

NLD statement on 19th July,2001 (unofficial translation)

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

Discourse on the 54 anniversary of martyrs' day.

"Consequences of the 19th July"

Regicide was practiced in the Padethayit era in Union of Burma. The group of power grabbers in the palace believed in pulling strings and getting the performers to dance according to their wishes. After King Mendon (who organized the 5th Buddhist Synod) King Thebaw ascended the throne through this process of regicide. Crown Prince Kanaungmintha and other princes were all brutally killed.

Embracing the principle "kill and grab power" a group in the palace enthroned King Theban but he was weak and stupid. After seven years monarchial rule came to an end. The country was under colonial rule in 1885 when independence was lost.

Fifty-four years ago today (19 July 2001) our national leader, architect of our independence, father of the tatmadaw Bogyoke Aung San and other heroes were assassinated. Galon U Saw, one time prime minister wanted political power. It must be said that instead of using the democratic process, he resorted to a short-cut process by the use of force.

By the death of Bogyoke Aung San and the heroes the entire country has suffered a great loss. It is necessary here to define the duties of each of the fallen heroes.

- Bogyoke Aung San was the leader of the AFPFL government.
- Thakin Mya was the Minister for Home Affairs.
- U Ba Cho was the Minister for Information.
- U Razak was the Minister for National Planning.
- U Ba Win was the Minister for Supply and Trade.
- Mahn Ba Khine was the Minister for Industry and Labor.
- Maingpun Sawbwa Sai San Tun was the Minister for the Frontier Areas.
- U Ohn Maung (ICS) was the Secretary for the Department of Roads and Communications.
- Ko Htwe was Mr Razak's bodyguard.

Let us examine the living conditions, prosperity and political circumstances of the country during six periods when political power was gained through the democratic process and when political power was obtained by force of arms.

1. AFPFL government period (1948 - 1958)

1948 to 1958 the AFPFL ruled. It was a government elected by the people. Because of differences in political ideologies there was civil war. Two thirds of the Union of Burma was under the control of multi colored insurgents. The biggest groups were the communists whose creed was to gain power by force of arms and the KNDO (now KNU) whose main objective was to obtain its own territory for its own people.

In accordance with the Candy Agreement, the strength of the Burmese Tatmadaw was limited to 5000 soldiers and 200 officers. This was insufficient for the protection of the country.

Consequently the AFPFL government recruited students, youths, adults, civil servants, members of the police and military forces and formed volunteer organizations such as the Pyusawhtis giving them arms to suppress the rebels. On one hand it had to follow the democratic process and on the other hand it had to resort to force of arms to extinguish the fires of rebellions that was raging around the country.

Despite all this, the education, health and economy of the country did not deteriorate badly. Every citizen was comfortably well off, they had enough to eat, medicines were available and living standard was noticeably higher. This was because democracy was alive and well and countries of the world recognized and respected it.

The essence of democracy is freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom to work, freedom to worship, and an independent judiciary and the Union of Burma enjoyed all these freedoms.

On the 18 April 1955, U Nu as Prime minister signed the Peaceful Co-existence Bandung Agreement with Chou En Lei (Prime Minister of China), Nehru (Prime Minister of India), Nasser (Prime Minister of Egypt), Dr. Sukarno, (Prime Minister of Indonesia). Because of Burma's correct political stance, U Thant, Burma's permanent representative to the UN was appointed the Secretary General of the United Nations General Assembly on the 3rd November 1961. He served two terms in that office. He worked relentlessly to negotiate between the different groups to prevent a third world war, and to maintain peace in the world.

Economists maintain that though Burma suffered from conflicting political ideologies internally during the AFPFL era, it was an advanced country in the South East Asia.

2. Caretaker Government period (1958-60)

This Caretaker Government was born out of a wrong perception by the Nu Tin (U NU + U Tun) and the Tatmadaw. That was when it was a very critical time for Prime Minister U Nu's future. The country's political fortunes depended upon his decision. With great misgiving he decided to hand over the government to General Ne Win, the army head to replace him and create political conditions so that a new free and fair election could be held.

On the afternoon of the 26 September U Nu declared that his government was handing over state power to Chief of Staff and in accordance with the constitution he would be declared Prime Minister on the 28th October. Also, that the caretaker government would restore the rule of law and conduct free and fair elections within 6 months of its inception.

In doing so, U Nu failed to solve political issues by political means. State power given to him by the people he handed over to the military chief of staff.

The Caretaker government could not fulfil its obligations within the period of 6 months so the period had to be extended by a further 6 months and a temporary amendment to Section 116 of the Constitution had to be made.

3. The First Government period (1960 - 62)

The AFPFL that was founded by Bogyoke Aung San split into two not on principle but based on personalities. (The "Clean" and the "Stable"). U Nu's Pyi Daung Su party (PaHtaSa) won the elections and state power was handed back to them on the 4th April 1960. U Nu became the Prime Minister for the fourth time.

Again in this PaHtaSa party there were rival factions calling themselves "U", "Bo" and "Thakin". Just as there is freedom to disagree, there is freedom to agree in the democratic system. These political issues have to be solved through a political process.

On the 2nd March 1962, the Army Chief of Staff giving federalism as an excuse, took over state power and arrested all the members of the government. After that democracy and human rights ended in Burma.

4) Revolutionary Council period (1962- 1974)

The Revolutionary Council was military rule. There was no such a thing as democracy and human rights was zero. The Tatmadaw in seizing political power demonstrated a complete disregard for the 1947 constitution drawn up by national leaders headed by Bogyoke Aung San.

The Revolutionary Council created its own Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) and after years of procrastination in 1974 wrote a new constitution, which the people were forced to vote for.

Then elections were held under the BSPP one party system and a government was formed. Proclaiming that state power would be transferred to the people, the Revolution Council Chairman General Ne Win handed over power to the Chairman of the State Council U Ne Win. What difference was there?

5) State Council or BSPP period (1974- 1988)

The State Council BSPP one party system left no room for democracy and human rights in the Union of Burma. The heavy burden that people suffered was made even heavier. For 26 long years the people suffered bitterly.

This BSPP party appropriated state funds and was constituted by civil servants in the guise of a political party. In democratic countries, political parties are not only forbidden from appropriating state funds, they are forbidden from using any state properties whatsoever.

6) State Law and Order Restoration Council and State Peace And Development Council period - 1988 to date. Because of the uprising for democracy and human rights, Dr. Maung Maung who became the President and the Chairman of the State Council handed state power to the Military and the BSPP government was abolished.

The Military formed the State Law and Order Council on 18 September 1988 and proclaimed that it would (a) maintain law and order,

- (b) provide smooth and secure transportation,
- (c) improve conditions of food, clothing and shelter for the people and
- (d) hold multi-party elections.

But we now have exorbitant commodity prices; the result of the elections has not been honored; the Pyithu Hluttaw has not been called.

The State Peace and Development Council to which power has been transferred have not improved matters. Very noticeably, political, economic and social conditions have deteriorated and worsened.

Just compare the social, political and economic conditions in the periods when a democratically elected government ruled the country and when it was under a government, which obtained power by force. When was it worse? When was it better? The truth cannot be hidden. Among the poorest countries of the world, Burma stands last.

To obtain Burma's freedom, Bogyoke Aung San and those martyred national leaders who sacrificed and worked relentlessly became victims of assassins who believed in the use of force to gain power. Moreover, the country today is suffering immense hardships in all aspects of life. Martyrs' Day has come about as the consequence of the principle of killing people for power and using weapons to control. This day should not be forgotten nor treated indifferently. Doing so will amount to destroying the memory of Bogyoke Aung San and the heroes of our independence.

Had these leaders not lost their lives, the democratic system will be alive and well. Political solutions could be found for the issues and problems relating to the nationalities.

Along with Bogyoke Aung San, Thakin Mya, U Ba Cho, U Razak and other leaders would have been able to preserve democracy and the rule of law in the country.

Therefore, let us commemorate this martyrs day and not let the memory of the sacrifices they made be dimmed. Also let us be conscious of the injurious consequences of relying on force and arms. For the good of the Union of Burma let us join hands and work together for democracy.

Rangoon, 19 July 2001.