National League for Democracy
97B West Shwegondaing Street
Bahan Township
Rangoon

Statement No. 9/97

1. At about 16:15 hours on 15-9-97, a military intelligence officer came to the house of the Chairman of the National League for Democracy (NLD), U Aung Shwe. The officer started by saying that Secretary (1) of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) wished to meet the Chairman at 09:30 hours the next morning (16-9-97). He then said that U Soe Myint and U Lun Tin, two members of the Central Executive Committee (CEC) of the NLD would also be included. He added nothing more about the proposed meeting.

2. Chairman U Aung Shwe, Deputy Chairman U Tin U and General Secretary Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met at about 16:45 hours to discuss the matter. It was decided that in accordance with the principles laid down by the NLD elected Members of Parliament and by the organizational committees of the NLD at various levels, party matters must be handled jointly by the Chairman and the General Secretary. Therefore it would not be possible for the Chairman U Aung Shwe to attend the meeting alone (without the General Secretary). This decision was conveyed to Deputy Chairman U Kyi Maung and to Secretary U Lwin and their consent was obtained.

3. In order to convey the decision to Secretary (1) of the SLORC, the MI officer who had issued the invitation was asked, through the MI unit in Daw Aung San Suu Kyis compound, to come to see the Chairman. It was indicated that the matter concerned was of great importance and that if the MI officer was unable to come that evening he should come to the house of the Chairman not later than 08:00 hours the next morning.

4. At about 07:30 hours on 16-9-97, a member of the MI came to the Chairmans house to find out who had arrived. The Chairman called him back (as he was leaving) to remind him that the MI officer who had come the previous day should come by 08:00 hours that morning. However the officer did not arrive. He only came at about 08:45 hours, after CEC members U Soe Myint and U Lun Tin had arrived, to convey them (and the Chairman) to the proposed meeting with Secretary (1).

5. The Chairman told the MI officer that he could not come. As there were commands and regulations within the army, so also a political party had rules and principles to which the Chairman himself must adhere. It was a policy decision of the NLD that party matters had to be handled jointly by the Chairman and the General Secretary. In this instance, as
the Chairman had been invited only with two stipulated members of the CEC, he would not be able to come. However, in accordance with the principle of keeping open the road to negotiation, it had been agreed that U Soe Myint and U Lun Tin should go to the meeting.

6. U Soe Myint then told the MI officer that he and U Lun Tin would be attending the meeting to explain to Secretary (1) the reasons why the Chairman was unable to attend the meeting, to listen to what Secretary (1) had to say and to convey his words to the CEC.

7. After reporting back to those concerned the MI officer tried to persuade U Aung Shwe to attend the meeting. When the Chairman firmly refused, the MI officer said that plans for the meeting had been cancelled and left.

8. One of the salient comments made by the MI officer was that in the statement issued (by the NLD) after the Chairman, U Hla Pe and U Than Tun (two members of the CEC of the NLD) met Secretary (1) of SLORC on 17-7-97, the Chairman had guaranteed that negotiations carried out with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would meet with success, but by now refusing to take the opportunity offered on the present day, the Chairman was acting in a destructive manner.

9. In the statement issued after the meeting on 17-7-97, not only had Chairman U Aung Shwe guaranteed that negotiations with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would meet with success, it had also been made clear that party matters must be handled jointly by the Chairman and the General Secretary, in accordance with the mandate given by the elected Members of Parliament of the NLD and the organizational committees of the party at various levels.

10. Therefore Chairman U Aung Shwe was acting correctly in accordance with party policy. In future also, in seeking genuine negotiations, the NLD will stand firmly by its principles, with the support and encouragement of the people.

11. It was decided that a statement (on the matter of the proposed meeting with Secretary (1)) would be issued so that members of the NLD, the people of Burma and the international community could make a correct assessment of the situation. However, in the interests of achieving harmonious relations, it was also decided that the contents of the statement should be discussed in advance with the authorities. With this end in view, Deputy Chairman U Tin U conveyed the following message to a member of the MI unit in Daw Aung San Suu Kyis compound at about 11:00 hours on 16-9-97.

Tomorrow the NLD will be issuing a statement in connection with the matter which occurred this morning, 16-9-97. Before issuing the statement, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would like Colonel Than Tun to come to see her in the interests of achieving harmonious relations between the
two sides. Could we be informed as soon as possible of the time when the colonel would be able to come.

12. Not only did the authorities fail to send Col. Than Tun, they unilaterally issued a statement entitled Meeting Called Off to foreign news agencies abroad. The claim made in the statement that Chairman U Aung Shwe and the two members of the CEC had been extremely delighted with the invitation to the meeting is quite untrue.

13. As the NLD understands very well the nature of genuine negotiations, we will continue to strive for such negotiations with the support of the people.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy