

# Myanmar Literature Project

မြန်မာစာပေစီမံကိန်း

Hans-Bernd Zöllner (ed.)

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**Books on the Russian Revolution**

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## About the Contributors

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**Win Lwin**, born 1938 in Kyauk Saei, Mandalay Division. Finished studies in Myanmar Literature 1962. Served as the middle school headmaster from 1962 on. He retired from the office of Education in 1995. Now he lives in his native town spending most of his time with meditation.

**Thinzar Swe**, born 1979 in Shan State, finished her education in 2003, received Bachelor of Commerce, B.Com. She still on her education and recently passed CPA part II.

**Maung Phyu**, born 1965 in Sittwe, received his B.A and M.A in History. As he passed his exam with credit, he got the opportunity to continue his education at Hyderabad Central University, India and received his Ph.D. there. At present, he is serving as a professor in Yangon University of Distance Education.

**Gunnar Peters** studied physics and South Asian studies at Humboldt University in Berlin. There he started to learn the Burmese language with Dr. Uta Gärtner. In 1997-98 he studied Burmese at the University of Foreign Languages in Yangon, Burma. After getting his degree in physics, he worked for five years as a Burmese interpreter for the International Committee of the Red Cross in Burma, later also as Thai interpreter in Southern Thailand. At present he works as a freelance translator and compiles an English-Shan dictionary.

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**Georg Noack**, born 1977 in Hannover (Germany) studied at Hamburg University and Humboldt University Berlin (South-East Asian studies, ethnology) specialising himself in Burma studies. He perfected his language skills in Myanmar and in 2005 received his MA from the Humboldt University with a thesis on the exposition of gender in Burmese novels. He is now working on his Ph.D.

## Material on three books on the Russian Revolution

**Thakin Hla Kun**, born 1922 in Central Burma is a former member of the Burmese Communist Party (White Flag). For details of his biography Working Paper 1: 50-54.

## I. INTRODUCTION (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)

### **Designing a Revolution against Britain via Britain**

The three books covered in this Working Paper informed Burmese readers about the Russian Revolution. They were published in the first period of the Nagani Book Club, before Tun Aye set up his own publishing house.<sup>1</sup> They were distributed some twenty years after the October Revolution of 1917 at a time when some Burmese groups strived for a revolution in their own country. The year 1938 (1300 of the Burmese era) started with a strike by oilfield workers in Upper Burma, supported by the Dobama Asiayone, and was later dubbed the “year of strife” or “the year of revolution”.<sup>2</sup> The slogans shouted at the end of the first May Day celebration organised by the *Dobama* in 1938 in Yenaungyaung, one of the centres of the Burmese oil industry, illustrate the heated atmosphere of that year: “Destroy capitalism”; “Destroy the New Constitution”; “Workers unite”; [...] “Freedom of speech”; “Freedom of assembly”; “Freedom of the press”; “Workers of the world unite!”; “Triumph to the revolution”; [...]<sup>3</sup>

These broad, emotional and rather vague demands needed two kinds of specificity. Workers - and for that matter students, farmers, government workers - had to issue specific demands like raising salaries, extending holidays, promoting health care and the like.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, it was necessary to figure out what the essence of revolution was and how it could work in a country like Burma.

The first task could be fulfilled by listening to the grievances experienced by the workers. With regard to carrying out a revolution, there was no home-grown knowledge to draw on. Such expertise had to be imported and transferred into the Burmese context.<sup>5</sup> In other words, a-Burmese revolution had to be conceptualised and modelled. The books presented in this paper can be regarded as tools for this task.

The slogans cited above clearly show what the revolution wanted to change: capitalism, the present constitution, the powerlessness of the workers and any kind of oppression; in short everything

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<sup>1</sup> Later, two more books were published which addressed topics related to the Soviet Union. In April 1940, Tun Pe wrote about “Soviet Democracy and One’s Experiences” (ဆိုပီယက်ဒီမိုကရေစီနှင့်ကိုယ်တွေ့များ) based on [the](#) account of a British citizen who lived [for](#) some time in the Soviet Union. In 1941, the memories of Lenin’s wife, Krupskaya, on Lenin were published entitled “My Beloved Husband (ကျွန်မချစ်လင်).

<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account of the year’s events see Khin Yi (1988) *The Dobama Movement in Burma (1930-1938)*. Ithaca, Cornell University: 57-132.

<sup>3</sup> Khin Yi 1988: 77.

<sup>4</sup> See the demands of the oilfield workers at the beginning of the strike (Khin Yi 1988: 62).

<sup>5</sup> For this process of transformation see Robert Taylor (1986) “Burmese Concepts of Revolution.” In: Mark Hobart and Robert H. Taylor (eds.) (1986) *Context, Meaning and Power in Southeast Asia*. Ithaca, Cornell University: 79-92.

connected with British colonial rule. A complete transformation of the whole political and economic system established by the British was intended, not just in Burma, but all over the world. However, interestingly, the tools for this big change were imported via Britain, the country of comprehensive oppression against which Nagani wanted to mobilise the Burmese people by informing them about the Russian Revolution.

This way of importing ideas on revolution is easily explained by the fact that authentic literature on the Russian revolution was not available in Burma at that time, and if it had been almost nobody would have been able to read it. But a look at the British authors whose works were used as models for the Burmese adaptations introduced here points to a contradiction.

Robin Page Arnot whose two books on the Russian Revolution were translated by Nu and James Maxton, author of a Lenin biography, were leftist British intellectuals and politicians.<sup>1</sup> They struggled to change the society of their country and came into serious conflict with the authorities. Arnot was imprisoned twice because of his refusal to join the army in World War I and for his support of a general strike in 1925. Nevertheless, they remained within the parameters of British democracy and its institutions.

Simple proof of the tolerance and freedom both authors enjoyed is the wide and unhindered publication of their books in Britain. Furthermore, they found their way into Burma<sup>2</sup> and their adaptations could be printed there as well. The Burmese revolutionaries thus exploited British freedom as a means in the attempt to establish their own version of a free and independent society.

To untangle this paradox, a closer look at the different meanings of “freedom” as well of “revolution” would be necessary. Moreover, one could reflect on the consequences of the Nagani authors’ and editors’ obvious unawareness of this irony.

### **A Pilgrimage’s Legacies**

Looking at the Burmese authors of the books opens up another perspective for understanding the motives and backgrounds of these publications. Arnot’s two volumes, entitled “A Short History of the Russian Revolution: From 1905 to the Present Day”, published in 1937, were adapted by Nu,

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<sup>1</sup> For some more details, see the short biographies in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> There are many stories about how leftist literature entered Burma. For an overview, see Robert Taylor (1984), *Marxism and Resistance in Burma: 1942-1945. Thein Pe Myint's Wartime Traveler*. Athens, Ohio University Press. Shortly after the foundation of the Nagani Book Club, any kind of literature published in Britain could be obtained in Burma, as an advertisement written in English in the Nagani News No. 2 (early 1938) illustrates. It reads under the heading “Book-Catalogues ready!!!”: “Kindly send For Catalogues, without any obligation. Send your orders. For Any Books. Books which are out of stock, will be ordered directly from Our Agents in England. Kindly contact us, without any obligation, regarding choice of Books. – We announce with regret that owing to some misunderstanding between the Left Book Club and ourselves, the books for those members – who have lately joined the Club, will Be delayed for some time. - TUN AYE, Book Sellers, 151, Scott market, RANGOON”.

co-founder of Nagani and later first Prime Minister of independent Burma. The adaptation of Maxton's "Lenin" does not name a specific author. It was written by "One who is standing together with the poor people," thus pointing to the message of the book that Lenin is to be appreciated as the "Leader of the Poor".

The same identification of the fates of Russia and Burma can be found in the adaptation of Arnot's work by Nu, who synchronizes events in Russia and Burma.<sup>1</sup> This empathy resulted in a change in the book's intention, indicated by the choice of the Burmese title. Arnot's "A Short History of the Russian Revolution" suggests a non-fictional account of what happened in Russia, Nu's "The Way to Emancipate the Paupers" or "Way Out for the Poor" evokes feelings of compassion (Pali: *karuna*) and loving-kindness (Pali: *metta*), two of the four Buddhist virtues known as Brahma Viharas, the four sublime attitudes. British adaptations of the Russian Revolution underwent a second transformation into a Burmese-Buddhist context.

This observation can be connected with the story of the genesis of the Nagani Book Club as retold by Tun Aye.<sup>2</sup> According to him, Nu and Tun Aye traveled to India in 1937 on a pilgrimage to Bodhgaya in order to evade attacks from monks caused by Nu's role in publishing Thein Pe's novel "Modern Monk" (*The-pongyi*). In Calcutta, they met the book's author and were introduced by him to student groups studying communist tracts. At first, they didn't understand these writings. Only after reading novels by Maxim Gorki and Mikhail Sholokhov on their way to Bodhgaya, novels which presented socialist ideas in the shape of fictional narratives, did they become fascinated by the thoughts behind the Russian revolution and Nu vowed<sup>3</sup> to help translating works like this into Burmese in order to liberate the Burmese masses.

It was thus a rather popular "compassionate socialism" compatible with Buddhist virtues that attracted Nu, not a "dogmatic" socialism. His translation of Arnot's work can be interpreted as one outcome of his experiences on the pilgrimage. This interpretation can be corroborated by other arguments.

First, Nagani as a book club was modelled after Victor Gollancz' Left Book Club in London. From the beginning, one of Tun Aye's tasks as the enterprise's manager was to organize the handling of books from London to Burmese readers.<sup>4</sup> The British Club had started a special series of books named "The New People's Library" which intended "being a series of books on a wide range of

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<sup>1</sup> See the book review below, II.2.

<sup>2</sup> See volume 1 of this series, chapter III.2.

<sup>3</sup> On the role of vows in Nu's life see his autobiography. Nu (1975), *U Nu, Saturday's Son*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press: 43-54.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p.2, footnote 2.

topics, designed as basic introductions. The aim has been that each book (a) should be authoritative, (b) should be simply written, (c) should assume no previous knowledge on the part of the reader.”<sup>1</sup> Arnot’s books comprise the two parts of volume VI of the series and fit perfectly into the experiences of the pilgrimage because they promised to provide “Simple, Short, Authoritative” information, as per the stated aim of the books’ jacked blurb.

Second, the impact of the “Calcutta connection” is illustrated by the fact that of the first twenty books published by Nagani, Thein Pe and Nu wrote four each. Before his adaptation of Arnot’s work, he translated the first part of Dale Carnegie’s bestseller “How to Win Friends and Influence People”, a clearly non-socialist book, but one which emphasized the importance of a sound ethical attitude in business relations along the way to becoming influential and rich.<sup>2</sup> Nu’s early plays, which were printed in Nagani’s second publication, exhort the readers to cultivate a sound morality in the fields of politics and family.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the emphasis of Nu and the anonymous writer on compassion partly explain why Tun Aye left Nagani in mid-1939. Obviously, Tun Aye was favoured to promote “doctrinal socialism”, but because of Nu’s seniority could not implement his ideas.

Further investigation into this matter could provide some insights into the reasons for the splits within the socialist movement in Burma, which had such disastrous consequences.

### **About this Volume**

As in previous Working Papers (WP), the following texts are an invitation for questions, discussions and further investigation. In addition, in view of the many papers already published in this series, opportunities for comparing books and the ideas they propagated increase. So too does the opportunity for gaining a more comprehensive picture of the political as well as intellectual climate in pre-war and post-independence Burma. For example, the books introduced here have affinities to (and differences from) the books on capitalism (WP 3) and on the significance of the World War for Burma (WP 8). The role of Lenin and the fading away of his memory (see below, III.7) may be compared with the short-term role which José Rizal’s biography (WP 7) played in the Burmese independence movement.

Moreover, the books on the Russian revolution and Lenin offer the opportunity for a detailed comparison between the original English model and the Burmese adaptation, both in terms of language (how certain terms were translated) and of interpretation and contextualisation for those

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<sup>1</sup> The quotation is from p.2 of the two volumes of Arnot’s book, which describes the volumes of the series.

<sup>2</sup> For more details, see the forthcoming Working Paper on the two volumes of this book.

<sup>3</sup> For more details, see the forthcoming Working Paper on this book.

scholars who can read Burmese as well as English. Copies of the respective books in both languages can be obtained from the manager of the project.<sup>1</sup>

Each of the following individual texts may give cause for further questions and deliberations. U Win Lwin's report on Nu's adaptation of Arnot's "Short History" not only gives some insights into how the author compared the Russian and the Burmese social state of affairs, but also contrasts the "socialistic" Nu of the pre-war era with the "capitalist parliamentary democratic" Nu as Prime Minister. This confrontation reflects a specific periodisation of Burma's history as well as a critical assessment of Nu's personality. Both judgments deserve further elaboration and discussion.

There are two pieces of information about R. Page Arnot: a biographical note and an article written by him on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian revolution, ten years before the publication of his book. These texts, in addition to the biography of James Maxton and the review of his "Lenin" reproduced later, may help to assess the differences between the political and intellectual climate in Britain and Burma.

The presentation of the book on Lenin departs slightly from the standards employed elsewhere in this series. The two book reviewers, who had no access to the English model, summarised the contents of the book. From these abstracts a summary of the book's contents was put together by the editor. The summary tries to bring out the author's intention of making readers interested in Lenin's life and achievements. A comparison between the model and the adaptation is still needed. To this end, the translation of the book's foreword as well as the two commentaries on the book reviews may be helpful.

Finally, there are two texts on the relationship between Lenin and his successor Stalin from a Burmese perspective. Ba Swe, who after the war became a prominent leader of the socialist wing of the AFPFL, wrote an article in 1938 praising Stalin as an erector of "Paradise on Earth" (*lokha nibbana*). Thakin Hla Kun recalls how Lenin's role as a revolutionary model-leader was superseded and replaced by Stalin within the communist movement of Burma. His contribution could be complemented by a history of the communist movement until its collapse, following the breakdown of the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe, as well as an analysis of the reasons for evoking the "communist threat" to the "Burmese way of life" both in the socialist era and the post-socialist era after 1988.

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<sup>1</sup> Readers who are interested may send a mail to Hans-Bernd Zöllner (habezett@t-online.de).

## Material on three books on the Russian Revolution

Finally, I would like to draw the reader's attention to the reproductions of the title pages and back pages of the three books. They could provide a good starting point for anybody interested in writing about Burmese political iconography.

Finally, I would like to thank all contributors to this paper for their work!

Hans-Bernd Zöllner

September 2009 (last update)

## II. MATERIAL ON NU, WAY OUT OF POVERTY (Two Volumes)

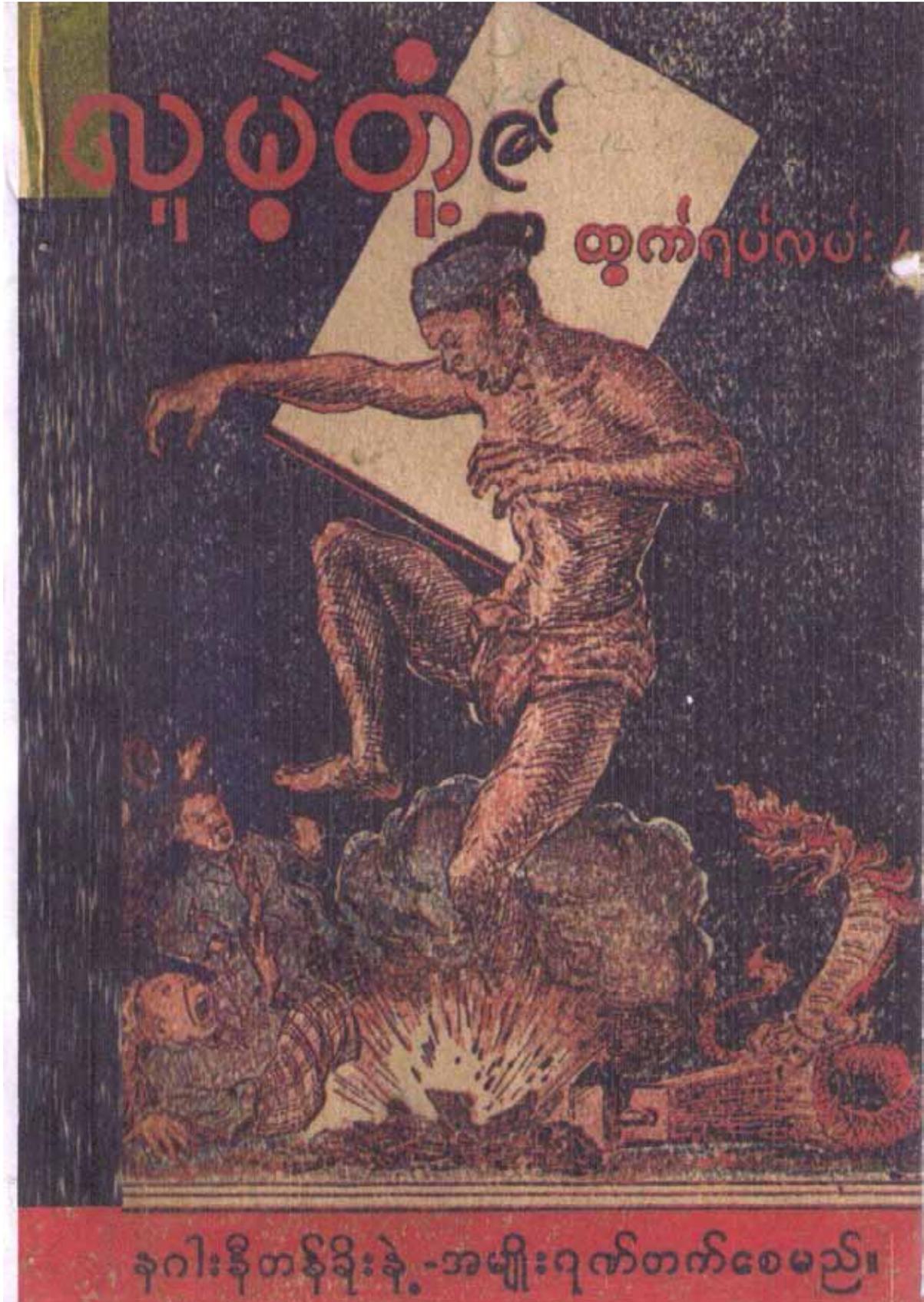
### 1. Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information

Translated from his Nagani-Bibliography, p. 30-34 by Gunnar Peters

13) **Nu, U: Way out/Escape for the Poor.** Translator: Maung Nu; Yangon, Nagani 1938; 224 p.

“An adapted translation of ‘A Short History of the Russian Revolution’ by R. Page Arnot”. The book cover says in a frame: “Propagation of teachings by the members of the Nagani Club - thanks to the members of the Nagani Club, this book can be sold now for only 4 Annas.” There is also a warning that the book shall not be sold for more than 4 Annas. It is written with prominent headings and subheadings, as it is typical for the Nagani writers. The first chapter is about the connection between the book and the Myanmar context; it has 17 pages. The Russian revolution is divided into five chapters. The first chapter treats the situation in the feudal and capitalist eras in Russia. The second chapter is about the Russian revolutionaries, and their emergence, about the Bolsheviks and other small groups, as well as the differences of the Mensheviks. Chapter 3 is about the revolution of 1905. Chapter 4 is about the youth of the czar and the spread of socialist ideas. Chapter 5 is about the imperialist world wars[?], the uprising and opportunism, and about the success of the 1917 revolution.

In the back of the book there is an advertisement: “The first part of the escape of the poor is finished. The second part will come out on the 10<sup>th</sup> of the waxing moon of Nadaw month, 1230[?]. There is also an explanation of words of over two pages. This is U Nu’s (Thakin Nu’s) famous book about socialism. It was published under the name of U Tun Aye on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1938 with 4000 copies.



Reproduction of Title Page

14) **Nu, U: Escape of the Poor**, second part. Translator: Maung Nu; Yangon, Nagani 1938; 219 p. On the cover it says: “Escape of the Poor” and “May the power of Nagani elevate the prestige of the nation.” In the inside: “The 12<sup>th</sup> book. It is not allowed to be sold by other persons than club members.”; and the Nagani emblem.

The second part of the Russian revolution is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1: 1 – the February Revolution; 2 – ‘The April Thesis’; 3 – May to August; 4 – Until October. Chapter 2: 1 – Peace; 2 – Land. [Point 3, Dictatorship of the Proletariat is not mentioned. – translator] Chapter 3: 1 – Attack of the Capitalists; 2 – Efforts of England and the Entente; 3 – The Return of the Poles [?]; 4 – Military Communism. Chapter 4: 1 – A New Economic System; 2 – ‘The U.S.S.R.’ Chapter 5: 1 – The Creation of Large Industries; 2 – Disruptions. Chapter 6: 1 – The Second Five-Year Plan; 2 – The Enemies; 3 – ‘The Stalin Constitution’.

It is evident that this publication, in line with the policy of Nagani, promotes the spread of communist ideas. In the end of the book it says under the heading of ‘This Escape of the Poor is only the forerunner’, “We promise to publish books analyzing communism with Abhidhamma [Buddhist philosophical], economical and other methods.” They will also publish an autobiography by U Nya, and because they are not satisfied with the monthly Nagani News “Taninganway (Sunday) Nagani”, they also announce that they will publish a journal every Sunday. On the back cover is the announcement for next month of the second volume of the striking students.



Reproduction of Title Page

(The signboard carries the title of the book: "Way out of poverty")

## **2. Win Lwin, Book Review: The Way to Emancipate the Paupers**

(Nagani Publishing House)<sup>1</sup>

### **The Translator**

The book is a work of translation from English by Maung Nu (U Nu). He was a person who vitalized capitalist parliamentary democracy system in the period subsequent to Myanmar's regaining of independence. He was also a former prime minister in the parliamentary democracy era. He was an enthusiast about writing. He had written the book "The World and the Origin of the Creature and Culture" and religious treatises such as "The Three Foremost Noble Beings," "The Noblest Golden State", and "The Noblest Victory." With the advent of the Revolutionary Council in Myanmar in 1962, U Nu's capitalist parliamentary democracy government was toppled.

### **Introduction**

Although U Nu had translated facts about Russia's initiation of leftist system into the way to emancipate the Paupers as part of the Nagani Publication Series and also as a motivation to the independence struggle, it is found that he based the formation of his government on capitalism in the parliamentary democracy era.

Dealing with the evils of monarchic rule, miseries of the wars and ill-consequences of oligarchy since the reign of the Czar, he detailed uprisings devoted to the cause of establishing a government whose power was wielded by the public and which represented the majority of people. The way to emancipate the paupers means the campaign of striving all-out for the wellbeing of the impoverished peasants and workers, the primary class, which accounted for the majority. He also included the ideology of Karl Marx and the life of Lenin, father of the Russian Republic.

The context of the book is confined only to the first-stage and second-stage struggles of the revolution. He dealt at length with the initial struggles to the achievement of success in establishing a socialism-based Russian state, led by Lenin, into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, after the downfall of monarchism.

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<sup>1</sup> Footnotes are inserted by the editor.

### **The Way to Emancipate the Paupers, General Critique**

The book “The Way to Emancipate the Paupers” was published during the colonial era as a work of translation involved in the Nagani literary movement. The book “A Short History of the Russian Revolution” was translated into Myanmar by Maung Nu, and it served as a good contribution towards the struggles for extirpating imperialism during the colonial era of capitalist domination and for wresting back Myanmar’s independence. The original author was R. Page Arnot. U Nu admitted that his work was not made verbatim, and instead, was an adaptation only.

He mentioned that the Myanmar translation of the title should have followed the original title “A Short History of the Russian Revolution” and that the ideology in the book was found expedient as a way out not only for the Russian people from poverty but also for the people of the entire world, and eventually published the translated work with the “The Way to Emancipate the Paupers” as a number in the Nagani publication series.

In the primary text, the translator explained that Myanmar nationals, zealous to serve the wellbeing of themselves, relatives, the race and the religion, usually strove by practising alchemy in mercury or iron till they succeeded in compressing the substance with fire into the mercury core-compound or the iron core-compound regarded - like a philosopher’s stone - as providing food sufficient for the entire kingdom, in the case of the former, and sufficient for all relatives, in the case of the latter. However, Myanmar became poorer and poorer owing to the capitalist system and hardships of the ill-fated colonial era. Under the colonialist government, the life of Myanmar turned from bad to worse. The number of the poor persons had increased. In the contemporary period, (Karl) Marxism, or a way out, emerged in Russia. Through this means, the Russian destitute came to enjoy prosperity and downpours of gold and silver pieces. U Nu, the translator, claimed that the ideology of Karl Marx was a genuine way out for the impoverished.

The world history shows that subjugation of the minority colonialists belonging to the capitalist class over the innocent minority poor persons induced the following ill-consequences.

People could not eat their fill despite the existence of adequate food. They could not be dressed properly despite the surfeit of clothes. They could not build healthy houses despite the sufficiency of building materials. They contracted diseases, not worthy of them, despite the existence of tools to combat them.

Hence, this translated work contributed greatly to the struggle for the independence of Myanmar from the yoke of the imperialist British. Nagani Publishing House instigated the cause of the Myanmar national affair in the form of a literary movement. This publication deals with the

preface and expansion of the Russian borders in **Chapter 1**, the Bolsheviks in **Chapter 2**; the 1905 Revolution in **Chapter 3**; loosening of the bundle of bamboo rods in **Chapter 4**; the way out for the impoverished till the outbreak of world of the imperialists (the first stage) in **Chapter 5**. The second stage is composed of the situation in Russia (the February Revolution) from February to October, 1917, in **Chapter 1**; peace in **Chapter 2**; military communism in **Chapter 3**; new economic system in **Chapter 4**; establishment of factories in **Chapter 5**; and the Second Five-Year Plans in **Chapter 6**.

Topically, the book exposes the affairs of the nation of Russia, or the history of the Russian Revolution. The first stage covered 224 pages and the second stage, 219 pages. Included in the book are the lines “Printed in Myanmar,” “This publication is not allowed for sale to non-members,” and “This is our country. This is our land” together with the logo of the Nagani Association, and the song, “Prestige of the nation will be enhanced by the power and glory of Nagani (Red Dragon),” which highlights the situation and glimpse of the nation of the time. It can be reviewed that the book was published as the 12th publication of Nagani Publishing House for the Myanmar politics to enlighten, through its members, the entire nation on political outlook.

### **The Topics in the Book**

Chapter 1 is an introduction about the Russian political movement or the Russian Revolution. The world began to know the name “Russia” around 900 AD. Because of the different religious faiths, Russia did not have relations with other European countries. In detailed description, the area of Russia, the rule of the Czar and the advent of capitalism were presented. Of the total population at that time of 130 million in Russia, the great Russia or the Russian race constituted the majority. The Ukrainians were the minority. There were also Byelorussians and the silk race. The white Byelorussians and members of the silk race made up 92 million of the population. Other Russian races included Georgians, Uzbeks and Finns. Over 100 languages were spoken. The Russian language was used as the official language, mainly in religion, education and national affairs.

In the years following 1800 AD, Russia was divided in two—one being poor peasants (country people) and the other, the elite (the high class). Country people were not land-owners, but servants of the landlords. They had to earn their livelihood, living in shabby huts just more in quality than rat-holes and pig-pens.

Under this circumstance, lords who owned acres of land came to need a class of workers, not like life-long serfs, to cultivate their land with advanced machines.

## Material on three books on the Russian Revolution

In cities, as modern factories were built, idle persons who were not peasants were needed to work. At the same time, the Czar government, lacking in funds, was also seized with the urgency to collect tax from the farmers. Goaded by a large gap between the rich and the poor, a revolt led by Puachev, the largest, occurred and uprisings became rife beginning 1840. Hence, King Alexander said, “We, from the above, must liberate these country people from serfdom. Otherwise, they would struggle their way out from below.”

When these words spread in Russia, landlords had already seized the best of farmlands. They not only held in their possession goats, buffaloes, cows, water and ports, essential for the farmers, and pastures, but also collected farm products as a charge for renting them to the latter. When they had to liberate the country people from serfdom, they still squeezed the money out from them. For this, people were displeased with the Czar.

In 1990, forms of social relations changed, creating various circumstances that served as a firm foundation for eruption of a Russian revolution. Gradually, Russia was transformed from the landlord system into capitalism in which persons who possessed capitals dominated. The capitalists competitively built factories applying modern technology. Supported by foreign loans, their businesses prospered and factories mushroomed on acres of land, entailing workers. In the world, powerful countries were waging wars and colonizing small countries.

Workers’ riots emerged between 1890 and 1900. The problems of inequality arise from the capitalists’ suppression of the workers in every way. When workers rose up, the capitalists dismissed them, and reduced the workforce and working hours. In turn, they had to take actions such as increasing wages and improving their dwelling places. However, based on these facts, riots often took place. Mass revolts occurred. With the boycott in the entire country, a workers’ organization appeared. Those who controlled it were socialists.

Bolsheviks are also described in the book. The person who led the Bolsheviks was Lenin, leader of the Russian Revolution. Lenin said that the workers would be contented only when they owned the entire factory. Looking far into the future, he was the sort who would be pleased only when the entire cultivation farm was trusted into the hands of workers.

In fact, the matter of causing the entire factory or farm to fall into the hands of workers was not a simple one. In the entire world population, there remained a difference of classes—the wealthy and the impoverished. The wealthy were doing well in everything while the impoverished were faced with hardships. It was believed that only when the people’s power was transferred into the hands of the basic class, the poor, would they enjoy welfare. They assumed that the Russian

people were pauperized because the Bolsheviks lacked people's power, and so they wished to establish people's power.

However, a group led by Peter Struve,<sup>2</sup> bearing the name "The Socialists," did not grudge the capitalists. Instead, they aimed only at collecting profits. Socialism and the ideology bearing the title "socialism" are divided.

The name Bolshevik was born in London. The chief enemy of the Bolsheviks were the Narodniki<sup>3</sup> gang, whose ism was not socialism. The instance of socialism mixed with the democratic means of the capitalists is something like "the blending of rat droppings with the rice to be offered to the preeminent ones." Next, the opportunist socialists were also enemies of the Bolsheviks. Opportunism appeared not only in Russia but also in every country of the world.

Lenin also wrote a book "The Future of the Ideology of Karl Marx." In Russia, there emerged a small group of Mensheviks with its own ideology. The socialists believed that capitalism was a cruel system. Those who owned capitals fed the poor workers so that they could barely live and work for their factories. They did not support when workers became old or impaired in health. They did not look after them when they suffered accidents. They did not care when workers made demands for their damages.

As the majority ism of the Bolsheviks and the minority ism of the Mensheviks were not in harmony, problems arose in 1903. A great revolution erupted in 1905. There were two kinds of revolution in Russia - the one led by the capitalists against the monarchic rule, and the other led by the poor class against the capitalist class, the root of the imperialists.

The problem that was expected to arise was the clash of organizations. The Bolshevik party stressed and encouraged persons who were well versed in going deep down in the waging of a revolution while the Mensheviks did not care about them.

The book also covered the Russian-Japanese War, which had been instigated by the Czar. The Japanese believed that everything would be accomplished only after the war had been waged. When the Russians captured Port Arthur, the Japanese rallied their military strength. In 1902, the British made an agreement with the Japanese. In 1904, the Russian-Japanese war broke out. The Japanese sank the Russian warships with torpedoes. In the war, Russia incurred casualties,

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Struve (1870-1944) born in Perm, was an Russian intellectual and politician. While studying at the University of St. Petersburg he became interested in Marxism. After 1900, he became a liberal and an opponent of Lenin. (For a short biography see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter\\_Struve](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Struve)).

<sup>3</sup> "Narodniki" was the name for Russian revolutionaries of the 1860s and 1870s. The term itself derives from a Russian expression meaning "going to the people".

## Material on three books on the Russian Revolution

including the soldiers and civilians, numbering more than 400,000. This immense loss brought a serious impact on the internal affairs of Russia.

Beginning from 1900, the socialist-democrats led in instigating the Russian workers. Finally, the workers, inclusive of men, women and children, marched in procession to the Czar Palace. On their way, they were shot, but continued their march with any cowering or timidity. In 1905 alone, the number of protesters amounted to over 2.8 million.

In this way, the Workers Strike emerged. The peasants in the rural areas were much elated by the boycott of the workers, and followed suit. They staged 670 strikes between 1900 and 1904. When the peasants, with a population of over 200 million, and the workers, over 3 million, joined forces, some soldiers took their side, and the movement transformed into the Russian Revolution. They issued a proclamation, entitled "To all the civilized countries in the world," flying a Red Flag. Written in the proclamation were the mottos "Down with the Monarchic System!" and "Success with the People's Assembly." The Czar then conceded and ordered formation of a legislative body. Realizing that the people were indignant about monarchism, the Czar transformed its administration from monarchism to capitalism. Such a transformation was the first stage of the Russian Revolution. The second stage involved transformation into the people's power.

In the world, wars breed unfavourable implications - the destruction caused by weapons, the destruction caused by diseases, and the destruction caused by famine.

All the impoverished workers and peasants wished to topple the Czar for the bread and freedom of the mass of Russians. They attributed the Russia's involvement in the war to the Czar. The way to emancipate the paupers, in its first stage, was to wrest power for the people from the Czar. After establishing people's power, they were to extirpate the capitalists.

In the reign of the Czar, Russia was much like a spacious prison. Those residing in it were akin to prisoners. Since the downfall of the Czar, the Russian people had been exonerated from confinement. Since the staging of the Russian Revolution, Russia had stood as an independent nation in the world. Monarchism turned into capitalism. Inmates serving the life-long sentence and those were sent into exile could have the chance to return to their native places where their relatives were. Lenin issued a declaration concerning people's power.

Lenin had a forethought that the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks could not work together, analogizing to the case of eating sugar and medicine mixed together, in which the taste of sugar is lost. Though Russia had turned its administrative machinery into capitalism, what Lenin wanted was people's power, not capitalism. The power wielded by foreigners was forcibly attained one and

was to be handed back to the original countries. All the businesses that headed towards the benefits of the minority wealthy must be uprooted.

The revolution with the motive of transforming the minority power-wielding capitalism, favoured by the Bolsheviks, to the people's power, favoured by the majority workers and peasants, the basic class, developed at a rapid pace. The Bolsheviks voiced a clamour that if the poor became rich, the capitalist, the snake, must be killed. Their clamours "Hand the power to the people!" and "We wish bread, peace and freedom" became louder and more serious.

The government ordered arrest of Lenin. The majority in the Central Executive Committee of the Bolshevik party supported Lenin. But when the plan to rise up and topple the capitalist government, resorting to force, opinions were divided between Lenin and the party members. Lenin issued a declaration undersigned by the name of the Military Headquarters of the Revolution. Mentioned in it was that the provisional government of the capitalists had been rooted out and the people's power had fallen into the hands of the military headquarters organized by the Petrograd workers and soldiers. Then, they held the Congress of Soviets, which established the Russian Government, after forming the All-Russia Central Executive Committee. The president of the Government of the Soviets was Lenin. The Congress issued a proclamation to the workers, peasants and soldiers that the congress was composed of many Soviet factions.

Then, the Soviets convened the Second Congress, and officially declared Russia as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics which would be governed under socialism. The Soviet government turned the war into peace. As the Bolsheviks were the leaders of the destitute, they never forgot the welfare of the genuine poor persons.

### **Affairs of Myanmar**

As the book "The Way to Emancipate the Paupers" is a work of translation, the theme covers facts about the transformation of Russia and the Socialist Revolution. However, U Nu, the translator, highlighted the aspect of the time by sandwiching facts about the affairs of Myanmar among the Russian Revolution.

In contemporary Myanmar, workers associations had appeared. The author viewed that leaders of these associations were lacking in ideology which they should be embracing. In association with the Russian Revolution and the people's power, the author seemed not satisfied with the present system of colonial Myanmar.

In presenting his view of the colonial Myanmar and the poor people in Myanmar, U Nu mentioned that in Myanmar, the poor mass was led by the capitalists, small capitalists and their

henchmen, and if a crisis broke out, they would align with the imperialists, and so Myanmar paupers were often caught in the lies. At that time, Karl Marxism was popular in Russia while there was no definite political ideology to hold in their struggle for their liberation from the colonialists and establishing people's power by opposing the imperialist English.

On page 92, he described his review of some affairs in Myanmar. Marxism is the ideology of Karl Marx, based on socialism. In Myanmar, too, associations that had fostered the ideology of Karl Marx had already appeared. But it failed because Myanmar did not understand Marxism properly and there was lack of persons qualified enough to lead the poor people.

There was one point in Myanmar identical to Russia. That was the existence of opportunism and opportunists, who were taking advantage by using rich leftist terms to cover up their opportunism.

In the colonial Myanmar, there were divided opinions of the British rule—separate from or jointly with India. The British, with intent to prolong the serfdom of Myanmar, were engaged in operations to cause the waning of nationalism in people—with the disappearance of the spirit of Thakin (master) and appearance of the spirit of Bo (British). With intent to prolong their rule, the British created conditions to make people think a high opinion of the British, look down on Myanmar, hold the view that living under the British provided them comfort, and feel worried that Myanmar might regain her independence.

The translator encouraged the Myanmar people to contribute from their various capacities to the cause for the liberation of Mother Myanmar from the British domination. During the Russian Revolution, an ideology for the socialists in various countries to foster was announced. It exhorted that the war of the colonialists be changed into internal wars. It was time for the people to strive to regain independence in Myanmar, based on the military strength. The first stage of the book came to a close on page 220.

### **The Second Stage of the Russian Revolution and Myanmar**

Just as the Czar government, the monarchic rule exploiting and suppressing the people, was toppled in Russia, all the people in Myanmar must fight in unity against the capitalist government of the colonialist British. Russia did not want capitalism. Myanmar, too, did not want the colonialist capitalists. Russia detested war. However, war was the key to Myanmar for the liberation of Myanmar while the British were faced with difficulties.

Just as the destitute Russians continued to strive for the success of the second-stage revolution, their counterparts in Myanmar had come to acquire broad knowledge and political

insights for regaining independence. The strength of the impoverished had increased gradually. What was needed was a good leader to provide them correct guidance.

### **Impact of the System**

Myanmar underwent from the status of a nation with its own monarch and throne to a colonial country, and having fallen under the colonial British, suffered bitter experiences. Despite the monarchic rule of Myanmar kings with absolute power, Myanmar had not had as bad experiences as under the Czar. Myanmar kings exercised justice. However, Myanmar was transformed from the monarchic system into capitalism following 1885. The royal ruling system changed into capitalists' government. Problems between the land-owners and the landless and the capital-owners and the capital-less arose. The British created conditions to cause the land fall into the hands of Chettiars, leaving Myanmar farmers without any land to work on. They sank Myanmar into the depths of the well of poverty.

In the industrial age, inequality of classes induced problems related to workers. These were the true situations during the colonial Myanmar.

The first stage of the revolution to build people's power in Russia was to remove the Czar and uproot the absolute, dictatorial rule. After the downfall of the Czar, industrial capitalists took the place, thereby leading to the second-stage revolution. A republic was to be established with people's power in the place of the capitalist government, and transformed into socialist rule. That was the Lenin's expectation.

In the case of Myanmar, it was not that Myanmar had abolished the monarchic system. It is a difference in transition between Russia and Myanmar. There was not such a change as the first-stage revolution in Russia. But, events in the stage were identical.

Just as Russian people got into trouble under the capitalist government, Myanmar suffered the blow of capitalism with the loss of independence. The emergence of the Workers Strike, the Peasants' Uprising and the Students Boycott in Myanmar came out from the demand of the system. They served as the foundation stone for regaining independence.

Just as revolutions erupted in Russia, the Peasants' Uprising, led by Saya San, based in Tharrawaddy, and the Workers' Strike, staged by workers of Chauk and Yenangyaung oil fields, led by Thakin Po Hla Gyi, in 1300 ME. The British used force to quell them. Then followed the General Boycott including workers, peasants, students and the people.

In Myanmar, progressive youths came to realize that the only means of repulsing the colonialists was to wield weapons and resort to force. Just as Russians formed organizations and

moved for the success of their revolution, Myanmar also organized leftist associations to wage the anti-colonialist war.

Organizations such as Doh Bamar Asiayone (We, Bamar, Association), the Anti-Fascist and People's Freedom League (AFPFL), Pyithu Ayaydawbon Party (People's Affairs Party) and Bamah Htwet Yat Gaing—all that had emerged under the demand of the system and war—were popular in the independence struggle. Marxists seeped into Myanmar youths. As the government had banned formation of organization, an organization was formed and engaged in a literary movement. Nagani Association could awaken the people to political consciousness with regards to independence. During the independence struggle, Nagani publication series enlightened Myanmar people who was the independence war in the form of people's affairs. Thanks to literature, Myanmar could enjoy the fruits of independence in 1948. Since then, socialism took its root on the Myanmar land. Socialist leaders appeared.

In their achievement of success in the second-stage revolution, led by Lenin, the Russians radically abolished the power of the minority capitalist government, and established socialism-based people's power. The All-Russia Central Executive Committee successfully formed with the people's power the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

In Myanmar, the absolute monarchic system had automatically disappeared with the loss of independence and falling into servitude in 1885-86, the first-stage of revolution (as in Russia) concluded without the efforts of Myanmar nationals. The Czar was opposed by the Russian people. In Myanmar, King Thibaw was captured by the British. The second-stage revolution in Myanmar took place under the British. The Russians could build a republic with people's power. In Myanmar, the tempo of independence struggle could be heightened. Hence, the books published by Nagani or the Publishing House itself could fulfil the requirement of Myanmar in the colonial era and reflect the contemporary conditions.

## **Conclusion**

The book "The Way to Emancipate the Paupers", a work of translation by U Nu, refers to the Russian Revolution. Although Russia was not directly related to Myanmar, it contributed in the form of a book to the cause for regaining independence in Myanmar. Within 437 pages, the translator could make an overall view of the first and second stages of the Revolution. As it was a part of the publication series of Nagani which claimed, "The prestige of the nation will be enhanced by the power and glory of Nagani...", it could well reflect the era and system. Hence, I would like to say that it is a required book.

### **3. Commentary on the Book Report**

#### 4. R. Page Arnot, (1890-1986), Biographical Note<sup>1</sup>

Robin Page Arnot was born in 1890 at Greenock. His father was the editor of the *Greenock Telegraph* and *Clyde Shipping Gazette*. He went to Glasgow University where he helped to form the University Socialist Federation in 1912.

Robin Page Arnot was closely connected with the Labour Research Department from its beginnings. In 1912 the Fabian Beatrice Webb had established a Committee of Enquiry into “The control of industry in the state of tomorrow”. One of the volunteers attracted to the project was Arnot. The committee soon turned into the Fabian Research Department and in 1914 Arnot became its full-time secretary, a post he held until 1926.

Arnot was called up to fight in the war in 1916. He refused to go, being opposed to war and was imprisoned for two years in Wakefield as a conscientious objector. When he was released in 1918 he returned to his former post as Secretary of the Research Department which had by then changed its name to the Labour Research Department, having become an independent ‘fact-finding body for the trade union and labour movement’. In 1919 the miners demanded higher wages, shorter hours and nationalisation of the mines. The government established a Committee of Enquiry and the Miners’ Federation asked the LRD for help. Arnot assembled evidence on their behalf and publicised the miners’ cause. Arnot, together with H. H. Slessor, the Federation legal advisor, drafted the Mines Nationalisation Bill which was presented to the Royal Commission set up by the government. During the railway strike later that year, Arnot and the LRD organised publicity for the railwaymen.



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<sup>1</sup> Source: <http://www.marxists.org/glossary/people/a/r.htm> (January 6, 2008).

## Material on three books on the Russian Revolution

Arnot was one of the founder members of the Communist Party in 1920, as was his second wife, Olive. Robin Page Arnot was also a member of the Party's Central Committee and as such was arrested under the 1797 Incitement to Mutiny Act in 1925 in the run up to the General Strike and spent six months in jail. He was released on the eve of the strike and helped to form the Northumberland and Durham Joint Strike Committee. He later returned to the LRD as Director of Research and wrote a book on the general strike.

Arnot was the first Principal of the Marx Memorial Library from 1933 and from 1949-1975 he wrote a famous 6-volume series on the history of the miners. He was also the author of a two-volume *Short History of the Russian Revolution* (1937). He was elected to the LRD's Executive in 1938 and was re-elected every year until 1976 when he was made Honorary President. He was also a contributor and working editor for *Labour Monthly*, the journal founded by R. Palme Dutt, until its last issue in March 1981. Arnot died in 1986 aged 95.

From Graham Stevenson.

## 5. R. Page Arnot, *The Russian Revolution*<sup>1</sup>

Source: *The Labour Monthly*, November 1927, Vol. IX.

Publisher: 162 Buckingham Palace Road, London, S.W.1

Transcription/Mark-up: Brian Reid

Proof-reader: Chris Clayton

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THIS month of November, ten years ago, was the Bolshevik revolution; this month of November, 1927, there still is the Bolshevik revolution, the same, but grown greater. The challenge that rang out in November, 1917, has swollen in volume through the years, and has filled the whole earth till now in every land the capitalists cannot get the sound of it out of their ears. To none is the challenge more compelling than to the leaders of the trade unions and the co-operative societies and the political labour organisations. Their answer is—to deny that any challenge exists. This is the meaning of the flood of anniversary articles in which the revolution is treated as some huge unique catastrophe, as something peculiar to Russia, something that *has* happened.

This treatment of the revolution, isolating it, gaping at it, is akin to the canonisation of revolutionary leaders (like the turning of Marx into a hackneyed Liberal). Those who would understand the revolution must seek to understand the process of human history. In that search they will find not only that within the historic period man advances by means of class struggle, but that within the period of capitalism class struggle after class struggle culminates in revolution. Within the last hundred and fifty years alone history presents itself not as a record of kings and battles, but (in spite of all the systematic lying of the Whigs and the Radicals, set forth in every school book, in every scholarly tome, in every speech, sermon and editorial) as a process of class striving with class, culminating in the overthrow of one class another, the intervening periods being but the preparation for that overthrow.

The American Revolution reacts on the great French Revolution from which in turn there issue the revolutions of 1930 and 1848 (in England the Luddites of 1812, and the suppressed trade union

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<sup>1</sup> Source: [http://www.marxists.org/archive/arnot-page/1927/russian\\_rev.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/arnot-page/1927/russian_rev.htm) (January 6, 2008)

## Material on three books on the Russian Revolution

agitation of 1800 to 1825, are succeeded by the Chartist movement of the working class which in its widest sense spans the years from the late 'twenties to the early 'fifties). Already in 1848 the working class has learned that it must go forward in its own strength; and though the Paris Commune, the first attempt to destroy capitalist rule and to build a workers' society is drowned in blood, the lessons of these few weeks remain unforgotten throughout the epoch of imperialism that followed. Then as the violence, punitive expeditions, wars, and massacres of imperialism bring more and more colonial peoples beneath the yoke, the stage is reached of dividing up the spoil anew through the first imperialist world war; and when this stage is reached the decay of imperialism becomes manifest, and equally manifest the rising of new forces, the re-awakening of the working class, the first rally of the colonial peoples against oppression. The revolution of 1905 in Russia marks the beginning of the decline, 1917 the end of the rotten rule of imperialism over one-sixth part of the earth; and at the same time an intense conflict begins against capitalist oppression in every country. In the midst of this intense conflict the British working class now finds itself compelled to fight for a livelihood, and in that struggle to attack the whole system that refuses it the bread of life. This is the process of world history, this is the meaning of the stage in that process in which we live, this is the meaning of the Russian Revolution.

How do they see it, the leaders of Labour, the bureaucracy of the trade unions and the co-operative societies, the men elected to parliaments and municipalities? In what shape do they perceive the Russian Revolution? The answer, as shown by thousands of their speeches and articles, is that for them it is something remote, spectacular, inexplicable, and, at close quarters, dangerous. And beneath this surface gaping there lurks a real hostility, only partially restrained by philistine respectfulness towards the might of the Soviet State.

The hostility bursts forth again and again, both in decisions of policy, from the Democracy and Socialism thesis of the Bern International in 1919 up to the rupture of the Anglo-Russian Committee as a pendant to the Baldwin Government's rupture of the Trade Agreement, and also in the declamations of leading "Socialists." It is especially at the moments when the Soviet power appears least strong that their theoretical objections become most pronounced. "The Bolsheviks," wrote Brailsford, ten years ago, against the first activity of the revolution to bring peace, "are putting themselves outside the pale of our international Socialist society." And through all the vicissitudes that make up a Brailsford, he is in the end as he was in the beginning, impenitently opposed to the world revolution. And Brailsford is typical of all the "Socialists" that pretend to welcome the revolution.

How is this attitude to be explained? It is the outlook born of the between-times, born of the trough of time that lies between the wave-crests of the advancing revolution.

In this century such an attitude was common amongst the Menshevik Socialists in Russia after the 1905 revolution. Because revolution had been defeated once, therefore revolution was at all times and for ever impossible. The Labour Movement, they said, must work within the framework of Tsardom, and give up the dream of its overthrow. So, to their eternal shame and dishonour, these “Socialists” argued - until 1917 swept them into oblivion along with the rotten timbers to which they clung. So now in this country, in the trough of the wave, in a similar time of depression, instead of fighting, stimulating, and heartening the workers, they are preaching industrial peace (submission to the worst the employers can inflict), and dropping Socialism out of their programme. The Edinburgh Trades Union Congress and the Blackpool Conference of the Labour Party mark the lowest pitch of fatalism, of craven submission to circumstance, of complete failure of courage and hope on the part of the leaders.

But this outlook is inevitable amongst men thus blind to the real meaning of the working-class struggle and to the movement it imparts to history. How shall savages understand an eclipse of the sun? To savages, knowing naught of the planetary laws of motion, or the periods of the moon, the sun’s eclipse is a catastrophe without past or future, unpredictable, causeless, dire, and destructive. To the astronomer the eclipse, itself predictable, is the means to verify and establish even more fundamental laws of physics. So with the Russian Revolution. Those who swallowed the hocus-pocus of capitalist politics and disdained any knowledge that lay beyond their own noses, were at once astonished by the revolution (an accident they had not allowed for—like the war which was also left out of their reckonings) and have never ceased to be wrong about it since; and because they were wrong about it, because their scheme of the human universe never rose above the conception of living from hand to mouth, they were bound to mislead the workers in their every-day struggle.

Further, the analogy, if followed up, yields a still more startling parallel between the astronomer of the skies and the social astronomer thinking in the discipline of Marxism. The most learned savage of an Oxford common room, the most bedizened medicine-man on the Treasury Bench, or at the Guildhall Banquet, is less capable of understanding social phenomena than the simple “ignorant” working man who can tell a capitalist war when he sees it (when the savages are prating of nationality, justice, &c.. &c.), and who can see that mankind will halt and retreat unless the capitalists are thrown from off the backs of the workers.

## Material on three books on the Russian Revolution

Social astronomers, able to calculate the laws of motion of capitalist society, predict the world revolution; and (since man himself is a social force) strive to hasten it. In the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics the endeavour is to build a Socialist society; and in capitalist Britain to build up through daily struggles a workers' movement that will conquer the power the governing class, and along with the revolutionary classes of India and other lands, set free a quarter of the human race.

### **III. MATERIAL ON ANONYMOUS, *LENIN***

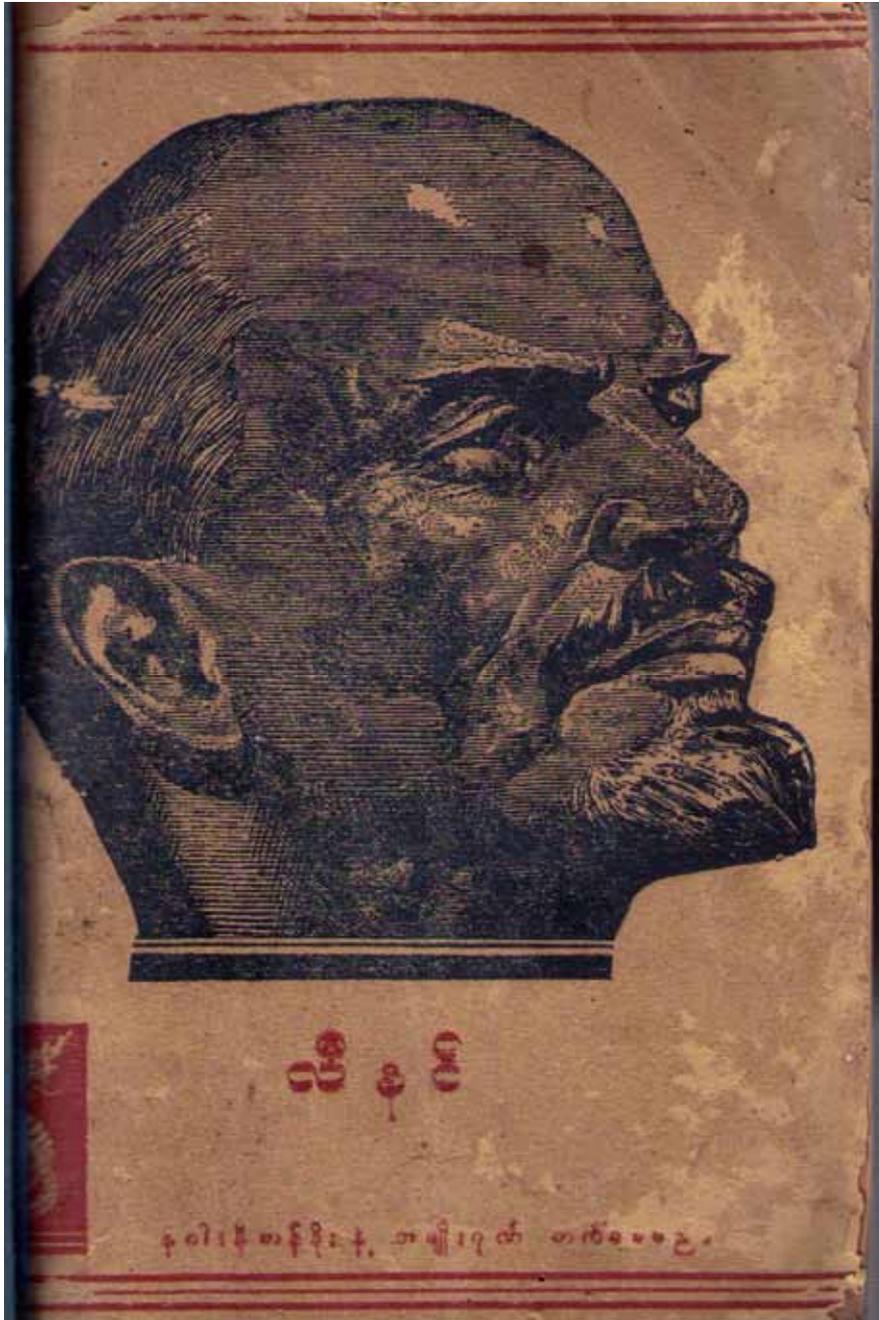
#### **1. Kyaw Hoe: Bibliographical Information**

Translated from his Nagani-Bibliography, p. 38-39 by Gunnar Peters

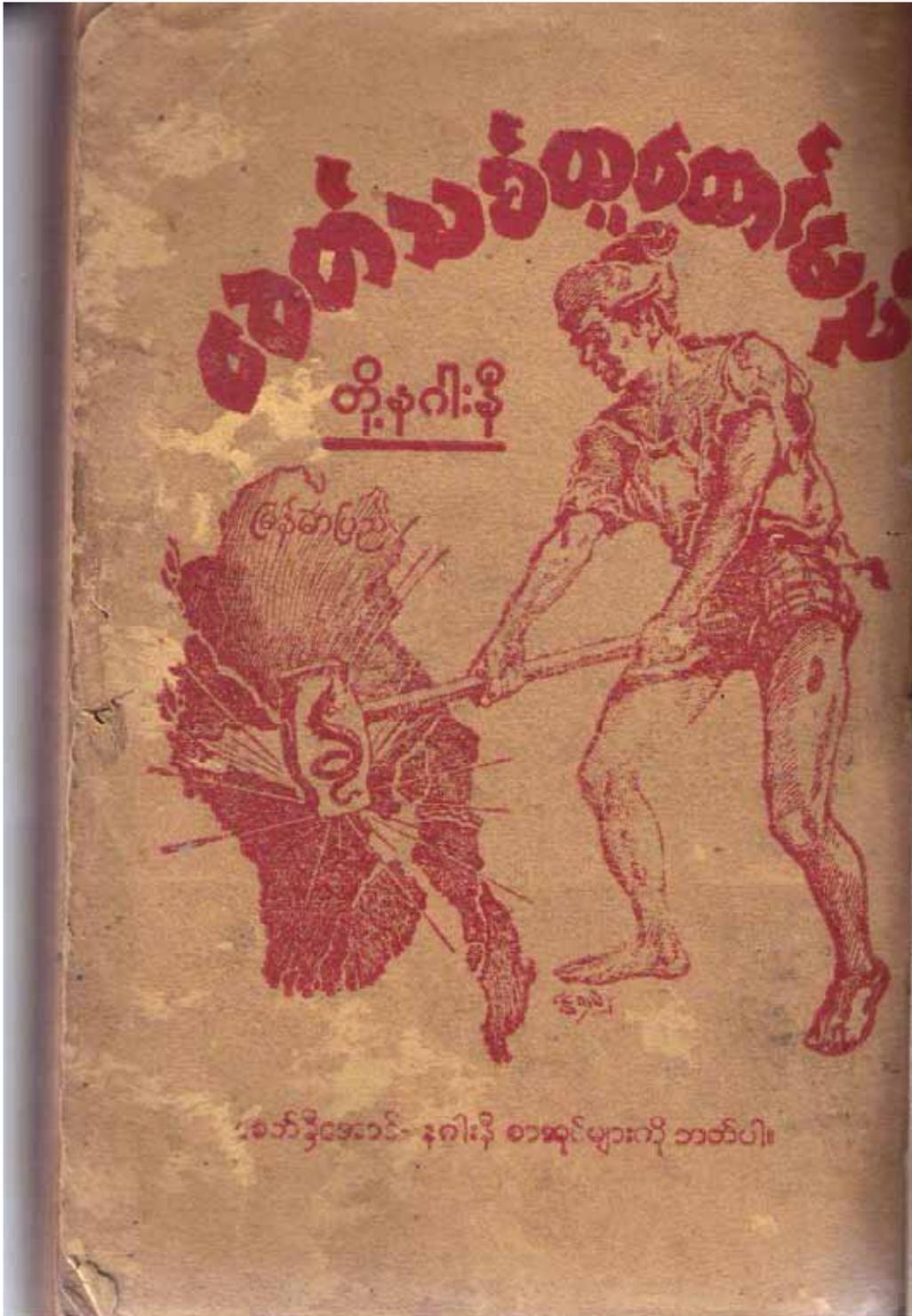
19) **Lenin**. Yangon, Nagani 1939; 224 p.

Written by an anonymous author, “a supporter of the poor.” Content: About Lenin from chapter 1, ‘The Leader of the Poor’, to chapter 27 – ‘Death’. Nagani was of the opinion that this book was a necessary publication to weld together the Russian revolution and Myanmar independence. This will be clear from the introduction by the translator under the heading ‘Why should we read Lenin seriously?’: “This is shedding light on a system where the big capitalists in Myanmar live on exploiting the small capitalists [or, those with a little wealth] and the small capitalists exploit the workers, farmers and kulis beneath them. Some mean people find their (opportunist) way out, which can hardly support them, to get their share of well-being by trapping and exploiting the poor, workers and farmers in many different ways. Every supporter of the poor who is looking for a way out of this should seriously read this book.”

Published April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939 with 5000 copies.



Lenin, Titel Page



Reproduction of back page.

Text:

Heading: "Will build a new era – We Nagani."

Bottom: "Read Nagani books to be modern"

## **2. The Book's Foreword**

Translation: Thakin Hla Kun

### **Why 'Lenin' should be read with all seriousness**

When hardships befall man, he wants to get a way out. There are so many kinds of hardships in life. One of them is youth turned into old age, that is, the active condition falling into weak and feeble situation. Health and happiness in life looted by illness and pain. Merry and luxury days living with near and dear ones lost when the road of death opens before you. All persons tortured by such hardships crave for some way that will give them liberation from such misfortune. They trust and follow those who claim possession of ways out for them.

In such unhappy times many kinds of pseudo-masters of way-out appeared. Some of these way-out guides teach methods of diving, warming before fire, jumping over wooden block and doing pebble game as sure way to be free from hardships. Some teachers instruct method of sunning naked the whole day. Some others tell to make sacrificial offerings to family guardian 'nat' spirits with the blood from the throat of animals. To people of social upper rung, the guidance given by way-out instructors was to constantly observe the precepts and to give away ones wealth, land, elephants and horses as charity.

The pupils of these opportunist way-out teachers have to go down to the deepest pit of hell that is the meeting point of all kinds of hardships immeasurably bigger than those in this human abode. This is the fate they have to meet because of their search for guidance from such teachers. A Myanmar saying had it that one becomes a carrier of the big drum while he seeks the benefit of virtuous action in the festival of watering the image of Lord Buddha at the 'Bo' tree.

Some of the pupils from the upper rung also do not get liberation from hardships. They reach the life of 'devas' of high class and higher class where hardships again surround them and they remain in this kind of life going upward and coming downward in turns.

## Material on three books on the Russian Revolution

Only the teachers - the opportunist-evil persons - get all kinds of fees and gifts all the time. Innumerable people secured genuine way out only through the correct teachings given by the noblest master the Lord Buddha who attained the Four Truths.

In the same way, millions over millions of ordinary people of Russia could break free from the life of poverty and unbelievable hardships that stemmed from the system of exploitation of man by man only when Lenin appeared on the scene. Before that time these people languished under the oppression by the despicable exploitative system and lived a very short life before its end as just only creatures of the lowest status. They had to follow those whom they mistakenly take for their saviours, without any result. These pseudo-saviours give fake ways of deliverance. Only they make profit becoming rich from deception practised on poor people and getting high positions in the government and social ladder.

With the appearance of Lenin, poor people of the world could get them onto the genuine path that can root out the bad social system. Following that way, the poor population of Russia come into peace and wealth without the word 'poverty' making a small sound of wind to the ear.

In Burma the evil system of exploitation practised on small capitalists by big capitalists and in turn these small capitalists practising the same on those lower people - workers, farmers and other labourers - is developing. In this situation the fake way-out teachers also take advantage with their opportunistic self-seeking art of exploitation practised on the above-mentioned poor people. Therefore, all good people who stand on the side of poverty-stricken ones should read this book with all seriousness.

The translator of the book,  
one who is standing together with the poor people.

### **3. Thinzar Swe, Maung Phyu, Aye Aye Khine: A Summary of the Book**

Edited by H.-B. Zöllner

Book title: Lenin. Written by “The comrade of the poor”

#### **The Leader of the Poor**

Lenin’s date of birth was 22 April 1870. He was born in Simbirsk, Russia, on the banks of the Volga River. His name was Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov. He began calling himself Lenin when he entered politics as an adult. His father was an officer in the Simbirsk Education Department, and his mother’s parents were small landowners. He was one of six children. The eldest took part in a plot to assassinate Tsar Alexander III, and was executed by hanging. The younger sister died while being still a schoolgirl. The other brothers and sisters were involved in Russian revolutionary politics. His father died in 1886, and his mother cared for her children.

Lenin was a sharp student, who studied the ideology of the German intellectual Karl Marx starting at the age of 17. From the day on his brother was hanged, he got outraged and began believing that the poor people of the country would unite to make a revolution that would remake the administration of the whole country. Living in Simbirsk, he knew very well the circumstances of the lives of poor Russians.

#### **University and Rebel**

In 1887, Lenin started his education at Kazan University. Students at that university intended to apply for government posts. However, as the living conditions and food were bad, many students tended toward revolution, and the government kept close watch on them. As the brother of the tsar’s assassination conspirator, Lenin was watched especially closely. Where there was a movement in the school, Lenin was accused of being the leader, and he was banished to Kokushkino.<sup>1</sup> There he put effort into his education, and in 1890, independently passed the law examination at the University of St Petersburg. However, he had no intention of supporting himself by the practice of the law; he eagerly read the ideological books of Karl Marx. The unjust treatment at universities of Lenin in Russia and Karl Marx in Germany paved the way for these two to become people who made their mark on world history. As Lenin read Marx, he was excited to find that if Marx’s

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<sup>1</sup> In Kokushkino, 40 km apart from Kazan, there was the family resort of Lenin’s family.

communist ideology were followed, the poor would be emancipated and achieve equality. Because of his speeches, the poor saw Karl Marx as a prophet; in England the workers formed associations under the influence of his communist writings.

### **Not Making a Living with his Law Education**

After becoming interested in and studying Karl Marx's communism while banished, Lenin then went to Samara, where he worked for a barrister at law. In 1893, he was transferred to Petersburg. At the age of 23, he became a member of a socialist association, and agitated for the poor to make an attempt to rise up and seize the tsar or his counsellors. In order to please the workers and the poor, he undertook railway construction, increased coal and iron production. Lenin was sometimes a member of the associations of the workers and the poor, but their thought and his did not always coincide. For example, in Lenin's opinion, assassinating tsars or counsellors would not change the governing system. He gave speeches about the oppression and unjust rule of the tsar and his counsellors, and the self-serving methods of the very wealthy and the large landowners. Toward the end of 1895, Lenin was arrested.

### **Transport into Exile**

After Lenin's arrest Social Democrat party members wrote a book about Russia's capitalist ideology on his advice. After two years in prison, he was ordered to be transported to Siberia. He arrived at a small village on the bank of the Yenisei River in January 1897. With little support from the government, he suffered in poverty along with the people of the village. At that time he became friendly with the villagers.

He was released from exile in 1900 and started travelling throughout Europe together with his wife, the social activist Nadezhda Krupskaya, whom he had married in 1898.

### **Social Democratic Party**

Lenin became the editor of the newspaper "Ispra"<sup>2</sup>, and his wife was the distributor. He was active in the Russian Social Democrat Party. In the May 1901 he started to publish a pamphlet entitled 'How shall we do it?' which became rather famous and contributed to the split in the party.

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<sup>2</sup> The Spark

### **Living in London**

In 1902, Lenin came to London. Living near Highgate Cemetery in a far quarter of London, he often went to Karl Marx's grave. The reading room of the British Library was of great advantage for Lenin.

Before long, Lenin became unwell, and due to that, plans were made to transfer Ispra newspaper to Switzerland, and Lenin moved to Geneva.

### **Social Democrat Conference**

Lenin and his wife reached Geneva in April 1903. There they lived in a workers' quarter and published their newspaper. At this time, Russian representatives arrived for the Social Democrat Congress, which was held in Brussels, Belgium. Here, a split occurred between. The majority (Russian: *Bolshevik*) were led by Lenin, the minority (Russian: *Menshevik*) by his former associate Plechanow.

### **Bolshevik and Menshevik**

The split led to Lenin's resignation from the Ispra newspaper. He established a new newspaper which was called "Forward" and highlighted the position of the Bolshevik fraction.

After Russia lost the war against Japan in 1905, the whole country faced starvation. The poor demonstrated for mercy and marched towards the palace of the tsar. The palace guard shot at them and killed about 200 people.

When Lenin heard this news, he became convinced that the people must have arms to be competitive. This conviction was published in the Forward newspaper, and the Bolsheviks in Petersburg published an analogical announcement.

### **All the Poor People**

In this announcement, they noted that the government had ruthlessly shot and shed the blood of the poor, and that the government armouries should be broken open, the tsar and counsellors who gave the orders should be executed, and the Police Department should be destroyed. They urged for rebellion against the tsar's administration, and for the establishment of a government of the people. As the spirit of rebellion against the government increased, Lenin desired to return to Russia. He reached Petersburg at the beginning of November and stayed in secret; he found the situation better than before because the poor had become more vocal. They had lost respect for the tsar as he had lost the war with Japan, and had shed the blood of the poor in Petersburg. Because of this change,

Lenin and his friends in Petersburg circulated more daring propaganda, but often had to move into hiding because of the surveillance of the detectives. However, they still gave advice on rebelling against the government and directed the Bolsheviks through writings in a newspaper.

### **Appearance of Soviets**

At that time in Petersburg, a new group for the independence and welfare of Russia was formed, called the Soviets. They were to represent and lead the workers. Soviet means council in English, or group, union, or organisation in Myanmar language. It is not clear who started this group. As Lenin was pleased with this organisation, he attended their meetings, and gave advice. Since he went to the soviet in Moscow, the members became Bolsheviks and organised opposition to the government in support of the majority of the poor.

### **Not Being Inflexible**

In 1907, Lenin moved to Finland, where he planned to publish a newspaper called “The People’s Poor” but as he became ill, he had to take a long rest. As Lenin’s brilliance lay in seizing the opportune moment, and remaining flexible, inevitably he was sometimes at odds with the members of his party.

The Russian government was still searching for Lenin, so he had to leave for Switzerland again.

### **First Rebellion against the Government**

The people first lost respect for the tsar when the government shot at the workers during the first rebellion in Petersburg in 1905. Lenin had long been inciting the poor and the workers to rebel, and the farmers had been thinking about how to arrange the redistribution of land as the socialist rebels had said in their speeches. Lenin was pleased that in 1905 a land reform took place. Fields were confiscated and taken from wealthy landowners and from the church and redistributed to the poor.

At this time, the Mensheviks were worried that difficulties would develop for the nation if the poor would enter into a republican government. Lenin said that rule by the poor would be better than rule by the tsars. As the tsar's administration had not been able to quell continuous rebellion by the workers, the poor, and the members of socialist organisations, the administration reduced their oppression.

### **Blaming Lenin**

Although the Mensheviks blamed Lenin and the Bolsheviks for the many casualties among the revolutionaries in 1905 - 1906, Lenin thought that although they had not succeeded at that time, they had gained practical experience.

### **Revival in Russia**

Although Lenin encountered unhappiness twice with the efforts at rebellion in Russia, he did not reduce his efforts and all the Bolsheviks considered him their leader and followed his plan. From 1912 to 1914 Lenin was the acknowledged leader of the poor in Russia even as he did not live in Russia.

### **Arrest as a Russian Undercover Agent**

After the outbreak of the World War, Lenin was arrested by the Austrian government as a Russian undercover agent. An Austrian socialist leader spoke for him, expressing regrets and pointing out that he was the enemy of the tsar. Lenin was permitted to leave for Switzerland. In Switzerland, Russian socialists presented a monograph relating to the World War, showing how the workers of the countries would be the ones who would suffer in the war. They declared that only if the tsar lost the war would the workers become wealthy.

As Lenin was putting his efforts into international socialist matters, he was preparing for revolution in Russia. When the tsar was dethroned and replaced by a republican government, the other imperialist countries which Russia was allied with kept it in the war. As the current war was the unjust war of the imperialists fighting over their shares, it would be just for the people to fight against their monarchs. It is just for territories taken over by force of arms to defend themselves against such a takeover.

Although Lenin believed the socialists were strongly opposed to world war, members of socialist parties supported their own governments' decisions to enter the war, just as the Russian workers who had been shot at by order of the tsar, now supported their government. Lenin thought that the socialists understood and supported the workers, who did not understand and supported the tsar. Lenin was envisioning how to fuel the internal tensions in his society, and also to rouse other countries.

### **The 1917 Revolution**

As socialists were discussing revolution, on 6 March 1917 a severe snowstorm in Petersburg stopped all trains and road transport and as many people had no bread to eat, they stopped working. On 8 March, at about 3:00 in the afternoon, unrest began in the outlying areas of Petersburg.. The Bolsheviks announced that they had overthrown the government of the tsar, and were withdrawing from the war. On 9 March the situation did not improve, and as the police were called in to stop looting from shops. On 11 March, as there was anarchy, the garrison officer promulgated an order to put down[the unrest, but as it only increased, the army came in to suppress it, and the order was obeyed to some extent. The remainder of the garrison joined the unrest, ending the rule of the tsars. The Duma formed a provisional government which included Kerensky but there was still a dispute over power. Although the soviets were empowered to govern Petersburg, Mensheviks in fact dominated the administration, and they announced the end of the war.

### **Return to the Home Country**

Lenin had been troubled by thinking about ending the world war for three years. He was advising the Bolsheviks, and when he heard by telegraph that the revolution had started in Russia in March 1917, he wanted to return to Russia. The provisional government announced that all banishment orders were rescinded and all those in exile were free to return to Russia.

Lenin began organising for approximately 500 Russians to return, but England and France forbid more than 150 Russians to pass through their territories. After that, Lenin began to plan his own return to Russia as quickly as possible. At last, the German foreign minister agreed that Russians could be put on a special closed train, which would take Lenin and some others.

After his return, Lenin gave a speech from the tsar's palace, declaring that he thought the war had awakened the people, and that there would be revolution in the whole world. What was needed was to call back the soldiers from the battlefield, and for the poor to form groups, and to transfer land to the hands of the peasants.

### **Plan to Bring Down the Provisional Government**

The day after Lenin arrived in Petersburg, he submitted a paper to the Social Democrat conference. He mentioned that the administration of the country should be handed over to the poor. He also advocated that the various dispersed groups should unite into one group, called the Communist Party, which should become the international socialist society.

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The revolution of the poor and the public which had been intolerably repressed was successful, but their wishes were not yet able to be fulfilled. When Lenin published this paper, many were drawn to become his supporters. As those in power objected to his paper, many who agreed with it did not dare to speak out openly. Lenin wrote in newspapers and gave speeches in workplaces and arranged for a Bolshevik conference to be held in Moscow in April. This conference endorsed Lenin's paper and spread it openly throughout the country.

Thus in this time, Lenin became well-known as the main leader of the poor, giving speeches daily and gaining followers.

### **Seizing Power**

The provisional Kerensky administration released imprisoned soldiers to protect the country. Lenin had urged the Bolsheviks to seize power from the hands of Kerensky. All layers in Russia supported Lenin's proposal. After that in October the meeting of Bolshevik committee was held. Here, it was decided to seize power immediately.

### **The Smolny Institute Building**

This building was situated on the bank of Nipa River in St. Petersburg. It was the educational centre for the Tsarist family. After the 1917 Revolution it became the meeting hall for the Bolshevik party. On November 7th Bolshevik in the building were ordered to nationalize everything in the cities. Finally, Kerensky administration came into an end. Lenin government issued a decree including further activities for the country. That day evening Soviet the administration made Lenin president and Trotsky foreign minister.

The new administration led by Lenin aimed for welfare of poor people surprised the world. His administration pacified the condition of the country.

### **Leader of the Poor**

Though Lenin performed for the economic welfare of the country, laborers and peasants in some places felt unsatisfied. He worked for the welfare of those who were unsatisfied and called for an all-Russian peasants conference in St. Petersburg. At the meeting Lenin made decision for welfare of peasants as followed:

- (I) To confiscate land from landlords.
- (II) To hand over all properties owned by the tsar and his relatives as well as the Church.
- (III) To punish those who destroyed the welfare of the masses.

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The entire people supported Lenin's decision.

Lenin with his associates made great attempts towards the goal of making Russia to be one of the richest countries of the world. Finally he could implement his plan. He encountered various difficulties and was humiliated by various people from outside and inside Russia but he did not give up the task of establishing a modern state. He started the attempt since he was 17 years old. At the age of 47, he had become the architect of Russia and had set up welfare for the poor people. As he had worked industriously for the welfare of the poor people both in Russia and over the world he became a real leader representing all poor people in the world.

### **Within a Month**

Being the architect of Russia Lenin could control many important cities such as St. Petersburg and Moscow within a month. He achieved peace in the war with Germany. He told that making peace with Germany and bringing Russian soldiers home were important steps for the development of a modern state. As the public realized his attempt for peace and his goodwill for Russia it felt shame for the humiliations through the German side.

### **Moscow**

Though Moscow was a very popular city, its huge buildings belonged to the bourgeoisie. Close to them were many huts inhabited by beggars. As people became famished, the Bolsheviks provided them either with fish soup with bread or potato soup. Some people were enabled to work in the production of arms and ammunitions while others were busy in military train grounds.

The Kremlin castle was the central office of the Bolshevik administration in Moscow. It was a landmark of Russia. Lenin was busy in the palace of old Tsar.

### **Lenin was Shot by a Jewish Lady**

In addition, Lenin established an organization for artists, writers and poets etc. and looked after the welfare of them. He achieved all this despite his internal and external enemies. Some of his foes took asylum abroad and wanted German troops to advance into Russia. English troops captured some important cities.

In this time Lenin was shot by a Jewish lady during a labour meeting. Then the Bolsheviks with the support of the masses topped the foreign intervention. Trotsky issued severe punishments for those soldiers and people who betrayed the cause of the country.

### **War with Poland**

After having pacified the country, Poland attacked Russia and aimed at occupying the border area. Lenin organized a counter-attack and wanted to advance to Warsaw, the capital of Poland in order to spread communism in Europe. But due to counter attacks the Russian troops were defeated. The defeat led Lenin to reach a peace agreement with Poland.

The second international congress meeting of 1920 emphasized the affairs of the poor people. The conference aimed at developing unity among the poor people of the world.

### **Death of Lenin**

Lenin devoted his life for the welfare of poor people. The task leading to develop the country exhausted his energy. His sleeping and appetite changed. But he continued to strive for a modern state. One day, he became unconscious in the Kremlin building. On the suggestion of a surgeon he was brought to a village called Gorki, a silent place. After having suffered for three months, he recovered and immediately continued to work forcefully for the development of a modern state which served the welfare of the poor people. At the fifth anniversary day of his regime he felt unhealthy at the Kremlin. Before his death, he delivered a speech at Soviet conference in Moscow and said: "Comrades, our country has become pacified now, the people know how we sacrificed our life and exhausted our energy but we had to do so for the sake of building a modern state. Let us continue to look forward and work for the future brightness of Russia."

He died on January 21, 1924.

#### **4. Gerhard Will, Commentary on the Book Report drawn up by Dr. Maung Phyu and Aye Aye Khine on the book “Lenin”**

The report describes the content of the above mentioned book “Lenin” in great detail, using the systematic of chapters chosen by the author. The information given on the various chapters is sometimes overly specific. Therefore I would propose to condense some parts of the report which describe the day to day life of Lenin.

The report leaves me with the impression that the author of the book gives us a very personal portrait of Lenin as an eminent personality, whereas the historical framework Lenin acted in is rather poorly covered and analyzed. Also the evolution of Lenin’s ideas and political strategies does neither become evident nor is it convincing. Instead, it quite often appears to be rather more coincidental than logical. There is no mention of the policy of ”War Communism” and the “New Economic Policy” succeeding it, which show a very different side of Lenin and the huge difficulties in promoting the “welfare for the poor” in an underdeveloped country devastated by war.

To get a better understanding of these deficiencies it would be useful to learn more about the background of this book. Which are the sources of reference the author had drawn upon? Is Lenin seen solely as a historical figure in a European and Western context without relevance for Myanmar or other countries in the East- and Southeast-Asia? To my knowledge this book was not the only one about Lenin and the Bolshevik Revolution which was published at that time in Myanmar and in Myanmar language respectively wow! Do we know anything about the significance and the impact of this book in shaping the image of Lenin in Myanmar during the late thirties?

Foreigners like myself would also be interested in an answer to the question: How is this book seen by Myanmar’s intellectuals of today? Is it still worth reading a book like this about Lenin after the fall of the Soviet Union and the decline of the many ideals Lenin had fought for?

Again: The report provides a very detailed description of the book’s contents, but some more information about its background and the role of Lenin seen from a Myanmar viewpoint would improve our comprehension of the Nagani Book Club and its publications to a great extent.

Dr. Gerhard Will

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10719 Berlin

## **5. Katja Meincke and Anna Jüschke, Commentary on Thinzar Shwe's Book Report on "Lenin"**

Dear Thindzar Swe,

Thank you for your contribution.

It was very interesting to read your report. Putting the three important topics of the book in relation to each other in such a short report is a complicated task which you have dealt with very well.

You have mentioned that the plot of the book was the history of Russia and Lenin (Wladimir Ilijítsch Uljánow) as the protagonist and his work on the welfare of poor people. Furthermore you concerned yourself with the impacts of his work on Russia as well as on the outside world, especially concerning Europe. It is remarkable how you chose the details that you have mentioned in the text. These facts are seldom paid attention to in contemporary books about Lenin. Another important aspect in your contribution are the quotations of Lenin you brought up to underline your conclusion.

As you have pointed out in your critique it is complicated to bring the coherence of the significant parts of Lenin's biography in a conceptional order, but you succeeded in writing an understandable disquisition. Although it is a good idea to follow the author's structure in your report, adding some short explanations and comments on the end of each paragraph could make it easier for your readers to get the content of the book. Especially terms like Menshevik, Bolshevik, Communism, Socialism, Leninism, Imperialism, the Duma, the Tsarist regime and the Soviet system should be explained to readers who have no previous knowledge about this topic. You refer to the 'manifesto' several times in your text and sometimes it is not clear what manifesto you are talking about. This may lead to a little confusion, which is true for the part about the emergence of the communist party in connection to the Soviet system as well.

While reading your book report a few questions appeared.

We understand your critique that you found a little fault with the description of the impacts on the population by the tsarist regime. What we would like to know: was the explanation false or missing? Besides that you have mentioned the role of religion in Lenin's attempts in relation to

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Marxism. What is the author's opinion about this question and what are your personal implications about this?

For us and other people who are not familiar with this topic, like Burmese readers who are interested in learning more about themes they don't know much about, it would be important to understand more about the background of this book. In which way would you personally appraise this work? What was the relevance of this work in the time of its first publishing?

Is there any criticism of Lenin and his ideas about governing Russia? You refer to the assassination attempt on Lenin by Fanny Kaplan and mentioned some other opponents of his work. It may be a good idea to deal more detailed with different critics of Lenin in order to show how complex the structure of the different parties and positions in Russia has been at that time.

When mentioning that there were some people who had doubts about Lenin's ability to reform such a big country, it would be interesting to think about their intentions as well.

In general we would like to get to know more about your personal ideas about this work. Do you agree with the author and with the content? What do you think about the value this book may have for Burmese readers today?

Thank you very much for providing this interesting report!

Best regards,

Katja Meincke and Anna Jüschke

## 6. Biographical Information on James Maxton

From Wikipedia,



James Maxton MP

James Maxton (1885 – 23 July 1946) was a Scottish socialist politician, and leader of the Independent Labour Party.

Born in the then burgh of Pollokshaws (now Pollok, Glasgow) in 1885, he was the son of two schoolteachers, the profession he would later enter himself after his education at Hutchesons' Grammar School and the University of Glasgow. He is viewed as one of the leading figures of the Red Clydeside era.

Maxton had whilst studying at the University of Glasgow described his political loyalties as lying with the Conservatives. He later embraced the ideology of socialism and in 1904 he joined the Barrhead branch of the Independent Labour Party (ILP).

Maxton's move to socialism was heavily influenced by John Maclean, a fellow student at Glasgow University, who would also become a schoolteacher. Maclean was not alone in influencing Maxton; it was directly following a meeting in Paisley addressed by the socialist Philip Snowden that he decided to join the ILP.

Maxton in his later life claimed that the biggest influence in his decision to become a socialist was the grinding poverty experienced by many of the children he taught. He subsequently convinced all his siblings to join the ILP, his sister Annie becoming a prominent figure.

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Maxton, along with Maclean, was a vociferous opponent of World War I and he spent a year in prison for campaigning against the war. He and Ramsay MacDonald were responsible for moving the motion at the Labour Party's National Executive Committee which dictated that Labour members of the wartime coalition government resign from it in preparation for the 1918 general election.

Maxton became the ILP MP for Glasgow Bridgeton at the 1922 general election and was chairman of the ILP from 1926 to 1931, and from 1934 to 1939; he was generally seen as the symbol of the ILP after its break from Labour in 1932. A militant socialist, he was horrified by the class collaborationism of the TUC after the defeat of the 1926 General Strike, and was co-author with the left-wing Miners leader, Arthur Cook, of the Cook-Maxton Manifesto of 1928.

Maxton died (still a sitting MP for Bridgeton) in 1946. After his death the ILP stagnated until it ceased to be a viable independent political party. Maxton was considered one of the greatest orators of his day both within and outside the House of Commons.

However, his forthright views often caused controversy, indeed his parliamentary privileges were withdrawn temporarily in 1923 when he called the Tory MP, Sir Frederick Banbury, "a murderer" following the government's decision to withdraw school milk. Churchill, whilst holding political opinions wholly inconsistent with those of Maxton, described him as the greatest parliamentarian of his day.

Maxton heavily influenced his family's political opinions, with his mother and all his siblings joining the ILP. His nephew John Maxton was MP for the Cathcart section of Glasgow from 1979 till 2001.

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has confessed to having been fascinated by Maxton as a young man and has written a biography of him, simply entitled Maxton. He also used Maxton for the basis of his PhD thesis whilst at the University of Edinburgh.

## 7. Sidney Hook: Book Review of Maxton, *Lenin*<sup>1</sup>

*Lenin*. By JAMES MAXTON: New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1932. Pp. 179. \$ 2.00.

This little book by a leading figure of the British I.L.P.<sup>2</sup> is less a biography of the great leader of the Russian Revolution than it is an uncritical eulogy. Homage is paid to Lenin's revolutionary intransigence, but there is very little analysis of his views or of the fundamental problems out of which they arose. Maxton's acquaintance with Lenin's work is obviously second-hand, and his discussion takes the form of a superficial running exposition of material readily accessible to the English reader. Even as a popular biography there is little excuse for it.

The real problems, however, concerned with Lenin's life and thought are many. Unfortunately, they are not so much as stated here. To begin with, the fundamental question must be asked: To what extent was Lenin an "orthodox Marxist" even in the pre-revolutionary days when he looked upon Kautsky and Plechanov as the leaders of social-democracy? What was Lenin's distinctive contribution as a Marxist? Did he do no more than to revive the revolutionary spirit of Marx's thought and apply it to the tactical problems of proletarian revolution in the epoch of imperialism? Or did he add genuinely new elements to the Marxian theory of social revolution, especially in his conception of the role of the political party leading in the conquest and exercise of power? What were the precise points at issue between Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg, Lenin and Trotsky – and has history confirmed the views which Lenin defended? To what extent can one speak of Leninism as a set of doctrines? Are his views on politics, epistemology, and culture logically compatible, and do they all flow from the same premises? What were the relationships which existed between Lenin and the other members of the Central Executive Committee of the Bolshevik party after he returned to Russia, and what effect did they have upon the strategy of the Revolution? Why did Lenin in his testament call upon the Bolshevik party to remove Stalin from his post? How did Lenin conceive of the dictatorship of the proletariat – as a genuine workers' democracy or as the rule of a political party over the working class?

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<sup>1</sup> *The American Journal of Sociology* 40,2 (September 1934): 277-278. James Hook taught at Washington Square College New York University

<sup>2</sup> Independent Labour Party, founded in 1893 as a successor to the Scottish Labour Party (founded 1888). After the foundation of the British Labour Party in 1906, the ILP formed an affiliation with the greater party which turned out to be full of tensions because of the I.L.P.'s more radical stance. After World War II and the death of James Maxton, the party lost political influence.

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These are only some of the questions which any competent study of Lenin must answer. Maxton's *Lenin* evades them all.

## **8. Maung Ba Swe: Stalin, erector of Paradise on Earth (Lokanibbana)<sup>1</sup>**

Translation: Georg Noack

Stalin, whose pock marked face appears harsh and ferocious has in his heart at the same time feelings of heartily pity for human beings and feelings of hate and loathing against an unjust world. He does not long for wealth or fame. He wants to create a world were human classes can live comfortably in happiness. He wants to see a just world. Working for this comfortable and just world to come into being is what his longing senses and his hopeful desires are directed at. Besides this work he hardly finds pleasure in anything like festivities, theatre etc.

His braveness, able to stand anything is famous. However, there is one thing he cannot tolerate: Those, who obstruct or sabotage his work or have in one way or another become his enemies. He light-heartedly wipes them out. All revolutionary politicians should admire how he bore his banishment for many years. At that time he lived away from other people in the steppes [big grass plains] alone, having to spend his time as a hunter. The naturally growing grass and trees taught him the lessons of communism and refined his mind. The wild beasts taught him braveness and faith in the power of braveness. Now he is the dictator of Russia, a country covering approximately one sixth of the earth. Nevertheless in his mind he has not become arrogant. Every day he thinks about how to provide for the people's wellbeing, day and night he plans and works without rest for the happiness of the people. Now he is aged over fifty, almost sixty. Nevertheless, his mind has not become weaker. His intellect is powerful and sharp as ever. He has created everything his people need to eat, drink, wear and live and nobody is left needy. He has solved and is still solving the problem of giving everybody enough to eat and the problem of unemployment. He is not yet satisfied with that. Her longs the whole world to become peaceful and every human to have enough to eat.

And he is steadily working for that. You have to know what kind of man such a special and noble person is.

His father was a shoemaker. He didn't know about literature. But as he wanted his son to become a priest he taught him to read and write. However, he [Stalin, the son] didn't wish to become a priest.

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<sup>1</sup> Nagani News Vol I, No. 8 (End of October 1938) pp. 24-28.

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When he was a little over ten years old he had tasted books and treatises that were marked as a “poison one shouldn’t even touch” and forbidden. These books were on a doctrine how to make people happy which is called socialism, and he had liked the taste. When the concerned school officials found out that he secretly read those books, they expelled him from school. With 16 he formally joined the association for creation of paradise on earth [communist party? revolutionary movement? G.N.] . His comrades knew him as Soso, *Dipi* [?] or Koba. At that time he studied communism and made a living as a writer. He even published his own newspaper and printed it in the crooked hut he lived in. He also helped his fellow members by various means. When the exploitative government came to know this they wanted to observe him and had secret agents investigate about him. In spite of entering politics disguised by various means these agents knew whatever he did and said. Therefore he was imprisoned six times between his 24<sup>th</sup> and his 34<sup>th</sup> birthday.

He was very clever and good in disguising himself. When he once went to meet Lenin who had fled to Finland, he disguised himself and used a fake passport. By the same means he followed Lenin to Germany to play chess with him. Although he had helped the movement for establishing a new era [revolutionary movement? G.N.] in various ways between his 16<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> birthday, nobody apart from Lenin noticed him. 1913 the police caught him while he was participating in a secret meeting. Though he planned to disguise himself as a woman and escape, the police arrived and caught him before he could do so. As this was the sixteenth time he was caught, he was banned to a place far from human settlement in the tundra near the arctic sea. While he spent his time all alone hunting and fishing he suffered hell on earth. From there he heard that a world war had begun. Without the opportunity to read newspapers or meet people to tell him, he didn’t know anything about what happened.

When he finally was released in 1917, he returned to his country [sic! G.N.]. However, different from other leaders he wasn’t welcomed enthusiastically. He had to find and go the way to his house all by himself. But, after a short time when he became the editor of a newspaper called “Prawda” and worked hand in hand with Lenin the people saw him as Lenin’s trusted comrade. At that time apart from Lenin he and Trotsky were the people’s most trusted leaders. True, they both were Lenin’s disciples. But they were never on good terms. Their characters and their ways were too different. Trotsky could incite his audience with speeches. Stalin knew how convert his enemies into supporters. In politics, Trotsky was a master of strategy and ruse. Stalin was clever at spontaneously using situations for his purpose. Trotsky knew how to stir up people’s minds and

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Stalin had a winning character. Trotsky was a talented writer. He also was a good orator. His weapon was his pen. He believed that he could win everybody by his words. He was one who expected to intimidate all enemies with his pen. Stalin believed that the enemy could only be defeated by the appropriate means precisely suiting a situation. Accordingly he didn't find it difficult to kill whoever deserved to be killed, to banish whoever deserved to be banished or to coax whoever deserved to be coaxed.

As their character and ways were so different, the two men competed and vied with one another. After in Russia the old times ended and the new era began, Lenin became dictator, Trotsky served as commander-in-chief of the troops and Stalin as secretary-general of the communist party. Once Stalin was in charge of quelling the monarchist rebel Denikin and commander-in-chief general Trotsky send him orders on how to proceed. But Stalin ignored these orders. He also ordered his majors not to follow Trotsky's orders. Lenin found it difficult to deal with his rivalling disciples. The last difficulty Lenin had to face, was the problem of who would succeed him. As he was unable to decide he willed the both of them to rule the country together.

Though he has been an incomparable, special person, in this issue Lenin was wrong. He seems to have forgotten that two lions can never dwell together in one cave.

Both wanted to erect paradise on earth and both together were solving the problem of everybody having enough to eat. Therefore they both joined Lenin in the revolution against the doctrine of the capitalists who deserve to be called blood-drinking ogres. Now in Russia the 90 percent of the people, formerly without any possessions, had received land and were well-fed and beautifully dressed. But though the aims of Stalin and Trotsky were the same the way to achieve it was different. So though they, observing Lenin's wishes, didn't right away start an open fight when he died, secretly they both prepared themselves. Within the communist party there were 19 functionaries and only three of them were on Trotsky's side. But Trotsky didn't give up. It was as if in his mind he always said to himself 'one day I will win.' He wrote whenever there was something to write about and held speeches wherever he could. The country came to respect Trotsky more than Stalin.

But Stalin held the reins within the communist party and to every post within the party he assigned only those loyal to him and controlled the party newspaper. Therefore in 1927 he won the elections for party leadership and became dictator while Trotsky suffered a big defeat.

Trotsky couldn't stand being defeated and wouldn't give in. He was banished to Siberia together with some other members of the communist opposition after Stalin had become a dictator because

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he kept being angry and Stalin feared he might rise and cause him trouble. Some of them pleaded that they would now live peacefully [i.e. without resisting Stalin any further, G.N.] and were permitted to return from exile. But that was nothing for Trotsky – living under his enemy's hands and just peacefully writing books and treatises was not imaginable to him. Now Trotsky lives in exile in Mexico and writes communist treatises. His enemy in exile, Stalin could now concentrate on his work. The electrification of Russia, meaning the distribution of electricity in the whole country so that everybody could use it was only begun by Lenin before his death. Stalin now completed it according to his five-year plan.

Every household can now use electricity and has its own electric oven. Every factory can now run on electricity and everybody can listen to the radio.

But he could still not be satisfied with that. There was much work left to be done for erecting paradise on earth. Facing warfare on the whole earth he is making up plans how to end that. That much is he. Day and night he is busy so that we will all have enough to eat and beautiful clothes to wear and will be saved from the dangers of war. We should praise him and follow his example. The era of our kings when heroes were exterminated out is gone. Now is the era when those who deserve to be honoured will be honoured and those who deserve reverence will be revered. Let us all praise and revere him who deserves so and his great master Lenin. Let us all follow their noble example and join them in erecting the new era.

## **9. Thakin Hla Kun: How our memory of Lenin faded**

To answer the question of why we pro-socialism people in our young age came to almost forget Lenin or retain only a vague memory of him, I must start with our situation in 1938-41, when we first gained of political knowledge.

The time was when the Book Club began to disseminate socialist ideas with its publications. Actually many of those books told us Lenin's life and his outstanding abilities in the political and military fields. Those abilities he had shown in about 25 or 30 years before we were born and he lived from 1870 to 1924. People like me (some were about 10 or 15 years senior to me) were quite young when Lenin died.

That particular period of time when we first took interest in the development of socialism was clouded with a gradually thickening haze of a potential war of global proportion. The principal characters in that world war included one Stalin, leader (in all Senses) of the Union of Socialist Soviet Russia on whom our total interest fell, almost obliterating our earlier scanty memory of and knowledge about Lenin, who had then left us worldly creatures years ago. So our eyes totally turned to Stalin. Our mind totally centred on him. Some scanty memory about Lenin was lost in the new developments.

We were so young that we failed to remember that without the USSR Lenin founded with such intensity of efforts and unparalleled intellect and also without the mighty Soviet people Lenin reared and led, that country could not have fought and defeated her enemies so roundly.

Whatever it was, our minds were filled with such admiration for Stalin and his undaunted efforts and unbelievable war victories in the antifascist struggle that the image of the late Lenin faded and sank into near-oblivion.

Of course, we were given to learn during our youthful life and as young political prisoners of the British rulers about how Lenin, a bright son of an educationist, suffered various forms of persecutions - being expelled from the Kazan University first, the exile to Siberia, the flight from the Czarist police, etc. But that knowledge was mixed with that of development of Socialism - the Communist Manifesto, Das Kapital and other classic books, Karl Marx and F. Engels, the rise of industrial capitalism and the surplus value, etc. So Lenin fell into some measure of insignificance. Before we could really recapture the significance of his life and political stature, those clouds of

## Material on three books on the Russian Revolution

world war and Stalin's role deserving high admiration came to overwhelm Lenin's larger political as well as military stature.

All those occurred during the period covering the years 1938 to 1956, when at last we were given to learn of Stalin's weaknesses, nay, the consequences of the personality cult that fatally harmed the existence of the Soviet Union. And only then memory of Lenin's abilities returned to us. We then remembered his relentless labours for the development of Socialist theories - how he made the popular organizations, how he fought the anti-socialist elements, how he successfully waged the October Revolution, how he brought victory in the civil war, how he liked cooperative movement, how he wanted to see the New Economic Policy succeed, to avoid extreme policies and to go on along that NEP for more years to come - and he expressed his displeasure about Stalin's behaviours. The knowledge of what Lenin wanted to happen for the Soviet Union was the valuable political lessons that came to us quite late.

Incidentally, I would like to add an instance that the memory of Lenin gave me a chance to indirectly criticize the extreme leftist economic policies of U New Win's BSPP (Burma Socialist Programme Party) then in power. The year 1970 was the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Lenin. The BSPP held a celebration on that occasion following the decision of the UNESCO. I was made one of the speakers on that occasion. I was foreign news editor of the working People's Daily, Burmese version, and a BSPP member at that time.

People in general were quite much dissatisfied with the BSPP economic policies. My speech referred to Lenin's New Economic Policy and by way of concluding the speech, I pointed out that we need to learn the wisdom of Lenin in introducing that policy as it helped change the course of the country's development according to the changed situation.

Written by Thakhin Hla Kun,

aged 85 years,

March 20, 2007

## **IV. APPENDICES**

### **SHORT INFORMATION on the MAKING of the BOOK REPORTS**

CHOSEN BOOKS from the bibliography will be provided on a lending basis by the manager [or for people in Myanmar through the Myanmar Book Centre in Yangon (55 Baho Road; telephone 221-271, 212-409)].

TWO REPORTS on each book by different persons are accepted.

LENGHT: 8,000 to 12,000 words (plus special space, if desired);

LANGUAGE of PUBLICATION: English; manuscripts in Myanmar language will be translated;

CRITERIA (must not slavishly be observed):

1. Biographical information about the author/translator, and other contributors;
2. Information about the non-Myanmar sources used in the book; (if the book is a translation, the original English version will be provided, too, if possible;)
3. Summary of the book's contents;
4. Information about the special aim and intended impact of the book at the time of publication;
5. How are foreign terms and concepts translated or transformed into the Myanmar language and the Myanmar context? (May be omitted!)
6. Personal assessment by the reviewer of the book, its impact on later times and its meaning for today

DEADLINE of DELIVERY of the REPORT: December 31, 2005 (the deadline can be extended);

DELIVERY of the REPORTS DRAFTED: Directly to the manager of the project by email or through the Myanmar Book Centre.

COMMENTS and EDITING: The reports will be commented upon by another person. The reviewer may react on the comments and answer the questions as he or she likes. The responsibility for the final editing of the reports is with the project manager.

REWARD: As a financial reward, each reviewer will receive 50 US \$ at the time of submitting the book report and 30 US \$ after the final editing.

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS like recollections of elder people, who remember the impact of Nagani on their life, and essays on subjects related to the club (Nagani Song, Nagani Magazine, the role of literature in disseminating knowledge in Myanmar, etc.) are very much appreciated.

## **INFORMATION about COMMENTARIES on BOOK REPORTS**

**1. The commentaries asked for shall serve two aims:**

First (and most important): To start a dialogue on Myanmar's intellectual and literary heritage between interested people inside and outside of Myanmar.

Second (and important, too): To check the clarity of the report with regard to the intended publication.

Therefore, the commentator should be interested in Burma affairs and in the general topic of the respective book, but must not know anything about its specific content.

**2. Length of each commentary: Must not exceed the space of this paper.**

**3. Some hints that may be useful to observe in writing a commentary:**

Are there any questions that are brought up by reading the report?

If yes, what kind of questions do arise?

Are the criteria listed in the “Short information on the making of book reports” (see attachment) met by the book report?

What information on the book report do I find interesting/exciting or unnecessary/redundant?

Is there anything that I would recommend to the author of the report?

**Delivery of the commentary:** It would be appreciated if the commentaries could be sent by email to the above mentioned email address. If the author of the report chooses to react on the commentary, the commentator will be informed.

**Affairs to come:** All participants will be informed about the development of the publishing process of the reports and are invited to participate in future deliberations and activities. - Questions and recommendations are very much appreciated!

MYANMAR LITERATURE PROJECT



Starting with an investigation into the NAGANI BOOK CLUB

The project's

**Working Papers**

are published by

the **Department of Southeast Asian Studies of Passau University**

Already Published:

No. 10:1, An Introduction into the Nagani Book Club

No. 10:1.1, Additional Material on Nagani

No. 10:2, Thein Pe, *Saya Lun* and *Member of Parliament*

10:3, Ba Hein and Hla Shwe on Capitalism

10:4, Thein Pe, *Students' Boycotter*

10:5, Ba Khaing, *Political History of Myanma*

10:6, Nu, *Gandalarit*

10:7, Mogyo, *José Rizal*

10:8, Three Books on World War & Burma

10:100, Papers Presented at the Burma Studies Conference, Singapore 2006

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Some Nagani Books  
were scanned and are available on CD.

For details contact  
habezett@t-online.de

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All Working Papers published until now are available  
at

**<http://www.zoellner-online.org/mlp.htm>**

and at the Online Burma Library

**<http://www.burmalibrary.org/show.php?cat=2083>**

## INVITATION

Readers are invited to participate in the project by

- writing **comments and criticisms** on the contents of this and other volumes of this series;
- contributing **essays** on Burmese/Myanmar literature as a medium between the international world and Burmese society;
- providing **material** that sheds more light on the Nagani Book Club, its context and impact on Burmese intellectual and literary life;
- offering **assistance** as translators and commentators of book reports.

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For contributions and questions, please contact:

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