

NLD Statement 36/2000:

National League for Democracy
No: (97/B), West Shwegonedine Road
Bahan Township, Rangoon

Statement 36 (3/00) (translation)

27 March, 2000 ~ the 55th anniversary of Resistance Day

When Burmese political leaders agreed that it was time to resist the British colonial rulers and fight for independence they realized that the first step was to get training in the art of warfare; secondly, to acquire weapons from countries that would assist and thirdly, that assistance must be obtained from a country whose skills in warfare was on a level or better than the country against which the battle was to be fought. So they made contact with Japan and sent thirty young thakins (later known as the thirty comrades) to Japan for military training.

On completion of military training, the thirty comrades led by Thakin Aung San arrived at Bangkok in Thailand where they founded the Burmese Independence Army (BIA) and on 27 December 1941 and 30 December 1941 they took an oath of allegiance by drinking blood drawn from their arms.

The first flag of the BIA was green depicting a peacock in a white circle in the center. In the four corners were streaks representing lightning flashes. However, the leaders decided to change the background and before the BIA marched into Burma, the background colors of the flag were changed to yellow, green and red with the centerpiece as before.

After the Japanese and the BIA succeeded in taking over Burma, the BIA was converted into what appeared to be a proper military institution and renamed the Burma Defense Army (BDA) on the 27 March 1942. As a matter of fact at that time the numbers in the BIA had swelled to 50,000 because it had the support of the people. This gave cause for alarm to the Japanese. It had to be restructured with only 3000 and renamed at the behest of the Japanese who were fearful that the Burmese would turn against them. They wanted the entire BIA disbanded but this would certainly have ended in revolt so they deceitfully offered to convert it into a well-trained army which had to be agreed upon. Bogyoke had to accept the arrangement because he was aware that the time was not ripe for an anti fascist revolt.

The Japanese failed to give Burma independence after Rangoon was captured as promised. It was only on 1st August 1944 that they made a pretense of giving Burma her independence. The Hai-be-kyau-ku in Rangoon (head office of the BDA where the Burma army worked in conjunction with the Japanese) and the BDA war office in Pyinmina collaborated and the BIA was restructured and came to be known as the Burma National Army from the 15th September 1943.

Whatever the circumstances, on 27 March 1945 (before the resistance against the Fascist Japanese regime) there was no name change of the tatmadaw.

The BIA was the creation of the leading political party, "Do-bama-ah-si-a-yone" and in the first struggle for independence, their tri-colour flag was hoisted and flown by the BIA when they marched into Burma. In the second struggle, which was against Fascist Japan, the flag that was hoisted and held by all resistance fighters including the army was the resistance flag . It was the Pha-Sa-Pa-La (Anti Fascist and Peoples Freedom Party) flag which was red in color with one white star in the left hand corner.

The leading political party was the Pha-Sa-Pa-La. Thakin Soe, Chairman of the Burma Communist Party and Bogyoke Aung San, Supreme Commander of the army were responsible for giving directions and commands.

While it was engaged in the Resistance Movement, the BDA (Burma Defense Army) was renamed PBF (Myochit Burma Tatmadaw - meaning armed forces who love their country). The 27 March was the day when the entire country especially in the villages and the countryside revolted together with the Tatmadaw against Fascist Japan. Everywhere, the nation loving Tatmadaw

soldiers, the civilians resistance groups, politicians and the masses were united, assisting each other and working as one. The soldiers provided security for the civilians and even helped in civilian duties and the civilians provided food and provisions for the soldiers to the best of their ability. They even sheltered and hid them from the Japanese who wanted to eliminate them.

The spirit of solidarity between the masses and the armed forces that was experienced during the time of this resistance movement is now seen as a landmark in the history of the country. Every individual who lived through this era experienced it. The country reached a remarkable peak on the 27th March in their resistance against Fascist Japan.

Most of the resistance work was done underground (surreptitiously). People sacrificed their lives because their one goal was to gain independence. People have reason to be proud of what they did and achieved on the 27 March. There was no differentiation between soldiers, civilians, politicians and other resistance workers. Every individual was filled with love of country and they can claim the 27 March as their RESISTANCE DAY.

It was not only a victory against Fascist Japan. It led to the gaining of complete independence on the 4th January 1948 and the establishment of the Union of Burma with pomp and ceremony. It is a shame that we cannot celebrate this day of independence every year as we did at the beginning. If we had not been victorious in our resistance on the 27 March, an independent Union of Burma would never have happened on the 4th January 1948.

Because of the resistance that began on the 27 March, the Japanese were rooted out from Burmese soil but after that this great resistance spirit became diffused. The solidarity, unity, trust in one another, mutual respect that reached a peak crumbled away and the ugly and loathsome head of insurrection surfaced causing much suffering to innocent people countrywide. Now they were burdened with the effects of insurgency while previously they were the ones who protected and saved the lives of soldiers in the resistance movement.

Before 1950, Resistance Day was observed in Rangoon a couple of times but its significance diminished. The insurrection that flared up then is still a burning issue today. Instead of coming to terms with one another on political matters, arms and the use of force has been resorted to. Time has been lost. To settle matters by meeting face to face and talking things out seems to be too much of a burden.

Since the time of the Caretaker Military Government in 1958, the importance of Resistance Day has been slowly diminished. For the sake of expediency and better leadership, the Thakins of the Do-bama-a-si-a-yone, who formed the Burma Independence Army changed the colour of their army flag and took on the tri-color of the Do-bama-a-si-a-yone in the first resistance struggle. In the second instance when they needed to root out the Fascist Japanese, they again discarded their army flag and adopted the Pha-sa-pa-la resistance flag for better leadership and expediency. The day on which the BIA (Burma Independence Army) was founded should be rightly observed as Tatmadaw Day. The 27th March 1945 besides being an auspicious day for all the people of Burma, it must be observed as the day on which resistance operations against Fascist Japan commenced under the leadership of the Pha-ta-pa-la. In commemorating the 27 March, we must honor all participants in the resistance movement against Fascist Japan including all those warriors who made great sacrifices and all civilians who gave shelter and provisions. The 27th of March must be distinctly and specifically distinguished as Resistance against Fascist Japan Day.

Under the Military Caretaker Government in 1958 Resistance Day and Tatmadaw Day was intermingled. Then during the Burma Socialist Program Party regime, it was completely changed to Tatmadaw Day. The forces marched and assembled in the Resistance Garden (not Tatmadaw Garden) with great pomp and ceremony and fire works display. At Government House, ambassadors and distinguished guest were lavishly entertained. Today, under the military dictators, grander and ostentatious celebrations take place. Resistance day and its significance are completely obliterated. Why has this happened? Because those warriors and activists who participated in the resistance and the struggle for independence are no more. The true meaning of resistance and independence is lost. That national unity must be obtained through political means is a concept that has diminished.

No one will deny that on the 27 March 1945, national solidarity and unity was achieved for the very first time in Burma's history. To neglect and disregard something of such national importance and significance is sad and depressing. Lives were lost, sacrifices were made in the first resistance movement because of which eventually Burma gained its independence.

Therefore, this day should be celebrated by recounting the brave and dangerous acts performed by those warriors in the resistance movement, by infusing the spirit of solidarity among the races, by joining hands with the armed forces and cooperating lovingly to preserve our independence. These celebrations should take place countrywide every year.

As a matter of fact, in this day and age, the army does not take precedence over politics. Wars are waged as a result of political decisions. Throughout Burma's struggle for independence leadership came from political minded individuals. This cannot be contradicted by anyone. Perfect example was Bogyoke Aung San who gave up his position as head of the army to be the political leader.

Therefore, knowing the real situation, seeing the country and its people being brutally subjugated, the National League for Democracy is doggedly working for genuine democracy and human rights. We urge all to join hands and overwhelmingly support us in our determination and efforts to work for the welfare of the nation.

Central Executive Committee
National League for Democracy

Rangoon
27 March 2000