weight and then died. Six months later, Saw Tang and Pan Sik Tha died. One had an infection in his ear. Our villages were close enough for us to be friends.

That is why the people got scared and immediately tried to escape with some of their things. All the men from Kher Nim and nearby villages just ran away. Only women were left from their village. People fled in groups of 4 or 5 to go and find their relatives. Some fled to Kho Lam, some to Mak Kok and some to Lai Kha. We went to Mak Kok, we fled the whole night through. A month after we'd fled, all the villagers around Kher Nim and Ton Hoong were ordered to move to Kho Lam.

Q: How long did you stay in Mak Kok [*part of Nam Zang town*]?

A: I stayed 8 months. During that time I had to do labour for the Army building and cleaning the roads from Murng Kerng to Lai Kha and near Nam Zang. Before there was an old road but they enlarged the road. I also had to be a porter.

Q: Did they know that you'd fled from a relocation site?

A: They couldn't have known that I was from a relocation site, because there were too many people in Mak Kok. Some people from other villages had also come to Mak Kok so they couldn't know who had come from where. There were a lot of people who moved to Mak Kok. There were originally about 150 households, but after people had moved there, there were about 400 households. Mak Kok is in Nam Zang township.

Q: Why did you leave Mak Kok?

A: They ordered us to move again from Mak Kok. They didn't come to give the order, they sent a written order to the village headman. It was Battalion #64. We had 12 days to move. Within 12 days we had to move completely, and after that if they had seen even a dog they would have shot it. They came after we'd left to check that we had moved. I don't know which Battalion came because we didn't see them, but we knew they'd come because when we went back to find our cattle and buffaloes we saw their footprints.

The soldiers didn't tell us where to move, they just ordered us to move to a town, but we could go to whichever town we wanted. About 100 people moved to Nam Zang, some moved to Mak Lang, some to Ho Pai, and some to Ko Hai. We moved straight to Ho Pai with about 60 other people. There were other people from other places who also moved to Ho Pai, but we didn't know them. It is very hard to say how many people were there, but there were many people. Some had pulled their old houses apart so they could use the materials, and some had to buy new materials to build their shelters. Our whole family moved our things together. There are 7 of us, my parents, my brother, my sister-in-law, my sister and two nephews, and we were together with seven or eight households from our village in all these places.

Q: Did the soldiers watch you in Ho Pai?

A: They didn't watch us all the time, but they came every evening to check because where we stayed was not far from their camp at Nawng Mong. There was no camp in Ho Pai, but between Nawng Mong and Ho Pai there is just a big rice field so they often passed through Ho Pai. They usually came at night. The soldiers gave us nothing to eat in Ho Pai, and people had health problems. We had to work in the fields for the soldiers and we had to clear the bushes along the road. This road goes from Lai Kha to Pang Long. We also had to carry the soldiers' things and build fences at their Army camp. They treated many people very badly. There was also a curfew; if they saw you going out at night after 8 o'clock they just beat you. We were allowed to go out and around within one mile of the main road to find some wood, but not at night.

Q: How did you survive there?

A: I was hired to work in onion plantations and in rice fields. Now the people who stay at Ho Pai make money as day labourers and they buy their food with the money that they earn. But it is not enough. I didn't stay very long. I stayed about one month and then I came here, because what you earn in Ho Pai is not enough for the whole family - especially because I was with older people, like my parents, and they couldn't make money. Now we haven't had messages from our family for a long time, so sometimes when we meet some friends or some Shan brothers we give them money to take with them to our family.

Q: How did you come to Thailand?

A: I came alone, nobody from Ho Pai came with me, but I joined with some people from another village, Sanen. First we came from Lai Kha to Pang Long and on to Loi Lem, and then to Lang Kher. We came by truck. From Lai Kha to Lang Kher I paid 2,000 Kyat for the transport. I brought all the money I had, altogether 5,000 or 6,000 Kyat, but I spent it on the truck fare and other things so nothing was left. When I arrived at Ho Murng I met some friends and they helped me [*lent him money*]. I arrived here in July [*1997*]. Now I have some debts of about 600 Baht, because in the rainy season we couldn't do anything [*find any work*]. Now the more we work the more we earn, a maximum of 120 Baht per day and a minimum of 50 or 60 [*he works digging sand*].

Q: What are your plans for the future?

A: It is very hard to say, maybe we will go back later. If I stay here forever it will be a problem for my parents, so I'm worried for them. I have one younger sister and one older brother, but he is married already [*i.e. the others can't take care of the parents*].

#15.

NAME: "Sai Tan"
Shan Buddhist farmer
FAMILY: Single
ADDRESS: Na Tsen village, Bang Hoo tract, Loi Lem township **INTERVIEWED:** 27/2/98
SEX: M **AGE:** 35

[*"Sai Tan" was interviewed after arriving in Thailand as a refugee.*]

Q: Where is your village?

A: Na Tsen is northwest of Pang Long and one day's walk west of Lai Kha. It is also one day's walk from Nam Zang.

Q: When and how did you have to move?

A: I don't know what day they ordered us to move but it was around the first of the month [*February 1998*]. They told us by mouth. We had to be moved completely by the last week of the month. We had to move from Na Tsen to Pang Long. They said if we weren't able to move completely they would burn the village. Four houses from Hoi Her were completely burned down, and in San Khan they burned three houses. Many villages were ordered to move at the same time as ours: Bang Hoo, Sanen, Na Tek, ... I can remember Look Koi, Mak Khee Noo, Bang Yang, Huay Koot, Lang Ka, Wan Tam, Kho Tong, Khok Lao, Sak Pung, Loi Lam ... all the villages in Ho Pong township and in Bang Hoo village tract [*of Loi Lem township*]. There are no more villages in the area. They also ordered Pong Seng, Tam Mae and Na Tum Sang villages to move. The villages were ordered to move to three places: Pang Long, Ho Pong or Murng Pan. We villagers from Na Tsen moved to Pang Long. The villagers from Sanen area also moved to Pang Long.

Q: Have you ever seen any opposition groups in your village?

A: The reality is that we never saw any opposition group coming to our village, but that is what they accused us of. It was the same for the other villages around, but because all our villages were on the mountain they wanted us all to move to one place. By the last week of the month no one is to be seen in our village. I don't know what will happen to anyone they see there.

Q: Were you able to take your belongings?

A: We could still go back to our village up until the last week of the month, so we were trying to move everything we could. During that time we just went back and forth to our village [*carrying things*]. We used bullock carts. By the end of the last week of the month nothing was left in the village. Sanen has been totally empty since the first week of the month. They moved before us, on the 7th of February.

I was not able to move everything I had in the village, some paddy and my farm animals were left behind. Those who didn't have a lot of things were able to move everything but those of us who had more were unable to move everything we had. We were allowed to take our cattle along with us and they allowed us to take along our building materials, but I didn't have time to move those things.

I was in Pang Long for three days. Some people are still there. In Pang Long there was a big rice field where all the *[relocated]* villagers had to stay, but they separated people by village and each village had a different area to stay in. We got nothing from the Army, they just arranged a flat piece of land where we had to stay together. We were just in that big field, and we had to build shelters for ourselves. For a short period it was okay, but we didn't know what would happen in the coming years. There were so many people, about five or six thousand people moved to Pang Long.

Q: How could you survive there?

A: They didn't take our belongings but they gave us no food, not even cooking oil. People won't have enough to live, because we didn't have a good road to carry our things and our village is quite far away *[from Pang Long]*, so people buried some of their things in the village because they couldn't take them along. Only the people in Sanen could carry all their things, because it is quite a convenient place to use carts.

Q: Did soldiers guard you in the new place?

A: They didn't build a fence around us or watch us and we could go wherever we wanted, but the only thing is that we were not allowed to go back to our village. We were told that after three months we would be allowed to go back to the village to get our belongings. They didn't say that we'd be allowed to resettle there, they just talked about going to get our things. They said the same thing to people from the other villages.

Q: When did you decide to come to Thailand?

A: I came here immediately after this happened, just after we had built our shelter. I came alone and I don't know what's happened there since I left. I came from Pang Long to Murng Nai and then from Murng Nai to Na Kong by truck. From Na Kong I walked for two days to Ho Murng. From Pang Long to Lang Kher it cost me 800 Kyat. The soldiers didn't stop me, I just told them that I was going to visit Ho Murng. I had to leave my ID card at Pan Taw Wet, just before Ho Murng. On our way back we're supposed to show them this receipt to get it back, so I must not lose this receipt *[he showed a "receipt" signed by an immigration officer named Win Khaing]* and I have it all the time with me. I will stay longer than the time limit allowed so I'll have to be fined. They didn't tell us anything when they took our ID cards. They didn't tell us what the reason was, they just told us that we could get them back later with the receipt.

Q: How can you manage in Thailand?

A: I arrived in Thailand 4 days ago. I had nothing with me except some money, but on the way I spent 15,000 Kyat *[on truck fares, etc.]*. I only have one or two hundred Baht left because I had to change my money at the border. After that money's gone I'll have to rely on the villagers here because I haven't been able to find a job yet. I have to stay here until I can find some job and until then I will keep on helping my friends *[he was taking care of the house for a Shan Thai]*

citizen who had helped him]. I suppose I'm just going to be hired as a labourer. My relatives and my parents are still in Pang Long. If I'm able to go back home I will, but for now I don't dare go back because the situation is very bad there.

#16.

NAME: "Mahn Htay"
Pwo Karen Christian trader
FAMILY: Married, 3 children
ADDRESS: Taunggyi Town
INTERVIEWED: 3/6/97

AGE: 43

["Mahn Htay" is a gem trader who lives in Taunggyi. He was interviewed while on one of his trading trips. He says that his National Identity Card used to record his nationality as Karen, but since the fall of Manerplaw this can cause problems for people who travel, so he has changed the nationality on his card to 'Burman'.]

The situation in Taunggyi is totally different from before. The situation of the farmers is bad. If we work 2 days for our job, we have to work 5 days for them!! Now there is railway construction work between Shwe Nyaung and Taunggyi. As far as I know, 17 or 18 people have already died on this railway construction site. Three people were hit by a rock and some were suffering from fever and died. It is a very miserable situation. Each family had to work 9 days. If a person can't go, he has to pay 900 Kyat. The railway construction is the same as the Nam Zang railway construction. The Nam Zang railway is not finished yet. They didn't do it properly. They couldn't lay the tracks. They ask money from the people.

The Shwe Nyaung-Taunggyi railway work started a few months ago. One person per family from the villages near Taunggyi has to work there. The people from Taunggyi town too. I myself hired a labourer. So far the people have had to go there once, but I don't know about the future. The people from my quarter had to work in February 1997. By now they have already cleared the way and built the embankment, but they haven't laid the stones yet. The village elders say "The work will come again." They still have to lay the stones, the sleepers and the tracks.

The people from Ya Sauth, Ho Pong, Leh Kya, Hayho, Shwe Nyaung, Nyaung Shwe, Tee Gyi, Saung Myaung, Pang Long, Phaikhun and Moe Vieh townships have to work there. Not from Kayah State, but Phaikhun and Moe Vieh are close to Kayah State. Most of the townships in Southern Shan State have to participate in this railway construction. I estimate the length to be 20 miles. The distance by the car road is only 7 miles but the railway line is going around the mountains. Each group has an assignment. If people are absent, they have to pay. They [soldiers] don't give any salary, they even beg for some food from the villagers. The soldiers are guarding the villagers along the way. I estimated that there were 300 to 400 soldiers when I was there. At night the villagers have to stay on the worksite. There is a particular place for the villagers to sleep, and when they go to work the people have to leave one villager at the shelters to watch and guard their food, clothes and other belongings. There were many women but no children.

Q: What is the situation on the Shwe Nyaung - Nam Zang railway?

A: They've only finished the embankment of the Nam Zang railway. For Nam Zang, I had to hire someone 9 times, for 900 Kyats each time. It took too long. It was stopped long ago. On the Nam Zang railway there are no stones, no sleepers, and no tracks. It is like the Shwe

Nyaung-Taunggyi railway. But they put special decorations at the entrance and exit of the city anyway. After the Nam Zang railway construction, they ordered the people to start building an international airport. The airport was too far away. It was worse than the railway construction. Actually, it was not an airport. Now they are building an army base there. The airport construction started 4 years ago. First the Nam Zang railway, then the international airport which was never completed, then Nam Zang air base *[which is now the largest SPDC air base in Shan State]*. It was an old airport on the way to Kentung and Tachilek, nearby Nam Zang. I don't know which battalions are involved, because most of the battalions are new. We always have to work for them, but the urban people are luckier than the rural people. We had to work only once on the railway, carrying ground, digging and putting earth on the railroad, but the *[rural]* villagers are facing more difficulties.

Q: What about the fishermen in Inle Lake?

A: Until just before the Water Festival *[mid-April 1997]*, the fishermen of Inle Lake were always fishing day and night in the lake so that they could buy rice and food. They use a net and a paddle canoe. They have no farm, nothing. They are very poor. Then about 3 months ago the Army saw two canoes and killed the fishermen with their own paddles. They were from Kela village. They hit their heads, their necks and their backs. They didn't shoot them. They killed them and threw them into the water. The other fishermen ran back to their village. The parents asked them, "Why have our sons not come back?" They answered, "We faced the Army so we had to run back." The next day the villagers found the dead bodies of the fishermen. The canoes and the bodies were floating separately. The Kela villagers are sure that they were killed by the Army. According to them, it is Army Division #55. The men were beaten and killed because they didn't pay the fishing net tax and the boat tax. They were very poor. I think the soldiers were looking for fishermen who were catching fish without paying taxes *[those who cannot pay go fishing secretly at night]*. I don't know how much money it is. There are so many different kinds of taxes. Fishing is only allowed if you pay the taxes. They started collecting taxes in 1996, but nothing like this had happened before. Now the Army is building two watch towers to check on the fishing at night time. They can see everything from there, from both sides *[of the lake]*.

There were a lot of weeds *[water hyacinth]* growing over the water of Inle Lake. Then the SLORC created a new system which started a few months ago. All the passenger boats have to carry and dump these weeds at a special place. If passenger boats carry passengers to Nyaung Shwe, when they come back they are not supposed to carry any passengers, only these plants. They started after Water Festival and now they are still doing it, but soon there will be no more weeds on the lake. Before there were a lot, but now everything has been cleaned. *[This forced labour is being implemented in order to keep the lake beautiful for tourists. SLORC/SPDC have also discussed plans to build a dam to keep the lake water level high all year round so it will be attractive to tourists. This dam would probably destroy much of the lake's ecosystem.]*

Q: What about the taxation on the *kyun myuw* *[floating gardens, mainly growing tomatoes]*?

A: The villagers have to pay 20, 25 or 30 Kyats for each *baung* *[1 x 20 armspans]*. Then, after they get their crop there is a crop revenue system *[i.e. they have to pay taxes or hand over quotas according to their crop]*. If they cannot pay, they are not allowed to grow anything and they cannot expand anymore. They used to go to cut and carry the floating ground from the foot of

the hill. Now they cannot do this anymore. They have to pay a lot of money for each new *baung*, I think between 700 and 800 Kyats. This new taxation system started last year after the Water Festival.

Q: Are there any tourist projects on Inle Lake ?

A: I saw some foreigners on this lake. Now they have speedboats. They are getting dollars. If a foreigner hires one speedboat, the boat owner can get 5,000 to 6,000 Kyat. They are enlarging the guest house near the ancient Shan Haw [*palace*] in the middle of the lake. They are repairing the Haw and extending it. It started in June or July 1996 but it is not finished yet. I think it is a government guest house because the government spent money for that and the construction work is coordinated by the Major who rules Nyaung Shwe town. I don't know whether they built it with *loh ah pay* [*forced labour*] or not. But the people are never free from forced labour.

Q: What happened during the last Water Festival?

A: Just before the Water Festival, Buddhist people built stages along the road from Shwe Nyaung as they usually do. Then the police and the army destroyed everything. They didn't issue an order beforehand. So the villagers built the stages again and they destroyed them again without any warning or any order. Even the *Ya Wa Ta* [*Village LORC; local-level SLORC administration*] was not informed of their plans. They didn't send any letter to headmen. They might have had some reason for that. At the time, the political situation was not so stable. I think they were afraid of riots [*this was just after the Buddhist/Muslim riots, though for the past 2 years running SLORC/SPDC have destroyed people's water-throwing stages throughout Burma in order to prevent gatherings and the satire of rulers which is a traditional feature of the Water Festival*]. That is why there was no happy Water Festival this year. Before, Taunggyi Water Festival was very famous, as well as the Taunggyi Thazaung Tei festival. Now it is nothing, and there is no big crowd. The people can only enjoy Water Festival in the villages, not in the towns.