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MAUNG MAUNG

B. L. (*Rangoon*), LL. D. (*Utrecht*),
of Lincoln's Inn, *Barrister-at-Law*

A TRIAL IN BURMA

THE ASSASSINATION

of

AUNG SAN



THE HAGUE

MARTINUS NIJHOFF

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THE HAGUE
MARTINUS NIJHOFF
1962

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By the same author

BURMA'S CONSTITUTION

*

BURMA IN THE FAMILY OF NATIONS

*

LAW AND CUSTOM IN BURMA

I. Burmese Buddhist Law
in preparation

*

AUNG SAN OF BURMA
in preparation

He that would make his own liberty secure must guard even his enemy from oppression; for if he violates this duty, he establishes a precedent that will reach to himself.

THOMAS PAINE

PREFACE

Crime does not pay, and politics by assassination pays even less. That is perhaps the one sharp lesson which stands out from the trial of U Saw and his men for the murder of Bogoyoke Aung San and his colleagues. The trial is a historic one, and the murders undoubtedly altered the course of Burma's modern history. I present the judgement of the Special Tribunal in full and the story of the assassinations for the record, in the hope that they will serve historians and our peoples in Burma in several ways.

Mr. Justice Mya Thein of the High Court gave me the records which he compiled of the trial while serving on the prosecution. That was a few years ago, and I have, since then, wanted to edit and publish a book of the trial. Dr. Myint Thein, Chief Justice of the Union, also gave his file of the records to the Defence Services Historical Research Institute, and I was able to check and compare the papers. To both I owe and sincerely acknowledge thanks. I am also grateful to Mr. Justice Aung Tha Gyaw of the Supreme Court who answered my questions with kindness and courtesy, and to U Kyaw Soe, Director of Information, and his staff, who dug up the pictures which are published in this book.

I found the time to work on the records of the trial at Yale on a grant from the Ford Foundation and a visiting lectureship extended to me by the University's Southeast Asia Studies Programme. At Yale I was able to use the ample library resources of the University, and read with some system the books and material on Burma and the law reports which my friend U Htin Leong, Director of the Government Press, was good enough to collect and send.

The Library of Congress, with its excellent and exciting holdings, has also been a good place to work in, and Cecil Hobbs, the head of the Oriental division, has been particularly helpful to me.

It was a good opportunity to read and write, free from temptations. I hope this kind of opportunity will become more widely available to my research-minded friends in Burma.

The Asia Foundation has kindly expressed willingness to distribute some copies of this book on its educational books programme, though responsibility for the views and opinions which I have expressed is, of course, entirely mine.

Aung San of Burma, a volume containing selected speeches and writings by Aung San, and on him by his contemporaries, is due to be published soon by the same publisher.

New Haven, Connecticut

MAUNG MAUNG

CONTENTS

<i>Preface</i>	VII
I. AUNG SAN'S HOUR	I
II. U SAW AND HIS MEN.	16
III. THE TRIAL.	32
IV. THE APPROVER'S STORY	45
V. U SAW'S STORY.	51
VI. SPEECHES AND DECISIONS	60
VII. THE LONG JOURNEY.	67
<i>Appendix: JUDGEMENT OF THE SPECIAL TRIBUNAL.</i>	69

TABLE OF CASES

Cited by the Special Crimes Tribunal:

AUNG HLA & OTHERS VS. KING-EMPEROR, Indian Law Reports, Rangoon series, vol. IX, p. 404;
 KING-EMPEROR VS. NGA MYO, 1938 Rangoon Law Reports, p. 190;
 MAUNG MYA & ANOTHER VS. KING-EMPEROR, 1938 Rangoon Law Reports, p. 30.

Appeals by U Saw and associates:

U SAW & OTHERS VS. THE UNION OF BURMA, 1948 Burma Law Reports, High Court, p. 217;
 U SAW & OTHERS VS. THE UNION OF BURMA, 1948 Burma Law Reports, Supreme Court, p. 249.

CHAPTER ONE

AUNG SAN'S HOUR

<I>

Burma regained her freedom on the 4th. January, 1948, when she declared herself to be a sovereign independent republic in the family of nations. Sixty-two years ago, almost to the day, Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy of India, had proclaimed, by command of Queen Victoria, the Queen-Empress, that the reign of King Thibaw in Upper Burma had ended, and all Burma had come under British rule.¹

Freedom was returned to Burma by friendly treaty. After World War II there were delegations from Rangoon to London, from London to Rangoon, talks round the table, and agreements signed, and when, at 4.20 in the grey dawn of the 4th. January, a time and a day chosen by the astrologers as propitious, Burma proclaimed her freedom, the severance of the tie with Britain was done almost in sadness.² Not a shot had been fired in anger against the British ruler in the negotiations for freedom. It was, said the leaders on both sides, a bloodless revolution, a voluntary abdication of power unprecedented in human history, friendly parting in farewell, but not good-bye. Those sayings were true. Yet, it would not be true to say Burma obtained her freedom without paying a price. She paid a heavy price in the long decades of struggle to rediscover her soul under alien rule, for a nation under alien rule has a body but not a soul.³

This book tells the story of a huge sacrifice which Burma made on the eve of freedom. The story is told through the records of a criminal trial. On the 19th. July, 1947, Bogyoke Aung San was presiding over a meeting of the Executive Council when gunmen burst into the chamber and sprayed it with bullets from automatic weapons.⁴ Their main attention was directed at Aung San who rose from his seat at the head of the table and made a gesture of command before he was felled. Colleagues of Aung San died with him and few escaped the chamber of death.

U Saw, a former Prime Minister, and nine men were put on trial for the assassinations. Not only those men stood trial, however. Burma stood trial

1. Proclamation was dated the 1st. January, 1886.

2. The day first chosen was the 6th. January but it was changed after consultations with the astrologers and before the simultaneous announcements of the date were made in Rangoon and London.

3. Maung Maung, *Burma's Constitution*, Martinus Nijhoff, 2nd. ed. 1961, for more detailed study of the developments leading to independence.

4. Bogyoke means Supremo, a term of love and respect, and more than General.

too, for she was put to proof that she could keep calm and hold her house together in the face of the great crisis, that she understood what justice meant and had the strength to give it even to those who stood charged of having slain her best loved sons. Britain stood trial too for the rumours were that some circles in London had supported the plot, that with Aung San gone U Saw would be installed in office so that Burma might be kept in the British fold.¹ Rumours thrived in the situation and passions ran high. The year 1947 might well have ended, if leaders in Burma and in London had been lesser men, in civil war and disaster in Burma instead of freedom.

〈2〉

Burma after World War II presented a strange scene. The country was in ashes after being twice fought over; three years of military occupation had ruined the economy. The peoples were undernourished and in rags, but they were united and proud. The battlecry of 'Asia for the Asians' with which the Japanese had plunged into war had inspired them. The war had excited them and drawn them together. They had tasted independence which, with all its limitations, had been a thrilling experience. When Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the British Governor, returned from his war-time retreat in Simla waving, almost apologetically – for his unavoidable absence – a White Paper of long-term plans and conditional promises, the peoples found themselves unamused. They wanted their freedom immediately. They were united as never before and in General Aung San they had found a hero and a leader in whom they could put their trust and hopes.

Sir Reginald tried hard to run a government, and wooed the support of Aung San and the united front which was the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL). It was, however, an impossible task from the start. The AFPFL took the stand that after having successfully led the resistance they had the right and duty to run a national government, if only provisionally before the general elections. Sir Reginald, empowered by London to take charge and exercise his personal rule over Burma, could not recognize the AFPFL as the national government even though he did see that the peoples and the political parties were solidly behind the League. Also, Sir Reginald had a few old faithfuls to think of and reward; Sir Paw Tun, who had gone

1. In the House of Commons on the 21st. July, Tom Driberg, M.P. (Labour), expressed 'the real, deep sorrow that members feel on this side of the House' who had learned to respect Aung San and his colleagues, but alleged that 'the moral guilt of the assassinations attaches less perhaps to the brutal elements in Rangoon than to the comfortable Conservative gentlemen here' (loud cries of 'Oh' and 'Withdraw') 'who incited to treachery and sabotage.' *London Times*, 22nd. July, 1947. The Government as well as the Conservative Opposition joined in expressing deep regret and disclaimed any complicity in the crimes.

to Simla with the government in retreat, was one. With his British sense of fair play and loyalty, he could not just pat Sir Paw Tun on the back and send the old boy home.

The lot of Sir Reginald was an unenviable one: for the first years of his appointment he was a Governor without a country to govern; when he returned there were not the conditions to permit him to govern. He invited the AFPFL to join the Executive Council which he proposed to form, and promised that even though the Councillors would be only advisers in strict law he would treat their advice with respect. The AFPFL was willing to try and asked for eleven seats in the Council including that for Home affairs, and suggested that while the Governor might continue his personal rule until a constituent assembly could be elected he should 'democratise' it by convention to the limits that the law allowed. The Governor could not offer the eleven seats that were asked; he offered seven, and reserved the Home portfolio for Sir Paw Tun. The talks broke down, and the rift between the Governor and the AFPFL widened. Political tensions increased, and the AFPFL, with the massive support of the People's Volunteer Organization whose core was made of veterans of the resistance, openly talked of armed rebellion as a last resort. The AFPFL dominated the political scene, and Aung San, the Bogoyoke, was the leader. Other parties and other men were negligible.

<3>

In January, 1946, when the first national convention of the AFPFL elected Aung San by acclaim as its president he was a few days short of 32.¹ At that young age he had built and commanded the national army, led the resistance, risen to be a hero and the leader and almost become a legend in the land. His meteoric rise was due in a large part to his own great qualities and his unwavering sense of mission; to an equally large part to the readiness of Burma's history to discover such a man at such a time and have him ride the high tides of the nationalist movement as they swept forward to the final goal. Aung San became prominent as a leader of the University students' strike in 1936, a strike that was destined to assume an importance which was out of proportion with its original limited purpose of bargaining with the authorities on certain student grievances, a strike which threw up leaders who were to figure large in public life for years to come.

From the University Aung San slipped naturally into politics. He became a leader of the young *thakin* ('Our Own Masters') movement, the secretary of the *Freedom Bloc*, and an advocate of direct action to oust British rule

1. The Anti-Fascist Organization first met in hiding under the Japanese occupation in August, 1944. Aung San was born on the 13th. February, 1915.

seizing the opportunity that the war presented. When the British began to take the young thakins seriously enough to round them up and put them away behind bars, Aung San slipped out with a colleague to Amoy in China where Japanese agents found him and arranged for him to cross over to Tokyo. More young Burmese slipped out of the country to join Aung San, and thus was born the legend of the 'Thirty Comrades' who received their military training in Formosa, and returned to Burma, building the Burma Independence Army as they marched from the southern ends of the country to Bhamo in the north. It was an epic which almost seemed to have come alive out of the story books, and with uplifted hearts the peoples found that they were not just seeing it but living it.

General Aung San marched with the men and when Burma was occupied in a few short months he told the thakin leaders who were jubilant and busy in the scramble for spoils that the fight for freedom had just begun.

The Japanese brought out Dr. Ba Maw, a former Prime Minister, from Mogok jail where the British had moved him, and made him the chief administrator. On the 1st. August, 1943, when Burma was declared to be an independent state, Dr. Ba Maw became the *Adipadi*, head of the state. Aung San became Minister of War while his deputy, Ne Win, took over the command of the re-formed Burma National Army.¹ The times were bad but challenging, and in the face of danger and difficulty the peoples drew together. Dr. Ba Maw was an able and colourful Adipadi, and he threw himself into the task of building the new nation with vigour and dedication. The group of young leaders whom he gathered around him were also able and devoted. Thakin Nu was Foreign Minister, reluctant to enter into office or stay, idealistic, sentimental, orthodox, and possessed of an immense fund of moral courage. Thakin Mya, the Socialist, was Deputy Prime Minister; the elder statesman among the young thakins, an elder brother, the calm, reasoning lawyer; but the flame of the revolutionary burned fierce in him too and he had been one of those who attempted to cross the borders in search of military assistance. Thakin Than Tun, the Communist, was Minister for Agriculture; a man of great ambition, he was coldly competent, infinitely patient, and watchful all the time for opportunities to advance his career and the cause. There were other men too around the Adipadi and together they formed the stout heart of the state in those impossible times.

In critical times men like to find someone in whom they can put their total trust, and the peoples of Burma, looking for such a man, found General Aung San. Perhaps it was because he was in uniform and the war gave glamour to the uniform; perhaps it was because he was leader of the army, idolized by the boys who, after all, came from homes all over the country.

1. General Ne Win, chief of staff, defence forces, led the caretaker government in Burma, October 1958-April 1960.

The army itself was a repository of the peoples' hope; and when the Japanese soldiers were overbearing in the market place, it was the boys from the army who stood up between them and the helpless peoples. All these no doubt helped to build the public image of Aung San, but his honesty and dedication to the country's freedom, his selflessness and courage also shone through in his public statements, in his home and public lives. He kept saying that the fight for freedom was not yet over, that the independence was mere glitter without substance; he kept up the call for unity, and worked to bring the minority peoples, such as the Karens, into the army, making it the rallying point of patriotism. When the Anti-Fascist Organization was formed, therefore, General Aung San was the natural leader, and when the AFO blossomed into the united front, the AFPFL, Aung San was the natural choice for president and national leader. 'I must now take leave of you,' he wrote to Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, supreme commander of the allies in Southeast Asia, 'before I go out from the Army to face the portentous perspective of a political career which, I hope, at all events, will not be as portentous in actual fact as it looks.'¹

〈4〉

There were contenders for the national leadership, for the leadership carried power and power is coveted. Also, it was obvious that freedom could not be denied to the peoples for much longer, and the national leader who led them on their final march could be sure of an honoured place in history. But none of the contenders amounted to much against Aung San.

Dr. Ba Maw, the Adipadi, retreating with the Japanese army, finally found himself in Sugermo jail in Japan. Early in 1946 he was set free and returned to Rangoon; the plumage of the Adipadi was gone, but he sported, in grand defiance, a Hitlerite moustache. He announced that if the peoples called to him he would respond but he would not organize a party for he was above party politics now and belonged to the nation. The peoples did not call, and he waited alone.

Thakin Ba Sein and Thakin Tun Ok, the early thakins, scoffed at young Aung San's leadership. Sir Reginald, in an attempt to get together a respectably representative looking Executive Council, made Thakin Thun Ok a Councillor. Thakin Tun Ok, one of the 'Thirty Comrades,' promptly launched out on vehement attacks against Aung San for alleged cruelties committed on the march of the Burma Independence Army.² But their attacks amounted to nothing.

Thakin Than Tun, exploiting the situation that prevailed after the resist-

1. Letter dated 25th. September, 1945.

2. e.g. speech in the Burma Legislative Council, *proceedings* vol. I-15, p. 545.

ance, built the Communist Party and roped in the veterans and the young politicians who were adrift looking for something exciting to do, hungering for some ideology. As one of the principal organizers of the AFO and the AFPFL, Than Tun claimed a leading role in the league, and he was elected Secretary-General, coming in importance next only to Aung San. But a second position did not satisfy him, and he worked within the league and out, with skill and cunning, to seize the leadership or wreck the league. He was found out and expelled, with the Communist Party, from the league in October, 1946.¹

Another contender for the national leadership and the place of honour in history was U Saw. Born in 1901 in Tharrawaddy district, the fabled home of rebels, U Saw had risen from modest circumstances to national prominence before he was out of his thirties. The rebellion of Saya San in Tharrawaddy district gave him his opportunity and he published a pamphlet containing an open letter to the Secretary of State in London in which he protested against the excesses committed by the government in suppressing the rebellion. The pamphlet was duly proscribed, but U Saw had made his mark, and from then on he called himself 'Galon' U Saw, to keep his link with 'Galon' Saya San.² He went into journalism and politics, early finding his way into the Legislative Assembly, and though he qualified as a pleader his ambition aimed far higher than the practice of law. In May, 1935, he went on a tour of Japan to report for the 'Sun,' Burmese newspaper, and also to enlarge his horizons. In November, 1936, he was elected to the new House of Representatives from North Henzada on the ticket of the *Ngabwintsaing* ('Five Flowers') party. Soon he tired of being a leader among many and began organizing the *Myochit* (The Patriots) party. It was the usual thing for an ambitious young politician to do: to avoid having to start from second or third ranks in a party he would start one of his own and appoint himself the leader.

The new House was a multi-party mess. There were days of manoeuvring to form a government, and at last Dr. Ba Maw, commanding 16 votes, was able to get together a coalition. U Saw was free to move and manoeuvre, activities in which he excelled. Dr. Ba Maw survived many no-confidence motions but early in 1939 his ministry fell. U Pu became Prime Minister and U Saw took his oath of office as Minister for Forests and Agriculture on the 30th. May. He had come a long way but, to his way of thinking, not far enough. He launched the *Myochit* party leaving the *Ngabwintsaing* for good, and as his party grew he bargained for more seats in the Cabinet and gained

1. Cf. speech by Aung San from the Rangoon radio on the 22nd. October, 1946, explaining the expulsion, in *Bogyoke Aung San* in Burmese, Information Department, Rangoon, 1955.
2. Galon is the mythical bird, conqueror of the dragon. See *Saya San*, in Burmese, Burma Translation Society, 1960.

his way until at last he felt ready to challenge the leader of his government, U Pu himself. During the budget session of the House, in August 1940, one of the usual no-confidence motions came up, and Minister U Saw resigned from the government half an hour before the debate, and thus relieved of responsibility and loyalty, he and his followers voted against the government and brought it down. On the 9th. September, U Saw took office as Prime Minister.

U Saw was able and forceful, and he learned constantly to fill the large gaps in his formal education. The European business community in Rangoon, which wielded a great influence in politics, got to like his certainty and the firmness with which he put down agitation. With his opponents U Saw was even firmer. Dr. Ba Maw already languished in jail serving sentences for sedition. U Saw soon invoked the Defence of Burma Rules, designed to cope with the war emergency, to lock up his former mentor, the veteran politician U Ba Pe, former ministers U Ba U and U Ba Thi of Mandalay, and rivals U Ba Win of Pyapon and U Ba Hlaing. All his rivals with a 'Ba' to their names thus safely behind the bars, U Saw reigned supreme.¹

The Governor, Sir Reginald, was rather fascinated by the character of his Prime Minister, and the two got on quite well. When the time came for new elections the Governor postponed them on ground of the emergency, and U Saw was safe. All he wanted now was a promise from His Majesty's Government that Burma would be made a self-governing dominion after the war; he wanted his place in history as the bringer of Burma's freedom, and in return for the prize he promised to marshal the support of the peoples behind the British war effort. Sir Reginald, however, was unable to offer the prize though he would have liked to have the peoples' support in the war, and he arranged for U Saw to visit London and talk to Prime Minister Churchill.² U Saw went, taking with him U Tin Tut, a senior official, on a 'journey perilous,' to make his case for Burma with Mr. L. S. Amery, the Secretary of State, and Mr. Winston Churchill. The case was forcefully made and U Saw was able to hold his own against Churchill, but the results were negative.

U Saw remembered his meeting with Churchill in the serialized 'Journey Perilous,' *Burmese Review*, the 19th. August, 1946: "Churchill said, closely studying my face, 'Tell me, Mr. Prime Minister, are not the Burmese happier under British rule than under Thibaw?' I had not expected this and I had difficulty in controlling my rising anger. 'Let me, Sir,' said I, 'answer this with another question. Heaven forbid that Germany should ever conquer Great Britain. But suppose she did, what would your answer be if I asked you whether the British would be happier under Hitler than under your

1. Kyaw Min, *The Burma We Love*, Calcutta, 1945.

2. Maurice Collis, *Last and First in Burma*, Macmillan, New York, 1956, p. 32.

own King?' The reply stunned Mr. Churchill... he did not reply at once but got up in anger and paced the room for a few minutes without further speech. He then said in sorrow rather than in anger, 'I do not know what has come over you young people nowadays.'"

U Saw returned an angry and disappointed man, and the cool and formal reception which he received in Washington where he stopped by did not console him. He reached Honolulu on the day of the Pearl Harbour incident, and turned back to fly home through Lisbon where he paid a call on the Japanese ambassador. U Saw was an angry man, and he had earlier associations with Japan, and when the British Intelligence, after breaking Japanese ciphers in Lisbon, reported to London that U Saw had promised the ambassador his support for a Japanese invasion of Burma, Mr. Amery ordered his arrest. The homeward journey was thus interrupted again at Haifa, and U Saw was arrested, and later interned in Uganda. U Tin Tut was cleared in due course and he joined the Burma government in Simla after the retreat.

In Rangoon when news of U Saw's arrest was broken on the 19th. January, 1942, there was no great excitement. The war was approaching now, and the first bombs had fallen on Rangoon. Sir Paw Tun, an Arakanese barrister and one of the senior politicians, a survivor of many ministries, took over as Prime Minister and had just enough time to pack his bags and leave Burma for Simla.

In Uganda the war was remote, and U Saw spent his enforced leisure reading copiously. It was the first time in more than a decade of political activities and ambitious climbing in a remarkable career that he had the time for quiet contemplation. Full four years passed before he could go home, for he was released only in January, 1946, the British government having 'carefully considered the circumstances in consultation with the Governor of Burma' and decided 'as a special case to take no further action against him.'¹ Questions were asked in the House of Commons if U Saw would be free, when back in Burma, to enter politics, and if His Majesty's Government were building him up to 'counterbalance the overwhelming popular support enjoyed by the AFPFL,' and the Under-Secretary of State replied: 'Burma, like this country, being a free country, it will be difficult to prevent any citizen taking part in politics.' The answer to the second part of the question was, 'No.'²

It was a changed Burma to which U Saw returned. Much had happened in the four years of his absence. A new mood seemed to have gripped the peoples; they were united and serious, urgent and insistent. Politics was never like this before. It used to be debates in the House, bargaining in the lobby for votes, speeches and promises made in public, understandings

1. *London Times*, 26th. January, 1946.

2. *Hansard*, Commons, 1946, vol. 418, 1346.

reached in private, the strong anti-British speeches and gestures made in public, the chuckled conversation with His Excellency the Governor at the Government House. Elections meant bargainings on bigger scales in wider markets. It was not too difficult to win a seat in the House if one knew the ropes and pulled them well, and it was not necessary to win a majority for once inside one could manoeuvre and buy and sell one's way into the Cabinet or even the Premiership. But now, looking round him, U Saw found a changed scene. The people were clamorous, which he could understand for people clamoured for something or other all the time. They were united and purposeful, which was strange, and they marched as one behind the AFPFL and Aung San, which was bad. Aung San and Thakin Nu, Kyaw Nyein and Ba Swe, and the young thakins Than Tun, Tin, Thein Pe, and others. Why, they were mere boys! They were students when he was Prime Minister. True, they were talking politics and freedom and the usual things, but they were boys, boys! Did they not remember how he, Galon U Saw, leader of the Myochit, took on the suave and silken Dr. Ba Maw, the learned doctor of philosophy, in mighty debate at the University students' Union? Did not these boys listen, rapt and awed, to the great wordy war in which he had put up such great showing? He had gone much further than that. As Prime Minister he had travelled to London through a burning war to debate with Prime Minister Churchill and demand Burma's freedom. Where were these boys when he was paying a terrible price for his patriotism, a prisoner for four long years in the iron clutches of the British imperialists – true, Uganda was not uncomfortable, but that was beside the point. Where were these boys? Playing soldiers and generals, ministers and puppets. He could laugh. Or he would if he could, only he couldn't.

〈5〉

Bogyoke Aung San and U Saw met a few times after the latter's return, but they could not come together. They were after the same goal: Burma's freedom; after the same prize: the place of honour in history. Destiny had chosen Aung San for the role of national leader in that march to the final goal, and for winner of the coveted prize. Aung San knew it. U Saw could not see it, or seeing, accept it.

The Myochit party had joined the AFPFL in U Saw's absence. Later, when the AFPFL refused to join the Governor's Executive Council, three Myochit leaders left, lured by office, while an important leader, U Mya (Henzada), resigned from the party to remain with the league.¹ The reason

1. U Aye, U Ba Ohn and U Lun, of the Myochit party took office. U Mya's letter to the AFPFL on the subject is reproduced in *'The White Paper, a Play'* (Sethubyu Pyazat) by Zeyya Maung, in Burmese, Mandalay, 1945.

given by the three leaders for accepting office was that they wanted to more effectively work for U Saw's release from inside the government.

When, therefore, U Saw arrived, the party existed only in name, with its leadership split and scattered. To steal the initiative from the AFPFL and win the national leadership from Aung San he must fight the British government and Sir Reginald who represented it; yet, three of his colleagues were Sir Reginald's Councillors. It was a strange and difficult position but U Saw did not despair. He worked hard to reorganize the party, and he travelled up and down the country.

On the 19th. February, 1946, U Saw began the offensive by writing to the Secretary of State in London making certain demands. He demanded that the Governor's Executive Council be enlarged and invested with the powers which were enjoyed by the Cabinet before the Governor assumed his personal rule; that defence and external affairs be put under the charge of the Council and a Burmese Councillor; that the affairs of Burma be looked after by the Dominions Office in London rather than the Burma Office. He also objected strongly against the separation of the frontier areas under a separate administration, for, he pointed out, that would only 'widen the differences between the peoples.' He demanded that a definite time limit be set for the establishment of Burma as a self-governing dominion. If the Secretary of State did not reply satisfactorily by the end of May, U Saw wrote, he must, 'according to my party's mandate,' withdraw the three members of the party from the Governor's Executive Council. The reply did not come and on the 15th. May U Saw met the Rangoon press and handed out copies of his letter to the Secretary of State, and at the end of the month he called upon the three Councillors to resign, which they did.¹

In March, 1946, U Saw travelled to Panglong in the Shan State to attend a conference of chiefs from thirty-four of the smaller states in the region. He called on the chiefs to unite with the Burmese and other peoples on their march to freedom. Thakin Nu, vice-president of the AFPFL, who was also invited by the chiefs, made a similar call in more blunt and forthright terms. U Lun of the Myochit party also attended as a Councillor to the Governor. It was an important conference where, while supposedly discussing the 'welfare, trade, and cultural aspirations of the states,' the Shan leaders anxiously sought some answers relating to their future relations with 'Burma proper' in the light of approaching freedom. The Burmese leaders spoke in the same vein and unanimously called for union.²

Political tensions in Burma mounted as the months passed and the rift grew between the Governor, with his formal Executive Council and Legislative Council, and the AFPFL, with its influence extending far beyond that

1. *London Times*, the 16th. May, 1946.

2. *London Times*, the 28th. March, 1946.