

the Olof Palme
International
Center



Evaluation of DVB

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Introduction



The radio-station DVB, Democratic Voice of Burma, has been supported by SIDA, The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, through the Olof Palme International Center since DVB started broadcasting from Oslo in 1992. Before deciding on

further support, SIDA has requested an evaluation.

To conduct this evaluation, interviews with more than 50 people have been conducted part from numerous conversations. People interviewed in Norway, Thailand and Sweden have in one way or the other been involved in working with and for the cause of the democratic movement in Burma including donors, journalists, doctors, representatives of human rights organizations, students, professors, refugees and politicians. Points of views have been collected not only from persons organized in any of the endless acronyms representing groups and alliances in Burma, but also from those who stay independent. Visits to Burma has also taken place by people supplying information for this report.

This evaluation focus on functions and not persons involved in running a radio-station. The emphasis is on the problems regarding a radio-station supported by SIDA through Olof Palme International Center. To avoid anyone trying to use this evaluation as a political platform for political statements and more important, to protect the sources being interviewed for this evaluation, no one is mentioned by name or organization.

Quite a few people have really gone out of their way to assist in this evaluation of DVB and to them: Thank You!

The Background Story

Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded with the Nobel Price for Peace in 1991.

One of her two son's, Alexander Aris, delivered her acceptance speech in Oslo on December 10th, his mother was kept in house-arrest in Rangoon by the ruling military junta, despite an overwhelming victory of her party in the May elections the year before, in 1990. *"She would say that this prize belongs not to her but to all those men, women and children who, even as I speak, continue to sacrifice their well-being, their freedom and their lives in pursuit of a democratic Burma"*, Alexander Aris said on behalf of his mother.

Aung San Suu Kyi is the daughter of Burma's national hero Aung San, who fought and brought independence from the British, but was along with six other members of the constituent cabinet assassinated in 1947 by a political rival and never lived to see the first day of Independence in the Union of Burma in 1948. Aung San Suu Kyi was only two years old when her father was killed and she grew up with her brothers and mother in Rangoon. Her mother, Daw Khin Kyi, became the first female minister of Social Welfare before she was appointed Ambassador to India. Aung San Suu Kyi, who was then sixteen, joined her mother and completed her studies in New Delhi and Oxford. She met her husband-to-be, Dr Michael Aris, worked for the UN in New York and Buthan, had two sons and worked on a PhD. Occasionally, Aung San Suu Kyi would return to visit her mother Daw Khin Kyi, who retired in Rangoon.

Daw Khin Kyi had diabetes. When she in 1988 was rushed to the hospital after a stroke, relatives send for her daughter and Aung San Suu Kyi arrived from her home in England to care for her mother. Aung San Suu Kyi's return to Burma coincided with the outbreak of a spontaneous revolt against twenty-six years of political repression. The military junta took power in 1962 and has like Suharto in Indonesia used the people and recourses in the country for their own benefits, those who oppose have systematically been thrown in jail, torture is common, Burma has one of the world's worst records of Human Rights abuse. The revolt against the junta 1988 had it's roots at the university in Rangoon, the very same place Aung San started to organize the fight against the British rulers.

The Burmese army Aung San had founded, now turned their weapons against the students.

On July 19th 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi took the place of her mother and, together with military leaders and government officials, attended the annual Martyr's Day ceremony commemorating the assassination of her father Aung San and his cabinet in 1947. It was her first official public appearance in Burma.

On August 8th 1988, in Burma an encouraging date regarding the significance around the number eight, students successfully planned a national strike. Massive demonstrations took place throughout the country but

that night, the army in Rangoon opened fire on the crowds and possibly thousands were brutally killed in their innocent quest for freedom. The junta even had plans to bomb the hospital in Rangoon, among the wounded, leaders of the opposition were being treated there.

Almost out of nowhere, Aung San Suu Kyi emerged at a meeting at the



Shwedagon pagoda in Rangoon where nearly half a million people gathered to hear her speak a couple of weeks later, on August 25th. She repeated her father's words, saying that the army should keep out of politics and that she, Aung San's daughter, could no longer stand on the sidelines while the people of Burma came forward in their second struggle for independence.

The opposition leaders continued to press for elections. The head of the army, General Saw Maung, set through a coup up a State Law and Order Restoration Committee, SLORC, to replace what was called BSPP, Burma Socialist Program Party. SLORC was to act as an interim

government until the country had returned to normality and conditions would be right for elections. Political parties were formed, among them The National League for Democracy, NLD, with Aung San Suu Kyi as secretary.

After her mother's death later that year, Aung San Suu Kyi stayed in Burma with the support of her husband and sons.

Aung San Suu Kyi traveled around the country and spoke about democracy. She challenged Ne Win, who no one else mentioned by name. He was either Number One or The Old Man. Ne Win had been selected by Aung San to participate in the struggle for independence when the 30 comrades was formed during World War II. He was the one who through a coup put Burma under a brutal military rule in 1962 (and is still at age 84 in control from his house on the other side of the lake from Aung San Suu Kyi's house-arrest in Rangoon.) The junta found Aung San Suu Kyi increasingly confrontational and she was under attack by the military rulers when she called for international sanctions against Burma. The day after Martyr's Day in 1989, her house in Rangoon was surrounded by troops and she was placed under house-arrest.

Later that year, SLORC suddenly changed the name of the country and the Union of Burma became the Union of Myanmar, the capital Rangoon became Yangon.

In early 1990, SLORC announced that general elections were to be held later that year, on May 27th. More than 200 political parties were registered

and no one really thought that any party would gain the necessary majority. Many believe the army registered quite a few political parties in efforts of trying to confuse the people and the election, making it impossible to return to a normality without them in power. With arms in their hands, the army promised free elections.

The people of Burma refused to be scared and went to the polls. The elections passed peacefully. Aung San Suu Kyi's party NLD won by a landslide, taking 392 of the 485 seats in the Parliament.

But nothing changed.

Aung San Suu Kyi was sentenced to another four years of house-arrest and elected parliament members were jailed. The military refused to hand over any power and found loopholes in the constitution giving them a reason to arrest hundreds of newly elected parliament representatives, others fled the country and formed a government-in-exile, NCGUB, National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma..

The military junta stole the democratic election from the people of Burma.

Aung San Suu Kyi had become a symbol of the democratic movement.

The Czech president, Vaclav Havel nominated her for the Nobel Peace Prize. He wrote *"By dedicating her life to the fight for human rights and democracy in Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi is not only speaking out for justice in her own country, but also for all those who want to be free to choose their own destiny. As long as the struggle for freedom needs to be fought throughout the world, voices such as Aung San Suu Kyi's will summon others to the cause"*.

The media in Burma is under total control of the military, echoing their voices over the country. The daily newspaper, radio broadcasts and television programs constantly portray pictures of the ruling junta. The democratic movement had no voice in the air reaching the households in the Union of Burma. They were left to the propaganda and lies of the military regime.

In connection to the Peace Prize ceremony in Norway, a plan to assist the democratic movement in Burma by establishing a radio-station started to grow. The Norwegian government expressed its support and the Norwegian Burma Council was established on January 2nd 1992. The activities of the NBC are planned and implemented in close cooperation with the NCGUB (report for the years 1992 and 1993), National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, which is the Burmese government in exile under the leadership of Dr Sein Win.

After a year of working out an organization for the radio-station, it was decided that the NCGUB, National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, was the responsible organ on the side of the Burmese democratic forces, and the Norwegian Burma Council, NCB, together with the Worldview International the responsible organs on the Norwegian side, in whose name the radio license was issued in July 1992. **"From the very beginning the objective of a closest possible cooperation between the NCB and the NCGUB has been emphasized. Channeling the support through the NCGUB contributes to strengthen NCGUB's activities. The NCB supports the efforts of NCGUB to achieve a democratic and fair**

distribution of the support” (The Norwegian Burma Council; Report for the years 1992 and 1993).

The Democratic Voice of Burma, DVB, started transmission from Norway on Martyr’s Day, July 19th 1992 and daily 25-minute programs were transmitted by short-wave from the island of Kvitsøy outside Stavanger on the Norwegian west coast.

Staff members were appointed by the NCGUB, National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, and given a brief course on radio work. (annual report 1994).

”In terms of the repression and the fear generated by military rule, Burma is not dissimilar to Romania before the fall of Nicolae Ceausescu. It is a country of rumor and suspicion.”(Harriet O’Brien ”Forgotten Land”)

In late 1997, the military junta changed its name. SLORC became SPDC, State Peace and Development Council. Nothing much changed, the change of name represented a face lift instead of a change towards democracy, new faces were found on 9 of 12 regional military commands. The power remains in the hands of the military and it is likely that the real powers stay in the hands of the old ones at the top.

This year, 1998, NLD was for the first time allowed to celebrate the victory of the May 27th election in 1990. The celebration took place at Aung San Suu Kyi’s house in Rangoon, where she is kept in house arrest.



BURMA

Burma is a large country, twice the size of Germany and slightly smaller than the state of Texas, with a population of about 46 million inhabitants. The official language is Burmese but there are over 100 distinct languages and dialects spoken in Burma. The country is bounded by China with a border of 2.185 km, Laos 235 km and Thailand 1.800 km in the east and by Bangladesh 193 km, India 1.463 km and the Indian Ocean 1.930 km in the south and the west. It could have been one of the richest countries in the region if the military junta had not run the economy rock bottom. The feeling in the capital Rangoon is that of a stand still. The country is obviously

bankrupt, forcing the junta to impose laws even forbidding the import of such items as soda and seasoning. They simply have no foreign money to pay for it with. The military junta generates incomes for themselves, forcing the population to work without salary and supplying the army with labour and goods like food and soldiers. Forced labour seem to increase as times get worse and nobody is spared. Widows and children are also forced to hard labour like building roads and railways along with chained prisoners.

Burma could be a jewel. Not a single person visiting the country can avoid falling in love with the rich beauty of people, land and culture. It could be a rich nation if the sources were used to enrich the people and the country instead of the junta and their families. There seem to be no limit to their

imagination when it comes to collect everything in their own pockets. The black market is not even black. There is at least two parallel financial systems, both controlled by the military.

The military junta controls in detail everything that takes place, like when New Years was celebrated this year in central Rangoon with invited diplomats and UN-officials. Smiling on the stage in front of the crowd, the mayor honored the dance-group with a large sum of money. Everybody knew the dance-group belongs to his wife.

Whatever business is being made in Burma, a large percentage goes into the pockets of the generals. It's said for instance, that when the Swedish telecommunications company Ericsson does business in Burma, they give each general three mobile phones so that the generals can sell two of them... The generals also profit from the golden triangle in the north where the world's largest poppy-production can be found (in competition with Afghanistan).

Burma is a country full of resources like petroleum and timber, tin, antimony, zinc, copper, tungsten, lead, coal, marble, limestone, precious stones and natural gas. Today, neighboring nations like Thailand is robbing Burma off its resources. Right now, the unique teak-forest on the boarder to Thailand is vanishing by the hour. About half of Burma is forest and woodland. Or was. Burma will face even larger problems in times of monsoon as the deforestation means more flooding.

Aung San, called the Nation's father, wanted to create the Union of Burma build on a federative system. Burma consists of seven states: Chin State, Kachin State, Karen State, Kayan State, Mon State, Rakhine State and Shan State. Of the population, the Burmans is the largest group with 68%, the Shan people about 9%, the Karen 7%, the Rakhine 4%, the Chinese about 3% (and growing), Mon 2% and Indian 2% (according to figures -93).

Most people in Burma are Buddhists, but there is a small group of Christians and Muslims as well. If anyone thought that the monks and monasteries were safe havens from the army, they're wrong. The military even pick up young men in the Buddhist monasteries and force them to be a soldier. Today, the Burmese army consists of some 400.000 men, very few belong to the navy and air force. Families in Burma can try to make a deal and pay the army not to take their young boys, that is if they have any money. It happens that families sell their young girls to work in the sex-industry in Thailand to earn money to send back home, so that the family is able to save their sons from being taken by the Burmese army.

There is no international threat to Burma. Groups inside Burma are primarily fighting for autonomy. The Burmese Army is fighting its own people. They claim to have signed peace-agreements with representatives of most states but fighting is still taking place in the Shan State, Karen State and Chin State. Tens of thousands of Karen refugees have crossed the border to Thailand. For years, the UN has tried to gain access to assist the refugees, but the Thai authorities has until just recently refused. The Burmese refugees are not safe in Thailand. As late as March this year, the Burmese Army crossed the border and attacked one of the camps with 8.000 refugees in the middle of the night when people were sleeping. It's a devastating sight. All the temporary homes made of bamboo and leaves are burned down. Before

leaving, the Burmese army destroyed the school, library and church, the soldiers told the refugees that when they return next time, they would kill anyone who was still there.

According to reports from human rights organizations like Amnesty, 300.000 people in Shan State have since 1996 been forced to leave 2.000 villages. The Burmese Army simply arrive to a village and tell people living there that they've got 2 or 3 days to move and whoever is left when they return is killed, old women and young children, before the village is destroyed by fire.

The military junta enjoys power by disruption, regardless if it involves drug-dealers, Thai and Chinese businessmen or paid militia. They have desperately tried to open up the borders to investors in the last years, but so far not enough capitalists have found their way to invest in the socialist, military state where Ne Win nationalized everything in Rangoon. In 1995, they tried to sell the image of Burma being a perfect tourist-spot and announced "Visit Myanmar" year. The result is many empty, very modern hotels fully staffed with nothing to do.

The junta already controlled the media in Burma, but SLORC limited the expressions of minds and words even more when they jailed writers and artists and made a blacklist not only of people but also of subjects.

The news in Burma are ridiculous. Hour after hour, television news show generals speaking in front of large crowds lined up. It look like as if it came out of a Mel Brooks movie. Same with the newspaper. All the pictures on the front page are mostly of one general, "Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Than Shwe...." visiting and inspecting different groups of people doing different things like building a bridge. You are also told how to behave, the Burmese and English version of the daily newspaper

Sa Citta Pariyo Dapanam; to purify one's mind
THE NEW LIGHT OF MYANMAR
 Established 1914
 Volume VI, Number 1 6th Waning of Tagu 1360 ME Friday, 17 April, 1998
Mone Creek Multi-purpose Dam Project and Anawrahta Bridge Project (Chauk) implementation gaining momentum

YANGON, 16 April—Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council Commander-in-Chief of Defense Services Senior General Than Shwe inspected Mone Creek Multi-purpose Dam Project in Sakkara Township and Anawrahta Bridge Project (Chauk) in Chauk Township yesterday.

Accompanied by Secretary-2 of the State Peace and Development Council Lt Gen Tin Oo and his entourage, the Senior General helo-ported from Bagan-Nyaung to Sakkara at 7:30 am yesterday.

On arrival at Sakkara, they were welcomed by Deputy Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation U Ota Myone and officials.

Mone Creek Multi-purpose Dam

They inspected building of a concrete retaining wall, preparation to lay concrete on upper interior surface of the diversion tunnel at left and outlet ponds at Mone Creek Multi-purpose Dam Project.

At the project hall, they heard a report on progress in implementing the project.

Circulation
24,500



Senior General Than Shwe inspects preparation to lay concrete on upper interior surface of the diversion tunnel at Mone Creek Multi-purpose Dam.—MNA

Senior General Than Shwe gave suggestions and presented Draft baskets to Japanese technicians of the project and gifts to Myanmar staff.

When completed, the project will irrigate up to 100,000 acres to cultivate 170,000 acres of crops and will generate 380 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually.

Anawrahta Bridge Project

In Chauk, they inspected Anawrahta Bridge Project.

Minister for Construction Maj Gen Saw Tun briefed them on features of the project and Superintending Engineer U Sai Han on developments.

Senior General Than Shwe urged them to strive for early completion.

The bridge, 4.191 feet long, spanning Ayyayawady River, will link Chauk on the eastern bank and Sakkaya Township on the western bank.

Building of No 1 approach structure on Chauk

bank, No 2 approach structure on Sakkaya bank, No 1 and 2 piers of the main bridge and columns of approach structures have been completed in present.

Efforts are being made to complete it in the early 1999.

At 11:30 am, the Senior General and party adjourned back to Bagan-Nyaung.

Secretary-2 Lt Gen Tin Oo visited Nyauktu Township People's Hospital, head of Mawlaikya Division Health Department U Tin Hlaing and Medical Superintendent Dr Ussa Hlto explained to him on points of the hospital.

The Secretary-2 attended to the needs including building of staff quarters and rental of physicians' residences.

At Baik Labaung Primary School No 3, the Secretary-2 and party asked into the requirements of headmaster U Than Swe and officials in running school buildings.

They also inspected Nyauktu Township BEHS and sought means for its improvement and betterment of staff.—MNA



Senior General Than Shwe greets Japanese technicians at Mone Creek Multi-purpose Dam.—MNA

Senior General Than Shwe sends felicitations to Syrian Arab Republic

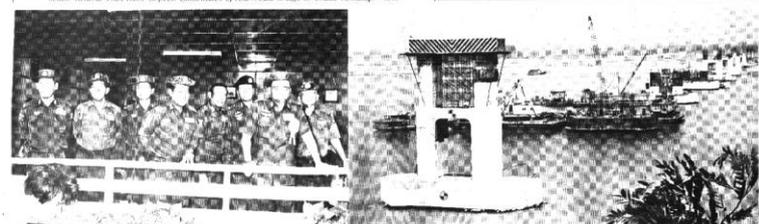
YANGON, 17 April—Senior General U Hlaing, Chairman of the State Peace and Development Council of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to His Excellency Mr Hafez Al-Assad, President of the Syrian Arab Republic, on the occasion of the National Day of the Syrian Arab Republic, which falls on 17 April 1998.—MNA

26 countries confirm attending FAO Regional Conference in Yangon

YANGON, 16 April—The 26th Food and Agriculture Organization Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific will be held at the Sodorra Hotel here on evening Monday, 20 April. The regional conference will focus on the follow-up to the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996) and the state of the fisheries sector in the Asia Pacific region. The conference will begin with seven officers agreement, three days. This will be followed by the ministerial-level plenary meeting on Thursday and Friday, 23 and 24 April.

Twenty-six countries have already confirmed their participation in the regional conference with 122 registered delegates. They include one France, Minister, 17 Ministers, nine Vice- or Deputy Ministers, Ministry, 41 observers representing three inter-governmental organizations, 11 non-governmental organizations, six UN agencies and 16 media organizations will also attend.

Director-General of FAO Dr Jacques Diouf will give a news briefing on the regional conference at the Sodorra Hotel at 5 pm on 23 April. MNA



Emergence of the State Constitution is the duty of all citizens of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.

"The New Light of Myanmar" are identical. The lack of respect for the reader is more than obvious. Scary, very scary.

Basic principles

These are the basic principles agreed upon between the National Government Of the Union of Burma, NCGUB, and the Norwegian Burma Council, NCB, regarding DVB:

1. The NCGUB is the responsible organ representing the Burmese democratic forces, and the NBC is the responsible organ on the Norwegian side, in whose name the radio license was issued in July 1992.
2. The Democratic Voice of Burma will not propagate violence.
3. All programs of DVB will be based on multi-ethnicity, and reflect the voice of all ethnic nationalities of Burma in different ethnic languages or in Burmese according to their own choice.
4. The programs will be a balanced mixture of political (with emphasis on democracy and human rights), education and cultural topics. There will also be news commentaries.

Objectives of DVB

The objectives of the Democratic Voice of Burma as originally drafted are:

1. To report on international events related to Burma, such as
 - a. the international effort to free political prisoners
 - b. the efforts of the UN General Assembly and the Security Council to bring The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to reason
 - c. the activities of the UN Commission for Human Rights, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the International Red Cross and other organizations concerning Burma
 - d. support given to the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB and the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) by democratic countries
 - e. how Burmese expatriates are working with NCGUB/DAB
2. To report on events occurring in Burma to the population inside Burma as well as to the world community, and present NCGUB and DAB's views to the Burmese people and SLORC
3. To broadcast regular education programs on subjects such as science, agriculture, health, nutrition, hygiene (including prevention of AIDS), and international language skills, etc.
4. To give in-depth training and information on world politics, constitutional issues, democracy, federalism, parliamentary procedures, human rights and so forth, to the people of Burma
5. To be an alternate news source informing about the progress of the Burmese democracy movement in liberated areas of Burma, and to provide the various groups opposing the Rangoon regime with a voice by which they can freely and openly express their views in a democratic manner

6. To promote understanding and cooperation amongst the various ethnic and religious groups of Burma.

Irregular contest from start

During the first year of trying to find an organization for the radio-station DVB, the involved representatives struggled. Meetings were held in different places like Manerplaw in Karen State on the border to Thailand with representatives from different ethnic groups, NCGUB and NCB. They failed in finding an organization for DVB representing a variety of ethnic groups. At this time, there were also ideas to set up mobile radio-stations in the Burmese jungle. Fortunately, this idea was never tried in practice as it would have jeopardized the security for innocent civilians. A radio-station is always a vulnerable target and a radio-station giving voice to the opposition would most certainly have been under military attack by the Burmese army.

It was decided that the NCGUB, National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma, was the responsible organ on the side of the Burmese democratic forces, and the Norwegian Burma Council, NCB, together with the Worldview International, the responsible organs on the Norwegian side. A couple of young men who had been hiding in the jungle after the uprising 1988 were chosen by NCGUB to go to Oslo to start the operations there. These representatives were/are active with the ABSDF, All Burma Student's Democratic Front. Either one of them knew anything about radio or journalism before arriving in Oslo.

In the beginning, they were appointed to the student radio-station in Oslo. The only equipment they had, was a table with two chairs, a microphone and a cassette-player on which they recorded the programs they produced on each side of the table. The cassette was sent by mail to the transmitter in Kvitsøy and, when and if the cassette arrived by mail, broadcasted on short-wave to Burma.

To their assistance in gathering information, the Oslo-office has had/have colleagues working on the Thai border, today also on the India and Chinese border, mainly among refugees. They fax information to Oslo and sometimes tape an interview on a cassette and send it to Oslo. Just recently, some, not all, are also able to give voice-reports by phone which are recorded at the studio in Oslo.

Through the years, it seems like there has been a struggle in finding a way of reporting that works. The equipment have been very simple, far from professional. There has also been confusion regarding news, views and

features and who decides what. A great deal of anxiety has been part of the job. All this, is due to the constant lack of professionalism. Some blame the problems that have emerged on the radio station on the staff being from Burma, not having experience in working together, being afraid of conflicts and having difficulties in being able to negotiate a solution amongst themselves. This is not necessarily the case at all. Considering the circumstances, with the lack of professionalism, problems would have occurred even though the staff came from the same street in the same city with the same ethnic background and spoke the same language. The staff is to be deeply admired for being able to do their job in a very difficult situation!

During the first years, DVB-workers had workspace in the office of Worldview International in Oslo. They were not paid a salary, only allowance. Staff members appointed by NCGUB to work in Oslo has always been primarily young male students without any previous experience from either journalism or radio.

Saving DVB from a total collapse after upsetting staff-problems, a new organization was formed in 1995 and DVB moved to their own office and studio in Oslo. With the new organization, DVB was to operate independently from NCB. Under Norwegian press law, NCB is legally responsible for DVB. DVB delivers copies of programs and lists of content to DVB on a regular basis. The lists are in English, no one at NBC speaks Burmese.

Donors & Money

It is not a known fact, that DVB is supported by other countries part from Norway. People from Burma are positively surprised and encouraged when they hear that support has been given from the start from Sweden, Denmark and the United States as well. People from Sweden are surprised and want to know why Sweden is supporting a radio-station broadcasting from Norway. Some are hesitant to continue with the support, if the station is perceived as support for a political party or if the broadcasts only reach those already involved in the democratic movement.

Sweden supports DVB with means from SIDA through Olof Palme International Center. Part from Sweden, support is given by

- * Denmark through the Danish Workers International Forum and the Danish Burma Committee
- * Soros Open Society in New York
- * the US congress through NED, National Endowment for Democracy
- * Korea through Kim Dae Jung Foundation/Forum of Democratic Leaders in Asia Pacific.

The expenses for DVB according to 1988 budget:

Overseas

Thai border	12.975
Indian border	9.630
Burma	14.815
TOTAL	37.410

Operations

Thai border	308.890
Indian border	158.145
Burma	29.630
TOTAL	498.665
TOTAL OVERSEAS	534.075

Norway

Equipment	58.520
Operations	
Personnel	698.145

Studio	341.476
Transmission 1	821.645
Transmission 2	1.026.500
Travel	76.295
NBC Services	350.000
Accountant	96.295
Consult/training	185.925
Miscellaneous	3.700
TOTAL NORWAY	3.658.501
TOTAL	4.192.576

According to the Financial Report 1978, the DVB budget for 1988 in Norwegian Kroner from the donors:

Norway:	350.000
Denmark:	1.000.000
NED:	1.000.000
Sweden:	750.000
Open Society:	750.000
Korea:	350.000
TOTAL	4.200.000

Effectiveness impact

Burma experienced a short period of democracy before the military coup in 1962. It is not possible that the country had a chance to mature in an full understanding of the concept of democracy with a free media during the 14 years of democracy, from the time of Independence in 1948. The media flourished though in this time, only to be crushed, forced to learn to express minds through metaphors instead of free words. Since 1962, the military have been in complete control of media. Radio, television and newspaper are propaganda tools. Thoughts and opinions not in line with the military junta, are regarded as threats to the nation. Individuals have been jailed for simply talking to a journalist, accused of giving information to foreign powers.

Today, journalists in Burma are bureaucrats acting as mouthpieces to the generals. It is not a job to be proud of.

The propaganda is blunt, full of lies and without any respect for the audience. They are left without knowing what is really happening to their own people in their own country, only seeing the pictures the generals want them to see, which are frequently pictures of themselves visiting different people and places, giving speeches and honoring civilians (who are often their own relatives).

With this in mind, it is understandable that the goal of DVB has been to try to fight this situation, to try to give the people another picture then the one

presented by the generals and information about what is actually happening in the country.

Goals of DVB

Now, the goals, or objectives, for DVB differ somewhat depending on where you read them. According to the quarterly report December 1997, the objectives of DVB are

1. To provide timely and accurate information to the general public about events inside Burma and international events that pertain to Burma:
2. To encourage and enable the democracy movement inside Burma to plan and act based on information that is unavailable to them from SLORC-controlled media:
3. To educate the general public and the Burmese military in particular, about democracy, human rights and the consequences of violating internationally accepted standards of human conduct:
4. To promote understanding and cooperation amongst the various ethnic and religious groups and within the democracy movement in general.

What is the purpose of DVB? For how long?

DVB is part of the Burmese democratic movement, a tool to force the military junta turn the power over to the elected government under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi.

What will happen then to DVB if/when the democratic movement succeeds?

The goal of DVB is not obvious. It is not discussed among donors or participants in the democratic movement. These are some options:

- * DVB will stop broadcasting and the station in Oslo will be closed down
- * DVB will continue to broadcast from Oslo during a transition period
- * DVB will move to Rangoon

There is a contradiction between the perception of DVB today and the need of DVB tomorrow.



Today, the perception is by many that DVB represents the voice of the people. Some seem to think that there is no need

for a radio-station giving the voice of the people the day the military junta is overthrown. Some trust that the elected government will be that voice, some believe commercial radio-stations will broadcast people's voices.

There is a contradiction between the goal set by Swedish SIDA regarding media-assistance and the goal of DVB. DVB started broadcasting before the strategy for SIDA's media-assistance was completed in 1992. The general goal for SIDA is to sponsor projects guarding "The Free Word" by supporting growth of civil and political rights in the recipient country.

In order to protect "The Free Word", the aim of media assistance from SIDA is

to support growth and the vital force in a media sector marked by pluralism, professionalism and integrity and which collected publishing activity reflects the right to comprehensive information and free exchange of views and reaches the great majority of the inhabitants of the society. Such a media sector works for and is enforced by

- * freedom from dominating dependence from one or a few directions

- * organizations looking after needs of media, different occupational groups and sector groups' need of education and studies of different kinds

- * greatest possible representation through pluralism

- * a broad spectra of media so that the largest part of the population is reached

Such a media sector is enforced by

- * laws and agreements codifying freedom of press and media actors rights in relation to state, society and civilians.

- * an independent legal system controlling that agreements and laws are observed.

Choosing media, SIDA gives priority to radio as a mean of reaching large part of populations.

SIDA underlines the goal of supporting independent and professional radio-stations to guard the free word.

The goal of DVB needs to be discussed. SIDA can not possibly support DVB the way DVB is organized today and meet the goals set for media-assistance. Furthermore, SIDA underlines the importance of education. There is nothing about education in the goal of DVB part from the content of programs which should be educational among other things.

If the parties involved decide to continue working in the direction of making DVB an independent and professional radio-station, the donors could bring important experience for the future of the democratic movement of Burma. The democratic movement need support to practice democracy instead of simply talking about it. Parts of the democratic movement don't seem to want to have an independent radio-station and argue that they know what the people need and are the only ones supplying that to the station, that they are the voices of the revolution. That is nothing but nonsense and reflects a similar way of thinking to those in control of the power in Rangoon today.

Many people are engaged in the problems of DVB, but some hesitate to participate in a creative process as they don't want to be linked to a political party or organization in doing so. There are Burmese who want to be independent. Today, it's somewhat difficult to find staff willing to travel to the other side of the world, separated from family and friends, probably feeling

guilty for leaving them behind, maybe worry that someone might think they are better off compared to those staying behind. From a Scandinavian perspective, it might seem to be a grand offer to work on a radio-station, media being very trendy especially among the younger population in the west. It is doubtful that that identity is shared by the Burmese, most of them have never experienced free media and don't know what it is like working as a professional journalist in a democracy. People making a decision to go to Oslo, have to be taken serious and offered something they can use as experience in the future, both as individuals and for their country.

DVB could play a roll in reinforcing that image and by doing so, strengthen the democratic movement not only for the present time, but also for the future. DVB could give Burma the tools to operate an independent radio-station by educating the staff. That could be a goal of DVB.

Today, it seems like the goal of DVB is limited to exist as a station as a tool for political forces involved in the democratic movement under the leadership of NCGUB until the military junta is overthrown and not to create an independent and professional radio-station.

Today, it happens that staff-to-be arrive in Oslo where it is discovered that they of some reason are not suitable for the job and end up doing other things like cooking food instead. That does not reflect respect to the individual.

Is DVB a tool in the Burmese democratic movement implemented by reliable students from the movement mainly giving voice to different political representatives and groups or, like in a democracy, an independent radio run by professional journalists for a large audience?

What is the goal of DVB? The answer is fundamental for the credibility. Today, DVB can be accused of being a mouthpiece to a political party which selects the staff. That, some argue, is only on paper and does not happen in reality. That is simply not a democratic argument. The free word of an independent radio-station need protection from political interest groups by written rules and agreements. That is the reality.

Objectives

To succeed, the objectives need to be clear, specific and easy to understand for everybody, regardless of sex, age or ethnic group. That is not the case.

The objectives of DVB are very wide. As the objectives are written, they focus mainly on the thoughts and minds of the powers, not as much on the people of Burma, they focus more on conditions people with power encounter and not on conditions regular people in Burma meet in their daily lives. It seems like much air-time is consumed by statements of different organizations and not so much on regular people. The voices of political leaders are heard to a much greater extend then the voices of regular people (which is very much the case in a media overall but not necessarily worth copying, especially not in a democratic movement). There is no tradition of giving the voice to the people for them to freely express their opinion. The objectives of DVB reflects that as well.

It is difficult and time-consuming to try to get ordinary people's stories, even dangerous. Nevertheless, it's important in a democratic progress and should be an important goal. Of obvious reasons, people can not be interviewed easily in Burma, but still, there stories can be told by others using other names.

Stations broadcasting to Burma - April 1998

according to DVB in Bangkok

<u>Station</u>	<u>Burmese Stand. Time</u>	<u>Frequencies</u>
BBC	06.30-07.00	11850 kHz, 9600 kHz
BBC	20.15-21.00	11850 kHz, 7135 kHz, 9720 kHz
DVB	19.14-20.15	15330 kHz, 11520 kHz, 17525 kHz
DVB	21.00-21-25	11850 kHz, 15360 kHz
RFA	07.00-08.00	17580 kHz, 7445 kHz, 13710 kHz, 11590 kHz
RFA	21.30-22-30	11600 kHz, 9395 kHz, 13820 kHz, 11590 kHz, 11830 kHz, 90530 kHz
VoA	06.30-07.30	11850 kHz
VoA	18.00-19.00	11850 kHz, 11910 kHz, 1575 kHz (MW)

One week of DVB broadcasts

according to DVB Oslo

Monday March 30, 1998

News Bulletin (24 minutes)

1. Burmese Monk Protest on Religious Exam (A.B.Y.U 30-3-98)
2. Australia Concerns on Kidnapping in Detail (Reuters, 30-3-98)
3. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Premier Oil Company (The Nation 30-3-98)
4. SPDC attacks KNU's No (7) Area (Nay Myoe Aung ,DVB, 30-3-98)
5. AIDS Discrimination in Shan State (Sunday Time, 22-3-98)
6. SPDC Massacred in Shan State (Sunday Time, 22-3-98)
7. Repatriation of Burmese Workers by Thai Authority (Maung Too, DVB, 25-3-98)
8. Analysis on Burmese Army Part 10 (U Aung Khin, 30-3-98)

Features

9. Burmese Traditional Water festival Than-gyat (Democratic Forces in India, 18 minutes)
10. Arakan Program (15 minutes)
11. Second 25-minute transmission

Tuesday March 31, 1998

News Bulletin 24 minutes

1. Conservative party called On Sanction Against SPDC (DVB Oslo, 30-3--98)
2. Increased Opium production in Burma (Bangkok Post 26-3-98)

3. CPJ called on Release of Imprisoned Journalists in Burma (CPJ 29-3-98)
4. Australian Hostage to be Released soon (The Reuters 31-3-98)
5. UNHCR greater role in Burmese Refugees Issue (The Nation 30-3-98)
6. Opening of Yae-Htawei Railroad & Forced Labour (Aung Myo Min DVB 31-3-98)
7. ILO Inquiry Commission Investigates SPDC (ILO Statement 26-3-98)
8. Analysis in Burmese Army Part 12 (U Aung Khin 31-3-98)

Features

9. Poetry (Wae Aung 9.30)
10. Women's Program (Nu Nu, India 8.15)
11. Chin Program (15.00)
12. Second 25-minute transmission

Wednesday April 1, 1998

News Bulletin (24 minutes)

1. Local SPDC Authorities Arrest Peasants at YayPhue (Aung Hlaing Oo 1-4-98)
2. Peasants Hard-situation at Kalymyo (DVB-India 1-4-98)
3. UNGCR's role on Refugees - Welcomed by Thai Army (BKK post 31-3-98)
4. DKBA Burnt Naesalam market-Thailand (AFP 1-4-98)
5. Shan Refugees Hiding into Jungle from Thai Authority (Maung Too 29-3-98)
6. Burma's Economic Crisis and SPDC (Asia Week1-4-98)
7. Unstable Ex-change rate and Marketing Economy (Dr Aung Khin 29-3-98)
8. Analysis in Burmese Army Part 13 - last (Dr. Aung Khin 31-3-98)

Features

9. Radio drama - The King and his Best Friend (Chindwin studio 18.00)
10. Shan Program (15.00)
11. Second 25-minute transmission

Thursday April 2, 1998

News Bulletin (24 minutes)

1. Australian Cheesman and Ngamsat Released Yesterday (BKK post, Nation 2-4-98)
2. Cheesman accused as illegal intruder by Thai army chief (AFP 2-4-98)
3. UNHCR role on Burmese Refugees being discussing (The Nation 2-4-98)
4. Refugee camps be shifted before Monsoon (BKK post 2-4-98)
5. Preview on ASEM & Alternative ASEM in London (DVB 2-4-98)
6. Open letter to ASEM from Suak-Thailand (DVB 1-4-98)
7. Oppositions to Yadana pipeline Construction-Thai (Aung Hlaing Oo 31-3-98)
8. US & Japan provide Anti-drugs Program i Burma (AFP, Reuters 2-4-98)
9. ASSK speech to UN Human rights Commission, Geneva (Aung Myo Min 2-4-98)

Features

10. Voice of Political Org: Free Burma Coalition (8.05)
11. DVB series (8.40)
12. Karen Program (15.00)
13. Second 25-minute transmission

Friday April 3, 1998

News Bulletin (24 minutes)

1. NCGUB-PM & Colleagues Visited to Lisbon (U Nwe Aung 2-4-98)
2. Press release on Anti drug Prog; to Burma by US Foreign Aff (Bur-net 2-4-98)
3. Shan couple committed suicide (DVB 3-4-98)
4. ASEM and future plans (DVB 3-4-98)
5. Alternative ASEM at London (DVB 3-4-98)
6. Noble Peace Laureates focus on Burma & China (Nation 3-4-98)
7. Amnesty International called ASEM on Human right Issue (DVB 2-4-98)
8. SPDC and rape cases (DVB 13-3-98)
9. ASSK speech to UN Human rights Commission, Geneva (Aung Myo Min 3-4-98)

Features

10. Author's Opinion "Literature in Burma" (10.50)
11. Burmese Traditional Water Festival Than-gyat (7.30)
12. Kayan Program (15.00)
13. Second 25-minute transmission

Saturday April 4, 1998

News Bulletin (24 minutes)

1. Traders hotel sacks Employees (DVB 3-4-98)
2. Yae-Htawe railroad should broken-down in Monsoon (DVB 2-4-98)
3. Student's sport festival and SPDC's fishing business (DVB 4-4-98)
4. Corruption of Kawht Taung Immigration officers (DVB 2-4-98)
5. Japan-more than Yen 5-million aid to Burmese refugees (Japan Times 1-4-98)
6. KNU attack DKBA camps, 26 of SPDC &DKBA died (Reuters 4-4-98)
7. Statement of Mr Cheesman on kidnapping case (Sydney Morning Post 2-4-98)
8. SPDC persuades Japanese motor companies to invest (BKK post 31-3-98)
9. Thai-Satellite company got 2-contracts from TV Myanmar (BKK post 2-4-98)
10. SPDC using Land mines in Thai-Burma border (DVB 16-3-98)
11. FDL-AP boycott FAO Asia-Pacific meeting in Rangoon (DVB 11-3-98)
12. U Human rights commission abolish Dead penalty-Geneva (Reuters 3-4-98)
13. ASSK speech to UN Human rights Commission; part 2 (3-4-98)
14. ASEM discussed on Economic crisis in Asia (DVB 3-4-98)

Features

15. Radio Drama: The Hammer change into Anvil" (16.30)
16. Kayan program (15.00)
17. Second 25-minute transmission

Sunday April 5, 1998

News Bulletin (24 minutes)

1. Preface on ASEM-2 (DVB 5-4-98)
2. Detail-background on the ASEM (DVB 4-4-98)
3. Differences between ASEM & Asian-European meeting (ACN,DVB 5-4-98)
4. Speeches of Daw Suu, Dalai Lama, Hosae Ramos to Alt-ASEM (Nation 3-4-98)
5. ASEM-2 resolution and Plaints (DVB 5-4-98)

6. ASEM-2 & Demonstration urges for Human rights, greater Freedom (DVB 5-4-98)
7. ASEM-2 conclusion pleads to be transparent governments (DVB 2-4-98)
Note; ASEM-s News comments based on International Media Sources
Features
8. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's speech on "Constructive engagements" (14.00)
9. Burmese traditional Water Festival Than-gyat (6.00)
10. Arakan Program (15.00)
11. Closing Tune
12. Second 25-minute transmission

Independence

According to SIDA, media assistance must not be perceived as support to a political party.

DVB has been accused of being a mouthpiece to NCGUB.

If the radio is to be part of a democratic progress in Burma, it needs to be independent. In a democratic process, the goal of a radio-station can not be to voice the opinion of a specific political party. It has been argued that NCGUB is the elected government. In a democratic process, the objectives of a radio-station cannot and must not be to voice the opinion of the government, elected or not. It has also been argued that the role of NCGUB is only on paper, not in reality. In a democracy, anything on paper reflects the reality which is to protect the media from interference and pressure from political interests. A radio-station must be free to question powers on it's own conditions based on democratic principles and protected by laws protecting freedom of speech.

DVB is not free to do so. As long as DVB is not an independent radio-station run according to democratic principles, it cannot be effective. It will always be limited by political ambitions instead of exercising the powers and responsibilities of the free word.

Objectives of DVB

The objectives of the Democratic Voice of Burma as originally drafted are:

1. To report on international events related to Burma, such as
 - a. the international effort to free political prisoners
 - b. the efforts of the UN General Assembly and the Security Council to bring The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) to reason
 - c. the activities of the UN Commission for Human Rights, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, the International Red Cross and other organizations concerning Burma
 - d. support given to the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB and the Democratic Alliance of Burma (DAB) by democratic countries
 - e. how Burmese expatriates are working with NCGUB/DAB

2. To report on events occurring in Burma to the population inside Burma as well as to the world community, and present NCGUB and DAB's views to the Burmese people and SLORC
3. To broadcast regular educational programs on subjects such as science, agriculture, health, nutrition, hygiene (including prevention of AIDS), and international language skills, etc.
4. To give in-depth training and information on world politics, constitutional issues, democracy, federalism, parliamentary procedures, human rights and so forth, to the people of Burma
5. To be an alternate news source informing about the progress of the Burmese democracy movement in liberated areas of Burma, and to provide the various groups opposing the Rangoon regime with a voice by which they can freely and openly express their views in a democratic manner
6. To promote understanding and cooperation amongst the various ethnic and religious groups of Burma.

These goals are probably realistic for anyone having the background in the democratic movement in Burma. They are not realistic for anyone with the background in working on a radio-station in a democracy.

The Burmese democratic movement itself needs education and experience from participating in different democratic processes, as the election was stolen from them in 1990 and they never had the possibility to execute democratic powers with free media. DVB could, if the goals were changed, be an active part of democracy in practice, not only for the journalists working on the station, but also for the members of the different organizations and political parties in the democratic movement.

The objectives that were originally drafted have probably been achieved to an extent, which not necessarily need to be positive from an objective point of view. For instance, it is quite clear that the status of ethnic programs have varied over the years. From the beginning, they did not have air-time. Eventually, some were given slots, but of different reasons programs were not produced regularly.

One reason could be the low pay and bad equipment they had to work with.

It could also be the case, that some ethnic groups did not feel it was worse their while, as the radio-station was controlled by NCGUB and the Burmans. There has obviously been communication problems. Therefore, it is quite clear that the ethnic programs have to be protected in the goals of DVB. It is not enough to state that the goal of DVB is "To promote understanding and cooperation amongst the various ethnic and religious groups of Burma."

When the Mon language program was suspended on January 4th, without any notice, representatives from the Mon people rightfully reacted. In a response letter from the director of DVB, it was explained that

"the Mon language program did not arrive on time.....In addition to the Mon language tape not being available, an extraordinary amount of news relating to the 50th Anniversary of the Independence was generated on 4 January. The News Editor, therefore, decided to temporarily suspend the Mon language program for that one day only. This was announced on the radio".

The answer from the Mon Unity League should be taken into consideration when the goals for DVB are revised:

".....But whenever you have special occasions or political situation in Burma, you should not suspend the ethnic programs (not only Mon program), because, as you said, they have a very limited broadcast time. They have only 15 minutes per week and totally 13 hours in one year. If you compared with programs broadcasted with Burmese language, their broadcast time is really very little.....In struggling for restoration of democratic and federal union of Burma, the participation of all ethnic groups in this struggle is important and the DVB radio station also shows this sign of all ethnic people of Burma. Since DVB gave chances for 15 minutes every week to broadcast with their own language to each ethnic group, we ask for this opportunity. We may not ask for extra time for our special occasion such as Mon National Day or other important days for Mon people, because DVB did not define or promise for it....".

The goals of DVB need to be written so that the rights of the minorities are protected. Only when respect is being paid on equal terms to different people of a country, understanding and stability can be reached to represent a democratic progress. There are lessons to be learned from Ireland, for instance!

Easy access to radio

People in Burma are used to listening to radio.

The military regime broadcast radio on short-wave as well. Radios are rather cheap and available, so are batteries. Burma is a country full of bad roads and slow traffic like oxen pulling carts. Telephones are rare. Some parts of the country, where the army is forcing people to leave their villages, are closed. In some parts, fighting is prohibiting access.

Radio is by comparison the best mean of information. There is really no alternative, one major problem for the opposition being distribution, papers can be confiscated. Through radio, information can be distributed without putting people in too much danger. If the signal was clear, it would be possible for people to listen to the radio without having to turn up the volume too much, like they do today, due to the frequently weak signal. Radio also has the advantage of being a fast medium, with the possibility of delivering the information while it's new.

Looking at the technical development, radio-broadcasting is looking at a bright future making it even easier to achieve high quality at low prices. It is likely that regimes like the military junta in Burma will increase their efforts in stopping broadcasts and more important, those who work with the broadcasts. **"Electronic information is difficult to control, but individual**

journalists are visible and vulnerable” according to William Orme, executive director of the Committee to Protect Journalists.

It is surely dangerous to express opinions in Burma. Thousands of political prisoners are in jail. The junta rules by constantly having some law to lean on whenever they want to execute oppression.

Burma, or Myanmar, was number two, after Nigeria and before Belarus, on the list of press enemies named by the Committee to Protect Journalists to mark the World Press Freedom Day on May 3rd. According to Reuters:

”The New York-based non-profit organization that seeks to safeguard press freedom said the list of leaders from around the world were selected for ”for their relentless campaigns of suppression of journalists....The list names Myanmar’s military ruler General Than Shwe....In citing Myanmar, the group(CPJ) said there were no independent newspaper in the southeast Asian country and fax machines, photocopies and computer modems were illegal”.

There is no evidence of people being arrested for listening to DVB or any other radio-station in Burma. There are no limitations on owning a radio. People have been harassed though, for listening to DVB, like a man who was evicted, his landlord had been told by the military to tell the tenant to move after they had heard that he listened to DVB.

It does not seem like the broadcasts are disturbed or interrupted, sometimes it happens that another station comes in clearer, like a Japanese or German, but this does not necessarily mean that the junta is trying to interfere, it could simply be of natural causes since the signal of the DVB-transmission often is very weak.

The objectives of DVB have clearly changed over time as the interpretation of the objectives has varied according to who has been in charge. Some staff-members have regarded themselves more professional and therefore more suitable to interpret the objectives. This reflects the weakness of the objectives. They should be written so that no one needs to wonder what they stand for. This also reflects the lack of professionalism. There is a grand difference between *thinking* you know what news are and *knowing*. Today, information from organizations is probably to a pretty large extent aired as news. Analysis are classified as news, so are speeches. It is very questionable if an analysis can be called news; what is being analyzed was probably news at some point. A speech itself is not news, it depends on who says what, where and when.

Like on many other radio-station, DVB need to identify the objectives.

It is even of greater importance that the staff working for DVB receives professional education, being in the middle of a struggle full of armed fights and propaganda. It’s a grand difference *thinking* you see propaganda and *knowing* how to spot it.

The objectives have clearly changed from what was originally drafted to what is aired today regarding the content of the programs. In the original draft, there is an empathy on current affairs programs regarding human rights and educational programs. Today, there is an empathy on news, or what the staff identify as news. The donors are probably not aware of this major



change.

DVB operations

- with respect to choice of technical and human resources in terms of quality and quantity

It feels like DVB has always been operating on thin ice with a possibility of falling into a hole in the ice. This, again, reflects the lack of professionalism. The ground has to be very stable, otherwise it is not possible to try to work in such an unstable situation like Burma with all the problems not only for the people living there, but also for the refugees scattered over the world separated from their families and friends.

DVB have been, and still are, operating with very simple means. Technically, it is surprising that so little was done during the first years to improve the situation. Still, staff in the field aren't even supplied with professional tape-recorders. It happens, that they use their own amateur Walkman, which is of very simple quality, record on a normal cassette, not even a chrome-cassette, put the microphone on the Walkman to the microphone on a phone and play it through the telephone connected to Oslo, where they record it. Many times, the material collected from the reporter in the field is useless due to the bad quality. If the through-the-telephone recording is recorded in Oslo, that recording is then broadcasted on short-

wave of very varied quality to Burma. Only an audience desperate for information would try to listen, the quality is bound to be terrible.

With very small means, the situation could improve, if the management showed an understanding of the problem and an interest in solving it.

Of different reasons, not all the staff in the field are allowed to give voice-reports, which mean you can actually hear them on their radio. Those who are not allowed to give voice-reports, fax their reports to the studio in Oslo, from where it's being read.

The possibility to produce radio has improved in Oslo during the last couple of years. Today, there is a simple studio with older, but professional, recording machines. When they still had a cassette tape-recorder only, they could not edit the programs. Today, they should have no problem editing in Oslo. They can also make their own telephone interviews from the studio in Oslo. They are limited when it comes to the possibility of mixing programs, like mixing different sounds like music and speech.

Very little money has been spend on technical investments. This is surprising, regarding the fact that DVB is a radio-station. In the DVB-budget, ten times the amount of money spend on technical investment is annually paid to NBC for administration. The staff is left with second-hand equipment while assistance money from SIDA goes to a Norwegian organization.

Easily, the technical situation could be improved without spending very much money. The DVB-staff has been inventive in finding solutions despite the lack of resources and could easily take one giant step forward to sounding professional with simple means and knowledge. They need professional guidance in doing so.

They could learn to send edited reports using computers both for editing and transmission, for this, they also need a telephone-line.

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The staff is to a large extend young and uneducated students who have left Burma of political reasons. Some have spend time hiding in the jungle, some

have even spend time in jail. They are brought to Oslo for a limited time. NBC handles the visa-issues. In Oslo, they live a rather isolated life. They work and live together with the other DVB-staff. The salary, or allowance, is low, not enough to find your own apartment, they even cook together to keep their tight budgets. Most probably, upon arrival in Oslo, some carry guilt-feeling for leaving there friends behind in terrible conditions. It is not likely that the staff complain, but must feel frustrated and lonely at times. Like most refugees, they don't learn the local language as they live to return to their home-country as soon as possible. Despite that some seem to think, that "*they (the Burmese) cross the border, learn the language and assimilate easily because they all look alike*", the situation is similar in Bangkok.

This is not a sound situation for the staff. They need active assistance to brake the isolation. They need to be part of the society where they operate and meet other people during the days. The staff need active assistance in their professional identity. So far, no efforts have been made to find a location for DVB at any of the NRK-stations or any other radio-station. DVB is regarded as an underground-radio, but still, the possibility of finding space for the DVB-staff to work in a professional surrounding would be very sound!

Finding staff has through the years been a difficult task. It is and should be a difficult task for any radio-station to find staff, not only DVB. It is a difficult job, a job that gets more complicated in circumstances like Burma. Who can be trusted? Different methods have been tried in the efforts of choosing staff. The close connection to NCGUB and ABSDF has scared some people away from working for DVB. Despite the fact that Burma is full of acronyms and the people of the Union of Burma all seem to belong to an organization or alliance, there are people who want to stay independent.

Finding staff has never been a question for the working staff of DVB. Today, the management committee with representatives from NCGUB, NCB, the donors and the DVB director, are responsible for employing staff. None of them have experience from working on a radio-station. In a democratic movement, a representative from a government or political party should not participate in choosing staff for a radio-station.

Regarding recruiting staff for DVB, the level needs to change. Today, staff recruited are much too young and inexperienced. Older and better educated might not want to come and work for DVB, in Oslo or elsewhere, as long as the allowance is low. To be able to recruit staff with higher education, they need to obtain not only an allowance but a salary. Instead of hiring more staff, DVB need to pay the ones working a decent salary and improve the living conditions so that people can lead adult lives while working for DVB in Oslo.

Some staff-members have received some kind of training participating in different two-week courses. According to reports, the participants have been eager to learn and ambitious. It is questionable how much they have been able to comprehend during these courses as they are performed in English, which not everyone understands very well. More important, they have not been educated for the job at DVB.

There is a great difference between education and a course. This needs to be taken seriously to secure the future of DVB. Without an educated staff, DVB might fall through the thin ice. The aim must be to find more experienced people and educate them before they work on the station. The aim must also be to put an end to the obvious negligent of women in choosing staff.

May 3rd was the day of celebrating the freedom of Press around the world. Arne Ruth, experienced editor-in-chief on Dagens Nyheter, the largest morning-paper in Sweden, wrote that day:

”Salary and prestige will never be sufficient as motive to take real risks. Without strong senses of honor, the journalist project is doomed. And to survive, the honor has to be deeply rooted collectively, as professional ethics.” (“Lön och prestige kommer aldrig att räcka som drivkraft för att ta verkliga risker. Utan starka hederskänslor är journalistprojektet dödsdömt. Och för att överleva måste hedern förankras kollektivt, som yrkesetik.”)

Why run a radio-station people can't hear regularly?

From the start, the major problem for DVB has been the transmission.

It is nothing but a scandal that the problem with a weak signal has not been solved in all these years that DVB has been operating. The problem has been known from the beginning and pointed out without a solution to be found. Listeners have written letters and staff-members have sent reports, still, the problem has not been solved. It was the NCB responsibility until the reorganization 1996. How can anyone run a radio-station and not solve the fundamental issue of finding a transmitter that works? How can so much money and people be used without making sure that the listeners can hear the programs? Not solving the problem, is turning the back on the Burmese people who clearly need information about their own country.

It seems unnecessary to make plans for the staff regarding organization and education or technical capacity in Oslo and the border, if the fundamental issue of the signal is not solved. Today, two signals are used for the broadcasts. Part from the Norwegian transmitter in Kvitsøy, programs are transmitted through a German transmitter, Deutsche Telekom. Tests are also currently conducted through World Radio Network operating from London. The issue of transmitting the programs has been/is sensitive due to political reasons. Active support has been needed from NBC to pave the diplomatic road, more could have been done in this matter. Germany needed to be informed officially that DVB does not propagate violence in its broadcasts before they allowed Deutsche Telekom to transmit the programs. The development seem to go in a more competitive direction though, making it easier to find strong transmitters willing to sell space without asking questions.

DVB-staff need to focus on producing programs according to the objectives. Without doubt, they need professional assistance in solving the transmission problem. They also need to work with someone conducting transmission reports on a regular basis to make sure the signal reaches the audience. The transmission reports by DVB-staff are insufficient. The Norwegians and Germans simply sell the transmission-space without conducting transmission-surveys. World Radio Network conduct their own transmission reports and actively work on finding stronger transmissions.

Oslo is OK

Of political reasons, DVB need the protection of a government in a country expressing support. If DVB succeeds in becoming more professional, the impact of the station will surely increase and the need of protection needed to an even greater extend. It would be impossible for DVB to broadcast from any of the neighboring countries. Today, DVB is allowed to operate in India and Thailand. That should not be taken for granted. DVB need to operate from a secure place not only to protect the station, but also civilians in the surrounding. The problem with the bad transmission is not due to the fact that DVB is geographically located far away from Burma.

At first, it might seem odd to have a radio-station broadcasting to Burma from Norway. Of course, it would be preferable to run a radio-station in

Burma or as close to Burma as possible to possibly be closer to the listeners and their problems. Therefore, it is very important to strengthen the DVB-locations on the borders and build sources in Burma. A close cooperation between those working "in the field" and on the station in Oslo is invaluable. That counts for any radio-station operating anywhere. With that in mind, there are adding reasons making Oslo and Norway a functional location for DVB. In cooperation with the donors, Norway also have the potential to offer DVB education, support and professional identification in different locations.

Broadcasting for whom?

Men, especially those organized in the democratic movement, listen to DVB. That you can take for granted.

Of obvious reasons, it is impossible to conduct a listeners survey in Burma. Nobody knows for sure who is listening where and when.

We must not try to guess how many listeners DVB has in Burma based on behavior in the west, with a variety of media, where television reaches even more people today than radio. In Burma, there is no competition. There is nothing to do at night. State radio and television is so obviously full of propaganda, people must be trying very hard to find information somewhere else.

It is possibly so, regarding the time DVB broadcasts, at night after dinner, that it is the head of the household who decides what the family does then. If the wife is finished with cleaning up and putting children to bed, she might join her husband in front of the radio.

The possibility to receive the programs vary. But regardless of profession or background, when asking people living in Thailand who are involved with Burma of some reason, many voice the same perception; DVB is the people's radio. That itself, is outstanding. Anyone else in the world running a radio-station would be jealous of such an identity.

It is very much a perception. People involved in the democratic movement would voice opinions about the importance of DVB and asked if they listened to the broadcasts, the answer would not necessarily be yes due to the difficulties receiving the programs depending on where they lived. Others would try very hard to hear something through the short-wave-noise.

Some believe DVB-listeners are the members of different organizations and political parties involved in the democratic movement, making sure the information they've send to DVB is aired. Some suspect that DVB broadcast to a small group of listeners who already have other means of informing each other and find the broadcasts unnecessary. It is quite unnecessary to support a radio-station only reaching those already involved in the democratic movement, some argue. Some seem to think that DVB only reaches a few people overall.

That is probably true to an extend. It is probably true that DVB-listeners are found among the different active NCGUB and NCUB representatives.

But they are far from alone.

In Burma, listeners are gathered around radios at night, to listen to DVB, often at the broadcast following BBC, in different places, sometimes whole

villages. It's probably the thing to do in some villages, not only because there is a lack of information, there is not much else to do at night after dinner.

It is very likely that DVB has greater impact in some areas compared to others. The impression is that quite many people listen to DVB in Burma and that the station is of great importance, when it can be heard. It is of course very disappointing when the signal doesn't come through.

It is inevitable mainly men over the age of 35 listening to DVB. In the programming, it does not seem to be programs directed specifically to women on an ordinary basis. There are no programs for children or for the younger audience.

It is questionable if the younger generation listen to DVB. This ought to be a problem for DVB. Teenagers in Burma were only children 1988 and 1990. This has to be taken into consideration when planning programming for DVB. If the younger population is not part of the democratic movement, who is then to carry the ideas forward? Programs have to be produced on the younger people's conditions enticing them to listen without forcing them to listen to



programs they should hear but don't like. Yes, if they want entertainment, they should be entertained. Political satire is one way, music another, educational programs a third. The air could be open to people who are not involved in organizations or

political parties, like famous musicians and writers, to a larger extent. The DVB is already doing this and the programs seem to be very popular. The one and very clear criticism of DVB is the bad signal. Over and over again, people point out the fact that it is difficult and many times completely impossible to hear DVB regardless if you try to listen in Burma or on the Thai border. To hear DVB in Bangkok is virtually impossible up to date.

The content of the programs have changed. DVB is focusing to a much larger extent on what they regard as news than originally drafted in the objectives. It is not sure that the audience benefit from this, as there are other, more qualified and experienced stations with better sources broadcasting news. In the original draft for DVB, the empathy was on current affairs programs, explaining the news and work done by the international community regarding human rights, and educational programs. As example: The history of Burma is rewritten by the military junta, where Aung San is given a less important roll. Is it not important that DVB educate the audience about the history, for instance? No, DVB cannot do everything. DVB need to choose what to emphasize. DVB need to choose an identity. DVB need to

choose an identity to fill in gaps of other stations broadcasting to Burma instead of competing with them in order to give the listeners in Burma as much information as possible.

It seems like the station in Oslo works somewhat isolated. Their sources in Burma are very limited. It does not seem like DVB necessarily is operating on the forefront collecting news, it seems like they broadcast what is channeled through to them, which could be statements from political parties and organizations. Obviously, DVB have very good connections with NCGUB and ABSDF. Of course, they receive news about jailed politicians and burned refugee camps as well as other stations and have their own staff on different locations, but it happens that representatives choose other stations to deliver news as they are regarded as more professional.

One problem surrounding DVB, which is a common problem in this line of work involving opposition struggles, is that people involved in the struggle give themselves the right to act as if they know what happens in Burma despite the fact that it has been many years since they were actually there.

Burma changes but their picture of Burma doesn't. Which picture is being broadcasted on DVB? This must be a constant issue of discussions.

Relation with partners

Other stations

BBC, Radio Free Asia, DVB and Voice of America are the main stations broadcasting to Burma in Burmese and other ethnic languages to Burma. Local radio-stations in Thailand reach Burma as well and are becoming very popular.

Radio-stations are constantly accused of being partial and controlled by politics or money. Journalists are accused of working simply for money,

others for being propaganda machines. DVB is also by some accused of being a propaganda station. Media concentration represents mainly an European-North American perspective. Here, DVB plays an important part of giving issues the local perspective.

★ BBC is the most experienced and reliable station broadcasting news to Burma. It is most likely that their broadcasts are reaching the largest audience, especially their Wednesday summary broadcast in Burmese. The signal is strong.

★ RFA, Radio Free Asia, is the newest station, operating and broadcasting from Washington for a year, sponsored by the US Congress. The policy of the station is to work for the freedom of speech. During the year RFA has been broadcasting, the station has doubtless found a large audience in Burma and independent. RFA is not supported by any particular Burmese group or movement. RFA have experienced correspondents stationed in the neighboring countries. From start, they have had no problem with the transmission from Washington and are planning to buy their own transmitter. (The Chinese programs are important targets for RFA)

★ Voice of America is obviously losing ground since RFA started to broadcast. VoA represents a strong North American perspective on most issues. Their signal is probably the strongest, of political reasons VoA have no problem using a transmission in Thailand.

★ Last year, local Thai government controlled radio started broadcasting in Chiang Mai. The signal reached Shan state and since the Shan language is similar to Thai, the broadcast found an audience in Burma. When the Thai authorities discovered that, they stopped the newscasts. Now, the station broadcast educational programs and act as public service radio, letting the audience send messages, acting as community radio. The station has become very popular and the Thai authorities are planning to start broadcasts reaching the Karen State as well. All the programs are censored.

★ DVB is probably the only station focusing on Burma alone, with a Burmese perspective. The other stations focus on international events as well. The signal is weak. Hardly anyone is aware of the fact that any other country part from Norway sponsors DVB. Basically no one knows Sweden supports DVB, not even in Sweden. An increased awareness would probably mean increased responsibility but more important, it would mean a lot to the people in Burma knowing that more countries than Norway are supporting their struggle for democracy. It would doubtless boost the morale by daily informing the DVB-audience that the station is sponsored by a variety of countries. Yes, some would accuse the station of being in the hands of foreign powers, even among members of the democratic movement, people are scornful against BBC, claiming it's not a professional station. It is very important to have a set of rules protecting the free word, clearly showing the independence of the station to maintain it's integrity and credibility.

Tired Donors

It seems like those involved with DVB are tired, even exhausted. There is definitely a donor-fatigue. The station has from the start struggled to find a functional operative organizations and identity and there has been numerous of conflicts which almost brought DVB down. The donors doubt the purpose of the station and feel that they are not sufficiently informed. On the other hand, it does not seem to worry NBC, believing " *they (the donors) need projects*".

DVB operates without regular involvement of the donors, part from the donors having a representative on the management committee. Donors have over and over again underscored the need to solve the issue of bad transmission without the problem being solved. Donors have pointed at the obvious need to attract female staff without the issue being seriously handled. Donors are not aware of the fact that the station has changed the focus on broadcasting what they, the station, regard as news on behalf of current affairs and educational programs. The donors don't really know what DVB broadcasts and how it sounds. The lack of professionalism is another issue the donors have focused on.

Some donors have expressed uncertainty regarding the willingness to fund DVB. They will not unconditionally continue to fund DVB.

The two major issues are

*** Transmission**

*** Professionalism. The staff must be educated and the station run according to democratic principals.**

This is a sound situation that can strengthen DVB. If not, it's probably the end for DVB.

DVB Management and supervision

In 1996, the responsibility for managing DVB was transferred from NBC to a Burmese director. A management committee was created to supervise DVB. The director is working out of his office in Brussels. Of course, it is preferable to have the director closer to the operation, but in this case, the director has made a great impact to improve DVB and put the station on a functional track. If it is decided that DVB moves to be an independent station based on democratic principles, it is necessary to convince the current director to stay on his post. He understands the issues and have clearly shown

administrational skills part from the fact that he is highly respected. As of today, he receives no financial compensation for the job.

Today, the management committee which supervises DVB is represented by NCGUB, NBC, a donor and staff through the director. The operating staff is not represented. It sounds like everybody involved would gain from the experience those working in the field can contribute with. As long as the basic principles and objectives are changed to protect DVB from being a mouthpiece to certain political interests, there is no problem having a representative from NCGUB on the committee, if he/she sits there appointed by NGUB. NCGUB is the government-in exile, NGUB represents the parliament in exile. The parliament body should appoint it's representative on the DVB management committee, not the executive body, and the representative appointed by the parliament body should report back to that body. The same things goes for the donors, they appoint a representative who has the responsibility to report back to the donors. Same goes for the staff-representative a s o.

The director has taken the initiative to organize DVB professionally, appointing managers, establishing a feature department in Oslo, introducing a DVB Audio Web site and purchasing new equipment among other things. Still, there are no job-descriptions. The efforts towards professionalism are conclusive for the future of DVB.

Lack of professionalism

DVB was during the first years managed by NBC under supervision of NCGUB according to the basic principles drawn up. NBC have no previous experience of managing a radio-station or professional journalism. The DVB-staff did not receive sufficient professional guidance arriving in Oslo. Numerous conflicts threatened to undermine the possibilities for DVB to survive. It is obvious that these conflicts where partly a result of the lack of professionalism among the management. It seems like the management lack respect for journalism and understanding of the difficulties involved in operating a radio-station, otherwise basic issues like transmission and education would have been solved a long time ago. It must have been a very frustrating situation for the staff, causing unnecessary conflicts among them.

”There has been grinding, relentless hard work. And there has been setbacks which, at one time, seemed to threaten the whole undertaking” (Annual Report 1977).

In 1994, it was decided that DVB was to be reorganized and strive towards a more professional profile. A station-manager was to be hired in Oslo and when this failed, a professional journalist was hired as consultant. Another, with experience from BBC, was hired as news-editor.

In early 1995, DVB lost it's studio in Manerplaw as the Karens lost the sight to the Burmese Army. Instead, a studio was build in Mae Sot on the Thai border an another one was set up .

At the end of 1995, management was moved from NBC to a director for DVB and a management committee. The organization seem to have been straightened up and seem to be heading towards a base to create a professional radio-station. The director clearly understands the problems involved, not only regarding differences between political groups in Burma, but also in the administration and need for educating journalists to work towards making DVB a professional radio-station. He also understands the importance of making DVB an independent radio-station based on democratic principles necessary to protect The Free Word.

The Basic principles and Objectives need to be rewritten in order for DVB to be an independent radio-station. Media assistance from SIDA *"must not be perceived as support for a political party or as distorting competition"*(Peter Eriches, program director SIDA in Newsletter from the Palme Center April 1988). The Objectives of DVB, if receiving further assistance from SIDA, must clearly be based on principles for an independent radio-station, protecting the station from pressure from political groups and governments. DVB today lacks an agreement assuring the station of independence protecting the staff's rights, information and integrity. Without that, it is a risk that **"the staff by self-appointed censorship avoid to freely look into the actions of all the players in the society"** (SIDA Freedom of Speech).

Some people claim that anything that can be perceived as criticism or negative about the democratic movement, works as propaganda for the military junta. In a democratic movement, everything and everybody can be scrutinized by professional and independent journalists. A free press is part of democracy.

Manage itself

To be an independent station, DVB needs to find ways to manage itself. Today, the management committee handles issues a station-manager could do instead, like hiring staff. The management committee could be the body setting the goals and principles for the station, finding resources and paving political and diplomatic roads to secure education of staff and transmission of broadcasts. The responsibility of a station-manager is then to execute these goals and principles together with the staff in ways set out by the management committee.

NBC continues to be legally responsible for DVB, as long as DVB is broadcasting from Norway. Legal responsibility is not to be confused with editorial responsibilities. (It is very common that there is a conflict whenever those of legal responsibility interfere with the editorial responsibilities, regardless of any cultural and ethnical background. It seems like that has been the case regarding DVB as well.)

Risks

The main risk to DVB is itself.

The base of DVB is still, after six years of broadcasting, weak. The entire operation needs the powers of professionalism to participate and survive in the endless struggle for democracy. Without the high ambition among those who have worked with and supported DVB, the station would probably have

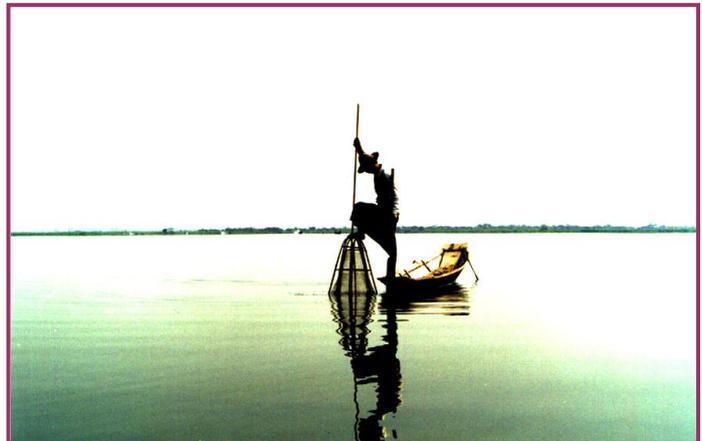


ceased to operate by now. To have the energy to continue, it is vital that the staff achieve proper tools to do a professional job by receiving education before they start working for DVB and decent conditions doing so.

Part of the staff have participated in short courses. That is far from

enough. They need education. Without the necessary education, the staff does not receive enough information about how to protect themselves and their sources, which in a situation like DVB, could be of danger. Every journalist encounter threats and need to learn how to handle that. If DVB becomes more professional, the impact of the station will increase and so the danger to the individual staff-members.

There is no outside threat to DVB. Staff-members have freely operated in different areas, both along the border and in Oslo. DVB has not encountered big problems when establishing stations in Thailand and India. It seems like DVB is not a big political problem for the neighboring countries, as long as they not openly transmits the programs to Burma. That situation could of course change



and it is up to the managing committee to keep an eye on the situation and also make contacts to facilitate the possibilities for DVB to operate in the areas. It seems like efforts in this direction could be improved.

If DVB succeeds on the road it is on, to become an independent radio-station with a professional staff, it is likely that the power of the free word occasionally will upset powers, elected or not. The staff need to learn how to relate to that pressure and be surrounded by protection through clear goals and agreements for the station and a management committee taking it's responsibilities by understanding and respecting the work of professional journalists on an independent radio-station.

Four political objectives

- * Stability of the State, community peace and tranquillity, prevalence of law and order
- * National reconsolidation
- * Emergence of a new enduring State Constitution
- * Building of a new modern developed nation in accord with the new State Constitution

Four economic objectives

- * Development of agriculture as the base and all-round development of other sectors of the economy as well
- * Proper evolution of the market-oriented economic system
- * Development of the economy inviting participation in terms of technical know-how and investments from sources inside the country and abroad
- * The initiative to shape the national economy must be kept in the hands of the State and the national peoples

Four social objectives

- * Uplift of the morale and morality of the entire nation
- * Uplift of national prestige and integrity and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national character
- * Uplift of dynamism of patriotic spirit
- * Uplift of health, fitness and education standards of the entire nation

People's Desire

- * Oppose those relying on external elements, acting as stooges, holding negative views
- * Oppose those trying to jeopardize stability of the State and progress of the nation
- * Oppose foreign nations interfering in internal affairs of the State
- * Crush all internal and external destructive elements as the common enemy

From the junta-controlled newspaper "The New Light of Myanmar"

CONCLUSION

The people in Burma definitely need DVB.

The sources for information are not only limited, but also censored. In Burma, people jeopardize their own safety by simply talking to a journalist or being suspected of giving some kind of information that is not in line with the

military junta. The jail sentences are long and the punishment often cruel, torture occurs and hard labor camps are common.

Visitors to Burma may not encounter any means of repression. It is quite possible to travel around the country believing everybody and everything is at peace. The military junta has developed means of "cleaning up" after outbreaks by using forced labor. They also "clean" areas and force people to leave their homes in the hunt for opposition, burning down villages. These areas, and other sensitive part of the country where there is fighting, are closed. Only by trying to listen to refugees, it is possible to find out what has happened to the people.

The military junta has ruled the country much like Suharto in Indonesia: use people and country for their own benefit by means of repression. Some tend to believe that the changes in Indonesia will have an impact on Burma as



well, others point at a new generation of generals being ready to continue the trail of military rule after that Number One, who is now 84 years old, passes away.

The military junta has driven Burma into bank-

ruptcy. This does not seem to worry people as much as the fact that the educational system is breaking down and the universities in Rangoon and Mandalay are closed after student-demonstrations in 1995. People are worried about the young generation and what will happen to them without the possibility of education.

Education is important to the people of Burma. Regarding the fact that Burma is a very poor country mainly populated by farmers, it has (had) a surprisingly high standard of education. DVB is and can be an even better contributing factor in the efforts of educating people.

More important, DVB can continue to contribute to the tiny stream of information people receive from sources outside of Burma. They completely depend on these sources. It is not evident that DVB should mainly be a news-station, there are others who know news-journalism better, like BBC and RFA, with more experience and better sources. DVB need to fill the space where people need it the most, which is most likely to hear information, education and explanation of news and current affairs based on a Burmese perspective.

DVB need to continue in the direction of becoming a professional radio-station, which means that the staff should be offered proper education, not only courses.

DVB need to become a stronger part of the democratic movement in Burma by being an independent radio-station, without any interference of any opinion group. Only then can DVB in a democratic manner have the possibility and right to protect the free word and its sources.

Based on the fact that Burma has been ruled by militaries pointing their guns at those who try to speak their minds, there is no tradition of working as professional journalists. DVB could play an important part of contributing with educated journalists who, hopefully, will also work in a democratic Burma. In a democracy as well, it is a constant struggle to defend the free word.

SIDA has supported DVB from the start on a more or less regular basis. The contribution has played an important role for the possibility of running the station. In the goals for media-assistance, SIDA points at radio as being the most important means reaching far the largest part of population at a relatively low cost. SIDA has entered the project and should only pull out if DVB violated the agreement. On very fundamental parts, SIDA's goal for supporting a radio-station and DVB's organization contradict each other. DVB is not an independent radio-station as long as a government-in-exile is part of the operation of DVB with rights to choose staff. This does not mean that DVB has violated SIDA's goals and agreements as the organization and objectives of DVB have been very clear from start and probably reflect an ambition to get DVB started in a difficult situation in a combination of the lack of professionalism regarding how to run a radio-station in principle and practice. DVB have supplied donors with quarterly reports where the organization and objectives are very clear. SIDA has in the meantime worked out its goals with media-assistance. The differences are possible to overcome. Members of the democratic movement in Burma welcome assistance in the direction of practicing democracy.

The fundamental issue is the signal, which has been weak from start. It can be solved and should be before any other issues are even discussed. It's ridiculous running a radio-station people can't hear on a regular basis! Trust and credibility are two of the most important foundations of a radio-station.

Surely, the question of signal will and can be solved by this summer. Taking into consideration that the organization of DVB is changed and the objectives revised in a direction where DVB without question is an independent radio-station, there should be no objectives for SIDA regarding further support. The support involves commitment. SIDA need to consider that commitment as it might take years before there is a change to democracy in Burma and even longer before an independent, public radio-station broadcasts in Burma.

SUGGESTIONS

Clearly, the people in Burma are desperate for information. The ruling junta controls the media in the country and choose mainly to focus on the generals.

The media situation is ridiculous, without any respect for the audience. To be able to find out what happens in Burma, the people rely on sources outside the country. Part from DVB, there are other stations: BBC, RFA (Radio Free Asia) and VoA (Voice of America). DVB is the only station focusing on Burma only with a Burmese perspective. DVB is perceived as the people's radio.

Of political reasons, it is necessary to find a location where DVB is protected, to operate freely, therefor Norway is a good location.

Sweden can only support an independent radio-station based on democratic principles protecting the free word. For Sweden to continue supporting DVB, changes need to be made. Before any changes are discussed, the fundamental issue of the signal need to be solved. There is no purpose of broadcasting radio if it can not be received satisfactory.

- ❑ The London based World Radio Network not only sell transmission space but also conduct transmission reports. DVB don't have sufficient means of their own to do that. They, World Radio Network, might be slightly more expensive, but it seems like wasting money if the signal does not reach it's listeners in Burma. Furthermore, the DVB staff need to concentrate on producing programs instead of worrying about the transmission.
- ❑ Programs should be broadcasted on the same times and if possible, same frequency. Changes should not be made without plenty of time to inform the audience unless in a situation of emergency. It seems like the best air-time would be following BBC at night, if possible, on the same frequency. Evening broadcasts are preferred as people have returned to their houses by then. Many people leave their homes early in the mornings. Maybe the early morning-hours are to prefer for programs directed to women? Children?
- ❑ The identity of DVB needs to be clarified. Compared to the original objectives, the empathy today is on news instead of current affairs and educational programs.
- ❑ The goals for DVB need to be drafted so that they are easily understood. In the draft, the ethnical programs need to be protected.
- ❑ The gender issue needs to be taken seriously, both in regard to finding staff for the station and in the programming. Women are being discriminated, both as journalists and as listeners.
- ❑ The younger generation doesn't listen to DVB to the same extend as the older. This should be a problem for DVB as the younger generation are the ones who will carry on the democratic struggle.
- ❑ The staff recruited to DVB is too young and too inexperienced. In order to be able to recruit more educated people with more experience, they need to be paid better and also given education before they start working on the radio-station.

- ❑ Education is a vital factor. Serious efforts have to take place in order to assist the staff to become professional journalists. Short courses are not enough, the staff-to-be need education. DVB could play a more active roll in educating journalists for the future of Burma. There is no tradition of independent journalism after 36 years of military rule. In Burma, journalist is not a profession being proud of, as it's a bureaucrat acting as mouth-piece to the generals. Free media is needed in a democracy. DVB could make it one of it's goals, educating professional journalists. If they want to stay and work for DVB or some other station is equal. People should not be forced to stay and work with DVB after the education, they should be free to choose their own employer, that should be understood from the beginning, the goal being to educate professional journalists. If it is one of the DVB goals, they will all participate in the fight for the free word regardless of where they work. This is important to the future.
- ❑ DVB need to be an independent radio-station run by professional journalists. Only then can DVB be a strong factor in a democratic movement. Media assistance must not be perceived as support to a political party. The organization and management committee of DVB need to change in order to make DVB an independent radio-station. No political parties can participate in the decisions regarding DVB. A political representative appointed by a parliamentary body can participate in the management committee for DVB. The statue of the management committee needs to be overlooked, so that the management committee consists of a representative from a parliamentary body, the donors, the responsible publisher and the staff by director and journalist. Each member of the management committee should be responsible for informing their group. The management committee should set up goals, rules, budgets and directions for DVB regarding operating the station, programming and hiring of staff. A station-manager should be responsible for executing the decisions together with the staff. (Powers in a democracy are divided between the decision-making body and the executive body).
- ❑ The staff need to be independent. If they are recruited from an organization or party, they can not professionally cover that same organization or party as journalist on DVB. It is important that everybody working for DVB is representing DVB and nothing else. What they do on their spare time is their private business.
- ❑ In order for the staff in Oslo to encounter professional colleagues and break the isolation, it would be healthy to find another location for the station, preferably at the Norwegian Radio, NRK. Efforts should be made in that direction. Practically, it would probably be cheaper to rent studio for the broadcasts instead of investing more money on a studio instead of the much needed recording and transmitting equipment for the staff on the borders.

- ❑ In the budget, NBC is being sponsored with Swedish money for administrating DVB. It seems likely that NBC can receive assistance from the Norwegian government instead of the Swedish. That money should go to DVB, so that they can employ their own administrator, a function every radio-station needs.



”The proposition that the Burmese are not fit to enjoy as many rights and privileges as the citizens of democratic countries is insulting. It also makes questionable the logic of a Burmese government considering itself fit to enjoy more rights and privileges than the governments of those same countries. The inconsistency can be explained - but not justified - only by assuming so wide a gulf between the government and the people that they have to be judged by different norms. Such an assumption in turn casts doubt on the doctrine of government as a comprehensive spirit and medium of national values.

Weak logic, inconsistencies and alienation from the people are common features of authoritarianism. The relentless attempts of totalitarian regimes to prevent free thought and new ideas and persistent assertion of their own rightness bring on them an

intellectual stasis which they project on to the nation at large. Intimidation and propaganda work in a duet of oppression, while the people, lapped in fear and distrust, learn to dissemble and to keep silent. And all the time the desire grows for a system which will lift them from the position of "rice-eating robots" to the status of human beings who can think and speak freely and hold their heads high in the security of their rights." Aung San Suu Kyi: In Quest of Democracy.



PERSPECTIVES

For a happy Thingyan

No doubt any Thingyan here has been a happy event, with all the dousing and merriment. Arrangements have been made for this year's Thingyan to be as merry and eventful as possible, getting the pandals, the floats and other things that make Thingyan what it is.

However, to ensure that the indisciplined do not mar the enjoyable side of Thingyan and to make it safe for everyone, suggestions and orders have been issued by the respective authorities.

For instance certain do's have been issued by the Maha Thingyan Supervisory Committee which suggests that in order to ensure a traditional Thingyan enjoyable for all, merry-makers are required—

- a. To avoid speech, acts and attire that run counter to Myanmar traditions and culture,
- b. To avoid acts that run counter to Buddhist culture,
- c. To avoid acts that would cause injury to each other, and,
- d. To avoid speech, thoughts and acts that will cause unrest and disintegration of national unity.

And promotion of a good Thingyan such as maintenance of national culture, avoidance of counter-culture, and promotion of Myanmar's honour and prestige through a traditional Thingyan are also urged.

Moreover, the ugly incidents brought on through thoughtless acts such as throwing ice-packs and balloons filled with water, which are actually missiles that have been known to cause irreparable eye or ear injury are to be completely banned. Deterrent punishment has been prescribed for those possessing ice-packs and water-balloons, those throwing them or those making and selling them.

The committee for ensuring discipline of motorists has also come up with a list of suggestions such as avoiding drink-driving, reckless driving and encroaching on right of way, not to remove the silencers (noise mufflers) from cars and motor-cycles thus leading to excessive emission noise, removal of licence tags, use of bogus tags, driving without driving licence or wheel tax disc, and not to use cars that are condemned as unsafe for the road.

Violations of the above would end in strict punishment, the committee said, adding more explicitly, "Do not let Myanmar traditional Thingyan be tarnished on your account."

These do's and don't's can ensure a happy Thingyan for all of us.

From the junta-controlled newspaper "The New Light of Myanmar" in preparation of celebrating New Year.

The end