

## Transcript

The Scotsman - 18 May 1949

### **Burmese Border 'War'**

Moslems' Fear of the Arakanese: Pakistan's Attitude

From Michael Davidson : "The Scotsman" Special Correspondent

Akyab (Arakan) Tuesday — A peace mission to North Arakan (which lies towards the Pakistan border) is trying to end "the Moslem war" which is one of the Burmese Government's many headaches.

Moslem elders, carrying an order from Prime Minister Thakin Nu, are in contact with the insurgent Moslems, and the latest reports from these emissaries say that some Moslems have already laid down their arms. These guerrilla operations are less a Moslem insurrection against the Government than "communal" action against the Arakanese — a prolongation of the Muslim-Buddhist riots of 1942. The Moslems — natives of Chittagong in East Bengal, now part of Pakistan — fear oppression by the Arakanese. The Arakanese, an intensely clannish community less than a million strong, hate their Burmese kith and kin, and are afraid of losing their identity in the growing Chittagongese population. Neither trusts the other.

A dangerous aspect of the fighting is its international aspect: Moslem insurgents have been carrying the Pakistan flag, and many of them clamour for the incorporation of this end of Arakan with Pakistan. It was suspected that they drew arms from across the border; the Government is, however, now satisfied that their rifles and ammunition are old stocks left behind by the Japanese and the British. An official of a neutral Embassy told me recently that Pakistan's attitude is entirely "correct" — though if Burma were to disintegrate, Pakistan would doubtless step in. The great majority of Arakan Moslems are said to be really Pakistanis from Chittagong, even if they have been settled here for a generation. Of the 130,000 Moslems here, 80,000 are still Pakistani citizens.

### **Touchy "Nationalists"**

The educated Arakanese are vigorously "nationalist"; they display that touchy assertiveness common to all infant nationalism. But their resentment is no longer against an Imperialist Power — to-day it is against their own Burmese flesh and blood, from which they have too long been cut off by the Yomas mountain.

Indeed, they want Burma (if they are to remain part of it) inside the Commonwealth — some even aspire to become a separate Dominion. But the Arakan "movement" does not seem to extend much beyond the upper class. Arakanese insurgents are not fighting under a "national" banner. They are not simply members of "bandit" groups; there are different political labels. There is no Arakan unity in the field, and the Government is not perturbed by Arakan nationalism.

Here in Arakan, as in the rest of Burma, are bands of dacoits calling themselves Red Communists, White Communists, or erstwhile followers of Aung San, who have disorganised the country, deprived the Government of its revenues, and ruined the rice trade.

The Government controls most of the townships and administrative centres — but there is no administration outside. Beyond town limits it is all Tom Tiddler's ground. You can travel almost anywhere, if you don't mind a few bullets now and then — even up the Kaladan river, whose banks are mainly controlled by Communists of two different factions.

### **Red and White Communists**

On one side, Red Communists seize the cargoes of paddy; on the other, White Communists are content to levy "Customs" dues. In Akyab itself — a township of bamboo houses where smashed aeroplanes, wrecked ships, vanished buildings, and skeletons of landing barges still bear witness to the Japanese and British occupations, there is law, but not much order. Often two sets of Government guards shoot each other up by mistake.

Government leaders here say they could clear Arakan of insurgents quickly, if they had more troops and ammunition. The regular battalions were withdrawn to defend Rangoon when the Burma civil war became grave. Arakan must make do with irregular police and the "private army of Pimya Thiha, a yellow-robed monk, who fought the Japanese as parachutist with the British-led underground "Force 136", and whose great religious influence keeps whole districts loyal to the Burmese Government.

SCOTSMAN

18 MAY 1949

## BURMESE BORDER

### "WAR"

## Muslims' Fear of the Arakanese

### PAKISTAN'S ATTITUDE

From MICHAEL DAVIDSON

(The Scotsman's Special Correspondent)

AYYER (ARAKAN), Tuesday. — A peace mission to North Arakan (which lies toward the Pakistan border) is trying to end "the Muslim war" since it is one of the Burmese Government's many headaches.

Muslim elders, carrying an order from Prime Minister U Thun Nu, are in contact with the insurgent Muslims, and the latest reports from those emissaries say that some Muslims have already laid down their arms. Large guerrilla operations are less a Muslim incursion against the Government than a communal clash against the Arakanese—a re-creation of the Muslim-Buddhist riot of 1937. The Muslims—natives of Chittagong in East Bengal, now part of Pakistan—fear oppression by the Arakanese. The Arakanese, an industrious, clean-shaven community less than a dozen years old, hate their Burmese kin and kin and are proud of using their identity in the growing Chittagongese population. Neither trusts the other.

A dangerous aspect of this fighting is its international aspect. Muslim insurgents have been carrying the Pakistan flag, and many of them clamour for the incorporation of the end of Arakan with Pakistan. It was suspected that they drew arms from across the border; the Government, however, is now satisfied that their rifles and ammunition are old stocks left behind by the Japanese and British. An official of a neutral Embassy in Rangoon told me recently that Pakistan's attitude is entirely "correct"—though if Burma were to disintegrate, Pakistan would doubtless step in. The great majority of Arakan Muslims are said to be really Pakistanis from Chittagong, even if they have been settled here for a generation. Of the 130,000 Muslims here, 80,000 are still Pakistani citizens.

### "TOUCHY" NATIONALISTS

The educated Arakanese are vigorously nationalist; they display that touchy assertiveness common to all infant nationalisms. But their resentment is no longer against an Imperialist Power--to-day it is against their own Burmese flesh and blood from which they have so long been cut off by the Yomas mountains.

Indeed, they want Burma if they are to remain part of it inside the Commonwealth--some even aspire to become a separate Dominion. But the Arakan "movement" does not seem to extend much beyond the upper class. Arakanese insurgents are not fighting under a "national" banner. They are not simply members of "bandit" groups; there are various different political labels. There is no Arakan unity in the field, and the Government is not perturbed by Arakan nationalism.

Here in Arakan, as in the rest of Burma, are bands of marauders calling themselves Red Communists, White Communists, or eventually followers of Aunt Sam, who have unspoiled the country, deprived the Government of its revenues, and ruined the rice trade.

The Government maintains most of the townships and administrative centres--but does so in a halfhearted way. Beyond that, it is all Lord Buddha's ground, and the only order and discipline in the area is that of the Buddhist monks, who are mainly controlled by Communists of two different factions.

### RED AND WHITE COMMUNISTS

The Red and White Communists are the main force of disorder in the area. While the Government maintains most of the townships, it is unable to control the border areas where the Red and White Communists are active. The Red Communists are the more numerous and the more active. They are the main force of disorder in the area.

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*Ans. Hat*