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COUNTRY Burma

SUBJECT Burma Government Policy Towards the Karen Internees

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- As a result of instructions issued by the Prime Minister, Thakin NU, a meeting was held on 24 July to consider the future policy of the Burma Government towards Karen internees from the armed services and the police. Present at the meeting were Thakin NU, U WIN (Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Defense), MAHN BA SAING (Minister for Karen Affairs), and officials from the Home and Defense Ministries.
- Thakin NU stated that the present situation warranted a review of Government policy concerning the internment of Karens from the armed services and the police. It was decided that steps should be taken forthwith to close down the internment camps and to review the case of each Karen at present in detention.¹ Accordingly, the Minister for Defense and Minister for Karen Affairs were empowered to set up a Board whose task would be to examine each case and submit recommendations. It was also decided that the Board would make use of three categories in making their recommendations. They were:

White: To be permitted to return to their position in the Armed Services or the Police forthwith.

Grey : To be discharged with full arrears of pay.

Black: To be held for further inquiry or court martial.

The Board would be instructed to complete its work within three months and thereafter the Internment Camps would be closed down.

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- Comment.** This is a refreshing sign of realism in Government policy vis-a-vis the Karens. Approximately seven hundred and fifty soldiers, sailors, airmen, and police have been interned in Rangoon alone since the outbreak of the Karen rebellion in early 1949. There is no evidence to suggest that this move on the part of the Government is connected with General NE WIN's temporary absence on leave. He is known to disfavor any suggestion of accommodation with Karens but in the absence of positive evidence, any connection between the events must remain a speculation.

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