A DISCOURSE ON THE FIFTY FOURTH ANNIVERSARY OF RESISTANCE DAY

Statement No: 50 (3/99)

1. On the 27th March 1999, fifty four years will have passed since the Armed Forces and the Burmese people shed their blood and resisted the armed forces of a foreign country and their fascist policies.

2. This story of resistance to reclaim sovereign power which began in 1945 is of tremendous importance and stands out as a landmark in Burma's history.

3. The overthrow of fascism was not only a symbol of the unity of all the peoples of Burma was the fore-runner in the obtaining of our independence on the 4th January 1948. This fact no one will deny.

4. The resistance movement -- in which General Aung San, martyred leader, independence architect, father and founder of Burma's Armed Forces and all the people participated with determination and the will to win and not capitulate, fighting and bleeding --- is of great historic significance. It is important that our children and the future generation should be made aware that the 27th March is not a commemoration of the Armed Forces but a commemoration of the resistance to fascism.

5. On page 83 of the book "History of the Resistance to Fascism", General Aung San wrote "On the 27 March, 1945, our whole nation organised and commenced the resistance movement against fascism as is known to the world today".

6. General Aung San in his writings recounted that before this resistance to the Japanese Fascists, he and his political colleagues resolved that to overthrow the British colonial government they needed to take up arms. Therefore the decision to form the armed forces was made.

7. This was why General Aung San and the "thirty comrades" (the youths of Burma) secretly went to Japan to train and equip themselves with the skills of warfare. After that they spearheaded the fight for Burma's independence in collaboration with the Japanese armed forces from Bangkok in Thailand. The Burma Independence Army (BIA) was formed on the 26 December 1941, by General Aung San and his thirty comrades with him as their leader.
8. Therefore, it is only fitting and proper that the 26th December be commemorated as "Armed forces Day", the day when the BIA was founded. This can not be altered or watered down in any way. It was on the 27th December and then again on the 30th December that these founders of the BIA took the oath "drank blood" and vowed to sacrifice their lives to gain independence for Burma. This act of allegiance and loyalty needs to be extolled. This is the genuine history of how General Aung San founded the Burma Army.

9. On the 27 December when they "drank blood" the words spoken by General Aung San was enough to cause continuous and painful goose pimples. These were his words:--

"Fellow comrades, provisions, we have none. Clothing, we don't even have a scrap. Therefore, throughout this war we will have the earth to sleep on and for food we have rocks and sand. This is all I can give you. Do not anticipate position and wealth. Death will be good luck for us." (The Sparse Speeches of General Aung San: page- 24)

10. General Aung San's BIA fought alongside the Japanese forces and caused the retreat of the British army from Burma. General Aung San acted as General of the Burma Defence Army (BDA) which replaces the BIA on July 27, 1942.

11. These soldiers had to endure dirty, bullying, crushing, overbearing persecutions while they were fighting for Burma's independence. They were prepared to sacrifice their lives and learn the skills of warfare from the Japanese. Those individuals were the ones who nurtured the soldiers of today's Armed Forces. Their love for country never evaporated.

12. This is how General Aung San founded and developed that Armed Forces with selfless devotion and love for the country and its people. Some of those Army personnel with sterling qualities are today leaders in the NLD holding positions in its central executive body. There are others in the Central Executive Committee and in other branches of the NLD who have fought fearlessly against the fascists together with members of the Armed Forces for our independence.

13. We reproduce some of the utterances of General Aung San, father of the Armed Forces. stipulating the qualities and responsibilities that members of the armed forces should observe.

"----- This Armed Forces should be something that the people of this country will revere, adore and depend on. But, if in the hearts of the people there is resentment against this armed forces then the establishment of this armed forces will be futile. Comrades, the poverty we now suffer, the poverty we experience in our barracks, the dangers we will face on the battle-field will have been all for nothing. That is
why, it is so essential that you discharge your duties so that the whole country will have complete faith and trust in you. " (The Sparse Speeches of General Aung San: page- 97)

" ----- This armed forces has not been established for any one individual. It has been established for the entire country- for all the people. This army has not been established for one group, one party, or one set of people. It has been established for the entire country- for all its citizens. ----- The duties and obligations that have been systematically given to you whether in the higher or lower ranks- you perform as representatives of this country."
(The Sparse Speeches of General Aung San: page- 102)

" ----- If these persons in high positions, no matter who, are self seeking and work to the disadvantage of the people and the country,- they will not last long. When the time comes they will fall. Looking back in history, no matter how big or important a person, he eventually will fall. You soldiers will also suffer if there are such corrupt persons in high positions. Example- When someone in authority issues an order outside his domain or jurisdiction and which has nothing whatsoever to do with the country or the people's benefit- you will need assess if that order is consonant with the established system, just or unjust, and what purpose it will serve the country and its people.
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(The Sparse Speeches of General Aung San: page- 103)

" ----- The other thing I want to say is what I have been repeatedly saying. But I need to emphasise it again. The armed forces has not been created for the purpose of persecuting the people, nor for the purpose of exercising power with weapons. The army is the servant of the country. The country is never the servant of the army . ----- "
(The Sparse Speeches of General Aung San: page- 104)

14. The above utterances made by our martyred leader General Aung San, architect of our independence, father of the army are precepts that should be followed by the armed forces.

15. It is extremely important for all members of the armed forces of today to be mindful of General Aung San's spirit and the discipline and principles that he propounded and to follow them conscientiously. On August 19 of 1945, the Anti Fascist People's Freedom League held the "Nay-thu-yein" conference with the full support of the people which made it possible for the army to be enlarged and elevated to the position that it is in today. It is not correct to exclaim that " Armed forces only is mother- Armed forces only is father". The correct message is " The people of the country only is mother- The people of the country only is father".
16. The real reason of our victory in the fight for independence from fascism was because the people and the political leaders were united. Similarly, the situation today calls for the whole country to learn from the past and unitedly struggle for genuine democracy and human rights.

17. In accordance with this historical record, the 27 March is not Armed Forces Day. No one can deny that it marks the day when armed resistance to the fascist system was taken up as a last resort. The armed forces of today need to remember and commit themselves to adhering to the spirit and the principles spelt out by the father of the army - General Aung San. It should be as General Aung San declared- The army must be the servant of the people. The country must not be the servant of the army. Because the army is composed of sons and daughters (jewels) of all the peoples of the country from every walk of life, fascist policies and systems must not be applied.

18. For the purpose of establishing genuine democracy which is the deepest desire of the people today and because it is so important for the future of the country it is first and foremost necessary that those who genuinely aspire for democracy act unitedly. Then only a genuine democratic government and a genuine democratic state for all the different nationalities that live in the country can be established.

19. When such a genuine democratic government is born it will be possible to revive and establish an Armed Forces envisaged by our martyred leader General Aung San, father of the army and architect of our independence; an Armed Forces that appreciates his spirit and will abide by his instructions; an Armed Forces that will be loved and revered as in the days when resistance was launched against the colonial and fascist systems. On that day, all the different nationalities and groups can unite and establish true democracy with equality and complete human rights. That will be a day of glory and victory.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
27 March 1999