

## KONFERENZEN

**International Seminar on ASEAN and the Wider Southeast Asia**

Institute of Strategic and International Studies (Malaysia), Kuala Lumpur, 11-13 July 1990

This three day seminar, attended by approximately 30 individuals from South East Asia, the European Community, and the United States, focused primarily on the current political and economic problems of Myanmar, formerly Burma. All of the participants, who wished the country and its people well, advanced a variety of views on the nature of Myanmar's polity and ways of achieving more open and democratic government with greater economic growth with equity. Many had previously met and exchanged their differing views but some of the participants were new to these debates. An added feature of the conference was the presence of individuals from Myanmar itself. They came in both official and private capacities and it was good to see Myanmar scholars and diplomats participating in such an international forum. This helped to alleviate some of the overly 'academic' quality of many previous debates on the future of the country.

The seminar began with a very useful paper which examined the strengths and weaknesses of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in assisting in the resolution of regional conflicts. While the record was mixed and unanimity among the member states had been rare, it was widely agreed by the participants that ASEAN had a role to play in ensuring that the problems of Myanmar did not expand and it was in the interest of the ASEAN member states that a comprehensive settlement of the internal conflicts within Myanmar be found before they spread beyond the country's borders and fuelled regional tensions. Myanmar's position between South Asia, China and South East Asia raised questions as to whether the country really was a South East Asian nation, but most agreed its position as a link in the hear of South and East Asia made its problems a regional issue. The ASEAN representatives were encouraged at the end of the conference to suggest to their governments that they take an active role in relations with Myanmar.

The seminar then turned to the core of its subject: what needed to be done in order for Myanmar to achieve domestic peace, stability and justice? While there was little disagreement as to the goals all held for the country and its people, and no one wished to see a continuation of the present political strife, repression and military conflicts, there were sharp disagreements as to what had to be done. To oversimplify the positions taken, on one end of the continuum of views was the position that the army would have to immediately abandon all political power and hand over authority to the National League for Democracy (NLD) which won the May elections, and release its leaders now under arrest, so that a new civilian government could negotiate a settlement with the various ethnic insurgent groups to form some sort of federation. In the process, the military would be radically restructured and purged of those now in power. At the other end of the continuum of opinion was the view that one had to accept that, whether one approved or not, the Myanmar army was a powerful political force which had tasted the fruits of power for many years and was not likely to abandon these readily. As a consequence, one would have to find a means of encouraging political compromise between the military and its opponents.

These conflicting interpretations as to how positive and enduring political change might be effected in Myanmar obviously led to differences as to the appropriate policies for foreign governments to assume toward the current military government. The first view argued that the governments should not take actions to assist the present regime in any way because only unremitting economic pressure would force the military to abandon power. Therefore, the current policies of the European Community, Japan and the United States to withhold aid and trade assistance was to be endorsed while the growing trade ties of Myanmar with China, South Korea and South East Asian states was to be deplored. The alternative view argued that the military was unlikely to give up power until it felt that its financial and personal interests were protected and that sanctions would have relatively little effect. Until the economy was sufficiently complex for a web of domestic and international links and institutions to have developed, as in Thailand and Indonesia, the military would feel constrained from handing over significant amounts of power. However, some initial movement could be encouraged through dialogue.

The seminar received on the final day a statement of the policy of the government toward the current situation, noting that power would not be passed to a civilian government until 1) a new constitution had been written, 2) this had been approved by the people, including all the ethnic minorities, and 3) a strong government was formed. Many felt that this programme was merely meant to delay a transition and really held no promise of progress.

A fruitful discussion of the economic condition of the country progressed with the political issues. Comparative lessons were drawn from the situation of Indonesia in the mid-1960s and the Indonesian reforms of that period were held out as an alternative for Myanmar. All of the participants hoped that more governments and individuals would give informed consideration to the problems of Myanmar and a future seminar, perhaps held in the country, was proposed. It is expected that the papers presented at the seminar will be published.

Robert H. Taylor

### **Indien und China: ökonomische und ökologische Probleme der Modernisierung in den neunziger Jahren**

Köln, 22.-26. Oktober 1990

In der entwicklungspolitischen Debatte der sechziger und siebziger Jahre wurden China und Indien als gegensätzliche "Modelle" wirtschaftlicher und gesellschaftlicher Entwicklung gehandelt: Dem erratischen Rhythmus internationaler Politik folgend, wurde nach dem indisch-chinesischen Krieg 1962 Indien von den USA zunächst zur bedrohten "asiatischen Demokratie" erklärt. Nicht zufällig wurde im Zuge der amerikanisch-chinesischen Annäherung zu Beginn der siebziger Jahre dann das "chinesische Modell" als Alternative zum (indischen) Verelendungswachstum entdeckt. Lange Zeit galt als unbestritten, daß die Dritte Welt in der einen oder anderen Form "von China lernen" könne. Erst der entwicklungspolitische Katzenjammer der achtziger Jahre brachte die Modelldiskussion zum Stillstand und ließ die "schrecklichen Vereinfacher" verstummen: Die indische und chinesische Realität ließ sich eben weder auf die Slums von Kalkutta noch