Myanmar Literature Project

Material on Ba Hein: Students’ Revolution

Working Paper No. 10:11
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I. INTRODUCTION (Hans-Bernd Zöllner)

The core of this paper presents a translation of Ba Hein’s booklet “Students’ Revolution” published in 1939 by the Nagani Book Club. The present volume thus continues to offer a complete translation of a Nagani book after the papers on “World War and Burma” written by Aung San and others (Working Paper 8) and Soe’s “Socialism” (Working Paper 10). For the first time, the original Burmese text is included, too, in order to proffer the opportunity of checking the translation and afford a thorough investigation into Ba Hein’s text.

The booklet is outstanding for many reasons. 50,000 copies were printed - the highest circulation of all books in pre-war Burma. This number indicates that the publishers pinned high expectations on the pamphlet. Such hope was founded in the book’s topic, revolution, as well as in the author, the young and promising student leader. Before some remarks on both issues will be offered, the book shall be put into the context of the Myanmar Literature Project’s series of working papers.

1. Manifold Complement

Ba Hein’s book contains complements to some interconnected mini-series within the Myanmar Literature Project in a manifold way. It informs about the first of three books written by Ba Hein published by the Nagani Book Club and the Burma Publishing House. The later publications already covered in this project are “The World of Capitalists” (Working Paper 3) and “World War and Burma” (Working Paper 8). Together with some smaller writings by Ba Hein published in this volume, it is now possible to assess the writings of one of the most gifted young men who took part in the nationalist struggle shortly before World War II both in terms of contents and style.1

On the other hand, this is the project’s third paper dealing with the student movement in Burma/Myanmar. It supplements the material on Thein Pe’s two documentary novels on the students’ strike of 1936 (Working Paper 4) and the volume containing additional material on the role of students in Burmese society between 1920 and 2007 (Working Paper 4.1). This paper, therefore, offers another valuable piece of information on one of the most important issues of modern Burmese politics.

Thirdly, the material presented here provides the opportunity to assess the personality of Ba Hein, his relationship to other Burmese characters of the time with a political as well as a literary vocation and the way others saw him. Here, Than Tun’s foreword to Ba Hein’s “The World of Capitalists”

1 Another piece of Ba Hein’s writings, a short story, may be added to this paper later.
together with Dagon Taya’s lively and sympathetic portrait of the student leader (part IV.1 of this paper) can be compared to Ba Hein’s own description of his role in the boycott movement of 1938.

2. Revolution in Theory and Practice

Ba Hein’s booklet can roughly be divided in two big parts anteceded by an introduction and concluded by a summary. The book starts with an explanation where (in prison) and why (induced by the conversation with a previously unknown visitor) the book was written. Then, the author describes the history of the Burmese student movement from the first students’ strike onwards and puts it into the national and international context. Chapters 6 and 7 exemplify the present state of the students’ involvement by Ba Hein’s personal participation which caused his imprisonment and defend the students’ actions and motives against allegations. The very short chapter 8 contains just some pathetic final words synthesizing theory and practice.

Ba Hein links the maturing of the students’ revolutionary awareness and their growing unity to the economic development in Burma and worldwide. A slow process of building up political awareness and an alteration between calm and intense times was necessary to achieve the full unity between the students and the people suffering most, i.e. the workers and peasants. Now, at the end of 1938, they had overcome the attitude just to look after their own interests which was proved by the rejection of amendments of the University Act in order to show their solidarity with the poor classes.

The involvement of the students’ leaders Ba Swe and Ba Hein are described as a consequence of the achieved consciousness on the side of all students and their cooperation as a separate force with a political movement, the Dobama Asiayone and the organizations of workers and peasants.

Ba Hein’s analysis is in line with a particular concept of “revolution” expressed in the term used in the title of the book, မြန်မာချစ်သီး (ayēi-daw-bon). As Robert Taylor has shown, the term can be traced back to the royal period of Burmese history, literally meaning “story of royal and state affairs” with an emphasis on wars and rebellions. Taken over by Marxist writers and politicians like Thakin Soe (see Working Paper 10), the word denotes a concept based on the belief “that historical forces will ultimately determine the nature and positive accomplishment of the revolution and

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2 The number indicating the beginning of chapter 7 is missing.
3 For an overview about Ba Hein’s personal involvement and its historical background see Working Paper 3, pp. 6, 7.
therefore rulers have only to preside over social change for good results to emerge.”

This concept of revolution can be harmonised with the concept of step-by-step-reform as shown by Ba Hein’s article on the students’ activities to amend the University Act in 1938 (see part III.2 of this paper). This article is a good example of Ba Hein’s literary skill. His metaphor of the sharpening stone and the sword bridging the world of the workers and that of the students is a very good example.

This concept of long term and somehow inevitable change is contrasted by the idea of a sudden and radical change initiated by a righteous ruler. This understanding of revolution is expressed by the term သောလန်း (taw-hlan-yēi) which stands for a revolt of revolutionary elite against an unjust or unable regime.

The latter word was thus used to signify the “Revolutionary Council” led by General Ne Win from 1962 to 1974. In 2007 it surfaced again in the Burmese translation of the term “Saffron Revolution”. On the other hand, the term ရေးလေး (taunlaw) was used to designate the “Revolutionary Party” which tried to establish a socialist alternative to the communist movement in Burma at the end of the Second World War and formed the core of the AFPFL, the leading Burmese party after independence until 1958.

Up to now, neither concept of revolution nor any other political idea could successfully be implemented in Burma/Myanmar. This failure should be seriously considered in any assessment of the country’s recent history and the students’ role in Burmese society and politics in particular. Ba Hein’s theoretical concept of a broad alliance of students and other large sectors of Burmese society can be compared with the actual leading role of students in the protests against various governments since independence culminating in the students’ movement which very much directed the uprising of 1988.

Be Hein’s work may give rise to an investigation into the conceptions of political change prevalent among the students’ activities in independent Burma to better understand the “second struggle for national independence” as Aung San Suu Kyi termed the people’s revolt headed by the students.

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5 Taylor 1986, pp. 84-85.
3. Another Tragic Hero

When Dagon Taya visited Lenin’s mausoleum in Moscow in 1953, he was reminded on Ba Hein and wrote a poem in which he mourned his early death. One may speculate, that in the eyes of the poem’s author this death at the age of 29 prevented Ba Hein to become a Burmese Lenin.\(^7\)

Some months after the publication of his book Ba Hein took part in a meeting, at which according to the official records, the Burmese Communist Party was founded. Besides him, Aung San, Than Tun, Soe, and some others were present at the meeting, which just might have been the beginning of a study group of socialist and communist literature. After the war, he became a member of the Central Committee of the Burmese Communist Party and after the split between into the White Flag (Thakin Than Tun - BCP) and the Red Flag (Thakin Soe – CP(B)) fractions joined Than Tun’s side.\(^8\) His main activity was to work as an editor of the party newspaper *Pyithu Arnar* (People’s Power).

Ba Hein’s death from Malaria coincided with the expulsion of the Communist Party from the AFPFL on the initiative of Aung San. This ending of the unity Ba Hein had envisioned in his early book added a special note to his death which might have inspired Dagon Taya to write his poem.

As Dagon Taya’s article indicates, Ba Hein was and is remembered as a tragic Burmese hero. However, his heroic qualities were quite dissimilar from those of Aung San who was killed seven months after Ba Hein’s decease. The contrast is indicated by Dagon Taya’s titles of the essays he wrote about both men: “Aung San or the Wild One”, and “One with the Padomma lotus smile or Ba Hein” (“Padomma” thereby refers to the lotus flower which has a great symbolic meaning for Buddhists). Aung San was well-known for his unkempt attire, and harsh, uncommunicative manners. Ba Hein was just the opposite, handsome and good looking, smart and friendly.

He represented another type of the “young promising politician” than the man he succeeded on top of the students’ union. Whereas Aung San cultivated his image in line with the belief in his particular individual *kamma* that outwardly was visible in his appearance\(^9\), Ba Hein demonstrated another kind of charisma, which was characterized by empathy\(^10\) and evoked attachment and the

\(^7\) See below IV.1.

\(^8\) According to Dagon Taya, he was “chairman of the Politbureau” (see below p IV.1).


\(^10\) See his description of the condition of the workers in Magwe, see below II.2 and 3, Chapter 6.
desire to protect the bearer of this special charm. In other words, Ba Hein was more of a team player than that of a lonely and decisive leader.

What we know about his life between 1939 and his death underlines these assumptions. He married early, was imprisoned together with many other leaders of the Freedom Bloc in 1940 and stayed in prison until 1942. After that, he did not join the resistance together with Soe or turned himself immediately to another political task, but was the only Thakin who returned home to his wife saying that he would do nothing during the Japanese occupation. According to Thein Pe who met him in Amarapura at the beginning of the Japanese occupation he was terribly frightened and “white with fear” because of the cruelty of the invaders. He later worked as a secretary of Nu in the Foreign Ministry and later joined the Sweat Army, the labor force organized under the Ba Maw government. After the war, he joined the moderatearty of Than Tun, who had served under the Japanese occupation as Forest Minister in Ba Maw’s cabinet and this way he was able to keep a close personal contact with his mentor. His literary ability he could put to use as the editor of the party’s newspaper.

One may conclude from this information that Ba Hein lived according to his belief in the nature of revolution coined not by laying stress on political activism, but a rather patient submission under the laws of history. Ba Hein waited until the goal was reached while pursuing his human duties in the meantime.

At last, the difference to Aung San’s charisma can be detected in the kind of death endured by both. Aung San was killed in order of a personal political rival and thus meeting the fate of a strong kammatic leader. Ba Hein, on the contrary, died from a wide-spread disease at a time where human disputes on ideology and power divided the united front which had strived for achieving independence.

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4. Questions

From these deliberations, some questions can be derived. First, it can and should be asked what concept of “revolution” or any other societal change was and is behind the students’ movements, who try to realize prosperity and freedom in Burma/Myanmar to the present day.

Second, an investigation into the typology of charismatic leaders could be worthwhile. The emergence of charismatic leaders, the last of them being Min Ko Naing, seems to form a pattern of Burmese politics which has not yet been studied thoroughly.

Finally, one may ask if there are any interrelations between the failure of the political concepts applied to Burmese politics from the late colonial period onwards and the many “tragic heroes” impersonating these failures.

5. About this Volume

As mentioned in the beginning, the core of this paper is formed by the English translation of Ba Hein’s booklet and the Burmese original. Section III of this Paper contains information about three short articles of the author published in the Nagani News. In addition to the information given in vol. 3 (The Capitalist World) and vol. 8 (World War and Burma), they complete the overview about Ba Hein’s political writings known up to now. In addition, a short story entitled “Life’s Journey” is included that shows how Be Hein expressed his political ideas in another literary form. As soon as more writings of the author are obtained, they will be added to this volume. The same applies to section IV. Two reminiscences written by people who met with the young revolutionary are presented here. More writings of this kind are highly welcomed as well as appraisals, critiques, and opinions of and on Ba Hein’s book on the students’ movement as well as on his other contributions to the Burmese independence struggle. Contributions of this kind may be combined in a fifth section to this paper, entitled “Essays and Assessments” or so.

Hamburg,
August 2008,
Hans-Bernd Zoellner

16 For an overview of the contents of the News see vol. 1 of the Myanmar Literature Project, pp. 71-86.
II. MATERIAL ON BA HEIN, STUDENTS’ REVOLUTION

1. Kyaw Hoe, Bibliographical Information

Translation: Gunnar Peters

Published on March 1st, 1939 with 50,000 copies at a price of 3 Annas. A small book by student leader Thakin Ba Hein about the Student Revolt. Published by Nagani to inform the whole country. It is written by Thakin Ba Hein while he was incarcerated in Insein Prison. It covers the student revolts beginning from the 1920 Students’ Strike. It is a description of the current situation of the uniting of the student rebellion and the workers’ revolt. It is bold writing and a daring publication despite his arrest on the way to Yenangyaung and his imprisonment in Insein prison. It is a description of the current situation as a decisive period of big changes in the history of Burma. In an outstanding and brave way Ko Ba Hein writes that the students, together with the farmers and workers, will wipe out imperialism.
Ba Hein around 1942 (left) together with Nu (second left), Nu’s children, his wife (second right), and a Japanese journalist
2. Translation: Sandy Saw Myat and Gunnar Peters

Students’ Revolution

written by Ba Hein

Ko Ba Hein was the chairman of All Burma Students Union. He was arrested in Magwe and wrote this booklet while serving his imprisonment in Insein Prison.

This book is published for the funding of All Burma Students Union.
Cost: 3 Pyar.

Publisher: Nagani Books Ltd.
151 Scott Market
Yangon
Students’ Revolution

written by Ba Hein

This book is published by the All Burma Students Union.

Publisher: Nagani Books Ltd.
151 Scott Market
Yangon
Dear patriotic Burmans!

Please do remember to buy the record as a memorial for Martyr Ko Aung Kyaw!

The songs are sung by Khin Khin Yi.

1 record costs 3 Kyats and 4 Pyar.

Recording: British Burma Film Company
Publishing: Nagani Publishing House Co., Ltd.
Nagani Publishing House Co., Ltd. is assigned by All Burma Students’ Union for the publishing.

The profit will be used for the Statue of Martyr Ko Aung Kyaw.
Students’ Revolution

(1)

Last December 24, around 11 a.m. in the morning, I was asked to go to the office of the commander of the jail, because there was a prison visitor for me. When I have arrived at the entrance of the office, I looked for my prison visitor with enthusiasm. However, I have not found any acquaintance of mine, instead a man who sat on a chair beside the jail-commander desk. He was in his early forties, neat and impressively dressed. The man made a friendly greeting smile towards me. I also smiled at him and took a chair to sit in front of him. When I was settled, the man started to talk keenly about the December 21 incident that he witnessed, how the police had beaten the students, and how brave the students were. I had listened to him so eagerly that I have forgotten to ask him the reason why he came to see me in prison.

After having talked for a while, he touched my shoulder to make obvious his satisfactions. Then he continued – “you students have been daring. I have been so impressed. I would not have believed it if I had not witnessed the event. When we were young, far from demonstrating our concerns as such, we did not even read newspapers. Our teachers were not pleased with us for founding a small ‘reading association’. The reason for me to visit you here was to explain your students’ adventures. Then I also told him that the unity of students and their sacrifices for the country were not supposed to be short and contemporary occasions.

Like this man, there would have been many others who would be surprised in comparison to their students’ time. Actually, the students have passed through different periods of time to come to current situations. Present-day students’ spirit has grown during those times. If my visitor had thought about gradual developments of students’ spirit within its own time and experience, people like him would not be so surprised.

My visitor had grown up in the days before 1920 - the time of the All-Burma students’ boycott. At the time, the colonial government started to build English-speaking schools to produce English-speaking civilian officers to serve them, in order to run their ruling mechanism sufficiently and suppress different social classes comprised of poor people, farmers, and workers.

In order to become obedient civil-servants after the schools, since their time at school, pupils were introduced to hard school disciplines, which included cruel punishment. The pupils had to take out their shoes and worship the school’s principle, when he came. The pupils/students could see the
world from their class rooms beyond the walls, as the colonial government believed that trained
civilian servants are obedient. The informative and intellectual books were prohibited. To form a
free students’ union was something that the students could not even dream about.

Since the British colonial government could give employment to their British trained educated
people, students have been satisfied and did not concern about demonstrations or boycotts. People
experienced prosperities and wealth, and needed not to suffer from economical stagnations. At that
time, one said commonly that one could become a Mayor if one passed the seventh standard of
education. Whilst one looked at this time politically, we could conclude that it was the time that the
whole country was sleeping politically.

(2)

However, the world we live in has been changing. As Burma was a part of the world, the
country also followed the changes in the world. In 1914, during the First World War, Burma also
had to fight for its patron Great Britain. Hence, after the First World War, in 1919, Burma also had
to take the consequences of war.

During the World War, the western industries had to produce weapons and ammunition. So
they could not produce sufficient industrial consumer goods anymore, which then became scarce.
Burma was hit more than other nations because it lacked mechanical engineering and had to rely on
foreign production. Now that industrial products were scarce and expensive, this was even more the
case in Burma.

Around 1919-20, Burma’s industrial goods inflated four times their original price. For
example, the then widely used Monkey brand matches climbed from one Pyar and two Lons to two
Pyars and one Lon. At that period, the middle class merchants who handled with cotton materials
suffered the most. Ninety percent of students who attended the English School were the children of
those merchants. Since their parents’ financial situation became tight, the students also came to
realise how unfair were colonial rules. Thus, a revolution spirit emerged to demonstrate eventually
against the unfair rules and regulations of the colonial government.

Although British rulers taught to Burmese students English with the intention to produce
quality slaves, the students could look ahead to the outside world and its progress through the
English language, and, through this, could develop the revolutionary spirit. When students had to
deal with differences of living standard between Burma and the developed modern world, they
started to concern for their country. In the way, the students became nationalistic and wished Burma to become developed and known in the world. They started to understand the politics vaguely.

Political awareness in Burma surfaced. The national bourgeoisie started off to be unsatisfied about the economy which was only dominated by foreign rulers and foreigners. The time was ‘wanthanu’ period of U Htun Shein, U Ba Pe and U Pu. The national bourgeoisie created conflicts between poor people and colonial rulers, as they wished to undertake their share of colonial business men that had been taken from poor farmers by force.

When industrial products became expensive, agricultural raw products also turned to be expensive. Hence the farmers who were depending on them suffered from these consequences. As living expenses surged, the factory workers protested to have their loans raised.

As a result, the whole country went under unrest and the infuriated students expressed their mind by the country-wide students’ boycott in 1921 December, which were based on their disagreement about Yangon University Act.

At that time, the students commenced to have political opinions and mindsets; however, the long struggle for independence still seemed to be in daydreams.

The political visions of the students neither aimed at improving the living standard of ninety percent of poor people nor at making them better-off. That’s why they did not understand to help the Oil Field Strike and the 1927 Railway Workers Strike which shook the whole country and happened at about the same time as the Students Boycott. Consciously or unconsciously, students happened to help the struggle of national bourgeoisies. Therefore one could not say that Diarchy Administration which was granted to the national bourgeoisie in 1923 was not in part due to the support by the students.

However, at that time the Burmese students were confronting the world bravely. One can say that the rebellion attitude was forced to develop. At the present time the students were active because they inherited the rebellion attitude of that time. To conclude: had the previous times not existed, the current situation would not occur.

(3)

The emergence of national schools country-wide were the significance of 1920 boycotts. Those developments led to reforms in Burmese students’ affairs. The immediate advantages of the emergence of national schools were: - because of a reduction in school fees, the children of lower
classes could learn English, the inherently pro-independence minds of students could be systematically trained, and thus, the national schools could produce many broad-minded students who wanted to work for the nation. Nevertheless the national schools were under colonial influence. Intended to produce slaves just like the other schools, they could not be built up towards a national education system as a main source of country development.

Looking at the economic situation of Burma between 1920 and 1934, while recovering from the First World War, Burma suffered very badly from the world economic depression in 1929. Although Burma along with the world had benefited from a more or less stable economy, after 1929 the economy had worsened without any improvement in between.

Every Burmese faced harsh living conditions like they had never experienced before. Top class national bourgeoisies also underwent the same difficulties at their level. Under the burden of debt, middle class farm owners had to hand-in their farms to bigger farm owners who did not really work in the farms. Merchants faced bad trading conditions and were stuck in a rut. Even the big companies from aboard such as Working Brothers Company that had been taken advantages of farmers also went bankrupt. Hence the people who were depending on them got into troubles and encountered starvation.

During 1929 economic stagnation, farmers and workers belonging to the lower class suffered the most. They had been taken advantage by both foreign and national bourgeoisies, and hence they also had to endure the burden which felt upon them.

Compared to the workers and farmers, the farmers got into deeper troubles, because prices of agricultural products had fallen diminishingly to their record in history. For example, from 1929 to 1933, 100 make-taut rice fell to 55 Kyats from 150-155 Kyats. 1930 December ‘Tharyarwady Farmers’ Rebellion’ was the result of the starvation and poverty of the farmers who suffered from the economic catastrophes. The farmers had two choices. They were – first, to die from starvation or second, to rebel against it. Hence they had chosen the second way. However they have been suppressed by the colonial rulers brutally. The colonial rulers have exploited the farmers until they starved and came to the decision to revolt out of choices. Then the colonial rulers killed the farmers who took any available weapons for rising up.

The colonial rulers called themselves a civilised government. However, when they arrested the rebellion leaders, they executed them in public by cutting the bodies into pieces. By that way, they tried to frighten the public. The farmers, who revolted due to their poverty and sufferings and
did not really have a rebellion nature, were, unsurprisingly, repressed in the time-frame of only one month by force of arms by the colonial government.

The hungry workers were manipulated by the colonial rulers. Thus before reaching its aims of revolt, it ended in Indo-Burman worker clashes.

After the ‘farmers revolt’ and ‘the clashes of Indian and Burman workers’ in 1930 and before 1936 ‘students boycott’, the country seemed to be in peace.

It is not because of better economic condition of the country. The 1929 economic crisis continued intensely. The country was in harmonious condition, because the people were in despair for revolt, after the brutal repression of ‘Tharyawady Rebellion’. The time was like in tranquillity before the storm. However, before the storm came, the colonial government managed to divert people’s aggression towards Indo-Burma clashes to achieve stability. People became more focused on the transfer of power to the new administration.

During the described period, the students started to gain a higher level of consciousness compared to the 1920s. The students could not show up impressively as much as in the olden times because their parents’ economic situations were difficult. Before, the parents could afford to send the students to good schools, and after that school, the students could get any slavery work easily. Now the students cannot live comfortably and on top of it, after the school, when they set one foot into the real world, they are confronted with the evil of joblessness.

The students, as they also faced difficulties, started to think deeply about the root cause of their difficulties. They started to see their insecure future that was full of worries under the colonial system. Thus they began to develop into nationalists.

But when we look at the students of that time as a whole, they would not yet take up to fight against colonialism, which had thrown the whole nation into deep poverty. They had not yet understood that only if one would fight together with the workers and peasants, one could destroy the colonialist system. Instead, the hot-blooded nationalist students misunderstood and became fascinated with the big thugs of capitalism, Hitler and Mussolini, and developed fascist tendencies. Strong nationalism often leans towards fascism. This was quite true also in Burma.

At that time, the students’ union appeared as a shiny building at Yangon University. At its beginning, the students’ union did not gain the revolutionary spirit yet, but was still at its soft line.
The university administration allowed the creation of a students’ union at the students’ wish. They had expected to have a small-scale student union, such as a small parliament. The main duty of the students’ union was to train loud and noisy students, and let them exercise their MPs’ skills. They had not expected that the students unions would stand for the rights of the students and become a major force to play in politics.

At first, the students’ union acted as the university superintendents wanted. However, with the time, the students began to revolt due to their dissatisfaction. Hence, the students’ union was slowly conveyed towards the fight for Burma’s independence.

As it was mentioned in chapter three, even though the students started their unrest due to their grievances, the university boycott did not happen before 1936.

Why has it taken such a long time? To answer this question, three facts have to be mentioned.

- First, it is normal that calm periods follow after sudden unrests. There had been the ‘Tharyawaddy Rebellion’ and the clashes between Indians and Burmans.

- Secondly, students from different towns and districts had no opportunities to communicate with each other. They could be in contact only locally. Students’ union or similar associations did not exist everywhere. It was unlike the present time, wherein the main students’ union communicates with the unions country-wide easily, and thus the boycott could be used as a weapon.

- Thirdly, students’ union, the forefront of the students’ union country-wide, did not possess the strong leadership before Ko Nu’s time.

In 1936, when one looks at the demands of students in the ‘students’ boycott’, one can see how far the political opinions of the students and their attitude towards the anti-colonial fight had progressed.

When the student boycott took place in 1936, what was in the mind of every student was: - the duty of the students at present was, not to involve in politics personally, but to demand for changes in the education system that concerned them directly.

However, the demands of the students’ boycott central committee did not even include educational concerns of students from the whole country, but their demands concerned only the rights of elite universities, where only one out of ten students in the country could attend. Accordingly one could see how narrow their demands were. Along with the limited claims the
students made, the demand for changing the university act, which had been popular in 1920, re-emerged.

For all this, the students’ leaders of the boycott committee could not be blamed. The leaders could not do against the standard of thinking of their followers. For example, when Ko Nu mentioned and demanded for the inclusion of a demand concerning the suffering of workers or farmers, not concerning education, there were not many followers behind him.

These assumptions were proven by the decisions of the first conference of Burma’s students. The resolution contained the facts that had to deal with education only, but not with farmers and workers. Far from the facts about farmers, the conference did not even discuss the popular subjects of that time, such as the transfer of administrative power.

To conclude, the second strike generation of students had become politically more aware and had more efficient organizational skills when compared to the first generation. They started to understand that their problems were directly linked with the colonial system and concentrated on anti-colonial fight. Nonetheless, they could not focus on the country-wide cause, but only on their students’ affairs.

1936 was a remarkable year in Burma’s student history. It was the first time the student got united and found the way to start their anti-colonial fight.

In May 1936, Burma Students’ Union was founded by students who attended the All Burma Students’ Conference at Jubilee Hall in Rangoon.

The first chairman was Mr. Rashid who was the second leader of the students’ boycott.

The students, who came from all over Burma, attended that conference and founded students’ unions when they returned to their native places. Like any person clearing his way through the jungle, those comrade students who planted the seeds of student unions all over the country had to face different obstacles. Some students’ unions disappeared right after their foundation and some existed just in name, but could not function. Apart from villages, there were 92 towns and cities in Burma. Nevertheless, at the end of first year term, there were only 34 students’ unions that existed.
As the students were united under the leadership of the Burma Students Union, not only focusing on students’ and educational matters, they started to discuss seriously problems which concerned the whole country.

By the end of Mr Rashid’s period, when the Second All Burma Students’ Conference was held in Mandalay, the representatives of 34 students’ unions discussed not only students’ affairs but began also to discuss about the fight against colonialism and to include the poor people into their discussions. One could see how far the students had progressed and changed by witnessing the facts that the conference was opened by a keynote speech of the Chairman of the Indian National Congress, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, and many workers and harbour porters from Mandalay came to listen.

Since the Mandalay conference, the person who led the students for one year and a half was Ko Aung San (now Thakin). During the time of Ko Aung San, the students accelerated their progress more than two times.

The Students’ Union transformed from narrow representation of students into an organisation which was concerned with all citizens. It was recognised country-wide that the Students’ Union was an important organisation which defended their citizens’ claims and rights. The Students’ Union marked days that concerned the public, like Anti-Administration Day on April 1st, U Wissara Day, National Day, Anti-Colonial Day and Anti-War Day.

The activities of the union, as well as the writings and speeches of union representatives and student leaders began to express the idea that students, workers and farmers have to fight colonialism together.

Students’ leaders met workers and farmers who were in complete troubles to discuss their grievances and concerns. The students announced in public that they would work together with farmers and workers.

Students collected donation money for the farmers in Arakan, Pegu and Hindada who had suffered from a flood two years ago. They supported the workers during the big Oil Field and Syriam Strikes, where the worker comrades clashed heavily with the capitalists. During the Oil Field Strike, the students showed their solidarity by strikes at schools and universities.
The students demonstrated their declared solidarity with farmers and workers by not accepting, in last August’s parliament meeting, the draft of Yangon University Act which had been demanded by the students since the 1920 strike. This refusal had shaken the whole country.

The main reason of the rejection was to express their solidarity with farmers and workers who did not get the approval of their demand for amending the draft Acts concerning farm ownership, intended to relieve farmers and not allowing ownership by persons who did not work the land. By doing so, students surprised and became suddenly visible for those people who were not interested in students’ affairs. In fact, it was a first step for the students in their fight for independence.

In today’s age of scientific education, with countries growing much closer to each other, the Burmese students have begun to make friends with students’ movements from other countries.

In the point of view of the Burmese students, it has become of special importance to unite with the students in different countries in the fight against imperialism, which causes poverty and hunger all around the world and which is the enemy of international progress.

Therefore, the All Burma Students’ Union has contacts with the International Federation of Students’ Unions in Paris, which was founded based on principles of freedom and civilization, and it also sent a Burmese representative to the International Students Conference held by this organization.

If we appreciate this raised level of consciousness of the students, accusations voiced by the imperialists and their lackeys in the recent student revolt, such as that the political parties use the students as their stooges, and the students would in an undisciplined manner get involved in affairs that were none of their business, become just ridiculous.

In order to see the recent student revolt in the right light, I want to recount what happened to myself a short while ago.

While we union executives were occupied with activities for the people’s freedom and with preparing the celebrations of Workers’ and Peasants’ Day by all the students’ unions on the day when workers and peasants would arrive in Rangoon, on December 8th around one o’clock at noon, Thakin Hla Pe (Calcutta) and Thakin Thein Win came to the University’s Students’ Union Building. They informed us that on the same evening at seven o’clock there would be a meeting of the executives of the Central Dobama Asiayone to discuss how to facilitate a quick arrival to
Rangoon of the workers’ march, which had reached Magwe by then. They invited us to attend that meeting in order to talk about how the students could help in that.

The meeting was held at the headquarter of the Central Dobama Asiayone on Pansodan Road in Rangoon just after seven o’clock at night. I and secretary Ko Ba Swe attended as representatives for the students. Among the attendants were Thakin Hteik Tin Kodawgyi, Thakin Than Tun, Thakin Hla Pe, Thakin Hla Maung and others from the Central Executive as well as three or four persons from the people who had volunteered to act as leaders for the oilfield strike. There was also one representative of the workers from the oilfield strike who was said to have arrived in Rangoon that same evening.

At the beginning of the meeting, the representative of the strikers reported at length about the situation of the oilfield workers in Magwe, how the strikers had been held in check by the Magwe police and how the strike leaders had been arrested. After that, every attendant gave his opinion on what would be the best way to ensure that the strike march could continue its way from Magwe to Rangoon as soon as possible. The ensuing arguments took again a lot of time.

The colonial government had been very frightened by the rebelling peasants and workers and the prospect of having them marching on foot to Rangoon to demand their rights. They were afraid that, if the workers and peasants would reach Rangoon and their demands would not be met, the situation might become so serious that their government might be overthrown. Out of this fear, they had thought out different ways to thwart the plan of the workers and peasants to march to Rangoon.

When the government had willingly allowed the workers’ march to leave Yenangyaung, it was not because they wanted to support their cause. It was in fact because they had feared to provoke a second oilfield strike if they had forcefully put down the movement right there in Yenangyaung, as other workers from the town might have stood up and joined it. Another reason why they had not suppressed the strike in Yenangyaung was that they had a huge contingent of military police stationed in Magwe that could easily subdue the workers, as well as the police lock-up.

When the workers had reached Magwe they had gone into the trap and the imperialists showed their power by happily starting to arrest the leaders. They proceeded with their scheme by stopping the workers under section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, and arresting as many of their leaders as possible. The workers wanted to advance, but the government threatened they
would use force and arrest all the leaders if section 144 should be violated. So it came to a stand-off between the two sides.

During the meeting, I and Ko Ba Swe explained what the students could do for the cause of the workers and peasants. We were ready to support them with a country-wide student strike if eventually it would be needed. Also, a great number of students would volunteer to act as leaders of workers’ groups. But the meeting came to the opinion that, for the time being, no immediate and direct action by the students was needed. It was regarded as sufficient to assume that the country’s students and workers were united.

After a lengthy discussion about the workers’ march, an action plan was drawn up. Two leaders, Thakin Htein Win and Thakin Soe, were chosen to join the leader Thakin Pe Than, who had already arrived in Magwe. They were also to bring documents with the action plan and instructions to the strikers. As a backup, in case the two would be arrested before they reached the strikers, me and Ko Ba Swe were chosen to deliver the papers by another way.

We were chosen because we had to go to Yenangyaung for the national school strike, which was not over yet, and could easily stop on the way.

In the same night, Thakin Soe and Thakin Htein Win left with the train to Prome, while I and Ko Ba Swe took the Mandalay Mail train in the direction of Magwe.

When we reached Magwe the next afternoon, we went to Meldee Meditation Center, where the workers had their camp, and delivered the documents. As the bus continuing to Yenangyaung paused in Magwe for more than an hour, there was enough time to talk to the workers personally.

When we saw the more than 800 workers from afar, camping like a big, disciplined community under that iron sheet roofed Tanzaung1 which provided absolutely no shelter - some were sleeping on bamboo mats, some were reading, others were talking -, we felt touched at heart.

The only personal things they had brought with them were a rough blanket, a shoulder bag and a drinking bottle each. We couldn’t imagine how they could sleep in the terrible cold of the winter season, which would have discouraged anybody who has lived in Upper Burma.

We asked a worker nearby about what they ate. He said they had only one meal a day, rice and a little condiment of fried fish paste. Sometimes they didn’t even have enough rice. The

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1 A four-cornered edifice with a graduated roof built as an appendage to a pagoda [translator’s note].
government thought that they would give up and go home when all their provisions were exhausted and they would have to go hungry. That’s why they held them here under section 144, they wanted to starve them. But now that we are here, we must go on, he said. One way or the other, they would reach Rangoon, and if they had to die under the shooting of the police, he told us with pride and dedication.

For anybody in such a bad situation, being denied the very basics of a humane life, not finding a job although one desperately wanted to work, it was no wonder that one’s own life became worthless, and that one would be ready to do whatever had to be done, regardless of the dangers.

Everybody capable of human feelings had to sympathize with those workers who had, disregarding the hardships, come more than 300 miles on foot in order to peacefully demand their simple human rights. However, the colonial government only made its evil character more evident by its groundless and unjust oppression. This also serves to incite the people to want to fight and destroy this unjust imperialist regime as quickly as possible.

While we were talking with the workers, mounted military police appeared on the main road outside the meditation center and not very far behind about 15 ordinary policemen came walking with long batons.

When I looked at Ko Ba Swe, our glances met, as he was looking at me too. Then I told Thakin Pe Than, who was nearby, that we would fight together with them to break the blocking of the workers and we would continue to Yenangyaung only when the workers would have left Magwe. Shortly afterwards, Thakin Htein Win and Thakin Soe arrived and the five of us discussed further actions. In order to finish the affair if possible in a peaceful manner, we planned to meet the deputy commissioner. During the next two days we contacted him in person and by letters to discuss the workers march.

But when we realized that the deputy commissioner was deceiving us to stall the issue, we decided to stop talking to him and instead prepared to break section 144 and continue the march. While we had treated him with due respect, the deputy commissioner had tricked us and had arrest warrants prepared for us in advance.

The march was planned to leave in the morning of December 12, but we five didn’t get to see the break of day as free men. On the evening before, around 7 o’clock, we were brought into custody at Magwe police station.
About the events that unfolded after our arrest, when a great number of students, male and female, were hurt and injured by the beating of the police, up to the time of the death of martyr Ko Aung Kyaw, people who were outside then will know more than I do.

Therefore, I only want to mention a few points regarding the present student revolt that need clarification. These are:

1) The students started the unrest only because me and Ko Ba Swe had been arrested.

2) The students meddle in political affairs that are none of their business.

3) Political activists use the students as their stooges

4) The students are associated with the Thakins.

1) The view that the students revolted only because me and Ko Ba Swe had been arrested, or otherwise they would not have interrupted their studies, is only partly true.

As I have written above, the students didn’t want to limit their life to the four walls of the classroom anymore like in the past and became interested also in other things beside their books. They had risen to become an important part of the people and hence became interested in all problems that concerned the people.

So as they are not born into a race called students, they understand that when their families, their own blood and their fellow-countrymen are suffering, they are suffering too. And when the people in their suffering fight back, they will have to join them in their fight. Therefore, now, in a time in which the country is facing one disaster after another, also the students don’t want to stay quiet and are eagerly looking for ways to help the country.

The students had been ready for action, and our arrest for the sake of the people, the poor, and the workers, had given them the occasion to stand up. If we would not have been arrested, the present student revolt would not have happened now, it might have happened at another time, but it would have happened sooner or later anyway. Our arrest was only the ignition of a ticking time bomb.

I will show clear evidence that this student revolt did not depend on our arrest.

After the five of us had been arrested, on December 14th, at around nine o’clock in the morning, the Taxation Minister U Ba Oo called us from Rangoon at Magwe Prison and asked what had happened to the two of us in Magwe. When I told him the same as I have described above, the
minister said: “There is a cabinet meeting now. We will consider your case. As you have not gone there as leaders, you will be released. I will get back to you at ten o’clock.” From then until when we reached Insein Prison we have not heard from him.

Why the cabinet meeting has not released us? It was not mainly because of us that the students protested. The students would not have stopped their protest even if we would have been released. They didn’t release us because they knew, if they would have done so, the protests would only have increased.

The students went on strike in order to have a number of articles of law repealed which were used to suppress the peasants and workers and with them the whole country. Did the students revolt to fight for the freedom of the people only after we two had been arrested? Not at all. The final part of the declaration (to the country) of the students assembly, held last November 3rd, 4th and 5th, on the draft of the University Act, states very clearly that the students all over the country would stand up to demand the people’s freedom. It is evident that with their protests the students only honored the decision of the Students Assembly.

2) It is one of the imperialists’ dirty habits to intimidate the students by saying that politics is a frightening and loathsome thing. Often we also hear those lackeys of the imperialists, who live of their leftovers, vaguely suggesting that students are not concerned by politics. This fear of the imperialists that the students enter into politics shows what an important role the students have come to play in the abolishment of imperialism.

If we look at the history of the students’ movement, at first, the imperialists kept the students so suppressed that they could not get on their feet and hardly raise their heads. Second, when the students started to stage protests, it was said that they were free to do so, but it had to be restricted to educational affairs; they were not allowed to get involved in politics. Meaning, the imperialists went a step backward, the students advanced one step. Next they will maybe say the students can do politics, but they should not get involved in a fight against imperialism. But in reality they will not be able to talk like that, the reason being that at that time they will not be in this world anymore.

The students will fight shoulder on shoulder with the poor and the peasants on the battlefield of freedom for building a new life, where every Burman can live in human dignity. The present activities are a preparation for that time. By doing so, the imperialists and their lackeys will not only say students get involved in politics, they will be happy that they can say the students are murderers.
3) The ridiculous allegation that the political parties abuse the students as their stooges have not been brought forward for the first time now. The students are already familiar with such accusations from the time when the draft university act was rejected.

The places where such accusations appear are the Rangoon Gazette, the mouthpiece of the imperialists, and the Bandoola Newspaper, the mouthpiece of their lackeys, the coalition government. In the affair of the draft university act this had to be explained in length, so that everybody would understand. But in the present affair it is very clear to everybody who has a brain to think. The students had started to defy the authorities by breaking the rules that oppress the people’s freedom before any political party or any group had given them such an idea. That those newspapers are still up to now writing such things, which at first might have been flattering for the students, is an insult to the people. Actually it had started already during the Galon movement that, imperceptibly, while everybody was dizzy with the repercussions from the students’ revolt, the defiance towards the authorities had reached the battlefield.

4) Again they say that the students are associated with the Thakins, which is true. The students are associated with the Thakins. But ‘associated’ does not mean that the Students Union and the Dobama Asiayone have properly united at a conference drawing up a legal framework. In accordance with the statutes of the union, the union is, up to this time, an independent organization that is not subordinate to any political party.

The Union and the Dobama Asiayone have the same main aim and policy. The Union has the conviction that only when we fight together with the poor and peasants, imperialism can be destroyed. That is the same for the Dobama Asiayone. The Union aims to establish a better world\(^2\), where every Bamar can live with human dignity. The same for the Dobama Asiayone. Therefore it is unavoidable that both will unite in their work.

The former chairman of the Students’ Union, Ko Aung San, has now, as Thakin Aung San, joined the Dobama Asiayone. I foresee that others will follow in Ko Aung San’s foot steps in the future and will flock to join the Dobama Asiayone.

(8)

Oh, imperialism,

\(^2\) *Lawki Nibban* (lit. ‘paradise on earth’)

29
You are torturing all the human beings in the whole world by causing them deepest poverty and utmost starvation. You are cutting the sprouts of the world’s civilization. Today we students, together with the peasants and workers whom you are maltreating at your last gasp, are preparing to destroy you and bury you once and for all. With your extermination we will rebuild the world as a livable place.

We, the unions, announce openly that we will wipe you out. Step forward, if you dare, and try to destroy the unions!
Appendix

Announcement of the All Burma Students’ Union regarding their position on the draft of Yangon University Act and the coalition government.

Students’ Declaration

In accordance with the rules passed by the Third All Burma Student’s Conference held in Bassein on April 25, 1938, the First All Burma Students’ Parliament (Hluttaw), consisting of representatives from the Yangon University Union and all other unions, herewith issues its declaration in connection with the above affairs.

As the coalition government has neither agreed with the joint statement of the executive committees of the All Burma Students’ Union* and the University Union from September 4th, nor with the explanation by Chairman Ko Aung San in English and Burmese** issued afterwards, this Students’ Parliament reaffirms its position to reject the draft of the University Act. Before we explain this, there is one issue that we want to address in the following.

It is known that we and certain people we don’t want to name here have several differences in opinions and beliefs. For instance, there are different claims, such as we have a common cause with the opposition groups in the Hluttaw, or it was done to relieve the coalition government, or it was done irresponsibly [without a mandate] by the student leaders, (especially) by Ko Aung San.

We don’t want to blame anybody on the part of those who don’t really know the matter, also because Ko Aung San’s statements and actions often clearly express his own beliefs. But we cannot have considerations anymore for the extreme allegations, beliefs and transgressions by those with personal or party connections.

* This joint statement has been published in Burmese in the Thuria and Light of Burma newspapers on September 5.
** The Burmese paper was read at a special meeting of Rangoon University Students Union on September 6, 1938. It has also been published in the Thuria newspaper and printed and widely distributed. The English text has been sent to the English language newspapers and appeared in the Rangoon Gazette and New Burma.
1) Before we come to the above mentioned affairs, there is one fact which everybody needs to understand, a fact that we executives and functionaries have repeatedly spoken and written about. This fact is our principle of impartiality, regardless of race, party or individual.∗∗∗ This is our true belief, in accord with the philosophy and policy of the organization, also with regards to the issue discussed here. That there have been connections made with the Indian-Bamar violence, is regrettable. Nonetheless, we will not abandon our principles and policies which we believe in. As the Indian-Bamar riots have happened so recently, and are still very fresh in our minds, and because in these unsettled times, human nature can be strange, we must wait until logic returns, and only then the true meaning of our words and actions will be evident. With time, as our program develops, our aims, efforts and successes will reappear like a moon from behind the clouds, and then, the true meaning and essence of our students’ movement will be shown prominently and clearly. In the meantime, although we may not be able to do as much as we want because of human weaknesses, which in historical retrospect will appear irrelevant, our philosophy shall continue to guide our actions and words.

On the Coalition Government

As said above, we objectively, openly and loudly speak out our dislike of the coalition government. Whether a single member of the government or the government as a whole will be dismissed or not, because of the favour or dislike of another party or an individual, is not our concern.∗ As we have

*** In an apology letter by the two student executive bodies addressed to national members of the upper and the lower house from September 12 they say: “We do not, for a moment wish to create any false impression upon you that we are up against any individuals or race. But we do feel that unless you combine yourselves together to meet the present critical situation, it will go from bad to worse” [original citation in English]

From a statement by Chairman Ko Aung San in Burmese representing the two executive bodies: “Thus, in the recent incidents, we are neither on the Indian side nor is there any ground for being enraged on the Burmese side, instead one has to realise the apparent basic facts.”

In a directive to upcountry representatives on political factions and the position of the students, Ko Aung San has said: “It should be explained that we are not against any political party or individuals.”

∗ From a letter sent to the political analyst of the Rangoon Gazette from September 8 (which was not published): “We were compelled to come to this sudden decision by some unhappy incidents in the riot that has brewed up once more. Those incidents indicate too woefully the extreme weakness of the present government which has become very unpopular with the people. In the circumstances we have no other option than urge the nationalist MPs to strive to form a new Government with or without the same personal as the care may be, which has the support of the nationalist MPs.” [original citation in English]
repeatedly said, the path taken is not in reality what we want but we have had to take it because of unavoidable circumstances. What are those circumstances?

At that time, it has been said in a paper by our Chairman: “The coalition government has done nothing but harm to the country in all fields, in workers’ affairs, in peasants’ affairs, and in education.” Later, in the joint and separate statements of our leaders, we have informed the country of the failings and serious mistakes of the government. It is two and a half years now that the coalition government has been formed. In this time, the peasants and workers have been protesting and rebelling a lot. During the past year, the Oilfield workers problem came up again with formerly unseen severity. In this matter, the government seemed not only not be able to act effectively, there has not even been the tiniest word with a view to the future and on plans to award some benefit to those workers. Up to now, one has heard nothing of plans of the government to either amend the prevailing laws pertaining to the workers, nor to present a draft for an appropriate new law.

On the other hand, everybody knows about the situation of the peasants, the heavy debt of the villages, and the problem of the landless. All this piles up, so that the existing land system is putting a lot of pressure on poor farmers. The government seems to be aware that they should come up with a systematic solution for this problem (such as drafting a Cultivatable Land transfer Act or a Ownership and Rights pertaining to Farmland Act.) But up to now nothing has happened yet. Apart from that, the farmers are additionally plagued by repeated heavy rains, floods and storms. And although their problems are getting worse and worse with the time, the government itself can do nothing and it doesn’t want to support the actions of other parliamentarians either.

Likewise in education. Apart from spending more money on education than last year, and the issue of the university law draft, there was hardly any other mentioning by the current government on its plans regarding education. Moreover, the government doesn’t seem to stop educational bureaucrats from, silently or loudly, suppressing good actions by the students. Apart from that, they have given educational bureaucrats authority to do whatever they want in drafting the Burma Primary Education Law.

Also in the handling of the recent Bamar-Indian riots, a lot of blame has to be put on the government. While the newspapers had written for many days in advance about the causes leading

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In a special meeting of the University Students’ Union on September 6, Ko Aung San said: “The government has either to be changed or be dismissed. There are only these two options.”

“The government has failed the country in several respects, whether in matters of labour or peasantry or education.”

[original citation in English]
to the incidents, the government has done nothing effective to prevent it. It reacted only afterwards, half-heartedly and disgracefully, by suppressing the newspapers in a way that was out of proportions, and by arresting a great number of people who had nothing to do with the ill-treatment of so many people in the country which had actually been a result of bad leadership in the police force. The government cannot be said to be innocent here. Thus, the coalition government is neither able to move forward nor backward. When the Hluttaw asked whether the university law would be finished by August, the prime minister gave a noncommittal answer because he didn’t trust his own government.

Opposing all this, we have supported the rejection of the University Act in the Hluttaw in August. Although the situation has not improved a bit up to now, it cannot be said that the government has made any changes for the better. The suppression of the freedom of the people is still going on. This suppression has to be put to an end soon. Also a plan is needed to improve the situation of the farmers and workers. We are still waiting to see whether the government will overcome its sluggishness and start to act in a way that will be tangible for the people or not.

The issue of the draft of the University Act

To summarize, if the current serious situation cannot be changed dramatically and in due time, we will have to move on beyond the issue of the University Act draft.’ The Students’ Hluttaw has authorized the executive of the All Burma Students’ Union to take all necessary and appropriate steps in this matter. In order to do away with the suppression of the people, this Hluttaw also has decided and declares herewith that we will stand up in protest all over the country to give voice to our demands.

*Chairman Ko Aung San has made clear the positions of the students to the draft law in a letter addressed to the Rangoon Gazette from September 9, 1938 (which was not published):

“The strike may arise, when we choose to ask for the conditions obtaining in Burma against which we have complained. [sic] [original citation in English]
ပညာရေးသတင်းစာ

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ဗျူဟာစိုးစံမှုကြောင့် အသစ်တွေအဖြစ် ပေါ်ထွန်းလာပါသော
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Ba Hein Student’s Revolution
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(ဗ) စိုးစွဲသောအတွက် သင်တန်းပြုစုသော တိုင်းရင်းမှစေ သောက်ရုပ်ဖောဖောရ်ကို ထုတ်ဖော်ပြီးနောက် ထုတ်ဖော်သောက်ရုပ်ဖောဖောရ်ကို သင်တန်းပြုစုသော တိုင်းရင်းမှစေ သောက်ရုပ်ဖောဖောရ်ကို ထုတ်ဖော်ပြီးနောက် ထုတ်ဖော်သောက်ရုပ်ဖောဖောရ်ကို သင်တန်းပြုစုသော တိုင်းရင်းမှစေ သောက်ရုပ်ဖောဖောရ်ကို ထုတ်ဖော်ပြီးနောက် ထုတ်ဖော်
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(ဗ)  အောက်ပါသော အချက်များအား ရှိသောအချက်များအား ထားစေရန် သို့မဟုတ် အမြဲတမ်း စိတ်ချစ်ချုံးသည် ပေးလျှင် အကြဵများကို သဘောမှ ပြချက် ထားစေရန် အမြဲတမ်း စိတ်ချစ်ချုံးသည် ပေးလျှင် အကြဵများကို သဘောမှ ပြချက် ထားစေရန် အမြဲတမ်း စိတ်ချစ်ချုံးသည် ပေးလျှင် အကြဵများကို သဘောမှ ပြချက် ထားစေရန် အမြဲတမ်း စိတ်ချစ်ချုံးသည် ပေးလျှင် အကြဵများကို သဘောမှ ပြချက် ထားစေရန် အမြဲတမ်း စိတ်ချစ်ချုံးသည် ပေးလျှင် အကြဵများကို သဘောမှ ပြချက် ထားစေရန် အမြဲတမ်း စိတ်ချစ်ချုံးသည် ပေးလျှင် အကြဵများကို သဘောမှ ပြချက် ထားစေရန် အမြဲတမ်း စိတ်ချစ်ချုံးသည် ပေးလျှင် အကြဵများကို သဘောမှ ပြချက် ထားစေရန် အမြဲတမ်း စိတ်ချစ်ချုံးသည် ပေးလျှင် အကြဵများကို သဘောမှ ပြချက် ထားစေရန် အမြဲတမ်း စိတ်ချစ်ချုံးသည် ပေးလျှင် အကြဵများကို သဘောမှ ပြချက် ထားစေရန် အမြဲတမ်း စိတ်ချစ်ချုံးသည် ပေးလျှင် အကြဵများကို သgable

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သဒ္ဒါကို အနောက် ရောင်းချင်ရန် အားလုံးတစ်မျိုးသော အချက်အလက်များဖြင့် ကူးယူထားသည်။ သဒ္ဒါကို အနောက် ရောင်းချင်ရန် အားလုံးတစ်မျိုးသော အချက်အလက်များဖြင့် ကူးယူထားသည်။

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[Text in Burmese]

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"We do not, for a moment wish to create any false impression upon you that we are up against any individuals or race. But we do feel that unless you combine yourselves together to meet the present critical situation, it will go from bad to worse.

"We should indicate that this is a class struggle. This is a struggle between the privileged and the people. It should be explained that we are not against any political party or individuals,
We were compelled to come to this sudden decision by some unhappy incidents. The present government, which has become very unpopular with the people, is in a desperate state. The nationalist members must strive to form a new government with or without the same personal as the care, which has the support of the nationalist members.
III. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL 1: FURTHER WRITINGS OF BA HEIN

1. Maung Maung Myint Than, Brief Summary of Ba Hein’s Review of “British Imperialism and India” written by Joan Beauchamp

This review article published in the Nagani News refers to a book written by Joan Beauchamp and published by Martin Lawrence Company in 1935. It was reviewed by one of the critics of Myanmar, Ba Hein. The critic made his comments on this book very boldly. What he said in his article is the following clear assessment of the nature of imperialism:

“If we make a study of the overall world history, there are only three main causes for the appearance of imperialism: First, the requirement of the market to sell out the surplus commodities produced by industries of the administrator country; second, the imperialists’ wants to monopolize the region which can make available the natural resources and raw materials; and third, the desire to apply the surplus amount of capital to create profit”.

Consequently, the critic mentioned that the imperialists made tricks and depicted their wrong achievements as right activities by creating a social and political camouflage to suppress the majority of the people by giving reasons like they are taming the uncivilized people and providing aid for the economic and cultural development of the undeveloped region.

The critic said that the poverty of the majority of the people who are peasants and workers are very same in the two countries, India [including Burma] and Britain. Thus, imperialism was not created by a nation but by the practice of the political economic system. Therefore, the critic stated that it has to fight against “imperialism” not against British people in order to destroy poverty. He means that the peasants and workers of Britain and India have to be united to execute the revolution against imperialism.

He said again that regional administrators (Maha rajas), as well as leaders of tribes are only the puppets of the imperialists and that those persons could not do anything for the advantages of the people.

He criticized as well that the national leaders, like Mahatama Gandhi are not in good position and that those leaders could not create the independence of the nations. He concluded his article by agitating that “the independence can be created only by the workers who have strong moral and they need the help of the workers from Britain”.

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1 Nagani News Vol. 1, 3 (June 1938): pp. 28-29. Ba Hein’s review was reprinted from the Myo Nyunt Magazine.
2. Ba Hein, My Answer

Translation: Maung Maung Myint Than

The rain which is falling loudly on the brick-tile has suddenly stopped. After a while, the dim light of the moonshine rises behind the clouds which are moving toward the northern part blown by the wind and portrays the big single “Santol tree” (Tagalog) which is standing openly within the lawn which is situated beside the Thaton Hall.

As the time is about one o’clock after midnight, it has bee long time that the room-lights are down and some small hallway-bulbs are twinkling unevenly.

The noises “Gyauk Gyauk….” of the foot-steps of someone who is wearing wooden-slippers walking through the corridor between Bago Hall and Pinya Hall sounds across the lawn and echoes toward the Thaton Hall.

Although I am facing toward the lawn while I am seated on the easy-chair outside of the room, my mind is going back through over “Santol tree” about the movements which I have been wondering in down-town Yangon for all day-time today. The small building which is the “Lower House of Representatives” is laid down in prone position in the middle of the blank-square besides the big secretariat building. At Scott Market’s “Red Dragon” (Nagani) Book shop, Ko Gyi Nu is having a chat with a smile together with Ko Tun Aye and Ko Thein Pe. Ko Thein Pe hits me with his elbow, makes a glance and said that “Hey guys, we would better fire”. He supports me by a mutually understood meaning related to the draft amendment of the University Act which is submitted to the Parliament by the government this August.

All the students throughout Burma have applied the “Boycott-weapon” as instrument to amend the very bad “University Act” once drafted in 1920 and the next time in 1936. Some students were kicked out from the university by the negative impact of the “University Act”. Some students were afraid to come back as they were grudged by the teachers. The status of some students dropped to jobless people because the government took action at that time against such kind of people by making use of criminal code 109 and 110 and charges them as vagabonds as they were disinherit by the parents after they disobeyed their parents and practiced boycot. There are many

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1 Nagani News vol. 1, No. 6 (September 1938): 21-23.
2 Thaton Hall is one of the students’ dormitories on Yangon’s University campus. The dormitories were named after cities of Burma (editor’s note).
3 Today: Bogyoke Aung San Market (editor’s note).
4 “Big brother Nu”, former prime minister of Myanmar (translator’s note).
5 It means that Ko Thein Pe, Ko Tun Aye and may be some people are going to shoot the question-words and some opinions to Ko Gyi Nu translator’s note).
students who failed the examination oppressed by the boycott and there is a huge amount of students who had to give up the student-life when they failed the examination. Some people who died from suffering disability were found at the towns in upper Burma like Pyay\(^6\) and Mandalay.

The Act which has been rejected in dissatisfaction and caused such sacrifices has arrived to the “House of Parliament” in this August disguised as a new born draft act. In this draft act there are some stipulations acceptable to the students as well as some others being unacceptable. Five amendments have been submitted to Parliament to change some stipulations which could not be accepted.

The students had to try hard in multiple ways to get the final approval of the drafted act by the parliament in August including the amendments drawn up by the students. The students had to hold special conferences. Their wishes and desires were expressed in meetings with senior senators, junior senators, party-leaders, party-fellows, the chief of the secretariat, the prime minister and including the secretaries of the parliament who are getting to attend the meetings of the Upper and Lower Houses. We, the students could not sleep and eat well due to the oppression of this act. Not only we could not attend the classes but also could not even look at the university.

The students made sacrifice to amend the act. They had to receive such a kind of poverty and struggle in return. Well, suppose the all wishes and desires of the students were fulfilled, the existing draft act was approved including the amendments of the students by the parliament. What kind of advantage could be obtained for the students and the whole Burmese nation?

The students are always oppressed by the big devil named joblessness day by night. 99 students out of 110 will be faced with disaster as soon as they leave the university. The students throughout Burma are holding strikes and shouting that “We no need this education system, give us ‘Thakin education’\(^7\)” as they do not like the existing education system at all. Nearly every school is on fire by boycott. If we look at the whole of Burma, we might see that the people of the countryside, the peasants, and the workers are suffering by being other people’s slaves and from all kinds of strains like starving, unhealthy and homeless status and the multi kinds of disadvantages which collectively fall upon them and are executed by fire, floods, storm, the government, capitalists and the landlords. Within this year there are boycotts at Yenanchaung and Thanlyn by the oil-field workers. In the Hinthada\(^8\) region there was a flood and the poor people went into the status

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\(^6\) Prome (translator’s note).
\(^7\) Master education (translator’s note).
\(^8\) Western spelling: Henzada (editor’s note).
of homeless people as well as they lost the lives of their relatives. The government having assorted a special way of thinking has developed a distinction between “Burman-slaves” and “Indian-slaves”.

Can the jobless problem be solved by the new act which occurred through the forceful efforts of the students as even the bones are broken and the blood has gone? It cannot. Can “the master education” be delivered? It cannot. Can the students’ boycott be stopped? It cannot. Can all kinds of trouble which are falling upon all poor be recovered? It cannot. The brief answer is that the act will not be able to solve any of the problems which the Burmese people are facing currently.

If so, are the efforts made by the students useless? Is it of no value at all what the students attempted through their sacrifice and struggle?

I was thinking a rather long time to give the answers to above mentioned questions. Then, I was dreaming about Ko Lu Yin, the Kamayut villager who wearily was sharpening his sword on the stone the day before yesterday although a lot of sweat was falling from his face. He did not smooth the surface of the sharpening stone, in fact, his destination was to sharpen his sword and make it shining. He will think of killing his enemy and the persons who are of no good character and cause harm to human society. The sharpening stone is not his weapon. The sword which he is sharpening on the stone is his real weapon.

The existing University Act also is not the sword; it is only a sharpening-stone. The real sword is the students. The students have become hot-blooded by the University Act. The students have become the persons with wide political exposure. The students have been reinforced to fight against imperialism.

Even though the University Act which is the sharpening stone cannot destroy the problems of the Burmese people, the students who can be regarded as the sword will cut and kill all kinds of disadvantages and damages which are the harms that disable Burmese people and make them the slaves of others.

Amending and revolutionary changes are different matters normally but they are interchanging between each other. The integration of small amendments will make a true revolution. The workers hold a strike to raise their salaries and reduce their working-hours. If the strike has a high potential, the workers will get more salary and a reduction of working-hours. Nevertheless, this success is only temporary. The daily trouble of the workers will not expire as

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9 Reference to the Burman-Muslim riots in July and August 1938.
10 Kamayut is a part of Yangon near the campus of the university where some factories were situated. Thein Pe used this location in his novels on the student strike of 1936 (see Working Paper 4 of this series; editor’s note).
long as they can not be freed from the capitalist-field.\textsuperscript{11} It is destined to accomplish the final rooting out of imperialism by boycott with the integration of the force of the workers.

Therefore, if I am going to give the answers for the above mentioned questions, it the efforts of the students are not useless. Their sacrifice and struggle are not non-valuable.

By the amendment of the University Act which has been submitted currently for amendment, the coming newly born university will give more opportunities than the existing situation and multiplies the chances of the students who are going to study here to implement the independence of Burma.

We, the students, only made just one-step forward to the independence goal by trying-hard and having sacrificed and taken risks like this.

\textsuperscript{11} The word „field“ is used in the same sense as in the term magnetic field (translator’s note).
3. Maung Maung Myint Than, Review of Ba Hein’s Article: A Political Party That Made the World Frighten

This article was written by “Maung Ba Hein”, a critic. In fact, he wrote about the “Russia Communist Party” of the Soviet Union. The article is political issue and starts with the big conference which was holding at London participated by the exiles of the Russia. The name of that conference was “the second annual meeting of the Russian Workers Association. The writer said, most of the people at that conference were revolutionists who became exiles by the suppression by the monarch of “Zar the King” in the year about 1903. The conference is remarkable as it as presided over by the two well-known people, “Lenin” and “Trotsky”.

The two political parties, "Bolshivit" and "Minshivit" (in Russian Language) were born by this conference. "Lenin" was the leader of the "Bolshivit Party" and the "Minshivit Party" was headed by "Trotsky" as party leader. The "Bolshivits" were politically and morally stronger than the "Minshivits". Thus, the "Bolshivits" could fight against "the King Zar" by the strong revolution during the 1903-1917. After that, "the Bolshivits" were able to seize the government power of the Russia in 1917. This event made the world to be frightened because the capitalists were made assault (were beaten) by the basic strata, the peasants and the workers.

The Bolshevik Party changed its name into "Communist Party" in 1918 after seizing government power. The highest authority of the "Soviet Communist Party" was the "Congress of the all Soviet Unions". The Central Communist Party" established the two sub-organizations, the "Politbureau" for party politics and the "Org Bureau" for organizational missions. There were five secretaries in Soviet Communist Party and the world well-known person Stalin was the first "Secretary General" among them.

The Communist Party was formed up with tight discipline. The Administrative Commission was appointed by the Congress and this commission supervised the various levels of the sub-organizations of the party as well as all party members. "Communist Party" mentioned that various levels of the sub-organizations of the party were formed up by Democracy -practices. The Democracy practices which had been applied by the Russian Communist Party were as follows: (Ba Hein explained the Soviet Democracy by just only in these words).

1. The "Main Committee" as well as small groups of the party must be elected.
2. The various levels of the committees have to report the higher authority according to the activities what they have done for the party.
3. The members of the party have to be existed abiding by the party disciplines and the minority must agree the majority's desire.

4. The small groups which were lower level and all members of the party must strictly obey the decisions of the higher committees.

The author "Ba Hein" stated that even though the Russian population in that period was 170 million in total, there were only 2 million of Communist Party members because the party disciplines were very strict and strong as steel. It was very difficult to become a member of the Communist Party and under mentioned procedures had to be applied:

a. Any person whom wanted to be a Communist Party member must be existed first under the small group which was called "the organization formed up with the people who give respects to the party".

b. Pre-membership period was depended on the status of the person mention as below:
   "the factory workers who were five years continuously working in the factory must be existed one year under the supervision of the small group as mentioned in above sub-para (a) and the other people such as villagers and rangers must be existed for two years under supervision of same group mentioned above.

c. The party-instructors gave lecture about "Leninism" and the "current affairs" to these members. As well as, the members had to participate at the reading seminar occasionally.

The article was concluded by expressing about "Party cleansing Meeting". Each and every party member had to express how they became party member as well as there was a program of questions and answers among members in this meeting. When any party member did not follow the rules and regulations of the party there would be by demotion to the status of pre-membership, existing again in "the organization formed up with the people who give respects to the party".

Sterlin said that "the revolution could not be achieved by the velvet hand". Therefore, anyone who was going to betray the communist party might have the heaviest punishment.
4. Ba Hein, Life’s Journey

Translation: Ye Nyunt

Ba Myint withdrew the paint-brush hovering over the still unfinished picture, and soaked it in the glass of water on the table next to him.

Having concentrated on the one-foot-square painting for a long time, his eyes became lethargic and strained, and suddenly blurry. Then he, seated on a stool, straightened his back. He looked across the painting towards the back window where breezes swept by, and then, his eyes darted to the calendar on the wall fluttering in the wind. On an impulse, he looked back over his shoulder to his friend, Thein Lwin, who was sleeping, lying on his side, in the drawing room, with his head towards the window.

The upper half of Thein Lwin’s face was lit by the bluish beams of light that spilt through the window. Overcome by physical exhaustion and mental stress on consecutive days for a certain period, he had lost his original feature slightly, his complexion a little sallow. The deep-set eyes had dark brown eyelids, streaked with long, dry strands of hair falling over the forehead.

Upset by his friend’s suffering, he returned his look to the painting, and picked the paint-brush half sunk in the glass to resume his work. On that instant, he heard his friend stir in the bed, and set the paint-brush down again. Looking back, he saw Thein Lwin sit up, stretching out both legs, and tying up his loose longyi.

Smiling at him, Ba Myint asked, “Had a good sleep?”

Thein Lwin looked up at him while rubbing both eyes with one hand.

Ba Myint asked him again, “How’re you feeling now?”

“Oh, I’m well. I’m much better than yesterday. It seems I’ve regained strength.” Thein Lwin answered, stretching the clasped hands upwards and straightening the body.

Ba Myint was much satisfied with his friend’s response that he felt comfortable again.

“Well, you’re going to recover completely by tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. The problem is you feel small easily. You’ve fallen ill because of your weak mind, as the saying goes, ‘Mental stress debilitates the body.’ Just cheer up, dismissing the thoughts of disappointment! It was not only you who lost the job. If you’re dismissed there’ll be another job. Who has decreed that we’ll be staying disappointed all the time until we die? We can be well off just at one stroke of luck. And then, I’ve repeatedly fold you not to be hesitant to seek my help. If things go well for me, it is

1 Dagon Magazine. 40, University Section: pp. 313-320
same to you. I’m happy that I can help you. Let’s stay happy whether we are full or starving.” Thus, Ba Myint preached a long sermon, grinning. This made Thein Lwin feel comfortable and smile a smile of relief.

In a minute, memories of his distress crossed his mind and his face turned dismal.

“Friend, I tried to rally myself, feeling that I’m a man. But I lost the job that I had intended to rely on for my entire life. No sooner had I lost the job, then I heard the news that my old mother without any relative in the rural area had died. The spirit I had braced up had collapsed. Because I had no money to spend on my mother’s funeral service, the community cooperated to do it. How can I forget this incident?” Thein Lwin lamented, staring out of the back window. He felt choking and tears welled up in his eyes.

“Hmm… I’ve just told you to brace yourself up. Now, your mind has returned to the dismal situation,” Ba Myint moaned, feeling sorry for his friend. Only then did Thein Lwin recover and change countenance in cheerful mood straightaway.

“Okay…friend! I’ve just forgotten to control myself. I won’t think of any miserable things in future,” Thein Lwin said, pretending to have regained composure. For distraction, he asked, “Have you finished the painting for the novel book cover?”

“I’m not slow in doing things for many. I’m about to be off, and send the cover picture and only that I’ve been waiting for you to wake up. It’ll fetch at least 10 kyats,” he said while standing up and reaching for the overcoat from the hanger on the wall.

“Hey…is it safe to go out? Just yesterday, monks and the military police had a clash at Thein-gyi Market. It is also rumored that there will be a clash between the Indians and the Bamars today. Be considerate!” Thein Lwin reminded.

“Oh, just forget it! I’ll do anything for money—be it beating by the Indians or the chase by the God of Death, I’m not afraid of.” Saying this he kept wearing the overcoat.

Then, turning to Thin Lwin, Ba Myint told him to eat something for breakfast as he must be hungry the whole morning.

“Don’t worry about me! I’m not hungry. Let’s eat when you come back.”

In fact, Thein Lwin was feeling hungry because he had not had anything the whole morning. He knew that Ba Myint had not had any penny left since they had dinner together the evening before. He just told a lie to Ba Myint lest he might be embarrassed.
Thein Lwin made for the kitchen, and washed his face, taking water from the tub. He pulled the towel from the clothesline, and wiped his face with it. Ba Myint’s words that he had not eaten anything the whole morning resounded in his ears. A sense that there was no food inside him made him feel hungrier. The hungrier he felt, the more intense attack the sense of starvation brought on his brain.

As convalescents do Thein Lwin felt out of place and would be restless until a morsel of food got into his stomach. Thus, he went into the kitchen to look for any remnant of food.

The fact was there was not any pot or plate to hold food, left over boiled rice or curry as both Ba Myint and Thein, single and free family care, would have their meals at road-side shops, as appropriate to time and money, without taking the trouble of cooking at home.

Just a 15-step descent down the stairs would bring him to an Indian restaurant where there were plenty of foods and drinks. But for Thein Lwin, who did not have even a dime, all these rich, oily foods such as parata, biriyani, bread, etc. were far away.

Knowing that there would certainly not be any leftover of food, he was searching every nook and corner of the kitchen just to deceive his hungry stomach. But as it was obviously an ineffectual attempt, he was compelled to devise a means that did not entail money.

First, he went to the drinking water pot, and gulped down the water to his fill. Then, he dismissed the thought of hunger and moved to the drawing room to divert his attention to other things. Sitting down on the stool that Ba Myint had occupied, he gazed at the still uncompleted picture.

While gazing at the picture, his mind floated along with the breezes that carried him to the reminiscences of the past, penetrating the thick layers of years and mountains of clouds.

The thoughts came into his mind piece like piece like pearl beads on a string: his loss of daily bread owing to the structure change made by the department store where he had worked; the death of his mother while he got into the pit of trouble and the life of mutual dependence of the son and mother; and eventually, his closest friend Ba Myint’s rescue of him from trouble.

It was rather like the incident of a person drifting in the sea without seeing a shore or an island. He was finally saved by a rowing boat which itself was exerting to escape the giant rolling waves. Thein Lwin could not feel happy completely, thinking of this analogy. He felt sorrow and hesitation at the help of Ba Myint, who himself was struggling to make ends meet, irregular for daily meals, and had had a heavier burden because of him.
In an instant, the sense of hunger, lost for a moment, struck his brain again, giving a notice, by the grumbling inside the stomach, that he still needed food. His throat felt burning. And he hurried back to the drinking water pot.

While drinking the water draught after draught, he heard indistinctly the rising and falling sounds of pandemonium and shouts of Indians about the corner of the street. Hurting towards the front window out of curiosity, he heard three or four shots of fire amidst the screaming of children.

Looking out the window, he caught sight of people running to the fro and the clash of Bamars and Indians wielding rods and swords in a small battle.

The scene suddenly reminded him of Ba Myint, and his eyes became blurry. Extremely worries, he as restless, are shutting between the interior and the front window, mumbling what would happen to Ba Myint.

Meanwhile, the sounds of crashes and impacts and the shouts of Indians surged up from the ground floor. Looking down the window, he saw about 20 Bamar youths destroying the Indian restaurant.

He was dazed for a while, but on an impulse, he girded up his loins with his longyi and jumped down the stairs, without even knowing what possessed him.

Thein Lwin was shouldering a bundle of bread, packed in a piece of cloth, towards the entrance when an RET truck carrying Indian military police pulled up in front of the restaurant. He was startled, feeling a momentary loss of consciousness. Then he was mid way down the stairs, about three of four steps, when he heard a piercing boom of a gun-shot. Then, Thein Lwin was found lying on his side, curving like a prawn, at the base of the restaurant stairs.

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It was a morgue….

The footsteps of the two persons on the glistening marble floor sounded eerie in this completely quiet hall.

The two persons walked across the hall to the south-west corner where there was a dead bed. The nurse moved to the head of the dead person, and pulled the shroud to uncover the face, and looked at Ba Myint who nodded at her. Just then, the nurse went out.
Ba Myint stood motionless, gazing the dead body of Thein Lwin, who was covered under the shroud. It seemed as if he were sleeping soundly with a serene, peaceful face without being buffeted by any trouble.

“What a bad fate you met, Thein Lwin!” The words came out slowly and gently, in a heart-rending voice, from the depths of his heart.

Warm tears rolled down the cheeks, and fell to the dead person’s feet.

With the eyes welling up with tears, Ba Myint gave a last look at the bed, pushed by the nurse, disappearing by a corner.
IV. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL 2: WRITINGS ABOUT BA HEIN

1. Ye Nyunt, Review of an Article of Dagon Taya: “One with the Padomma lotus smile or Ba Hein”

In this article, carried in No 5 (May 1985) issue of Sabe Phyu Magazine, Dagon Taya depicts the life and nature of Ba Hein, a student leader, and staunch politician, during the colonial era in Myanmar.

Apart from dialogues, most part of the essence in the article has been retained in this review and translation.

(1)

After writing the article “Aung San or the Wild One,” Dagon Taya went on to write “Ba Hein or Poetry,” which was published in Taya magazine (January, 1947)

Ba Hein, one of the fondest, closest, most understanding and most agreeable friends of the author, died in November, 1946, two years before Myanmar regained her independence. At that time, the author was busy, preparing to publish his name-sake magazine. “Taya”. The article “Aung San or the Wild One” had already been printed.

Dagon Taya heard the news of Ba Hein’s demise from Maung Maung, an editor of the Thamadi newspaper. Everyone liked Ba Hein, and Ba Hein stayed sociable to everyone. Professor of English Rhodes remarked that he was an amiable boy. Recalling the memories of Ba Hein, Taya gave his article the title “Ba Hein or Poetry. Aung San suggested “Ba Hein or Romance,” which the thought fitted well with the late one. He might have his own impressions about Ba Hein. The word “romance” embraces a number of meanings. It denotes imagination, beauty, poetry, fantastic love, etc.

Taya loved poetry, which involves aesthetics and delicate composition, and wished to analogize him to “poetry”.

Aung San and other members of the Student Union thought that Ba Hein had feelings different to them. When Taya and Ba Hein went about together, they smiled, suggesting the two persons indulgent in fantasy were now associated.

Towards the end of the rainy season (Note: the rainy season lasts five months from June to October) in 1941, Ba Hein was arrested on his return from a small temple by a few steps up from
the entrance lion figures to the Shwedagon Pagoda. The temple was at that time an anti-British clandestine camp. Many of the members of the Student Union and the Doh Bamar (We, Bamars) Association were detained, too. When Burma Independence Army (BIA) entered Yangon in 1942, Taya met Ba Hein again.

A few friends including Bo Letya, Ko Kyaw Nyein, Thakin Than Tun, Yaya and Aung San got together at the General Hospital (Now, Military Hospital) where Aung San was being hospitalized during the Japanese fascist era. Aung San had a romance, meeting a nurse, who later became Mrs Aung San (Daw Khin Kyi). The nature of Ba Hein was the main theme of the talks.

Though both Aung San and Ba Hein were politically strong minded, they have different dispositions. Ba Hein was humanitarian; he liked humans. When we were hiding in the clandestine camp, he felt pining for his newly married wife. He cared for Taya who was short-sighted. Aung San concentrated on only one thing; he did not care about other matters.

Of the Student Union members, Hla Swe and Ba Hein got married first, followed later at the beginning of the Japanese era by Hla Maung, Aung San, Bo Zayya, Bo Letya, Kyaw Nyein and Ba Swe. Taya remarked that they had got spliced because they were depressed. Depression set in because they could not do what they wished to. Ba Hein thought the other way, saying the lover was the closest partner who would share all troubles.

Taya had the feelings and thoughts in close proximity to Ba Hein’s. This brought them together in friendship. They could discuss music, painting, poetry and novels…. and songs. Their choices of the color of longyi (Myanmar male’s lower garment) concurred. Both appreciated subtlety and beauty. Ba Hein was a good write, too. Just as he could compile a thesis on political science, which carried full of facts, like “The World of Capitalists” he could also compose short novels like “Lay lwint thu” (The Idling One) and “Bawa Kha yee.” (The Journey of Life). But he could not finish the long novel “Luh Ahlo” (The Desires of Human Beings), burdened by political duties.

Just as he had a subtle mood, his feature was subtle, too. The hair was wavy. The complexion was fair with pinkish tinge on the face which ever wore a smile that was formed on his full cheeks and lips. Despite his delicate feature, he held a political belief, firm, great and strong.

Around 1940, a domestic war broke out in Spain. Progressive youths of Europe joined the “Multi-nation Force”, which had been formed against General Franco. Writers and poets, too, joined the force. Ba Hein asked him to join it together with him. Taya could not understand, but later came to understand him.
During the anti-fascist struggle in 1940, an Air Force officer told Taya he had seen Ba Hein slinging a carbine at the anti-fascist guerilla camp in the Baga Yoma Mountains. He was no longer surprised. Ba Hein was symbol of both tenderness and roughness. He had chosen the rough life of politician. Taya liked the synthesis of tenderness and roughness, rather a balanced combination. He had had a high opinion of Ba Hein since their university days. He thought more highly of Ba Hein than Aung San, who impressed him only in the days of the Japanese rule.

In fact Ba Hein wished Taya to enter the political world. Taya straddled the fence. He did not have the aim to be a politician like Ba Hein and Aung San. But he did have the spirit of politician, wishing to stay behind, writing and reading.

In 1939, Taya was elected member of the Executive Committee of the University Student Union, without his knowledge. Chairman, Vice-Chairman and six EC members were elected. Ba Hein and Hla Shwe enlisted his name as an EC candidate, in fact against his will. Later, Ba Hein urged Taya to serve in the post. He smiled at Taya. Actually, the two had complete trust in and attachment for Taya.

Primarily, the University Union seemed like and educational or social organization. In 1936, in the period of student strikes, it became an anti-colonialist front. It was modeled after Oxford University Student Union. On dividing duties, Taya was assigned as the chairman of the Social Relations Sub-committee and the editor of Oh Way magazine. He himself enjoyed being an editor, inspired by Aung San, the previous editor. In retrospect, the experiences of a Student Union member were valuable life’s experiences. This should be attributed to Ba Hein’s foresight.

Ba Hein was ever relentless. He formed an ideology-based organization in which he served as an EC member. Ba Hein intensely persuaded Taya to join it, convincing him of the formation. The two sat on the steps of the Convocation Hall at one end of Adhipati Road on the Yangon University Campus. Taya did not want to be an outright politician. He would provide assistance in the common cause. Ba Hein seemed not pleased with his response, but just smiled, telling him he would regard Taya as a trust-worthy comrade.

Ba Hein continued to consider him a reliable comrade. When Ba Hein went to China to seek foreign connection, he brought Taya. But Taya came back on reaching Hsenwi. When he attended Ramga Conference, invited by Nehru, he told him to accompany, Taya failed to comply with him on both trips.
When preliminary discussions were held to form *Bama Htwet Yat Gaing* (the Party to Liberate Burma1), Taya was invited to the meetings. But he was present on two occasions only. Most attendees wished to name it “Amyotha Asiayone”, (National Organization). At that time there was not a word like “Tatpaungsu” (the Assembly of All Armed Forces). Ba Hein asked Taya to think of a name for the association. Taya acquired political experience, thanks to Ba Hein.

Just as Ba Hein persuaded Taya politically, Taya persuaded Ba Hein in literature, telling him to write. Ba Hein wrote a short story, “Bawa Khayee” (the journey of life), which was carried in Dagon Magazine. If he were not a politician, he would be a writer. Both the politician and the writer have the common aim - seeking the truth. The difference lies only in the ways of seeking.

Taya wrote:

“Ko Ba Hein wished me to become a politician, but I did not. I wished Ko Ba Hein to become a writer, but he did not.”

(3) In this era, Taya’s teenage nieces are studying history, reciting extracts from speeches given by Ba Hein to oilfield workers in Magwe, in upper Myanmar.

“Let the fire be ablaze in the entire country by one beat of the horse-hoof.”

His political instigation was poetic.

In 1938, Ba Hein was both the chairman of the All-Burma Student Union (ABSU) and of the University Student Union. In the 1938-39 academic years, Aung San assumed the chairmanship in the first half, and then he resigned because he joined the Doh Bamar Asiayone, and assumed an honorific “Thakin” before his name, becoming Thakin Aung San. (Thakin means “master” or “lord” given intentionally to satire or rival the colonialists.) Ba Hein was the successor. Ba Swe was the secretary of ABSU. Since then, Taya had thought that Ba Hein was not only a student leader, but would become a political leader.

On his death, Ba Hein was the chairman of Burma Communist Party Politbureau, chairman of the All-Burma Worker Union and the editor of *Pyithu Arnar* (People’s Power) journal.

While he was taking treatment for heart disease at Mandalay hospital, the Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League (AFPFL) dismissed the Burma Communist Party (BCP). Ba Hein did not have the knowledge. He was not given the newspaper, as instructed by the doctors. One day, he caught sight of the news, on a piece of Pyithu Hittaing (People’s Forum) newspaper, which was

1 The common English name of the organization is “Freedom Bloc”.

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used as packing paper for bread. Since then, his condition worsened. Aung San wished to ask after him in Mandalay, but he did not wish to see Aung San. When Aung San came, he had already passed away.

Aung San praised him while paying tribute to his remains. Tears were welling up in his eyes. In fact, Aung San had been the first secretary of the BCP formed in 1939.

Ancient Scholars analogized politics as “mountains of clouds”—which usually change shape, and assume different hues.

In 1953, Taya visited Moscow. He went to Lenin’s mausoleum on the Red Square. He composed a poem, titled “Lenin Mausoleum” in honour of Ba Hein.

*Lenin Mausoleum*

(In honor of Thakin Ba Hein)

*By the City Wall*

are the drops and flakes of snow,

and the floors and snow-washed walls,

laid with red marble slabs,

encircled by deep-green pine trees,

crowned by diamonds of pearl-white snow,

in the dim light of the setting sun.

In the heart, heaving

with sorrow and longing.

and on the face, drenched

With tears.........

*Thakin Ba Hein, who lost life*
in the days of independence struggle
is mourned, imagined in mind,
in smouldering grief and sorrow.

Dagon Taya

(Translated in prose)
2. Thakhin Hla Kun: Meeting with Ko Ba Hein

It was the 11th of the month of July, 1941, the date I was released by the British colonial government of Burma from the Annexe Jail at the town of Insein. (I spent nine months in that jail as a political prisoner and reached the age of minus one month of 19 years)

I came out of that jail with a special task to hand over a political thesis (which later became known as Insein Thesis in the Myanmar's political history) to Ba Hein or Thakhin Ba Hein.

Two of my close comrades were there to welcome me at the main jail gate. One was Thakhin Tin Mya, aged 17 plus some months. He was released a few weeks before me from the same den. My release was delayed by a few hours. Jailors taking change of the release procedure wanted to search my things before letting me go. They were not interested to look into other things than the top quality hat I had on. The hat (a British topee) made with serge cloth on inner pith or cork material was quite an expensive one. The jailor from the annexe jail and his superior at the main jail wanted the hat's outer bands stripped away to see what were there under the bands. When they touched the hat I protested: "Don't destroy the hat unless you can pay compensation of seven Kyats". They did not want to pay from their own pockets. Now there was the crisis! They talked something among them and decided to present the case to the Inspector General of Prison at Rangoon. They put in a telephone call their chief, Mr. McEvoy, a member of the IMS (Indian Medical Service). He hastily arrived. He asked what was the trouble. He told me to let the jailors search the object and promised me the compensation from his purse.

Now, the show began. From each piece of band came out a cutting of paper with part of a political resolution written in very small hand writing in English. When all parts connected into whole sheet it showed the draft resolution of the senior leaders of the Dobama Asiayone on the international situation that had changed. It explained that the policy held by the Asi-ayone and consequently by the Freedom Bloc that it brought into being needed a change from non-cooperation with the imperialist British war effort into cooperation in the common struggle against the Nazi-Fascist aggression to destroy the democratic world. It said the situation changed since June 22, 1941 when the Nazis began their war against the Soviet Union. The draft resolution pointed out that Burma must seek British promise for its independence and go into Anti-Fascist struggle might and main.

When Mr. McEvoy saw what was on the connected sheet of paper he requested me to read it and explain it for him. After I had read and explained he told me "Oh! That is all right. You can
take it away and go out now. Here is the seven Kyat compensation you asked for. He readied to give the money. I declined and left the destroyed hat, collecting the strips of paper into a complete sheet. I thanked him and came out the gate at a gallop. I could make a big sigh in the arms of the welcoming comrades.

That was the episode which has stuck in my memory in all the remaining days still now.

I recalled this episode at some length to emphasize the momentous development in our history. Forgive me please if I had dwelt on this before proceeding to the meeting with Ko Ba Hein!

My comrades led me to No.14, Myay Nu Steet, Myaynigon, residence of Ko Ba Hein. We met his wife who directed us to him. He was editing foreign news at his desk at the town office of the Myanma Alin (New Light of Myanmar). I was utterly surprised to see such a youthful handsome man with such a beautifully wavy hair greeting me with such a sweet and hearty smile. Had I met him on the street I would have never thought this man to be such a famous student leader advanced into a prominent political leader. I might have taken him for a popular film actor!

I, being a jungle boy despite my growth into young nationalist, full-blown after one year term in Insein Annexe jail, I could not bring myself to believe this was the political leader the whole country recognized as their own.

Trying to forget my impression, I presented the draft resolution with my explanation. He gave all attention and invited me for further discussion at an appointed hour at the Dobama Asiayone HQ, where I must put up before returning to my native place.

In two days, the All-Burma Delegates’ Conference of the Asiayone was to be convened. I must attend as a guest.

Meantime, I shall write about the top leaders of the Dobama-Asiayone who were my prison mates. I had learned much as a political student as well as a formal education student from them. My closest tutor was Thakhin Than Tun, secretary of the peasant affairs department at the Dobama Asiayone HQ, He was a D.T (Diploma in Teaching), a teacher at the Burma Muslim High School before becoming a politician. My political teacher was Thakhin Soe, who later became the Red Flag Communist leader in 1946 and the early propagandist of Marxism in Burma. Thakhin Nu was my most revered general tutor, guiding me in the elements of general politics, history, Buddhism and also health and sexuology subjects. He was the most senior in age among them. Thakhin Kyaw Sein, a labour affairs enthusiast. Thakhin Khin Aung, a peasant affairs enthusiast and a score of middle level Dobama leaders.
All of them gave me various kinds of knowledge. All of them liked me as a young brother. And I liked all of them as my own elder brothers. The nearly nine months of life in that high class but small sized jail gave me quite a satisfaction and enjoyment. Yes! You won't believe that those days gave me such a full advantage for advancing into a worthy man of the country.

Dobama Asiayone's All Burma Delegates' Conference was held on July 13, 1941. I attended as an observer. Thakhin Mya, a lawyer and Member of the House of Representatives (Parliament) was in the chair. When the policy on international situation was deliberated upon, I found Thakhin Ba Hein advocating to get help from the Japanese for the independence struggle against the British first and against the Japanese if and when they betrayed. I was not satisfied with his double-faced line of action. I was all for cooperation with the Allies' anti-Fascist war. I went back to my native town and began organizing the people for my line. The underground (the illegal) Communist Party took that line making me its sympathizer.

Then the Burma Government banned the Dobama Asiayone of which I was a township leader. On February 1, 1942, I became a political detainee, a prisoner, again. The law said I would gain my freedom only after the close of the war. The authorities sent me to the jail at Myingyan. There I met Thakhin Soe again and also other comrades, detainees like me. Thakhin Soe wrote another political thesis which later became known as Myingyan Thesis. The document was written in English. It took the same line as the Insein Thesis, and mentioned the hope that the British rulers would grant independence to Burma. The thesis also promised cooperation in the war effort if promise of independence was given now. His fellow detainees, myself included wrote a letter to Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Govt. Minister (for Armaments?) visiting India then, to meet Gandhi, Nehru and others. We asked him to accept our political position in that letter.

By about March third week, we were transferred to Mandalay Jail as the advancing Japanese army had moved up to important towns in Central Burma.

Ko Ba Hein, Thakhin Nu and others were in the Mandalay Jail then. We, all the detainees, had to stay in a small building, originally built for one of great Indian political leader, Mr. Subhas Chandra Bose when he became a prisoner of the Indian Government. The building was later meant for a few B class prisoners. At the time when we were put there the number of detainees there reached to more than two hundred. Many of them had to sleep on cots outside that building. Jail administrators had given up normal rules and let us live as we liked, eat what the food stores had in them, managing our jail life by ourselves in that big jail which had freed hundreds of inmates two,
three times, as the war - damaged city of Mandalay was only a few weeks away from Japanese seizure.

In that greatly depopulated big Jail we searched the warehouses for dry rations. We made division of labour group for cooking, for carrying water from central water supply tank, etc. Ko Ba Hein , the same height as mine, was with me to carry water in a tall barrel, nearly the same height as ours. The two of us had a stout pole and put it in the big handles for us to carry on our shoulders. Our speed from the tank was nearly one half hour for the distance of ten or so yards, taking rest every five minutes and laughing heartily looking at one another's poor physique. We had to keep our upper bodies naked so as to shoulder the pole freely with our shirts used to place under the pole.

Thus living, the day of freedom arrived as a result of negotiations between our seniors headed by Thakhin Nu and the Chief Jailor, deserted by his subordinates. Thakhin Nu made a deal with the chief jailor promising him a good post under the Japanese led new regime and also our assistance in carrying (by-pushing) his small car toward a safe place. The car did not start, because one comrade among us, a mechanic by profession, had secretly taken out the rotor arm from the distributor when that chief jailor was engaged in the talk with Thakhin Nu. We pushed the poor small car to reach some distance out of the Palace Gate. There our mechanic, telling the chief jailor he would like to check the fault again while the chief jailor take the driver's seat readying to try starting the engine. The jailor agreed. The mechanic put back the rotor arm. He gave the order to start the engine which awoke with loud sound. The jailor made signs of thanks several times and raced ahead. Thus we parted with the poor jail and its native chief.

A few days after that I joined the Burma Independence Army (The BIA) formed by General Aung San, I served on the staff of its Upper Burma HQ after taking officer training course under Bo Lin Yon (one of the Thirty Comrades). I brought some special assignments to success. The HFQ was established at Amarapura.

When the BIA was disbanded on on July 27, 1942, I resigned and joined the underground Communist Party in Yangon.

Thakhin Nu who wanted me as his foster son, made me live with him and his family since August, 1942 and then assigned me to go and stay with Thakhim Than Tun at 56, Golden Valley Road. Thakhin Than Tun, a bachelor, became a cabinet member in Dr. Ba Maw’s Government under the control of the Japanese Army. I was to act as an aide cum house keeper while secretly working as a cadre of the Communist Party.
Ko Ba Hein and wife came to live with Bo Let Yar family at No 54, on the same road as ours from late 1942 to the day when he, with wife, went into hiding to take command of the Resistance Movement against the Japanese in February or early March, 1945. Bo Let Yar (one of the Thirty Comrades), a high BDA (Burma Defence Army) officer at the War Office and Ko Ba Hein were very close comrades since student days. And the No 54 house situated next to our house. For 2 1/2 years Ko Ba Hein was my neighbor, my close leader, and my dear teacher.

I had to leave for India on secret mission to receive military training on 20 December, 1944, at the head of five other comrades. Reached U Thein Pe Myint's HQ. U Thein Pe Myint (the renowned novelist, journalist, writer) was the representative in India of the Resistance movement led by the Anti-Fascist Peoples' Freedom League, secretly formed by General Aung San, Thakhin Soe, Thakhin Than Tun with other socialist and nationalist elements. I arrived in Calcutta in early January. By arrangement with the Force 136 (organization of the South-East Asia Command of the Allies). The group I led, together with a few other comrades, was sent to Howrana, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) for five weeks of military training (for leading the native guerrilla units).

After completing the training, we were sent back to Jessore, in East Bengal Province (now in Bangladesh) of India for a week of parachute training. Then the team of five parachutists (two of us Burmese officers, two British officers and one British sergeant - wireless operator) jumped into Burma in broad daylight on April 9, 1945. With all kinds of weapons, parachuted down, formed partisan units, fought the retreating Japanese army units in Pyinmana (now Naypyidaw) area, Toungoo area and north Pegu area. We fought for four and a half months till August 15, 1945, when the war ended. We put several hundred enemy troops out of action and captured more than a hundred war prisoners.

Ko Ba Hein whom the Allied troops addressed as Colonel, was then supervising our guerrilla operations from his HQ on the western Yomas (mountain ranges).

I had the chance to meet him several times at his home (which became the HQ of Trades Union Congress), in Myaynu Street in 1945. Then he fell ill with lung trouble. The illness worsened and he had to go back to his parents in Mandalay. At the General Hospital there, he passed away. The whole country mourned his death.

Ko Ba Hein (born July 1918) lived only for 28 years. He was student leader since 1935 and entered politics in 1939.

The memoir by Thakhin Hla Kun finished July 11, 2008 at the age of 86 years.
V. APPENDICES

MYANMAR LITERATURE PROJECT

Starting with an investigation into the NAGANI BOOK CLUB

The project's

**Working Papers**

are published by

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Already Published:

No. 10:1, An Introduction into the Nagani Book Club
No. 10:2, Thein Pe, *Saya Lun* and *Royal Advisors*
No. 10:3, Ba Hein, *The World of Capitalists*
No 10:4, Thein Pe, *Student Boycotters* (Two Volumes)
No. 10:4.1, Additional Material on Students and Politics
No. 10:5, Ba Khaing, *Political History of Burma*
No. 10:6, Nu, *Gandalarit*
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No. 10:9, Two Books on the History of the Russian Revolution
No.10:10, Soe, *Socialism* and Chit Hlaing, *Memories*
No.10:100, Papers Presented at the Burma Studies Conference, Singapore 2006

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A number of Nagani Books were scanned and are available on CD.
Details are available on request.

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Mail orders and enquiries should be addressed to:

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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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