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classroom, speakers who will impart new insights on Korean Americans to your students. Comments of my students who have seen the video are favorable; they cite believability and lack of bias as strong points of the video, since Koreans are telling their own story. *Korean Americans* will stimulate productive class discussion. ■

Jessica Stowell

JESSICA STOWELL, Ed.D., teaches Communication and Asian Studies at Tulsa Community College. She has been involved in the Asian Studies Development Program at the East-West Center, University of Hawaii since 1993, and has helped develop the Asian Studies program at TCC.

Inside Burma Land of Fear

PRODUCED AND DIRECTED BY
DAVID MUNRO
NARRATED BY JOHN PILGER
DISTRIBUTED BY BULLFROG FILMS
BOX 149, OLEY, PA 19547
610-779-8226
BULLFROG@IGC.ORG
HTTP://WWW.BULLFROGFILMS.COM
1997. 52 MINUTES. COLOR

Inside Burma questions, among other things, the “Visit Myanmar 1996” campaign orchestrated by the State Law and Order Restoration Committee (SLORC, which has recently changed its insalubrious acronym) and the role of foreign investment which enriches SLORC and subverts democracy. The video documents the oppression of the Burmese people and their resistance with rare film clips and an interview with

Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD). While itself a political act, *Inside Burma* documents the harsh conditions of life in this former British colony in the mid-1990s.

Reporter John Pilger narrates a quick overview of recent Burmese history, noting the resistance to Japanese occupation in World War II and Aung San’s (Suu Kyi’s father) role in the freedom movement which led to Burmese independence in a government that combined Buddhism, Marxism, and democracy.

In 1962, General Ne Win led a coup which overthrew the regime and began an isolating and brutal military dictatorship. In 1988, students and others arose in a rebellion that the government bloodily suppressed by shooting many demonstrators and even some of the medical personnel who tried to aid them. When Aung San Suu Kyi and the NLD won an overwhelming victory in the 1989 elections, SLORC nullified the elections.

By the early 1990s, however, the generals saw the need for more resources and began to open the country to tourism and development. Their attempts to make the country attractive to tourists were carried out by political prisoners, often described as slave labor.

Pilger weaves an interview with Aung San Suu Kyi through the video. Suu Kyi traces the rise of the NLD, the 1989 election, her house arrest, and the continuing struggle for democracy.

A series of still shots of the Burma Death Railway, built by forced labor under the Japanese, segues into current forced labor—mostly by convicts, but also children—to build new railways. Pilger emphasizes the large number of Burmese and other Asians who suffered in the building of the Railway. He then points out that

nearly as many Burmese are now suffering under their own government, by being forced to build railways to service a pipeline which will take Burmese natural gas to Thailand. International oil conglomerates Total (France) and Unocal (U.S.) are partners in the development of natural gas.

The other use of forced labor is in [re]building tourist attractions—mainly aimed at upscale, big-ticket tours. Pilger interviews several leading British tour planners who all deny any culpability in human rights abuses. He interviews an Australian lawyer who witnessed forced labor, and we see young children being forced to work on dangerous projects intended to make certain areas more attractive to tourists. This is contrasted with shots of Western tourists exclaiming over the ruins of Pagan. Suu Kyi makes clear that when democracy is achieved it will be time for tourists to visit Burma. The time is not now.

The video closes with a brief interview with members of the Karen minority in the northeast who have been opposing Burmese domination and SLORC. It underscores that this vast pool of cheap Asian labor is a downside of the Asian miracle, made all the worse by treating it as routine. Pilger argues that apartheid in South Africa was not brought down by foreign investment, but by sanctions—suggesting that similar tactics would be appropriate for Burma.

Obviously, this is a political video. It makes a familiar point: that foreign investment and tourism are often not good for the general populations of developing countries. This video had to be shot in secrecy. When broadcast on Australian television in 1996, SLORC attempted to block its reception in Burma by cracking down on the licensing requirements for satellite dishes. Tapes of the broadcast were a hot item

in the underground market during summer of 1996.

We have had the good fortune to watch this video in the company of Burmese and Americans who had witnessed many of the events it depicts. Its power was manifest in their sad faces and tears. Yet, while painful, all were grateful that the story was being told.

Despite its concise history of Burma, details in this video go by too quickly to be grasped by a novice in one viewing. It requires supplementary information for classroom use. Furthermore, students will need time to absorb what they see, and time to discuss it. *Inside Burma* does what *Beyond Rangoon* promised, but failed to deliver—it is a compelling account of the tragedy of recent Burmese history and the heroic efforts of her citizens to overcome that tragedy. We recommend it highly for any collection that seeks to cover recent Burmese and Southeast Asian history. ■

Thomas D. Hall
and
Jean A. Poland

THOMAS D. HALL is Lester M. Jones Professor of Sociology at DePauw University. He has taught the sociology of development and social change for twenty years.

JEAN A. POLAND is head of Swain Hall Library at Indiana University. She presented workshops on computers and libraries to Burmese librarians in Rangoon in 1996. Hall and Poland traveled in Southeast Asia in 1996.