

## Andrew Brock Travel Ltd.

Please reply to

- 29A Main Street, Lyddington, Oakham, Rutland LE15 9LR. Tel: 01572 821330. Fax: 01572 821072.  
E-mail: abrock3650@aol.com
- 10 Barley Mow Passage, London W4 4PH. Tel: 020-8994 6477. Fax: 020-8742 1066.

Patricia Barnett  
Director  
Tourism Concern  
Stapleton House  
277-281 Holloway Road  
London  
N7 8HN

20 November 2007

Dear Ms Barnett,

Thank you for your letter of the 23rd October just received. Please note our change of address.

We can be in entire agreement that all is not well in Burma, and I am just as concerned as you that poverty has driven protestors into the gunights of the army with consequent tragic and useless loss of life. I think we can also agree that nobody should travel to Burma unaware of the issues involved. Equally I join with you in deploring so many of the Junta's past activities undertaken in the name of tourism.

No doubt if I had also been in agreement with you over stopping sending tourists to Burma, I would have been the richer for it – I receive numerous letters and e-mails from people who tell me they will not use our services while I continue to programme tours to Burma. It is for reasons of conscience, not profit, that I accept the stigma of featuring on the Burma Dirty List. As you will remember, I was an enthusiastic signatory to the protest letter that Tourism Concern orchestrated from tour operators following the meeting you arranged at the House of Commons.

I note the statement on tourism by the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma. Sadly, in a country that is not free, it is impossible to test the degree of popular support for such a statement. All one can say for certain is that many individuals in Burma who wish to see an end to military rule do not wish to see an end to tourist arrivals. That Myint, U Thant's grandson, puts this point of view more eloquently than I can in "River of Lost Footsteps".

Tourism, as you know well, is a highly labour-intensive industry, creating numerous jobs for the less highly skilled, waiters, drivers, cooks, guides, cleaners and crewmen. I believe it is deeply deeply wrong, and entirely unacceptable for a Christian, to

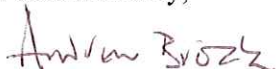
punish these people for the sins of their unelected masters. Burma is a country where there is no unemployment benefit, no free medicine, no free education, and when the tourists do not come there is no return to some idyllic pastoral paradise, only grinding poverty. A glance at any Amnesty report shows that tyranny and poverty tend to go hand in hand, and it seems to me that your approach tends to reinforce the problem rather than create the solution.

As you say, the tourism boycott campaign has already reduced tourism to Burma from this country to negligible levels, yet I can detect no sign whatsoever that your chosen policy has had any effect at all on the Junta's policies. This is hardly surprising, since tourism is not quite the limitless bankroll for the Junta that it is made out to be. Regrettably, 7% of all our remittances to Burma does indeed go directly to the government, but the remaining 93% reaches the hands of our agent, a man of total integrity with no links to the army, who does his very best to ensure that we use only those hotels, airlines and ships in which the Junta has no stake.

My contacts in Rangoon tell me that with Khin Nyunt now sidelined, General Than Shwe is very content to see the tourism boycott working effectively, since he believes, like General Ne Win before him, that Western tourists are a threat to Burmese social and religious values – as you know, he has already banned tourists from visiting the new capital outside Pyinmana. It would indeed be ironic if he goes further and, like Ne Win before him, abolishes tourist visas for Non-Asian nationalities. I know for sure that the vast majority of Burmese would be deeply unhappy to return to the 15 years of total isolation from the outside world which Ne Win imposed on them.

I am very grateful to you for undertaking to publicise my response to your letter, and I also will do my best to do so.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Brock

---

cc: Geoff O'Donoghue, Director of International Division, CAFOD  
cc: Kirsty Smith, Director, Methodist Relief and Development Fund