

**Twenty Six years with the American Embassy**

**in**

**Burma**

**(1948 – 1974)**

**By**

**Tin Tut**

## **Contents**

Author's Note

Chapter 1. First Impressions

Chapter 2. When the Karen Come Marching In

Chapter 3. Timely Assistance

Chapter 4. American Aid To Burma

Chapter 5. American Profiles

Chapter 6. Russian Interlude

Chapter 7. An Embarrassment

Chapter 8. The CIA in Burma

Chapter 9. Improved Relations

Chapter 10. Better Than Ever

Chapter 11. Political Changes

Chapter 12. The Caretaker Government

Chapter 13. American Prestige Wanes

Chapter 14. Worsening Relations

Chapter 15. The Revolutionary Government

Chapter 16. New American Diplomacy

Chapter 17. A New Approach

Chapter 18. Diplomats & Diplomats

Chapter 19. Cultural Exchanges

Chapter 20. A Rude Awakening

Chapter 21. Renewed American Assistance

Chapter 22. Out of the Top Drawer

Chapter 23. Revolutionary Government of the Union of Burma 's Endeavors

Chapter 24. Following U Nu's Defection

Chapter 25. Increased Cultural Exchanges

Chapter 26. Improving Relations

Chapter 27. Towards International Cooperation

Chapter 28. Socialist Republic of the Union Of Burma

Chapter 29. Some 'Normal' Routines

Chapter 30. A Time to Go

Appendix American Ambassadors to Burma 1948 to 1974

### **Author's Note**

"Twenty six years with the American Embassy in Burma" is an account of one Burmese employee's experiences, during nearly three decades in the American Foreign Service beginning with the arrival of the first American Ambassador to Burma, It is written against the background of the changing Burmese political panorama, and is also a record of the shifting balances in American-Burmese relations, as reflected by the history of those times.

This book, however, is not meant to be, in any way, an indictment like the book *The Ugly American* by William J. Lederer and Eugene Burdick, or of *American Policy*. Where comments, which may appear to be of such nature, are unavoidable, they have been made as objectively as possible, and in all sincerity, so that in future, nothing untoward may occur to mar the existing friendly relations between the two countries. The few unpalatable incidents, and accounts of some personalities, which appear in this book, are related without any embellishments.

The writing of personal memories is not always an easy task. For, when they touch on personalities, other than one's own, the need to present the truth, however unpleasant, is not compensated by a genuine desire to avoid hurting the feelings of other people. I can, honestly, only write of things as I saw and felt them. For obvious reasons, the real names of the persons involved have been withheld. To the local employees, Americans in the embassy at Rangoon are usually categorized as "good guys" and "bad guys". Fortunately, more of the former kind prevailed.

This book also attempts to record the achievement or otherwise of the American Ambassadors to Burma, in their efforts to strengthen and develop friendship and understanding between the two countries.

The material for this book is made up mostly from personal experiences and observations, and from reports in government publications, newspapers and magazine articles. I have avoided, as far as possible, including hearsay accounts and I have confined myself, more or less, to a factual recording of the incidents as they occurred.

In the preparation of this book, I must acknowledge my great debt to U<sup>1</sup> Myint Thein, retired Chief Justice of the Union, whose comments and suggestions have been most invaluable. I must also thank my colleagues in the embassy, who have given me permission to use accounts of their personal experiences as material for my book.

Tin Tut

30 April 1975  
Rangoon, Burma

## Chapter One

### First Impressions

My association with the American Embassy in Rangoon began in February 1948. It came about by pure chance. At that time I had resigned from my civil service post and was studying law while working as an English Tutor in University College, Rangoon. One day I met an old friend Nyo Mya, a roving journalist, who told me that the American embassy was in need of a translator and that I should go and see Dr Russel J. Andrus, the Second Secretary, Who once served as professor of Economics in the pre-war Judson College. After talking it over with my wife, I decided to go and see Dr Andrus about the job. After all, I was already the father of two children, and my salary as a tutor did not cover all the expenses of a growing family. My wife, Daw<sup>2</sup> Khin Khin May a.k.a Daw May Tin Tut, had not yet joined the staff of the Philosophy Department at Rangoon University and until she did, I was the sole support of my family.

The next day, 9 February, I went to the Chancery division of the American Embassy, which was located in those days on the second floor of the Rander House building on Phayre<sup>3</sup> Street. I talked with Dr Andrus, who, on learning that I was a pre-war graduate of University College and had of course heard of him, appointed me as a translator on a salary of kyat 450/- per month. I began work the same day. My job was to translate from the Burmese to English, editorials, articles and news items in the Burmese newspapers; the work was easy for me but arduous because there were ten newspapers (the number later increased to twenty-one) and I was the only translator. I had to prepare also a weekly summary of the Burmese press reports. I was given a broad outline of the subjects the embassy was interested in, but the selection of news items for translations was left to me.

U Ko Ko Gyi, another local employee was assigned to assist me. He had joined the American Consulate-General in 1947, under Mr. Earl L. Packer, the last American Consul General in Burma before independence. He was a pre-war high school graduate and had a good command of English but what was better still, he was an excellent stenographer. This facilitated my work a great deal. Later, I learnt that he had served as private secretary to Dr Ba Maw, Head of State, during the Japanese occupation of Burma. We worked together very well for many years until his retirement in May 1968.

My association with the American Embassy, as I mentioned earlier, came about by pure chance. As a matter of fact, I already had a good job offer from the British Embassy. It happened this way. While I was working as an English tutor in Rangoon University, I learnt that the First Secretary of the British Embassy was Mr. Leslie Glass. He had arrived in Rangoon in September 1947 and I presume, it was to prepare for the opening of the British Embassy. He was a former member of the Burma Civil Service, Class 1 and had served in Burma for many years. In 1938, my father, U San Mya, an Extra Assistant Commissioner, relieved him on his transfer as Sub-divisional Officer in Kanbalu, a large town in Upper Burma and headquarters of the sub-division. I was then in my senior year at college and met him while the formalities of handing over duties were taking place. When he left, we took up residence in the bungalow vacated by Mr. Glass. Kanbalu is a sprawling town and is noted for its heat and drought. We were, therefore, not surprised to find large numbers of beer bottle caps in the compound.

So one day I called on him at his office which was also in Rander House on Phayre Street. I recalled myself to him, and he was glad to see me after so many years though our acquaintanceship was only slight. He was more pleased when I asked about job openings in the embassy, especially more so, when he learnt that I was a contemporary of Prime Minister U Nu and other ministers of the Burmese Government. He said he would be very pleased to have me and that I could join the embassy any day I liked. I promised to give him my answer soon and left it at that, without even asking about such things as salary, terms of service etc.

It was afterwards that I met my friend Nyo Mya. What finally decided me to take a job with the American embassy and not with British, was a real desire to know more about the Americans. I had known the British all my life and had many friends among them. My old commissioner, Mr. R.S. Wilkie, ICS, was a very good friend, even before Glass and my father had been stationed together. Wilkie and I kept in touch, until his death in September 1974, while on holiday in the Shetland Isles. I think I would have been happy to serve with Mr. Glass in British Embassy, but it was not to be. It has been my fate to be associated with foreigners since my childhood, when the first school I attended was the English missionary school in Mandalay. The Burmese believe in astrology and I had been told by many astrologers, even while I was in the service of the Burmese government, that I would have a satisfying career though association with foreigners. This had now come to pass. In all probability, however, the fact that I had been educated in European code schools since my childhood may have influenced my choice of careers. I was born in Sagaing, a town on the Irrawaddy, a few miles below Mandalay, but because my father, as a district official was transferred from place to place, I was placed as a boarder in those schools in Mandalay and later Rangoon.

Burma had just declared her independence on 4 January 1948, and going through her teething troubles. The ruling Anti Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) was beset with rival factions. The Communist party Burma (CPB) under Thakin<sup>4</sup> Than Tun had just broken away from the League and was out to wreck it. The People's Volunteer Organization (PVO) was also split over alliance with the AFPFL. The PVO was composed of former freedom fighters, who did not qualify for admission into the reorganized Burma Army or who had elected to stay out of it. They numbered about 7000 strong. Some of its members had joined the CPB. Another matter of grave concern for the AFPFL was the demand by the Karen people, under the leadership of the aggressive Karen National Union (KNU) for a separate Karen State. Mass demonstrations sponsored by the KNU were simultaneously held in Rangoon and in other parts of the country on 11 February.

I was detailed to observe the demonstration held in Rangoon which was attended by over 5000 Karens. It was conducted peacefully, but the tone of the speeches was ominous. The AFPFL, the government and the Burmese press tried to play down the importance of the demonstrations. The Rangoon Daily newspaper, which had a leftist orientated policy, commented that the Karens' demand had been influenced and encouraged by the British and the Americans. Rumors that the British were involved were refuted by the British ambassador; but in the absence of the American ambassador who had not yet arrived, the embassy wisely refrained from making any comments. In my report I warned that the evaluation of the KNU as a minority crying in the wilderness must be accepted with reserve; they were not yet a large enough force to contend with, but yet were large enough to be a disturbing element. The government issued a communiqué on 12 February that a Karen State would be established provided the provisions of Section 180 of the Constitution are fulfilled.

Assignments to attend political rallies and other public demonstrations became a routine chore for me. Burma was going through turbulent times and the American Embassy was determined to keep abreast with events.

The first American ambassador to Burma Mr. Jerome Klahr Huddle arrived on 26 February 1948. A group of American officials led by the Charge d'Affaires a.i. Mr. Austin Acly welcomed the ambassador at the Phayre Street jetty. I was also present together with an official from the Burmese Foreign Office and members of the press. Burma in 1948 did not have a modern airfield and the BOAC, the only airline touching down at Rangoon, used flying boats which landed in and took off from the Rangoon River. My first impression of the ambassador was that he was a scholarly looking person with a charming personality. This also soon became apparent to the members of the press, who swarmed round him and began asking him questions. The ambassador answered them with good humor and also passed around some excellent cigars. Burmese experience of the Americans had been limited to a few missionaries and rough and sweaty oil drillers in the Burmese oilfields. The new American ambassador made a very favorable impression on the Burmese present to welcome him.

Mr. Huddle presented his credentials to H.E. Sao<sup>5</sup> Shwe Thaik, the President of the Union of Burma on 3 March 1948. Mr. Huddle was a career diplomat but this was his first assignment to SE Asia and incidentally, the first American ambassador to Burma. Previously, the American diplomatic mission was only a Consulate-General, which was opened in Rangoon in 1902. The last American Consul General in Burma before the war was Mr. Winfield Scott, who evacuated in 1941, upon the bombing of Rangoon on 23 December. All the Burmese newspapers gave prominence to this news and a good number displayed photos as well. But there were no comments; the press, like the Burmese people, would wait and see. I too, a Burmese employee in the embassy decided to do likewise.

So far my relations with the Americans had been confined to daily briefing sessions with Dr Andrus. He, as an old Burma hand, was understandingly keen to know more about contemporary Burma. Our daily talks centered on the political happening of the day. Events moved fast and in our talks we tried to analyze and interpret the news and sometimes, I would be optimistic enough to forecast certain events in the fast changing Burmese political scene. Dr. Andrus, with his knowledge of the Burmese, which I found to be considerable, was sharp in his questions. Although I did not realize it then, Dr Andrus was daily wringing my brains dry. The things he wanted to know were commonplace and of no value except to himself. I did not feel I was betraying my country with my commentaries on the political events of the day. On the contrary, I felt I was contributing to a better understanding between the American and Burmese people by keeping the embassy informed of current affairs.

Dr. Andrus was first and foremost a scholar. He could have returned to teach at the Judson College, but his long experience and his wide knowledge of the people and the country (he taught for seventeen years in Burma) must have made the Department of State in Washington D.C. select him for a diplomatic posting to a country the American Government did not know much about. Dr. Andrus was the author of many books on economics, one notably was "Burmese Economic Life" published in January 1948. I found him a fine American gentleman, warm and full of charm. He had a host of old pupils, mostly Karens who still visited him frequently and he made many new friends too, and I am proud to count myself one of them. Through our daily contacts I had come to like him very much and I think thus liking was reciprocated by him. He used to call me U Tin Tut (Galay); the word in

parenthesis means younger and it was used by him, humorously I think, to distinguish me from U Tin Tut, our Burmese Foreign Minister. Another American who caught my attention was Mr. Herbert D. Spivack, the Administrative Officer of the embassy. He was always well-dressed and looked very efficient and confident of himself. Later, when I came to know him better, I found him a very polished diplomat. There were not too many Americans with the embassy in those days, and except for a few officers who had their own little cubicles which passed for offices, the rest of us worked together in an open common room. I did not know it then but Mr. Spivack was soon to be my next chief.

There was yet another American with whom I came into contact. The experience was unpleasant and for the first time I discovered another type of American, educated but brash and crude in his manner, especially in dealing with the local staff, made up mostly of Anglo-Indians, a few Burmese and Indians. This fine example of the younger American diplomat was Mr. J. Hamden, (a fictitious name) a third secretary in the embassy. It was his first appointment overseas. I had particularly noticed his bullying manner when dealing with Mr. Allen Ameen, an elderly Indian who had begun service as a young man, when the American Consulate-General was first opened in Rangoon. In consequence he was the oldest local employee among us. It was for that reason and because of his seniority in age, the rest of the local staff all treated him with respect. He was also a very amiable and harmless old man and most obliging to all, Americans and locals alike. But even old amiable Ameen did not escape the boorish treatment by our Mr. Hamden.

His manner of speaking to Mr. Ameen was always in a loud and bullying tone. Mr. Ameen, it must be said, was slightly deaf, and young Mr. Hamden bellowed and bullied. There was another local employee a clerk named James Franklin, an Anglo-Indian, who also labored under Hamden's bullying. Frequently, Franklin would be reduced to impotent tears. These were almost daily exhibitions put on by Mr. Hamden, who probably believed that colored people must be treated roughly and put in their place. He probably had behaved in the same way back in the States and his manner was therefore nothing unusual for him. But to us Burmese, who had just thrown off the yoke of colonialism under white supremacy, his overbearing manner and speech were galling. How much so, I was to learn personally.

One day the ambassador's secretary phoned Mr. Hamden to get a new translation file from me and send it over to the embassy. Our offices were located in temporary premises and the embassy was at the ambassador's residence on Prome<sup>6</sup> Road<sup>7</sup>. When Hamden gave me the message I told him I would bring the file up to date and send it to him. As the material to be added to the file was quite long, there was a slight delay. This apparently did not please him, for he came fuming over to my desk and demanded in a loud voice why the bloody hell I had not sent in the file, and I was a so and so for delaying its dispatch.

I was shocked because never in all my life had I ever met such rudeness and vulgarity, not even from the British when they were our rulers. I have had many dealings with Englishmen and their behavior had always been correct. Even if they had to reprimand a subordinate, they did it in the privacy of their own office, but never in the presence of other employees. From an administrative point of view, it is never a good policy to do so. Without a word I handed him the file and phoned Dr Andrus that I was coming over immediately to see him. As soon as I entered his office, Dr Andrus knew something was wrong for I am sure my face was dark with suppressed anger and I found some difficulty in speaking. Finally I calmed down enough to report my experience with Hamden and told him I wanted to resign my job, if such behavior was to be expected in the future. Dr. Andrus, who was always a

gentleman and a kindly soul, expressed his regrets over the incident and promised he would report the matter to the ambassador.

A few days later, I received word that the ambassador wished to see me. When I reported myself to him, he received me cordially and asked me questions about myself. He commented on my good English. I told him that I had been educated in an English mission school in Mandalay and later in St. Peter's High School, Mandalay. He was surprised when I told him that there were three types of educational institutions under the British: the European code schools, the Anglo-Vernacular and Vernacular Schools. I also told him a little of my work in the Burma Civil Service. Not once did he mention Hamden, but when I left him, I had the impression that he was sizing me up. But since that day, Hamden's behavior to the employees improved and I am sure the ambassador had something to do with it.

## Chapter Two

### **When the Karen Come Marching In**

Meanwhile, the political situation in the country was becoming more perplexing. The communists under Thakin Than Tun had gone underground on 31 March, 1948 and were now in active revolt against the AFPEL Government of Prime Minister U Nu. A faction of the PVO known as the White Band had joined them and the Karen secessionists were also expected to revolt at anytime.

On the political front, the AFPEL was trying to win over the remaining PVO members and other leftist groups, who were still undecided about their loyalties, with a scheme which was called a Leftist Unity Plan. This was announced at a mass rally on 13 May 1948. It was thought this plan would bring about national unity. On 13 June, Prime Minister U Nu addressed a mass rally and clarified his 15-point program for leftist unity in a one and a half-hour speech which left no room for doubt in the minds of listeners that Burma had turned left, if not towards communism. What gave this impression was point 15 of the program which stated that the study of Marxism would be propagated in the country. This raised a furor abroad and foreign reaction was predictable: Burma had gone communist. Britain which still had vested interests in Burma was most alarmed and questions on Burma's integrity were asked in Parliament. Even some Burmese newspapers expressed bewilderment.

Foreign Minister U Tin Tut invited foreign and local pressmen to his office the next day to clear up misunderstandings created by U Nu's 15-point program. I also attended the press conference as a representative of the American Embassy. U Tin Tut definitely announced that Burma had not changed her policy and still desired the friendship of the Western democracies though U Nu also desired to establish political and commercial relationships with the Soviet Union and the Eastern democratic countries. He reaffirmed that Burma's foreign policy was strict neutrality and friendship with all nations. On my return to the office I assured American officials that Burma had not turned towards communism, but that it had clearly adopted a stronger leftist policy. However, I am afraid my assurances did not allay their fears.

In the early days of Burmese independence, both Burma and America were, so to way, rediscovering each other. Burmese- American relations go back more than a hundred years. As the result of an exchange of messages of good will and friendship between King Mindon and American President James Buchanan, the latter sent a diplomatic mission in 1858, with a letter to the Burmese King for establishing friendship between the two countries, and since then, Burmese-American relations have become closer and more firmly established, except during the hiatus caused by the British rule in Burma. As far as I could see, American policy in Burma was concerned with the reestablishment of goodwill and friendship between the two countries.

However, America was still cautious about offering economic or other forms of assistance. The Marshall Plan in Europe was being viewed with caution by the Burmese press. They suspected that US designs in aiding other countries was to draw them into their sphere of influence and regarded the Marshall Plan as a means to that end. Press comments were so unfavorable that Dr. Jochem, the Public Affairs Officer, held a press conference on 20 June 1948 and explained the purpose and operations of the Marshall Plan, which he said was primarily a European Recovery Plan. But the Hanthawaddy (21 June 1948) in an editorial comment, doubted the sincerity of the US aid for European recovery and summed it

up as a measure to counter the expansion of Soviet influence in Europe. By and large, however, American policy towards Burma in these days was unobtrusive and correct, though not properly understood by the Burmese.

Despite these handicaps, the American ambassador did his best to make the Burmese people understand American and the Americans by his personal effort to meet as many Burmese as he could. Mr. Huddle devoted himself to also understand the hopes and aspirations of the Burmese people. He held frequent social functions at which Burmese from a variety of backgrounds were invited. Ambassador Huddle mingled with his guests, and I could see him going among them with a box of Havana cigars which he offered to everyone. In those days I was a pipe smoker, but the ambassador would insist I smoke one of his cigars instead. One good result of this ambassadorial public relations was the visit to the USA of some leaders of the Trade Union Congress (Burma) led by Thakin Lwin, the President of the Labor Union. Their study tour was a great success and it was the first Burmese mission in post-independence days to visit the United States as guests of the American Government. Ambassador Huddle was successful in laying the foundations for better understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

Since the beginning of the New Year 1949, the situation in Burma had worsened. It was also about this time in February, if I remember correctly, that government employees went on a strike for better wages to meet the rising cost of living. This was all the services alike; the first was in 1947 when the AFPT launched the 'independence-within one year' movement. It is also a fact that at that time, government employees of all ranks had to take a 25% cut in their salaries because of low government funds. It was only a temporary measure but it aggravated the situation. Burma's currency in those days was tied with the sterling bloc and when the pound was devalued, it also brought down the value of the Burmese kyat. One good result of this, at least for the local employees in the embassy, was that the rate of exchange between the US dollar and the kyat also rose and since our salaries in those days were determined in US dollars, for one pay-period, we benefited by the new rate of exchange and everyone took home a bigger pay check.

The service strike affected us in a different way. They picketed the entrances to their offices, by lying prostrate on the ground before them. The entrance to our office in the Rander House building also underwent a siege, because government offices were in the same floor, with the result that we had to climb up the winding fire escape in the back lane to our office on the second floor. A rather stout American lady who was the Disbursing Officer, found the daily climb too much for her and she stopped coming to the office. The result was that there was no disbursement of our salaries for sometime. The senior officers were better off; they removed themselves to the embassy on Prome Road.

The rebellion was at its height. The communist rebels had been joined by some troops in the Burma Army. An infantry battalion of the Burma Rifles stationed at Thayet Myo had joined the rebels; some 350 troops from infantry and transport companies stationed at Mingaladon, some 10 miles out of downtown Rangoon, followed later. The Karen insurgency had also broken out sporadically. Major towns in Burma were attacked and occupied by Karen rebels who called themselves the Karen National Defense Organization (KNDO). Fighting broke out in Insein, 9 miles north of Rangoon. The capital city itself was threatened and some embassies considered evacuating families of their staff. Dr Andrus who had many Karen friends and former pupils was naturally concerned for their safety. He grieved for them, and I noticed his face growing haggard day by day. I too had many Karen

friends, but as a Burmese I was reluctant to make any comments on a situation which involved an ethnic race. Of course I was human enough be much saddened by the unnecessary waste of lives, both Karen and Burmese.

## Chapter Three

### **Timely Assistance**

In May 1949, Dr Andrus completed his tour of duty in Burma and was transferred as First Secretary, American Embassy, Karachi. Mr. Herbert Spivack now took over the Political Section as my new chief. From the start we got on very well and when he discovered that I was a contemporary of socialist ministers and senior government officials, while I was studying in college, and that I also knew Prime Minister U Nu very well, Mr. Spivack at once enlarged the scope of my duties. I was promoted to Political Assistant on an enhanced salary. I still did some translations but the embassy at my request subscribed to a News Translation Service run by U Tun Nyo, a retired Burmese educator who had opened a publishing business.

My work became more interesting as I was required to be in close and constant touch with leading politicians, journalists, businessmen and government officials. I was in the thick of things, so to say, at a time when Burma's history was being made. But at times doubts would assail me as to my usefulness to my country, working as I was in the American Embassy. I wondered whether I should not rejoin my old friends who were active in politics or return to government service and do something of more tangible benefit to the country. I was an interested observer of events marching by and when such moods came over me, I would sometimes try to convince myself that by putting Burma across in a true perspective towards a better understanding by the Americans, I was doing an important service to my country when viewed in the context of international relationship. It was not an easy task to explain socialism to the Americans who appear to have an aversion for the word and who would consider any move slightly left of center, as leaning towards the communist orbit, despite Burma's neutrality. Getting to know and understand Americans generally was also something I did not find easy.

I would discuss these doubts with Mr. Spivack whom I had come to know better and he would suggest that if I had any qualms about my job, I should rejoin my old friends and take up politics again. He also said something I was to remember years later. "You will also find it difficult to work with Americans in the embassy for long."

As events later turned out, he was quite right, but I was young enough then to be optimistic that the Americans could contribute much towards Burma's welfare and that I should assist towards that end by continuing to work with them.

At about this time, the American Embassy moved to its present premises at 581, Merchant Street. The building, formerly owned by Balthazar and Sons, was large and suitable for an embassy. It also had a good frontage facing Maha Bandoola Park. The staff of the embassy both Americans and locals had also increased. The embassy also awaited the arrival of the new ambassador, as Mr. Huddle had completed his assignment and left Burma on 28 November 1949.

One day in February 1950, my old friend Thakin Kyaw Sein, of the People's Literature House, phoned me at my office and said he wanted to see me on an urgent matter. Here, I think, I must explain the connection between Thakin Kyaw Sein who was a Marxist and myself. Thakin Kyaw Sein's wife and mine were in school together since they were very young and are very close friends. We husbands naturally came to know one another well and

also became good friends. Thakin Kyaw Sein was the proprietor of the People's Literature House, which sold books on all subjects and from all lands. It was a popular retreat for browsing book lovers and scholars.

The juxtaposition of Soviet and Western publications also gave the shop an intriguing atmosphere and Thakin Kyaw Sein himself was somewhat of an enigma; he was also a politician, but not an active one at that time, but still a keen observer of politics. Albeit a Marxist, he was liberal in his views and not antagonistic to views expressed by some of my capitalist friends, the Americans. Through me, he had come to know Mr. Spivack who was now married to Miss Florence Paw Tun, daughter of Sir Paw Tun, (one-time Prime Minister in pre-war Burma) and his American wife. I think Herbert Spivack and Thakin Kyaw Sein got along well enough despite the difference in their political ideology. There were many occasions when Thakin Kyaw Sein and I would visit Herbert Spivack and talk shop; we sometimes talked and argued politics late into the night. Having married a Burmese wife, Mr. Spivack wanted to know more about Burma.

The People's Literature House was just a short distance away from our embassy and it was a favorite place for foreign diplomats who might find themselves rubbing shoulders with a minister of the government one day or with a long-haired, unkempt member of a leftist political organization the next. When I got there, Thakin Kyaw Sein took me to his office, after leaving word with his assistant that we were not to be disturbed. As soon as we were seated, he said abruptly, "Ko Tin Tut, you must help us. We need American help and assistance."

The fact that our country was in need of assistance did not surprise me because the internal insurrection was causing a heavy financial drain and her coffers were fast becoming empty. Many well-filled government treasuries had been looted by the rebels, as one major town after another fell to them. What surprised me, and I think, Mr. Spivack too, was that a socialist country like Burma should turn to a capitalist country like America for help. Thakin Kyaw Sein said he had been asked by a high authority, to put out a feeler to the American Embassy; the government did not want to face a rebuff, by making an outright request for aid, not knowing in advance how it would be received. Indeed, the situation in the country was critical. So much so, that as a matter of dire necessity, government employees had to take a 25% cut in their salaries.

Thakin Kyaw Sein, who knew I would take this up with Mr. Spivack, said "The situation is so bad, I am not at liberty to go into details, but we need American help and assistance soon." He added,

"The Soviets have somehow got wind of this, and they are offering all kinds of aid to our ambassador in New Delhi, but we don't want to have dealings yet with the Soviets."

On his further assurance that I could regard it more or less as an official approach, and that the matter was urgent, I promised to let him know how the embassy reacted to this bit of news. On my return to the office, I immediately reported to Mr. Spivack all that Thakin Kyaw Sein had told me. He listened with grave attention, and then asked me how much reliance we could place on Thakin Kyaw Sein's startling statements.

"How close is Thakin Kyaw Sein to the government?" Mr. Spivack wanted to know.

I told him what I knew of Thakin Kyaw Sein; how he was a close associate of U Ba Swe, President of the Burma Socialist Party and Secretary-General of the AFPEL and the

probability that it was U Ba Swe who had commissioned Thakin Kyaw Sein to put out this feeler, since U Ba Swe was aware of Thakin Kyaw Sein's association with me. Mr. Spivack realized that the matter was urgent and merited serious consideration, so he asked me to bring Thakin Kyaw Sein to his house that night after dinner.

Mr. Spivack's house was at 69 Cheape Road<sup>8</sup> and since then, it has become the official residence of succeeding first secretaries of the embassy. Apropos I must mention that Mr. Spivack had been promoted First Secretary. Thakin Kyaw Sein and I arrived at his house at about 8:30 p.m. and I prepared myself for an interesting evening. Flory Spivack, though just recently married, quickly fell into her role as a diplomat's wife, said "Good Night" and left us men to ourselves.

I then turned to Thakin Kyaw Sein, "Now you just tell Mr. Spivack what you told me today and try to convince him about the country's need and its urgency. I shall just sit and listen."

Drink in hand, I settled back and listened with attention to what they said. Thakin Kyaw Sein, I must say, has a fine command of English and speaks and writes it with great facility. Besides, he is also a forceful speaker. He did not mention any names and begged to be excused on that point, because he said the matter of foreign help had not yet come before the AFPEL Executive Committee, nor before the Cabinet. He said the matter would be pursued according to how the Americans reacted. He assured Mr. Spivack that he spoke on behalf of a high authority and went into more details of the pressing needs facing Burma and the urgency of the required assistance.

He reported that Burma had been trying to sell her rice in foreign markets to bolster her financial position, but had found that her traditional buyers could not buy her rice because of their war-torn economy. They themselves appeared to be dependent on outside assistance to revive their economies. He side that at that particular moment, A Burmese trade mission was in Tokyo, negotiating with the Japanese authorities to sell rice, but were meeting some difficulties. Japan, at that time was under the supreme Allied Commander, General Douglas MacArthur.

Thakin Kyaw Sein suggested that in order to relieve Burma's urgent financial difficulties, the United States Government, as the occupying power in Japan, and also responsible for the welfare of the people, whose devastated lands were not ready for cultivation of vital food grains, however badly needed. He said Burma did not want American aid in the form of financial loans, but such indirect help, as he proposed, could be more prompt and effective to Burma in her present situation. Mr. Spivack also remarked that the question of financial aid could only be decided by Congress. Regarding the Soviet proposals, Mr. Spivack wanted to know why the Burmese Government did not take them up, since the offer of assistance was made by one socialist country to another. Thakin Kyaw Sein's reply was,

"We don't know half about them, as we do of you."

Burma was also beginning her first contact with the USSR and agreement had been reached in February 1948 for exchange of diplomatic relations between the two countries, but ambassadors had not yet been appointed.

We all laughed at Thakin Kyaw Sein's reply, and I thought to myself that Mr. Spivack must think the Burmese very naïve to gauge the measure of the two countries in such an important matter, on the casual acquaintanceship the Burmese had of both. But I think the simplicity of approach finally convinced Mr. Spivack, Thakin Kyaw Sein emphasized that the United States should help Burma to be really strong and independent and as an ex-colonial country Burma would jealously look after her own independence. The words I have put down on these pages, spoken twenty-five years ago, will not adequately convey the sense of urgency of the situation as recounted by Thakin Kyaw Sein, to clinch his arguments conclusively.

It was past midnight when Herbert Spivack turned to Thakin Kyaw Sein and said, "Alright, I am convinced of your needs. I will even go so far as to tell you that you can sit down at that typewriter and present your case which I will immediately forward to Washington."

We then relaxed and after a while took leave of our host. I dropped Thakin Kyaw Sein at his house and returned home. The night was over but the day had already begun for me. I reviewed all that Thakin Kyaw Sein and Mr. Spivack discussed, the arguments and the questions and the many speculations that had occurred to us during the discussions. I marshaled all my thoughts in neat order, for on arrival at the office, I would have to prepare a memorandum of the momentous session we had.

I dictated the memo to Ko Ko Gyi and when it was ready, had it sent up to Mr. Spivack. The matter did not end there. Mr. Spivack also arranged for Thakin Kyaw Sein to meet Mr. Henry B. Day, the Charge d'Affaires a.i., to whom Thakin Kyaw Sein again presented his case. As a result, Mr. Day gave the matter high priority and I am sure that it was due to their efforts that timely US assistance arrived at a time when Burma's need was urgent. Therefore, I was not surprised to learn sometime later, about the successful conclusion of the rice deal with the Japanese and also to read one day a report in the newspapers that the US Griffin Mission, so called after its leader Mr. Griffin, a body of economic and financial experts, on an official survey of economic conditions in SE Asia would be visiting Burma. Mr. Spivack had apparently been busy and the Griffin Mission which did not at first have Burma on its itinerary, arrived in Rangoon on 23 March 1950. It was fortuitous that the Griffin Mission was in the neighborhood soon after we had that talk with Thakin Kyaw Sein, barely a month ago. The Griffin Mission completed its survey of Burma's economy on 3 April.

The new American Ambassador Mr. David Mekendree Key arrived on 21 March 1950.

## Chapter Four

### **American Aid to Burma**

Mr. David Mekendree Key presented his credentials to the President of the Union of 26 April 1950. A new phase opened for the American Embassy in Burma. It was a period when the embassy would be mainly concerned with economic assistance to Burma. The receipt of a £6 million Commonwealth loan gave the government a breathing spell and eased the financial situation.

As the result of the report of the Griffin Mission, an Economic Co-operation Agreement was signed in Rangoon on 13 September 1950 between Burma and the United States of America. The Hon'ble David Mckendree Key signed on behalf of the USA and the Hen'ble Sao Hkun Hkiom, the Foreign Minister, on behalf of Burma. American aid to Burma was called ECA (Economic Co-operation Agreement) in the first year, MSA (Mutual Security Administration) in the second year and TCA (Technical Co-operation Agreement) in the third and final year. For the successful implementation of the program, the Special Technical and Economic Mission (STEM) arrived from the States. This was assted from Burma by the Burmese Economic Aid Committee (BEAC).

Under the agreement, the United States Government would render aid to Burma to the value of \$10 millions for the financial year ending 30 June 1951. The projects to be carried out with this aid were to be determined largely by the requirements of the Burmese Government. They might extend to a wide variety of fields including agriculture, mining, transportation, communications, medical and public health, and the detailed working of the aid program was to be decided by mutual agreement between the two governments. On the whole, Burmese press reaction was favorable.

The Hanthawaddy (15 September 1950), an influential Burmese daily in an editorial comment recalled that even Stalin had to admit that the Soviets had to invoke American aid during the period of Russia's economic rehabilitation and development. It pointed out that the acceptance by Burma of American aid was purely on a cooperative and reciprocal basis and would be her benefit than to her detriment. Another leading Burmese daily the Bamakhit (18 September 1950), with the largest circulation in the country, scouted the notion prevalent in certain quarters that by accepting the Agreement, political strings would be attached to it and Burma would come under the American yoke.

The Nation (15 September 1950), the leading English language daily had this to say: "Burma has nothing to lose and every thing to gain by signing this Agreement. Burma has had to make no changes in the structure of her foreign or domestic policies. The Agreement has no secret clauses, no strings attached. It will bear scrutiny in the United Nations to which in fact a copy of the document is being forwarded."

The Economic Co-operation Agreement was ratified by the Union Parliament on 5 October 1950. In answer to critics from the extreme Left group who declared that acceptance of the Agreement meant handing over control of Burma's economy to America, Prime Minister U Nu hyperbolically termed it "a gift cow with golden teeth."

After a slow start, American economic assistance to Burma began to shape up into specific projects. Twelve were planned and among the most urgent was the rehabilitation of

the port of Rangoon, which was almost totally destroyed during the war, and the State-owned Inland Water Transport, which was to get desperately needed vessels to supplement its riverine services. With the extreme Left denouncing the program as an "imperialist venture," the situation called for tact on the American side, and it was fortunate that Ambassador Key had a better than ordinary understanding of Burmese sensibilities. He was a career diplomat, distinguished in appearance, but stern of visage. He was well-liked in government circles for his unflinching courtesy and efficiency in his official relations. He was primarily responsible for establishing US aid to Burma on a firm footing and successful progression of the economic projects. He devoted his whole time to his job and did not have close personal dealings with either the American or local members of his staff.

The relations between Burma and America progressed so well that the communist bloc, fearing to lose Burma to the Western democracies, and with its usual disregard for truth, planted a misleading story in the Hindustan Standard of 26 March 1951 with a London dateline (24 March) about American intentions in Burma, purported to be a report made by Mr. Key while on a recent visit to Washington. The report reads in part:

"American Ambassador to Burma, Mr. David McKendree Key, who was appointed to Burma last year and recently visited Washington, is understood from high diplomatic quarters, to have reported to the American State Department that Burma could only deal with "internal rebels and external Chinese communists" and could also be made safe for American investments with the aid of Nationalist Chinese military leadership, similar to General Stilwell's command during the war."

Mr. Key's report is also understood to have indicated that the U Nu Government is 'weak' that 'instability' of the Rangoon Administration is still persisting and Burma is thus unsuitable for any American investment."

The italics are mine. 'Rangoon Administration' or the 'Rangoon Government' is a term used contemptuously by the communists when referring to the Government of the Union of Burma. This characteristic usage alone was sufficient to expose the falsity of the report and the perfidy of the communists. The report about Ambassador Key was clearly not in keeping with his excellent relationship with the Burmese Government. Besides, it was Ambassador Key who had signed the economic agreement on behalf of the US Government and was the last person to have concocted such a report which was credited to him.

Immediately this news report appeared in the New Times of Burma on 29 May 1951, Mr. Henry B. Day, Charge d' Affairs a.i. flatly denied the story as having "no foundation in fact."

The text of the American Embassy's statement was as follows.

"The article which appeared in the Hindustan Standard of 26 March 1951, with a London dateline of 24 March and which alleges that the American ambassador to Burma, now in Washington, has made certain recommendations is wholly false. It is based on entirely false suppositions. It is a complete fabrication with absolutely no foundation in fact."

I had every reason to remember this incident, because Jerry Donohue, the Press Officer and I had left the office in the early afternoon to play golf with some government officials at the Rangoon Golf Club. An embassy car arrived to fetch us just as we had finished the ninth hole. Jerry and I rushed back to the office and I personally distributed the embassy statement to all the local presses.

In the American Embassy's promotion of friendship and understanding between the two countries, I must mention an American who, by his personal relationship with Burmese people, had contributed a great deal to the establishment of closer ties of friendship and understanding between the two peoples. Mr. Lewis M. Purnell, generally known as Skipper to his friends, joined the American Embassy in Rangoon as Political Officer in July 1949. He and I worked closely together and became good friends and we still keep in touch up to now.

The situation in the country was confusing with changing shifts in the fighting between government forces and the multi-colored rebels (i.e. White Flag and Red Flag communists, White and Yellow band PVOs and the KNDO rebels). But Skipper was a keen observer and a careful analyst of the political scene and he had a host of Burmese friends who helped him to assess the situation correctly. He was a soft spoken and very friendly American, especially to the Burmese, with no pretensions whatsoever, and he and his wife Matilda (Til to all Burmese friends) charmed their way into the affections of the Burmese. They entertained frequently, and Burmese friends predominated on these occasions.

Skipper was a great asset to the American mission in Burma and contributed much to its success during his assignment here. Skipper was a good friend of the Burmese and they all were sad when he and his family left Rangoon, in April 1951. He was DCM in the American Embassy, Jakarta, Indonesia, in 1971 and is now DCM, Manila, Philippines. He has been in our part of the world for sometime now and I have often wished he'd be sent to Burma as an ambassador one of these days. He would make a fine one, and I am sure he will be very successful too.

There was another attaché, who did not take his job too seriously. Once, he took off on an up-country trip, without waiting for permission from the Foreign Office. He took it for granted that it would be given, and he enjoyed himself up in the Naga Hills, with the Deputy Commissioner, Mr. Jud Carrot. On his return to Rangoon, he found a note from the Foreign Office, withholding permission for his trip up north for security reasons.

He was Alfred Wells, a nice enough guy, who got on very well with the Burmese, except on one occasion, when he and I called on U Aung Than, elder brother of our martyred national leader General Aung San. He was also at that time, President of the People's Peace Front. We arrived one early morning at his house on Kyaukkon Road, and were entertained to tea and cakes. I must mention that U Aung Than was one of the leaders of a coalition of leftist political organizations. Wells began to discuss leftist philosophy with U Aung Than, and after a while, I noticed that A1 was baiting U Aung Than, and finding some amusement in doing so.

U Aung Than, who, at first, was not aware of this, was serious on his part. However, it gradually dawned on him that Wells was poking fun at all the Burmese leftists. U Aung Than, always noted for his short temper, blew up, and began a tirade against Western imperialists and capitalists. Both men soon began to lose their tempers and it fell to me to placate both of them, until they became less vehement and simmered down. Finally we took our leave and returned to the office. A1 was still annoyed and red in the face, but he soon saw the funny side of it: a politician and a diplomat, both grown men, losing their tempers over an argument, and was again his genial self.

Within the next few days, the Burma Workers and Peasants Party issued a statement to the press, castigating rude, nousey, American diplomats and their running-dogs. The last, I

think, was an allusion to me, though I was only an amused spectator at that time. This all happened "in the line of duty" and there was nothing I could do about it, except endure the ignominy.

There is yet another American, I must mention, who made an impression on the Burmese. His sincerity won him the friendship of many Burmese and through them, he was able to bring about a better understanding of Americans and their mission in Burma. He was Mr. Lionel Landry, Public Affairs Officer, USIS, who was in Rangoon from 1953 to 1956. I came to have a high regard for him. He was a scholarly and cultured person, but when occasion arose, he could play and be good fun too. His costume ball held at his residence, 25 Dubern Road on 29 December 1954, was a gala affair, where everyone who attended had a great time. It is still remembered with nostalgia by old timers like me.

He had a great regard and affection for the Burmese and these finally led to his marriage to Miss Ruth Kin Maung, daughter of U Kin Maung, a retired Burma Frontier Service official, and at that time, the Managing Director of the Nation. He later wrote a book, "The Land and the People of Burma" and he says that among the reasons writing it was a desire for his children to become acquainted with their Burmese as well as American heritage. He now lives with his family in Connecticut, in woods which he says are "reminiscent of Anisakan, a favorite picnic spot for the people of Maymyo." Lionel retired from the USIA and is now the Executive Director of the Asia Society, New York City.

## Chapter Five

### American Profiles

Mr. William J. Sebald succeeded Mr. Mekendree Key as the new American ambassador to Burma. He presented his credentials to the President of the Union on 18 July 1952. Mr. Sebald was not a career diplomat, but had some years' experience in the Far East. In fact, he served as Political Advisor to General Douglas MacArthur, when the latter was Supreme Commander in Japan, and the virtual ruler of that conquered nation at the end of World War II. I think it was while he was there that he married his wife, a Japanese lady.

Actually, Mrs. Sebald's nationality was British; her father was a British barrister, who practiced in Japan, and then married a Japanese peeress. Mrs. Sebald later adopted US nationality, but always claimed to be Japanese. Mrs. Sebald was a lady of distinction, even in the Western manner and was besides, very charming and friendly to all those who came to know her. I came to know her too, when I was asked to interpret for her when she consulted Saya Kyaw, a famous astrologer and soothsayer, who had been recommended to her by Prime Minister U Nu, who was an ardent believer in astrology and all things spiritual- he never did anything momentous without first consulting Saya Kyaw for auspicious signs. Mrs. Sebald too, like all Asians, believed in astrology and also like all good Asian wives, wanted to know what the stars held for her husband's future.

The séance which was held at the ambassador's residence was also attended by Madame Sao Shwe Thaike, wife of the President of the Union of Burma. Saya Kyaw, after ascertaining the birth date of the ambassador sat in a posture of meditation and gradually went into a trance. Later, I interpreted his predictions to Mrs. Sebald and this was what he saw in the ambassador's future. First, he said the ambassador would resign from his post in Rangoon and return to the United States. This came as a great surprise to Mrs. Sebald and to us. The situation in Rangoon was calm and American-Burmese relations, excellent-there was no indication, whatsoever, that the American ambassador would have to resign. But Saya Kyaw was adamant- that was what he saw. Continuing, he said that Mr. Sebald would be offered a higher appointment by his government, but that he should decline it, because it would have bad consequences for him. Finally, Saya Kyaw said, Mr. Sebald would be offered a high appointment in the lumber industry, and said he should take it up, because it would be greatly rewarding.

Mrs. Sebald, Madame Sao Shwe Thaike and I were puzzled, but Madame Sao Shwe Thaike told us that Saya Kyaw's predictions were usually true. However, Saya Kyaw, in this case, was wrong. Mr. Sebald did not resign; and after his assignment in Burma, he was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. I learnt later, that after serving as US ambassador to Australia, he retired and is now residing in Naples, Florida, U.S.A.

Mrs. Sebald was the First Lady among the American community in Rangoon, but because she was Japanese, she was resented by some embassy wives, who had to give precedence to her as the ambassador's wife. Ambassador Sebald too, did not make himself popular with his staff or with the Burmese people. He had an arrogant air, and his bearing, somewhat, resembled that of his old boss, General MacArthur. As one American put it, he had the 'aloofness of a high caste Brahmin.' His manner in dealing with people was distant and he did not mix well with them but he did his job conscientiously.

I also had a new chief. Dr Albert Franklin was now First Secretary of Embassy. He was a career foreign service officer, but looked more like a college professor. Outside of his work, he took a keen interest in oriental religious philosophy and the practice of Vipasana meditation. He also took up the study of Yoga. Throughout his term of office in Rangoon, he followed both these pursuits with great diligence. Those spiritual exercises, I am told, develop discipline of both mind and body. At any rate, Dr Franklin made many Burmese friends, especially among the Rangoon University Faculties of Philosophy and of Oriental Studies. He also came to know the great teachers of Vipasana practice.

In all his dealings with Americans or with the Burmese, Dr Franklin behaved more like a scholar than like an embassy official. He was always courteous to everyone he met and took great pains to conform to the manners and customs of the Burmese. It was at his suggestion that I prepared a paper on "Burmese Mode of Address." Burmese names are often very confusing to foreigners since the Burmese do not have surnames, and Burmese wives seldom use the name of their husbands. Thus U San's wife might be called Daw Mya and his son be known as Maung Tin.

Burmese people are never addressed without the use of a courtesy title prefixed to their names. These are a bit confusing at first. A boy's name is prefixed with the title Maung and a girl's name with the title Ma while they are still in their teens. An older man may address a much younger one with the prefix Maung while the younger man will address an older one with the courtesy title U. In the feminine version, a younger woman will address an older one with the title Daw. These two titles U and Daw also denote some official or social standing by his name only and without the usual prefixes by friends of equal age or standing, he is never so addressed by a woman.

Equally so, a Burmese woman who is elderly or is of some social standing is never addressed without the prefix Daw. This prefix is also used in addressing married Burmese women. However, there is no means of differentiating between a married Burmese woman and an unmarried one by the form of the address used. In all these forms of usage, it should be noticed that the difference in the respective ages of the persons concerned plays a great part in the style of address adopted: courtesy and respect for age being inherent in the Burmese people.

On one occasion, Dr and Mrs. Franklin were guests at my house and I had also invited Dr. Hla Bu, Professor of Philosophy and U Aung Than, Professor of Pali of Rangoon University to meet the Franklins. Mrs. Franklin, unaccustomed to Burmese etiquette, addressed U Aung Than as Aung Than without the courtesy title.

Dr Franklin immediately corrected his wife.

"Nancy, you must always address Burmese gentlemen with the prefix U and in this case, you should say U Aung Than. To say just 'Aung Than' is very rude."

Mrs. Franklin apologized at once. Dr Franklin was very meticulous about observing Burmese etiquette and customs, even to the extent of rebuking his wife in public. He was a refreshing change from the usual run of American Foreign Service officers, both male and female, many of whom never even bothered to learn the customs and usages of the Burmese people and who never realized that Asian peoples also have their pride and dignity. In my time with the American Embassy, I was to hear an elderly Burmese gentleman, a retired

senior government official, addressed by name only, by an American woman employee in the embassy, young enough to be his daughter.

Years later, I myself was addressed in a similar manner by a woman Foreign Service officer who was much younger than myself. Yet she was a student of our language and not unaware of our customs and usages. However there were other ladies who compensated for the lack of manners displayed by others. Such a person was Miss Ruth Lorena Lewis, (she died on 23 May 1969) who was the Information Officer of the Rangoon USIS, from 1948 to 1950. She was the soul of courtesy and her friendliness towards people, won her hordes of Burmese friends. On her departure from Burma, Ruth was almost hidden under the mass of floral garlands presented by her Burmese friends who had come to send her off at the airport. It is not surprising that Miss Lewis won the Superior Service Award in 1955 and the Merit Honor Award in 1965.

Then again there was another woman staffer of the embassy, who projected her personality among the Burmese with so much warmth and goodwill that she won the hearts of both young and old. She was Mrs. Zelma S. Graham, who was the Director of the USIS library. Both Zelma and her husband had been Church Mission teachers in Rangoon from 1937 to 1941. After her husband's death in Burma, Zelma chose to make Rangoon her home and she took over the management of the USIS library from September 1948 until it closed down in December 1965. She did her job so well that she was awarded the Distinguished Service Award in 1959.

The majority of the local employees in the library were women and Zelma soon became a second mother to them and in turn grand-mother to their children. Even after she left Burma for assignments elsewhere, Zelma would return for visits to Rangoon for a reunion with her Burmese family. She was always pleasantly surprised at her family of rapidly growing-up children whom she knew in many cases as toddlers. Her last and final visit was in December 1967 when she spent a few days with her friends. I was also very fond of Zelma and she in turn showed her affection for my family in many ways. Zelma and I both began work in the American Embassy in 1948 and throughout the long years of our association, I came to have a tremendous regard for the successful one-woman public relations campaign she conducted in furtherance of American-Burmese friendship. It all stemmed from the goodness of her heart and her respect and love for the Burmese people.

There is yet another whom I must mention, if not for anything else but for her love for the Burmese people. She was the kind of American who is very unassuming and a good mixer, who made many friends in Rangoon. She was Miss Gilda R. Duly and when I met her in 1949, she was the Consular Officer in the embassy, the first woman to hold this position in the embassy in Rangoon. Gill's regard for her Burmese friends was warm and close. She enjoyed their company even to having dinner with them at a Chinese road-side shop. She is now retired and lives quietly in Honolulu. Gill sends me a card at every Christmas and an occasional letter

I think people all over the world are basically the same. They respond to kindness and understanding. This is truer of people in the developing countries.

## Chapter Six

### Russian Interlude

Regarding relationship between Burmese and foreigners, let me relate about an informal meeting of a few Burmese among whom were two political leaders, two noted writers and myself, and two officials of the Soviet Embassy, one a Counselor, Mr. Dyukorov and the other, the First Secretary, Mr. Nicolai Statskivitch. The meeting took place at my house. U Thoung, (who writes under the pen name of Aung Bala, now Deputy Director, News and Periodicals Corporation), and my brother-in-law, U Htin Gyi, (another writer and now Director, Printing and Publishing Corporation), asked me if I would like to meet some officials of the Soviet Embassy on a social basis. Never having met, let alone sat down with the Russians, I was intrigued and replied that I would be glad to invite them to my house for dinner, if my chief approved.

It was therefore with some misgivings that I approached Mr. Franklin the next day. The Soviet Embassy had opened in Rangoon only in the last year and little was then known of the activities of the Soviets; the Burmese were thus unacquainted with the Russians. Moreover, there was little or no contact between them and officers of our embassy.

Mr. Franklin readily gave me permission to "find out how the other side lives" as I put it to him and he was also very helpful by sending me two bottles of Johnny Walker Black and a carton of American cigarettes for entertainment purposes. He evidently knew what the Russians liked. It was well he did, and also as an afterthought he sent two more bottles via my back door, while we Burmese were still in the midst of a good-natured argument with our Russian guests!

The two Russians arrived promptly in a huge limousine driven by a Russian chauffeur. Unlike other embassies which employed local people, the Russians employed their own people to avoid having aliens in their embassy. Among my other Burmese guests, there were also U Aung Than, elder brother of General Aung San and U Wan Maung, Ex-Police officer and leader of the police strike during Burma's post-war struggle for independence. These were the two political leaders, while the other two I have already mentioned earlier, U Thoung and U Htin Gyi.

At first the Burmese guests were cautious in their conversational approach. On the other hand, the Russians, sensing this, were very affable and created an atmosphere of informality by asking permission to take off their coats. The mood lightened and as the whisky flowed, conversation became more general and animated. Two of my Burmese guests had leftist leaning and it was a grand opportunity for them to know more about the Soviet philosophy at first hand. As a matter of fact, they seized it with both hands as the discussions went on late into the early hours of the next morning.

The remaining three of us, who had no such leanings, but were open-minded, got into long and friendly argument with our two Russian guests. First one or the other would reply, but not before they conferred a while in their language between themselves. We also exchanged information on the way of life, culture, customs and tradition of the Burmese and the Russian people. The dinner was a typically Burmese one and both our Russian guests enjoyed it. Conversation flowed round the dining table, with the Russians and our political leaders holding forth. The discussions and arguments did not lag even after dinner and it went

on with no one appearing to be tired or bored. We were meeting the Russians for the first time, and so to say, on our home ground too, and this probably had a stimulating effect on us. It was as if the party had just begun.

Throughout all this, my wife was an amused onlooker, though she also had to join in when our Russian guests found out that she was a lecturer in the Department of Philosophy at the Rangoon University. (In the late forenoon of the same day, our Russian friends sent my wife many books on philosophy, but mostly by Karl Marx, Engels, Lenin and other famous Russian philosophers).

Round about 3 a.m. our Russian guests apologized for keeping us all up so late and I replied with the usual words of Burmese hospitality – "My house is yours." Our other friends also left, expressing their pleasure at the meeting with the Russians. One thing struck me. The Russians never asked me awkward questions even when they knew I worked in the American Embassy. To show their liberalism, they even assured me that, should I ever wish to visit the Soviet Union, there would be no difficulty about a visa. I think it was a sincere offer and I have often wished I could have taken advantage of it. Both the Russians were likeable persons and my only regret is that I have not met them again after their assignment in Burma ended. Wherever they are, I wish them well.

Russian policy in the immediate post-war period was to encourage and assist national liberation movements led by communist parties in the countries of South East Asia, including Burma. However, by 1952, local communist organizations were on their own and without active assistance from the Soviet Communist Party. Probably, this shift in policy enabled the Soviets to engage in friendlier intercourse with the peoples of SE Asia countries, where native communists were launching power struggles, or as they preferred to call them – national liberation movements.

A sequel to this meeting was that my wife and I were invited to the first reception held by the Soviet ambassador to mark the anniversary of the October Revolution Day. There was, however, one thing unusual in our relations with the Russians. They never invited us to their homes, while they would willingly come to ours. Most of the time, we met at the Union of Burma Club. I must say, the Russians go to a great deal of personal inconvenience to contact and make friends with the Burmese, whom they had come to know as a friendly people. Regardless of their official positions, they behave just like ordinary people and are always informal and friendly in their relationship with the Burmese. They sit out the time, once they get going with a group of Burmese, be it at a club or a restaurant or as with me, in a Burmese home. This patience and perseverance they cultivate and endure, unlike American officials who confine themselves to a clique of some few government officials, westernized in their outlook and upbringing, who like to fraternize with the Anglo-Americans in preference to the Russians and other European people.

On one occasion, I took Mr. Franklin to my club, the Union of Burma Club, a beautifully situated, palatial building on the royal Lakes, where in the evenings the upper strata of Rangoon's society relax and enjoy themselves. It was also a good place to meet ministers and officials of the government and also the leading politicians. I knew most of them, and through them I was able to keep abreast with current affairs. I formed a table with some friends, one of whom was the Auditor-General, another a university professor and the third a businessman. We just had time for a round of drinks as Mr. Franklin had a cocktail party to attend and could not stay too long. I was disappointed because the conversation was

getting interesting and we had to leave in a short while. The Americans, I am afraid, are victims of the diplomatic cocktail circuit, which is almost a daily affair.

One American friend confided to me that he and his wife had not had a proper dinner on many occasions, and if they did manage to have one after the party, it was usually very late and a cold one at that. I did not envy him and I for one, attended only the unavoidable receptions. I am not unsociable, but except for a few ultra-westernized people, the Burmese generally do not enjoy cocktail parties, where the accent is on moving round, meeting various people, indulging in gossip and small talk and very soon afterwards forgetting the names of the people you were introduced to. Burmese ministers and top political leaders usually shied away from these parties, except when the occasion was a national holiday of some country or other.

It was a pity Americans could not find the time to stay longer among new-found Burmese friends at informal gatherings, where they could get to know each other better. On the other hand, the Russians, as I discovered, are most patient and enduring when they meet the Burmese at the club or elsewhere through mutual friends. They will sit out the evening with their Burmese friends, even if the talk is on commonplace things and no politics are discussed. This attitude is unlike that of the Americans who usually plunge into the conversation with blunt questions on the political situation and feel aggrieved if they don't get the answers they want. This sort of approach immediately puts the Burmese on the defensive.

However, the Russians, wait till they and the Burmese come to know each other well enough before discussing Burmese politics. Some of the Americans, I am sorry to say, are impatient and intolerant of the subtle approach. It is a most deplorable trait, as I was often to remark to my chief, and one not calculated to win them many friends. As one high Burmese official said to me, "Your Americans think they can pump us for information just by inviting us to their homes for a few drinks".

I am afraid this is true, but Americans make better leeway with Burmese journalists, those tough and easy going people, who are never averse to sitting down with Americans to discourse on all kinds of subjects, so long as the drinks are flowing: that after all is their way of life. How much information the Americans gained is a matter for conjecture.

## Chapter Seven

### **An Embarrassment**

American aid to Burma, known successfully as ECA, MSA and TCA was terminated on 30 June 1953 at the request of the Government of Burma. Prime Minister U Nu, however, paid tribute to the American Government and people for their invaluable assistance towards the rehabilitation and development of war-damaged Burma, when speaking at the formal opening of the Aung San Demonstration Centre. He said: "I would like to thank the Government and people of the United States of America for their sincere motive in giving us the most needed assistance and may God bless the peoples of the two countries."

In view of the fact, however, that considerable sums had already been invested in the projects now underway in Burma, the Burmese and American governments began a series of negotiations working on the principle of preventing economic wastage and the nullifying of work already well in hand. After protracted negotiations, the agreement reached provided for the completion of certain projects, even though these would carry into the period beyond the deadline. For this, the US Government was to make available a further \$6 millions worth of goods and services, thus bringing the total amount of the aid received by Burma under the agreement to \$18 millions out of the \$31 millions she might have had.

The Foreign Office Note terminating the ECA received by the American ambassador on 17 March 1953 emphasized that it was no reflection on the TCA program or personnel. But the main reason behind this rejection was the presence of Nationalist Chinese troops in Burmese territory, who were suspected of being supported by American arms and dollars. Burma stopped US aid so that she could have a free hand-which was thought impossible, if aid was to be continued.

As a result of their defeat on the Chinese mainland, over 2000 Kuomintang troops took refuge on the borders of Burma, Thailand and Indo-China in 1949. Apart from punitive expeditions sent against these forces, the Burmese Government could do nothing effective to expel them, because of the insurgency in its own areas. The Burmese Government, however, made a request to the government of the United States of America to use its influence on the Formosa government to have these KMT troops withdrawn from Burma, as their presence was considered territorial aggression against Burma. Burmese leaders firmly believed that the American Government had influence over these KMT troops because they were sure that the Central Intelligence Agency of the USA was financing and directing the KMT operations.

Also, documents captured from the KMT revealed that there were definite orders for KMT troops to create border incidents as to jeopardize the relationship between the Union Government and the Chinese Republican Government. Instructions clearly stated that every endeavor must be made to launch attacks on the border outposts in the guise of Chinese Republican forces. Concrete evidence of such an incident was brought to light when Kyugok was occupied on 14 February 1953 by KMT forces and pre-KMT elements all over Burma, launched whispering campaigns that the town was occupied by Chinese Republican forces and not the KMT<sup>9</sup>.

Burma at first did not take up the matter in the United Nations because the government feared that it would result in more international complications. Burma kept quiet, because she considered that the matter could be settled outside the United Nations. Regarding this, Justice U Myint Thein, speaking before the UN said: "Efforts at settlement went through the Embassy of the USA at Rangoon and though we had been given encouragement and hope, instead of the forces withdrawing from our country, they grew in size and equipment."

However he thanked the American Embassy for all the help they rendered to the Burmese Government. It was also as he said earlier in the UN: "because we do not wish to add tensions to an already tense world." This remark was made by him, at the 1951 UNGA session in Paris, when the Polish delegate quoting a Rangoon dateline in an English paper, reported that 12000 KMT troops had been transported in US planes. Justice U Myint Thein had to intervene in the debate, thereby giving worldwide publicity to the KMT problem. But by 1952, the scattered bands of KMTs had been mobilized and their continued presence and seizure of towns in the Shan States, presented them as a serious military problem. KMT strength in Burma was estimated at 12000 troops. They were also unified into a single command under General Siu Kuo Chuan, commanding the 26<sup>th</sup> Division at Mong Hsat in the Southern Shan States.

The Burmese army launched operations against the entrenched KMT troops and the government also decided to take up the matter in the United Nations. The denial of the Formosa Government regarding its responsibility also speeded Burma's decision. Now that the ECA was terminated, the Burmese Government felt itself free of obligations to the United States Government when submitting its complaint in the United Nations on 25 March 1953.

Justice U Myint Thein, leader of the Burmese delegation, very ably presented Burma's case against the Formosan Government at the seventh session of the UNGA on 17 April 1953. He traced the history of the KMT intrusion into Burma, and detailed accounts of their operations against the Burmese Government and the support given them by the Formosan Government, all these supported by documents captured from the KMT. He won the sympathy and support of the member nations, and on 22 April 1953, the United Nations passed a resolution, recommending the immediate disarmament and withdrawal of all foreign troops from the territory of Burma. A proposal was also made that a Four Nation Military Conference, including the USA, Burma, Thailand and Nationalist China should be held in Bangkok under the auspices of the USA to seek ways and means for the implementation of the UN resolution for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Burma.

As the New York Herald Tribune (1 April 1953) said: "Burma needs US aid but not at this price." The paper urged that the question of Nationalist Chinese troops in Burma should be speedily cleared up since it "embarrassed American policy in Burma and India."

To official requests from the Burmese Government to use its influence on the Formosa Government, the American Embassy in Rangoon denied the US Government had any influence over Formosa. Though it made some attempts to get the Nationalist Chinese government to withdraw its troops from Burmese territory, nothing effective resulted.

Americans in the embassy adopted the official line that the US had nothing to do with the KMT incursion in Burma. It was an embarrassing period for them, because the Burmese Government and the people did not accept this statement. Invitations to receptions held by the embassy were studiously ignored by Burmese officials and members of the press; only a

few officers of the Foreign Office, who could not conscientiously avoid them, attended. For the first time, Americans were held in opprobrium by the Burmese people.

American statesman who visited Burma during this period also expressed grave concern over the presence of the Nationalist Chinese troops in Burma. Mr. Adlai Stevenson who visited Rangoon, 23 to 28 April 1953 told local pressmen that he heartily agreed with the UN resolution on Burma's complaint regarding the Kuomintang Chinese and hoped that the problem would be solved speedily, with the voluntary and peaceful withdrawal of the foreign troops now in Burma.

While Adlai Stevenson's visit passed off without an incident, news of US Vice-President Richard M. Nixon's proposed visit to Rangoon was met with a mixed reception. The American Embassy was busy for days ahead discussing the program of the State Visit and security arrangements with Burmese officials. The embassy was also not left alone by leftist political groups, which protested Vice-President Nixon's visit. Both Americans and local employees of the embassy were in a state of excitement over the reported receptions prepared for Mr. Nixon's visit by the Red socialist parties.

On the morning of 17 November, about fifty members of the Burma Workers and Peasants Party (BWPP) led by Comrade Thein Han staged a demonstration in front of the embassy. They converged on the embassy in two groups shouting "We don't want the American Imperialists – drive them out! – drive them out!"

The employees of the embassy, especially the Burmese, breathed easier only when the demonstrators were dispersed by the police, who then continued to stand guard at the embassy.

Mr. Richard M. Nixon, Vice-President of the United States, accompanied by his wife and members of his entourage, arrived in Rangoon on 24 November 1953. The Vice-President charmed the crowd waiting to welcome him with his informal manner. Soon afterwards, the embassy received a letter from the Burma Workers and Peasants Party, addressed to Vice-President Nixon. The following is a translation of the letter.

Burma Workers and Peasants Party  
210, Phayre Street,  
Rangoon.

To,

Mr. Nixon,  
Vice-President of the United States of America,  
Care, American Ambassador in Burma

Dated: 26 November 1953

Dear Mr. Vice-President,

1. Although you distributed some prepared statements when you arrived on 24 November we regret very much that you did not permit the newspapermen to question you.

2. In that statement you said "All Asian countries wish to guard against the loss of their precious liberty, either through invasion from without or from subversion within.

I believe that these aspirations can, with cooperation and goodwill be realized. I can assure you that America is eager to do its part." This letter is being sent to let you know the meaning of those words as understood by the Burmese people in the light of America's undertaking and practice.

3. According to your statement, the American Government does not desire any form of aggression in Asian countries, but the entry of American armed forces into the Korean War is an aggression against Korea. Your Government has promised further aid of over \$700 millions during this year to the French Government to enable it to continue to fight against the people of Vietnam. This amounts to an entry of the American Government in the aggression against Vietnam. Therefore, the people of Burma regarded the American Government as an aggressor government.

4. It is the American Government which is defending and giving financial and military aid to the Kuomintang regime which is committing aggression against Burma. It is the American Government which is defending the illegal entry of the KMT in the United Nations. It is the American Government which, when requested by the Burma Government to help her in driving out the KMT from Burmese territories, sends instead, American officers to train the KMT. It is the American Government which, in spite of the Burmese Government's submission of the KMT Withdrawal Plan, instead, gives further support in reinforcements to the KMT. It is the American Government which is today doing everything to prevent the withdrawal of the KMT from Burma. Therefore, the Burmese people regard the American Government as the accused who is responsible for the KMT aggression.

5. Your statement makes it appear that you respect and desire Burma's independence. But in early 1953 when rubber exports to the People's Republic of China were being shipped, the American Ambassador rushed over to Kyaukpyu where the Prime Minister was at some religious functions and demanded that the rubber be immediately unloaded from the ships. Because of this, TCA was stopped by the Burmese Government. Therefore, the Burmese people consider that the American Government is the one that has insulted Burmese independence and sovereignty.

6. In your statement you have urged cooperation and goodwill. Throughout the Bangkok Talks and throughout all the time when the KMT problem was being discussed, the American Government urged the Burmese Government to cooperate with the Kuomintang regime. The Burmese people know very well that the American Government has urged us to accept the KMT with goodwill.

7. It also mentions that America will do its part. The American Government has fanned the flames of civil war in Burma more fiercely. It has also tried to make the Burmese Government similar to that of the Chiang Kai-shek government. The people realized that the American Government is bribing the Burmese Government with promises of aids in arms and money if it will become a satellite government like the Chiang Kai-shek government and fight the civil war instead of the KMT aggression.

8. You have only furthered war and bloodshed in Asia. You are also instigating the civil war in Burma to assume bigger proportions. The Burmese people realized that you are only an agent of war.

9. Therefore, your arrival in Burma is not desired by the Burmese people. We wish you to understand that they have no desire to welcome you but to drive you out.

Letter No. 145'53  
Dated: 26 November 1953

Sd. Thakin Lwin  
Secretary General  
Burma Workers and Peasant Party

The highlight of Mr. Nixon's visit was a trip to Pegu<sup>10</sup>, about fifty miles north of Rangoon and in times past, it was the capital of the Mon kingdom. My chief, Mr. Franklin and I accompanied the Vice-President's party. We made some stops at two or three villages in Htaukkyant Township for inspection of primary schools and the Maternity and Child Welfare Centers and to partake of rural hospitality. The Vice-President and Mrs. Nixon enjoyed themselves and mingled freely with the Burmese people who turned out in large numbers to welcome and to see the distinguished visitors. The motor road to Pegu was patrolled by troops and armored cars of the Burma Army, as rebels still lurked in the country side. Mr. and Mrs. Nixon and Ambassador Sebald rode in an armor-plated car provided by the Burmese Government so they were in no real danger at all.

While Mr. Nixon escaped undesirable attentions from the communist rebels, their above-ground comrades in Pegu had prepared a reception for his arrival. As soon as the motorcade entered the town, placards held aloft by silent members of the BWPP greeted the Vice-President. Typical of a few were "Nixon – Remove your KMTs" – "Imperialist – Go Back" and "We Don't Want the Americans"

We drove to the Government Rest House for a short rest before going to the lunch at the Town Hall which was being hosted by the Commissioner of the Pegu Division, U Moe Myint. While we were at the rest house, Mr. Nixon kept walking up and down, deep in thought, probably on the reception by the BWPP. The climax of the visit came after lunch. While we were eating, we were entertained to a long harangue in English, delivered over loud speakers turned towards the Town Hall. The speaker was U Tha Din, Headmaster of the National High School, Pegu, and also a member of the left-wing BWPP. fluent English, he recounted US aggressions throughout the world, beginning with the dropping the first atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II. The KMT aggression in Burma came in for special mention. One placard displayed this verse.

Pax Vobiscum

Scant regard for home sapiens of the East  
Begets doubts about your move for peace  
Rest' sured, however, of one important fact  
That we shan't fight like Kilkenny cats,  
To ensure for ravenous wolves of Wall Street  
An easy life and wealthy retreat.

The demonstrators were still there when lunch was over. Before anyone could anticipate his intentions, Mr. Nixon walked up to the demonstrators and flabbergasted them by offering his hand, saying "I am Nixon, what is your name? Let me answer any questions you have." U Tha Din, who had earlier made the harangue, unfortunately had already left the

scene. He would have made an admirable opponent in an extemporaneous debate with the American Vice-President.

As it was, the debate which followed between Mr. Nixon and the placard holding leftists became a one-sided affair, because almost none of the demonstrators had the facility of language of U Tha Din. A curious crowd soon gathered and Mr. Nixon in turn launched into a speech defending US policies and actions round the world. The only people, I noticed, who did not enjoy the show were the American and Burmese security men whose duty was to protect him. They were helplessly restricted, because Mr. Nixon was hemmed in by the crowd, which however was by then a friendly one, just curious and amused. Later, during his official travels in Latin American countries, advance press reports recounted how he 'routed' the communists in Burma!

Vice-President Nixon, however, disappointed the Burmese press. Everyone was primed to ask questions on the burning issue of the KMT, but he avoided giving direct answers. However he must have sensed that the Burmese Government and people were seriously concerned about the KMT question. In this connection, Mr. Nixon issued a statement to the press just before his departure from Rangoon on 27 November. He said:

"Although a number of important topics were discussed during my visit here, one particularly troublesome problem has been examined in the greatest detail; I refer to the presence in Burma of Chinese irregular forces. In this most difficult of situations, it may be well for me to say here that the United States Government is fully aware of the wishes of the Union Government to have these forces leave Burma forthwith. Our Government shares these wishes completely and agrees that there is no complete solution short of total evacuation of all effective foreign armed personnel. We hope that this can be accomplished.

We are fully in accord that these irregular troops have no business in Burma. Let there be no mistake about the position of the United States in this matter. The Government of the United States, far from giving tacit approval to the presence here of these foreign troops, is doing and will continue to do all it can to help accelerate the evacuation of the Chinese irregular forces from Burma.

We fully respect Burma's sovereignty, and we have been working energetically towards its preservation. And you may be certain that I, as Vice-President of the United States of America, will present on the highest levels of my Government, the situation as it affects the Union of Burma and I will recommend that our efforts to find a solution to this problem be continued with the utmost vigor."

The press received his statement with caution. The New Light of Burma in its editorial the next day said: "Burma has entertained doubts about America. It has been quite a long time since conditions have been such as to impair Burmese-American goodwill. Since Mr. Nixon has made responsible statements to clear existing doubts, he is reminded that it is also important for action to follow such statements. In Burma, we have a proverb: it is for the people to wait and see whether kings and governments keep their promises. Therefore, we must also wait and see, in the light of Mr. Nixon's statement, whether the most annoying problem of the KMT withdrawal will be speedily done or not."

## Chapter Eight

### **The CIA in Burma**

Under the terms of the UN resolution for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Burma, the Four Nation Military Conference, including the United States of America, Thailand, Burma and Nationalist China, eventually managed to evacuate 5328 KMT troops and 1142 dependents between 7 November 1953 and 10 March 1954. Government offensives continued and KMT concentrations in the Shan States were broken up. However, remnants of the KMT still remain in Burma to this day.

According to informed Burmese Government sources, the Central Intelligence Agency of the US government used the KMT initially as anti-communist forces to attack the Chinese mainland. But the CIA failed to achieve its objectives, because the KMT troops were more concerned with opium growing than with fighting the Red Chinese. A similar view was also expressed by Alfred W. McCoy, who wrote in his book "The Politics of Heroin in South East Asia" that the American CIA-sponsored KMT forces encouraged opium production to finance their activities in Burma in the 1950s.

At one time, there were several KMT stragglers in northern Burma. They had with them considerable quantities of American arms and ammunition and the CIA saw in this band of irregulars, an instrument of harassment to the Red Chinese across the border. Under the direction of CIA agents, more weapons were dispatched to them and more American dollars poured in to finance the operations. By that time, however, the KMT had had enough of fighting; they settled down to the opium trade and began to prey on the local population. They took over many parts of northern Burma and almost all of Kengtung State in the Southern Shan States. This flouting of Burmese sovereignty roused the anger of the Burmese Government, and convinced that the CIA was the directing hand, a strong Protest Note was handed over to the American ambassador in Rangoon.

Ambassador Key was indignant because he did not know that the CIA was involved, and thought the Burmese protest uncalled for. He issued a blunt denial that the KMT troops in Burma were being financed with American dollars and advised by American agents. Prime Minister U Nu was shocked by this denial, since CIA operations were well known to the Burmese Government. He cancelled all remaining American aid programs and threatened to break off diplomatic relations.

Key resigned because he was not informed of the CIA activities behind his back. He was the victim of circumstances, caught in the backwash of the Kuomintang's bid, aided by the CIA, to regain power in the Chinese mainland. Victor Marchetti, an ex-CIA man, also confirmed the connection between the KMT and the CIA in his book, "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence" and the exposé of the CIA, written in collaboration with John D. Marks, a former State Department official, when he wrote that the purpose of the CIA is to advance US policies by covert means. He said that its most dangerous function is its clandestine intervention in the internal affairs of countries where the US Government wishes to extend its influence.

Dr. Maung Maung, Chief Justice of the Union in his book. "Burma and General Ne Win" quotes from the book "The Invisible Government" on CIA activities, by David Wise

and Thomas B. Ross, to substantiate Burmese claims that the CIA was indeed the directing hand in the KMT operations in Burma.

US Senator Stephan M. Young (Democrat, Ohio) speaking at a Senate meeting on 17 August 1965, said that all American embassies overseas had CIA operatives or spies. "I've talked with some of our CIA operatives in our embassies in foreign nations and know the facts." Much later, John Marks, formerly of the State Department, said in an article in the October 1974 issue of the Washington Monthly, that more than a quarter of State Department employees in posts abroad were in fact agents of the CIA.

I do not have personal knowledge of the existence of any CIA agent in our embassy at Rangoon, but there has been a succession of young and not-so-young men, with no particular functions, but designated attachés. Maybe they were CIA agents, maybe they were not, but the Burmese Government and many people were convinced that the CIA operated in Burma.

## Chapter Nine

### Improved Relations

Mr. R. Austin Acly was the Charge d'Affairs a.i. pending the arrival of Mr. Joseph C. Satterhwaite, the new American ambassador to Burma. During this period, Secretary of State Mr. Foster Dulles paid a short visit to Rangoon on 24 February 1955. His visit coming as it did, after he had attended the SEATO Conference in Bangkok, was not well-received by the Burmese press. They feared that he had come to persuade Burma to join SEATO. In his meeting with the local press on 26 February he dispelled this notion, saying he had not come to Burma to "woo U Nu" or to be wooed.

The Secretary of State, however, learned that the Burmese thought their economy was being badly damaged by the US Government's program for disposing of US agricultural surplus in foreign countries. Premier U Nu told Dulles that Burma had found some of her traditional rice markets being taken away from her by American exports under US Public Law 480, which authorized the administration to move surplus agricultural products to needy countries or sell it to them for their local currencies.

The Burmese Premier informed Dulles that he considered this a major problem in Burmese-American relations. U Nu complained particularly about American shipments of rice to Japan, where Burma formerly had sold large amounts of the commodity. Burmese leaders and the press considered this American move to be one way of exerting economic pressure to try and break Burma's policy of neutrality which Mr. Foster Dulles later described as "immoral". This charge brought about a storm of protest from the Burmese press.

One tangible result of Mr. Dulles' visit to Burma was the dispatch of a US Rice Study Mission to discuss South East Asia's serious rice marketing problem. The United States Rice Mission which arrived in Rangoon held a meeting with Burmese officials on 23 May 1955 and were told how the dumping of surplus US rice and wheat in Burma's traditional rice markets was adversely affecting the Burmese economy. The US Mission expressed concern over the situation, but told the meeting that the US Government had also to take into consideration the interests of US farmers who produce rice. No specific suggestion to improve the rice marketing situation was made by either side.

The US Rice Study Mission was led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Eastern Economic Affairs, Mr. Charles F. Baldwin. Burma's fears over US rice dumping were to continue for years.

Ambassador Satterhwaite presented his credentials to the President of Burma on 10 May 1955. He was no stranger to this part of the world, having served as American ambassador to Ceylon in 1949. During his tenure of office, US aid to Burma was resumed. Following a balance of payments crisis in 1954-55 the Burmese Government requested aid from the United States once more. Thus, economic cooperation between the two countries was resumed with the signing of the first PL 480 Agreement for US \$22.7 million on 2 February 1956. This was followed by other agreements, the chief of which was the Economic Development Loan Agreement for US \$25 million signed on 21 March 1957. Burmese-American relations improved and Ambassador Satterhwaite's personal relationship with the Burmese Government and people also contributed largely to this happy state of affairs.

The General Elections held in April 1956 saw the ruling Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League again emerge the winners, polling 47.9 per cent of the total votes; but a significant fact also emerged. The opposition National United Front (NUF) polled 44.8 per cent of the total votes and secured 45 seats in the Chamber of Deputies as against the AFPFL's 171. The NUF was later to play an important role in national politics.

Mr. Herbert Spivack, my old chief returned to Rangoon for another tour of duty. Both of us were a few years older and except for some grey in our hair, we had not changed much in appearance. His wife Flory too, was looking very well and I was happy to see them again. Herbert and I had always worked well together. He was a very good chief, always fair and understanding of the difficulties facing a Burmese national employed in a foreign embassy.

Ko Ko Gyi, who was now my political assistant and I, sometimes worked extra hours and on holidays too, and did our work without even bothering about overtime pay or compensatory time off. I was now the Political Advisor and my duties were of a more responsible nature. I kept up with the daily events and political developments in the country, so that Herbert himself was always aware of the latest developments. It was my job to be in constant touch with the public, government officials, politicians and people from all walks of life, who could contribute to our better understanding of the Burmese political scene.

At about this time, a few things happened which concerned me personally. As I have said, I had to analyze news items in the daily press and prepare reports on political developments. It was not my job, however, to seek out classified official information or to try and uncover official secrets. In all my years with the embassy, I have never exceeded my proper duties, none of which required me to act as a sort of spy for the Americans. Be that as it may, the Special Branch Police tried to find out if I was one. The Deputy Inspector-General of Police who was in charge of the Special Branch and I were friends, but I do not think he knew anything about it. Anyway, his subordinates went about it in a clumsy way. There was in their department, at that time, a junior police officer called Smith who had been in school with me. One day, he came to my office and told me that he was finding it difficult to live on his salary and wanted to sell official information to the American Embassy.

"Would you buy?" he asked.

"Most certainly not." I replied.

Smith had a plausible enough story, but I sensed that it could also be a trap. I told Herbert about it and he also agreed with me and told me not to permit Smith to visit my office. "The embassy does not work this way," he said.

While the Special Branch had failed to label me as an American spy, the Communist Party, Burma had no qualms about doing so. The Ministry of Defense published on 1 May 1957 some documents captured from the CPB rebels which incriminated Brigadier Kyaw Zaw in a conspiracy with them. But what was of more personal concern to me was the inclusion of a list of American spies prepared by the CPB and in which I was listed as "J<sup>11</sup>. Tin Tut, one of the officers of the American Embassy," the third ranking American spy! Whether or not I actually was an American spy did not matter to them; for their record I was already listed as one. Much perturbed, I discussed the matter with Herbert who reassured me, "The communists always call anyone who works for us a spy. But everyone knows you are not one, so why worry."

Life in the embassy went on as usual. However, a disturbing bit of news was revealed to me by U Tin Nyunt, the Minister for Labor. One day, when we met at the Union Club,

U Tin Nyunt, who is a good friend of mine, complained good-naturedly, "Ko Tin Tut, if your embassy must buy up my own people, you should at least let me know first."

I did not know what he meant and I told him so. This was what he said.

"A Mr. Muffin (a fictitious name) who is said to be Labor Attaché in your Embassy has been going round to our labor unions and offering some of our executives study tours in the United States. It is our government's policy that invitations must be made officially through the Foreign Office. Here I am the Minister for Labor and neither I nor the Foreign Office knows anything about it."

Now it was all clear to me. This Mr. Muffin he spoke about was an attaché in the Economic Section who was assigned to study labor conditions in Burma, he was a bluff type and his boast was that his father was a common laborer. As a diplomat, he had no finesse and was forever doing things in his own impetuous way. I assured the Hon'ble Minister that the matter would be brought to the notice of my chief. I told Herbert about this bit of contretemps and hoped that he would be able to straighten things out.

I was, however, vastly relieved when Mr. Muffin at last left Rangoon on home leave and then a transfer. Persons of his type and the few unpleasant ones I mentioned earlier, tend to impair the good relations painstakingly established by their better qualified colleagues. Even the ambassador's mission could be adversely affected by such people.

## Chapter Ten

### **Better than Ever**

Mr.. Walter P. McConaughy, a career diplomat with twenty six years in the Foreign Service arrived in Rangoon as the new American ambassador on 16 August 1957. A veteran of the Far East diplomatic experience, Mr. McConaughy was Director of the Office of Chinese Affairs at the State Department since 1952. He was previously Consul-General in Hongkong from 1950 to 1952.

His term of office was eventful for two incidents. One was the split in the ruling party, resulting in a transfer of power to General Ne Win, Chief of Staff, to set up a Caretaker Government. The other was purely an international affair and I shall narrate it in its proper place.

The first incident had a portentous bearing on Burma's future. In effect, it was the beginning of the end of the AFPEL era, a decade of a one-party government's fumbling misrule. It was finally to change the course of Burmese history. The 1956 general elections had shown that the AFPEL was no longer the supreme arbiter of the country's fate. Corruption and personal rivalries among the top leaders began to weaken the government's infrastructure. The NUF and other opposition parties gathered more strength and waited out for the League's collapse. It was not long in coming.

Personal rivalries among the top leaders could not be mended and on 3 May 1958 the last meeting of the AFPEL was held and the leaders formally decided upon the parting of the ways. U Nu led his faction called the Clean AFPEL, while U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein led the Stable AFPEL. The final issue was to be decided in parliament on 9 June 1958 when a no-confidence motion against U Nu's government would be put to the vote. Leaders of both groups began massing parliamentary following. The Swe-Nyein was able to muster a majority among the AFPEL members of Parliament, while U Nu was assured of the solid support of the opposition NUF with its 44 votes (originally 45; one member defected to the Swe-Nyein group). The minority groups became the deciding factor. These groups were won over by U Nu with promises of Statehood to the Arakenese<sup>12</sup> and the Mon.

Nothing was really predictable until the actual division of votes was counted. During this political crisis, Ko Ko Gyi and I devoted ourselves to keeping up with the fast-moving political events. We attended political rallies at nights, interviewed political leaders and newspapermen, and scanned newspapers for switches in political loyalties and analyzed the daily news reports. Our efforts paid off; we had the final score. According to our calculations, U Nu could claim 127 votes, whilst Swe-Nyein could only claim 119 out of the 248-members House of Deputies. But the latter group had expectations of support from the Shan members of parliament.

Parliament resumed its fateful sitting on 9 June 1958. U Ba Swe moved his no-confidence motion which was then put to the vote. Out of the 248 members, 246 voted and the final count was as we had forecast; 127 votes for U Nu's Clean AFPEL and 119 for the Swe-Nyein stable AFPEL.

Ko Ko Gyi and I were pleased with ourselves for the accuracy of our forecasts and Mr. Spivack was unstinting in his praise of a job well-done. Just for the record, this is the

memorandum he submitted to Ambassador McConaughy, in connection with our work during the recent political crisis.

To: The Ambassador  
Thru: Mr. Kerr  
From: HDS  
Subject: Commendable Performance by Local Employees of the Political Section.

I should like to call to your attention the commendable performance of two Burmese employees of the Political Section during the recent political crisis. U Tin Tut and U Ko Ko Gyi, in addition to their normal work of scanning newspapers, preparing translations of items of interest, and making reports on routing political subjects, took special pains to keep careful and accurate charts of adherents of the two sides in the Parliamentary split on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, they utilized their contacts on the Burmese political scene very effectively to develop information relating to the crisis which would otherwise not have been available to the Political Section. Both of them worked after hours to accomplish this. They showed enthusiasm and real interest in this work and thereby greatly assisted the Political Section in analyzing and reporting developments.

I feel that you would wish to be informed of this type of commendable service on the part of local employees.

Mr. Spivack:

I have noted this report on the good work of U Tin Tut and U Ko Ko Gyi with particular gratification. I should like to express my appreciation to them personally some time soon.

Please see that this commendation goes into their personal files.

Amb.  
6/12

## Chapter Eleven

### Political Changes

The Clean AFPEL Government did not last long and there were many reasons for this. The NUF pressured the government into granting more concessions to the underground communist rebels; this was to be their price for saving U Nu's Government. There was also a growing suspicion among the Clean AFPEL leaders that many of the army officers who were anti-communists sympathized with the Stable AFPEL leaders. The army officers, on the other hand, also felt that Clean AFPEL leaders would turn against them. The situation in the country worsened and army leaders adopted strict security measures on 22 September, when unauthorized movements of Union Military Police personnel converging on Rangoon were detected.

Prime Minister U Nu, when informed of the situation decided that the only way to avert disaster was to hand over government powers to General Ne Win. This was constitutionally carried out and on 28 October 1958 General Ne Win was installed as Prime Minister of a Caretaker Government. A decade of the AFPEL's uninterrupted rule in the country came to a dramatic close. This was the result of the split of the League. In the crucial months attending this political upheaval, the country had been thrown into turmoil. It was a national tragedy.

In reviewing the events that led to the change in government, it will be found that the real reason behind it was the alarm over the imminent threat of the communists forcing the forthcoming general elections to go in favor of their above-ground supporters. During the short term of U Nu's Clean AFPEL Government (9 June to 27 October, 1958), the NUF wrung many concessions for the underground communists who demanded not only direct negotiations, but also the integration of their armed units into the regular armed forces of the Union. They endeavored to bring about the final disintegration of the armed forces which stood in the way of communist domination of the country. At the same time, with the advantageous position in hand, they were becoming more effective in infiltration and in gaining ground on which to subvert the country into a communist state.

General Ne Win's Caretaker Government at once began to restore normalcy to the country. Law and order was firmly established, the economy was revived and trade with other countries broadened. The Investment Act was passed and attractive terms such as guarantees for non-nationalization within 10 years, quick expatriation of profits and a 3 years' tax exemption were offered to foreign investors. Under this new policy, the General Exploration Company of California was the first foreign firm to receive prospecting permits to explore petroleum and natural gas in six areas, each occupying approximately 2000 sq. miles.

Seizure of rebel documents, revealing the clandestine relations between the Clean AFPEL and the rebels, showed the government that free and fair elections could not be held in April 1959 as stipulated. General Ne Win announced this when parliament met in February. His government also resigned on 13 February 1959. Announcing this, General Ne Win said: "Since the Clean AFPEL which had proposed my government, no longer has confidence in it I am reluctant to continue."

But with pressure on the Stable AFPEL which had all along supported his government, a constitutional amendment was made, and General Ne Win was reinstated as

prime minister for another term of office. The NUF opposed the move and proposed a coalition government to meet the political crisis.

The government set about its tasks with renewed vigor and determination, and much was accomplished within the short term of its life. One such instance was when it announced on 2 April 1959, a decision to use Ks. 70,671,000 of PL 480 Kyat fund to finance the local costs, beginning in April, of nine ongoing projects for which the United States last year agreed to lend \$17,174,000 to finance their foreign exchange costs. Both dollar and kyat funds were made available in accordance with the loan agreements of 21 March 1957, which provided that the United States would lend Burma \$25,000,000 and Ks. 82,175,000 of PL 480 funds for economic development projects. On the political front, the government launched an anti-communist campaign with a nation-wide publication of a book "Dhamma In Danger" which exposed the evils of communism and its threat to Buddhism. But while the government fought communism at home, it still upheld its policy of neutrality abroad. However, in matters affecting Burma's sovereignty, the government was firm regardless of whether its actions were approved or not. This could be witnessed in the case of Aleksandr Kaznacheev, an officer of the Soviet Embassy in Rangoon who defected and took refuge in the American Embassy on 26 June 1959.

This was the first time such an incident had taken place in Burma. It was just like how you read of it in books. It was a dramatic incident which threw all of us at the embassy and the Burmese press into a dither. We were besieged by friends, via the telephone, who wanted first hand information and all the details. Personnel of the American Embassy basked in the limelight and the incident was of extreme satisfaction to all the Americans and their government. It also enhanced the personal prestige of Ambassador McConaughy and Bill Hamilton, one of our Political Officers who handled the arrangements.

The American Embassy announced on 26 June 1959, that an officer of the Soviet Embassy in Rangoon had asked for and been afforded asylum in American Embassy, Rangoon. The officer was Aleksandr Urevitch Kaznacheev, whose job was that of Information Officer. He was 27 years old at that time, born in Moscow, a graduate of the International Affairs Institute in Moscow and spoke Burmese and English in addition to his own native Russian.

The following is the signed statement of A.Kazncheev, photostat copies of which were made available to the press.

"I have decided on my own free will to leave my former life and responsibilities.

I desire a life of freedom, which is not possible for a citizen of the USSR and I request asylum. I hate the regime that is presently ruling the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government uses terror, subversion and police state methods to achieve its aims.

I believe that Communism is evil because it deprives the individual man of his pride and self respect. Communism reduces man to a sub-human level where he is a slave of the party and its ruling masters.

Since I have been in Burma, I have been forced by my superiors in the Soviet Embassy to spy on my fellow Russians as well as on my Burmese friends.

I love the Russian people, but I hate the Government of the Soviet Union and its cruel police and intelligence services which oppress the Russian people. I have freely left my position in the Soviet Embassy in Rangoon because I want to struggle against the cruel and oppressive tyranny of Communism.

I appeal to my friends in Burma and in Russia to appreciate the step I am taking, the sacrifice I am making in the struggle against Communist tyranny. I appeal that they recognize the dangers to their way of life, religion and in fact their independent existence from the Soviet regime and international Communism.

I state that the above statement has been made by me in my own hand, of my free will in the solemn hope that it will contribute to the inevitable success of the free world's struggle against international Communism.

(Signed) A.Kaznacheev

24-6-1959

The American ambassador called on the Hon'ble Foreign Minister on 27 June and informed him that a member of the Soviet Embassy, Mr. Aleksandr Kaznacheev, had asked for and been given the protection of the American Embassy.

The same day, Kaznacheev met the press in the USIS office. He explained his reasons for defecting to the Americans<sup>13</sup> and in answer to questions, disclosed that the Soviet Embassy in Rangoon was engaged in subversive activities against the Burmese Government. But for obvious reasons, he did not give any detailed information, saying he would give a full report to the Burmese authorities. As a result of Kaznacheev's disclosures, the Burmese press was up in arms and the Tribune a leading Burmese daily, even demanded that Burma sever diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia.

The American ambassador produced Mr. Kaznacheev before the Minister for Foreign Affairs and transferred him to the protection of the Burmese Government on 29 June. During the four hours he was in their custody, he was questioned at length by the Foreign Minister and by the various security agencies of the government. Later, he was taken from the embassy by the American ambassador directly to the Mingaladon Airport, where he boarded a special US Air Force plane which took off immediately. His departure was attended by the strictest security measures ever seen at the airport.

## Chapter Twelve

### **The Caretaker Government**

Relations between the Burmese and American governments during the regime of the Caretaker Government were very cordial and a great deal of cooperation was also evident, not only in the economic sector but also in other fields. The new regime was dynamic and also vigorously anti-communist.

Attempts were again made by the communist bloc to sabotage the excellent relations between the two countries. The Soviet News Agency (Tass) on 23 April 1959, quoting reports in the Delhi Times (21 April) stated that the Americans used the local newspapers, The Nation, The Guardian and The Reporter to make Burma abandon her neutral policy. The Agency further stated that the editor of The Nation had received \$34,000 from the American Embassy in Rangoon in March 1959.

The attempt boomeranged. The Tass representative in Rangoon Mr. Eyqueni Kovtuneko was sued for libel by U Law Yone, editor of The Nation. Though court action was taken, Kovtunenکو sought refuge in the Soviet Embassy and finally managed to slip out of the country. But the Soviets were discredited. It was not an auspicious time for the Soviet Embassy in Rangoon. What with the attempt to defect made by Colonel Stryguine, Soviet Military Attaché, and his later attempt at suicide when his attempt to defect failed, the man-handling by Soviet "thugs" of Burmese newsmen who tried to cover the story and finally the successful defection of Soviet Information Officer, Aleksandr Kaznacheev, all contributed to lower the prestige of the Soviets and heap opprobrium on the Soviet Embassy in Burma.

To cover up for the real reasons for their fallen prestige, the Soviet newspaper Soviet Russia in its issue of 6 September 1959, charged that reactionary circles in Burma were trying to steer Burma off her traditional course of neutrality under orders received from the United States. "These dangerous tendencies are on the increase and are clearly revealed by the clamors of hostility towards the Soviet Union which can now be heard almost everywhere in Burma," it added.

In these circumstances, it is interesting to note that the Caretaker Government had made a request for a grant-aid from the US Government. The American Embassy in Rangoon announced on 6 July 1959, that the United States was prepared to make a substantial contribution to two major development projects for which assistance had been requested by the Government of Burma. One of the projects involved the construction of a modern highway connecting Rangoon with Mandalay. An agreement to furnish \$37 million worth of US assistance was signed by American Ambassador Mr. McConaughy and Foreign Minister U Chan Tun Aung on 6 July 1959. The International Cooperation Administration (ICA) which succeeded the MSA, TCA and FCA in Burma, was responsible for administering the economic cooperation programs of the United States Government. The New York Herald Tribune stressed that the mere fact that Burma accepted American aid after rejecting it for six years, reflected an important change of plans in that country.

On the wider economic front, the Caretaker Government made a clean sweep of foreign experts on projects yet unimplemented. The Government dispensed with the services of two American firms, TAMS and Robert Nathan Associates. It also suspended the team of Soviet agricultural experts, who were to assist in the construction of the Kyetmauk Taung Dam. However, of greater significance, was the government's decision in early in September

1959, to drop the five remaining Soviet "gift" projects, as being too costly and luxurious for a small nation with a limited budget.

In connection with the highway project, a joke was started by someone at one of the cocktail parties in Rangoon. The story was that the Americans planned to construct a super-highway, wide enough, so that even planes could use it as a runway. The alert Red Chinese Embassy came forward and offered to plant trees along both sides of the highway to beautify it. The joke was that the trees, the Chinese proposed to plant, were not seedlings, but would be big trees, transplanted, root and all, along both sides of the highway.....thus nullifying its military usefulness!

Incidentally, the highway was never built with American aid. Later, General Ne Win's Revolutionary Government dropped the project, when it came into power in March 1962. The government used its own funds for widening the road and resurfacing it with asphalt.

Mr. McConaughy completed his tour of duty in Burma and was transferred as ambassador to the Republic of Korea. He left Burma on 2 November 1959. The exceptional success of his mission can be attributed to the personal achievements of Mr. McConaughy. When I came to know Ambassador and Mrs. McConaughy very well, I realized why they had been so successful in establishing firmer ties of friendship between the two countries. The following newspaper editorial, speaks eloquently of Ambassador McConaughy's achievements.

The New Light of Burma, 2 November 1959 editorialized them under the heading: "An Appreciation".

"American Ambassador Mr. McConaughy is leaving today on transfer to South Korea as American Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary. It will not be necessary to mention that during Mr. McConaughy's term of office, American-Burmese relations were extremely good and that goodwill between the two countries had improved considerably.

In the acceptance by Burma of the American Government's assistance for the building of a modern highway between Rangoon and Mandalay and an Intermediate College for the University of Rangoon, it will not be wrong to say that success in these projects was due to the keen interest taken by American Ambassador Mr. McConaughy, and to his desire to promote better understanding and goodwill between the two countries. Mr. McConaughy's efforts to establish goodwill have kept on improving up to the time of his departure and we pray that his successor will be able to maintain this goodwill and prevent it from braking down. In conclusion, we again pray that Ambassador McConaughy, who is a true friend of Burma, will have a successful term of office in his new post."

On his departure from Burma, Ambassador McConaughy issued a statement. Some excerpts are reproduced below.

"As the time approached for my departure from Burma, I find it increasingly difficult to say goodbye. When, over a period of many months, you establish close and friendly ties and when you find you are accepted as a participant more and more in the life of the country of your assignment and that you share to some extent the joys and hopes and fears of its people, it naturally becomes extremely difficult to leave and to say farewell.

We have found these years in Burma to be rich, full years ---- years which have brought us much happiness. Our close association with the leaders and people of Burma and

with your culture and way of life has enriched our own lives and provided us with many new insights.

Turning to the immediate past, in the field of economic reconstruction, I believe your country and mine have been able to work together to great advantage.

I leave Burma knowing that our cooperation has contributed to the shared objective of advancing the economic wellbeing of your people. It is a record of which both of our countries can be justifiably proud.

Our memories of our meetings with you – here in Rangoon, in the Delta, in Tenessarim or as far north as Mandalay and Myitkyina - will always be in our hearts."

Ambassador McConaughy, after serving in Korea and then as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far East (1961) was American ambassador in Taipei from 1966 to 1974. We exchange Christmas greeting every year and I feel honored to have served under such a fine American ambassador.

The First Secretary of the Embassy, Mr. Herbert Spivack had also finished his tour of duty and was succeeded by Mr. Richard Tucker Ewing. I must mention that though Mr. Spivack had left Burma, he continued to take a keen interest in Burmese affairs and this was to keep bringing him and his wife Flory back to this country to meet Flory's relatives and other Burmese friends. Their last visit was in June 1972, when Herbert was a member of a team of Foreign Service inspectors.

His tour of duty was enlivened by visits from his numerous Burmese friends. Herbert Spivack, on his own, had won the friendship of many Burmese and in his quite way had contributed a great deal to achieving an understanding and real goodwill between the Burmese and American peoples. My only regret, where Herbert is concerned, is that though he is a very experienced and senior career Foreign Service officer, he has not yet won the distinction, which he highly deserves of representing his country as Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary. I learnt later from a mutual friend why he had missed being appointed to an ambassador's post. It happened after the end of the East-West Pakistan war, and the emergence of East Pakistan as Bangladesh, a new independent state in January 1972. Herbert had been posted as US Consul General to East Pakistan, and when hostilities broke out, he remained at his post for the purpose of observing at first hand the momentous events taking place. At that time, Flory was on a visit in Rangoon and when I enquired after Herbert, she replied: "You know, Herbert is like an old warhorse and he likes to be in the thick of things."

This is quite true of Herbert. Even while he was in Rangoon, whenever leftist demonstrators shouted anti-American slogans before the embassy, there would be Herbert Spivack, right on the front door steps, beaming and quite amused by the whole thing. Ko Ko Gyi and I would be feel anxious, lest some agent-provocateur throw a stone at him.

Herbert not only observed the horrors and atrocities of the war in East Pakistan, but was also able, because of his vantage position, to assess the political situation correctly. After Bangladesh was created, and when Mujibur Rahman, the East Pakistan leader arrived in Dacca in January 1972 to be sworn in as Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Herbert was present at the airport, not to welcome Mujibur Rahman in his official capacity as US Consul General,

because the United States did not have diplomatic relations with that country, which had broken away from West Pakistan, with which country, the United States had a military alliance as members of SEATO. But Herbert was there to see things for himself and to evaluate the situation.

Though Herbert did not attend the swearing-in ceremony of Mujibur Rahman as the Prime Minister, his presence at the airport on the day the latter arrived, was frowned upon by the State Department. However, as a result of his on-the-spot observations, Herbert was able to submit factual reports, evaluation of events and to make recommendations to his government. But he fell foul of the policy makers, who had a Pakistan bias, and his reports and recommendations were not accepted.

His next appointment was to be as ambassador, but because of the Pakistan bias of White House officials, Herbert was bypassed and somebody else was appointed as ambassador, and he returned to the Inspectorate. My best wishes go to him that he will yet achieve an ambassadorship before he retires from the Foreign Service. At present, he is American Consul-General in Munich, Federal Republic of Germany.

## Chapter Thirteen

### **American Prestige Wanes**

The new American Ambassador Mr. William Pennel Snow arrived in Rangoon on 21 November 1959. Ambassador Snow, who was then 52 years of age, has served since June 1957 as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Inter American Affairs. This was his first posting as ambassador and considered a reward for outstanding work during a period of extraordinary and sometimes explosive developments in Latin America. He was one of the State Department's top career officers, and this was his first posting to an Asian country. In his statement made at the airport, Ambassador Snow stated that the United States attached great importance to its relations with Burma and that he would endeavor his best in furthering mutual understanding and cooperation between the two countries.

Towards this end, further US aid loans were made available for more development projects. On 10 October 1959, an agreement for the grant of about US \$ 6 million was effected by an exchange of Notes between Ambassador Snow and Mr. James Barrington, Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Office. The exchange of Notes, amending an agreement concluded in 1958 for the sale of cotton, tobacco and edible oils under PL 480 was necessary because the funds had originally been intended as a loan instead of a grant. About US \$550,000 of the grant was to be used for the construction of new buildings for Rangoon University, a project which, along with the highway project, was agreed between the two governments earlier last year.

Conditions in the country had improved considerably under the Caretaker Government, and in keeping with his promise, General Ne Win made arrangements for the holding of a general election, and parliament was dissolved on 19 December 1959. The Clean AFPEL led by U Nu won the elections held on 6 February 1960, with a majority of 160 members and formed the new Pyidaungsu (Union) Government on 3 April 1960. The Stable AFPEL which won 43 seats formed the Opposition.

Ambassador Snow's efforts to maintain the good relations already established by his predecessor were greatly handicapped by the continued presence and increasing depredations of the Kuomintang troops in Burma. Despite Burma's protest to the United Nations, and the Four Nation Commission's efforts to evacuate the KMT in 1953, many remained behind in Burma. With the passing of the years, more KMT troops were flown in and these entrenched themselves in the Southern Shan States. Supplies were regularly airdropped by unidentified planes.

The Reporter, 2 June 1960, editorialized Burmese sentiments:

"The Kuomintang problem continues to exist, though some have been evacuated. The Nationalist Chinese Government replies that it has nothing to do with the KMT remnants in Burma who are just opium smugglers. But the construction of a big airfield must be for a bigger objective than for more opium smuggling.

Whenever we have occasion to experience wrong doings of the KMT, we are at once reminded of their master, the United States. Our disgust grows against America whenever the KMT do something against us. The more the KMT insult Burma, the less America gets of Burma's goodwill and respect. However, we will not seek American help to get the KMT out of Burma. We have enough strength to drive them out ourselves."

The situation was an unfortunate one for Ambassador Snow and for the American Embassy.

Despite this, however, Ambassador Snow was able to lay another milestone in the relations between the two governments by ceremoniously opening the American Consulate in Mandalay on 4 November 1960. The consulate served the area of Upper Burma, including the Shan States, the Kachin State and the Chin Hills Special Division. It was the first American Consulate to be established in Mandalay, although the United States has had consular representation in Rangoon since 1902. Mr. Marshall Hays Noble was the first American Consul in charge of the post in Mandalay.

Anti-American feelings came to a head and demonstrations began to be held in Rangoon, and on the afternoon of 15 February 1961, about 100 members of the leftwing labor unions demonstrated in front of the American Embassy, and pelted it with over-ripe tomatoes and shouted anti-American slogans. The demonstration was a reaction to newspaper reports on 15 February 1961 of the capture by Burmese troops in Operation Mekong, of large quantities of arms and ammunition from the KMT intruders bearing US markings.

At a press conference held at Mong Pa-Liao on 13 February, Colonel Tun Sein, Commander of Operation Mekong, disclosed that when the KMT headquarters Keng Lap and Mong Pa-Liao in Kengtung State fell to the Burma Army on 26 January, large quantities of arms and ammunition were captured. The fall of the KMT headquarters was so unexpected that on the following day after its fall, a plane came over and airdropped a quantity of arms and ammunition, apparently thinking the KMT to be still there. All the captured arms bore the marks of the United States of America and the containers bore the seal of the American AID - two hands clasped in friendship, against a background of stars and stripes. Photographs of the captured equipment clearly showed the US markings.

Press reaction was hostile and extensive. The Red Star, 16 February 1961, editorial said: "Marks bearing the stamp of the US Government were found on arms and equipments airdropped to the KMT. It is not strange that the US gives help to the Nationalists. But to aid those who are committing aggressive act by the United States. The KMT issue has again come into the limelight only just after Burma had signed a friendship pact with Red China. It seems a clear indication that the United States is displeased with Burma's action and is taking steps to show it."

Another anti-American demonstration was carried out by the left wing NUF before the US Consulate and USIS at Mandalay. These places were stoned by demonstrators, some of whom were later arrested.

The State Department at Washington expressed its serious concern over widespread reports that modern US military equipment had been supplied to Chinese Nationalist guerilla troops in Northern Burma. It said the United States would take prompt action if an investigation by American officials in Burma disclosed contravention of agreement between the United States and the Chinese Nationalist regime in Formosa. The American Embassy in Rangoon also issued the following statement on 19 February 1961.

"The Embassy has reported to the United States Government, the recent accounts appearing in the Burmese press about the seizure said to have been made of American-type military equipment at the so called KMT bases in Burma. The Embassy has been authorized

to state categorically that any military equipment in the hands of the KMT irregulars is there totally without the knowledge and consent of the United States Government. The Embassy has been instructed to make as full an investigation as possible, and the Embassy today, has requested the full cooperation of the Government of Burma in order that such an investigation may be carried out promptly and effectively. If the investigation demonstrates that the equipment came from a third country in contravention of established agreements and procedures, the United States Government is prepared to take appropriate action and to do so promptly."

The statement, couched in equivocal diplomatic language, neither satisfied nor appeased Burmese opinion. In a statement issued to the press the same night, U Kyaw Nyein, Burma's top socialist and Vice-President of the AFPEL observed: "The Chiang Kai-shek regime in Formosa owes its existence to American economic and military aid, and it is surprising indeed that the United States Government is not aware that American made aircraft have been transporting American manufactured arms to KMT intruders in Burms."

In a later statement, U Kyaw Nyein charged that without the collusion of the CIA, the Chinese Nationalists could not have plagued Burma for such a long time. Coming from a steadfast neutralist, who was also an avowed anti-communist this observation may be taken as reflecting the majority opinion of the Burmese people.

The atmosphere in Rangoon, especially round the American Embassy, was tense. Rumors of a massive anti-American demonstration were so persistent that precautions were taken at the embassy when it opened at its usual hour on 21 February 1961. Anticipating trouble, the staff was dismissed at noon. Only a skeleton staff, mostly Americans, remained behind. My assistant Ko Ko Gyi and I were the only two Burmese employees detained for duty that day.

The whole morning and afternoon, the crowd was gathering in front of the embassy and in the Maha Bandoola Park facing it. It was mostly made up of the curious, who, like us, had heard of the impending demonstration. The crowd was still ominously quiet. The embassy closed its doors at 3:15 p.m. when the trouble began.

On that afternoon, about 3000 Rangoon University students staged a demonstration by marching past the embassy in procession shouting anti-American slogans. It was an orderly march; the leaders had planned for a well-disciplined demonstration without resorting to violence. But it was not to be. Fate in the person of Ajala, a Nigerian globetrotter intervened. Ajala was out for publicity and the students' demonstration gave him the opportunity.

Dressed in his flamboyant native dress, Ajala strode to the head of the procession and when it reached the road blocks set up by the police Ajala took the stage by lifting the heavy road blocks and throwing them aside. The crowd which had now increased in numbers and had also become a mixed one, cheered and the first stone thrown by Ajala led to a barrage of stones on the American Embassy. This Ajala, or to give him his full name, Mashood Olabisi Ajala, was a Nigerian, who had arrived in Rangoon for a five-week tour only a few days before the rioting. He immediately made headlines in the local newspapers, when on 16 February 1961 he staged a one-man demonstration to protest the killing of ex-Congolese Prime Minister Mr. Lumumba. Early that morning, armed with a tin of red paint and brush, he came to our embassy and scribbled on the walls- "Belgians, US and UN killed Lumumba." "US Go Home." "UN Go to Hell" He again visited the embassy in the afternoon and tried to

force his way in, but was stopped by the marine guard. Failing to gain entry, he smashed the glass panes of the cellar rooms. While doing so, he was arrested by the police and a case for trespassing opened against him. He was later released on bail. It was then that he took a leading role in the rioting before the American Embassy. Some students and Ajala were arrested, and the government, not wishing to provide more headlines for Ajala, deported him on 22 February 1961.

The demonstration was now a riot, with one and all joining in throwing stones and anything they could lay their hands on, at the embassy. One stone, fortunately, not a large one, came crashing through a window on the first floor, breaking the glass panes, and was thrown with such force, and apparently from close to the building, that it passed through another glass partition and hit an American official standing in the corridor. It was only a glancing hit on the head and he became our one and only casualty.

The anger of the crowd was also fanned by the antics of some marines, who climbed to the roof and made taunting gestures at the crowd. They must have found the rioting an exciting change from their dull daily routine of standing guard at the embassy. In the early stages, the police refrained from taking drastic action and allowed the demonstrators to give vent to their feelings, hoping they would calm down eventually. But mob violence began to get out of hand; all the windows of the American Embassy were broken. The police then used tear gas and made baton charges, which finally dispersed the crowd, but not before two demonstrators had been killed, three policemen and many demonstrators severely injured. Some twenty persons were arrested.

During the siege, we in the embassy tried to keep calm. Our only fear was that the mob might succeed in breaking down the embassy doors and gaining entry. Ko Ko Gyi and I, as Burmese nationals working for the Americans, would be looked upon as traitors and instantly killed, if we fell into the hands of the mob. The American marine guards each had a sack of tear gas grenades and batons besides their side arms to repel invaders. Some made preparations to destroy classified documents, should this become necessary. Fortunately, the embassy held and later in the evening, Ko Ko Gyi and I managed to slip out of the back door into a side street unnoticed by the mob, which by this time had moved back some distance from the embassy.

The army took over the security of the city and normalcy soon returned to Rangoon. Material damage to embassy property was slight, but damage to American prestige and American-Burmese relations was considerable. It was the first time in the history of the relations between the two countries that the Burmese people had come to resent the Americans with what they considered justifiable cause.

In the days that followed, Burmese employees attending work were looked upon with hostile eyes by the people who still loitered round the embassy. Some of the Burmese women employees, frightened by this hostility, took annual leave and stayed away from the embassy until the atmosphere improved.

On 22 February 1961, the Burmese Government sent a cable to the Secretary General of the United Nations, reporting Nationalist Chinese aggression of Burmese air space and of aiding the KMT remnants in Burma with new American arms and supplies. The last paragraph of the Note is significant. "The Government of the Union of Burma protest vehemently against this and other deliberate and hostile intrusions on their territory, and the

gross violation of the United Nations General Assembly's Resolution 815 (IX) which urges all States to take all necessary steps to prevent the furnishing of any assistance which may enable foreign forces to remain in the territory of the Union of Burma or to continue their hostile acts against that country."

On 3 March 1961 the American Embassy handed over a Note to the Permanent Secretary of the Burmese Foreign Office expressing the United States Government's desire to help evacuate Chinese Nationalist troops from Northern Burma.

The Army, Naval and Air Attachés from the embassy also inspected the military equipment captured from the KMT. But apart from an admission that the equipment was of US origin, no conclusive report was ever made public.

## Chapter Fourteen

### Worsening Relations

The Burmese Foreign Office announced on 11 April 1961 that the Union Government had agreed to the appointment of Mr. John Scott Everton as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to Burma in succession to Mr. William P. Snow.

Mr. Everton was essentially a Baptist churchman and a scholar. He had served as minister at the Central Baptist Church, Pennsylvania, as Dean of Chapel and Professor of Philosophy and Religion at Grinnell College and as President of Kalamazoo (Michigan) College. Mr. Everton was Representative of the Ford Foundation in Burma from 1953 to 1956, during which period he associated himself with Rangoon University as external examiner in Philosophy. Since 1956 he had been an Executive Associate with the Ford Foundation in New York. Of the seven American ambassadors to Burma appointed so far, Mr. Everton was another non-career diplomat. The American mission under his predecessor Mr. William P. Snow was a failure, not because of any shortcoming on his part, but because of the KMT operations in Burma.

President Kennedy probably thought that a non-career diplomat, with previous experience in Burma, would be better able to restore friendly relations between the two countries. Before his departure from the United States, Mr. Everton expressed his delight, during a reception at the State Department, at renewing his association with Burmese friends of former days. His mission, he said, would be to deepen the understanding between Burma and the United States.

American Ambassador John Scott Everton arrived in Rangoon on 2 June 1961. The next day, Ambassador Everton issued the following statement:

"It gives me great pleasure to be returning to Burma, a country for while I have developed a high regard and deep affection as a result of my earlier sojourn in Rangoon representing the Ford Foundation and my several visits here in recent years as a private citizen. I look forward with anticipation to meeting old friends and discovering new ones.

Before leaving Washington I was able to visit several previous ambassadors, including Ambassadors Key, Satterthwaite, McConaughy and Snow, all of whom spoke with happy recollection of their service in Rangoon. They, as well as many other officials and private citizens now in Washington who have lived in Burma in past years, have sent their greetings and best wishes to their friends in Burma.

My mission will be to contribute to the best of my ability to building on the already well-laid foundation of friendship and mutual trust between our two countries and to eliminating all seeds of possible mistrust I bring a full assurance of United States; understanding of and respect for the role Burma has chosen to play in world affairs. United States relations with Burma are founded on confidence in the future of Burma as a free and independent state."

Ambassador Everton got off to a good start. He gave his first public address at the weekly Rotary Club luncheon held at the Strand Hotel on 15 June 1961 where he was the guest speaker. Ambassador Everton observed that broadened American intellectual and cultural horizons through exchanges of Burmese and American scholars and students and

offering study programs at leading American universities were essential elements in building understanding between Burma and the United States.

As a scholar, it was typical of Ambassador Everton to view intellectual and cultural exchanges as essential in building mutual understanding. It was also a fact that since 1947, besides scholarships granted by the Burmese Government, educational exchange and cultural presentation programs had been agreed upon by the two governments. Many Burmese had visited the United States, to study and to learn and many Americans too, had come to Burma for similar purposes. There was also an exchange of distinguished scholars from both countries to teach and increase knowledge and awareness of each other's culture and history. Programs under the Fulbright and Hays Act really provided the means towards mutual understanding and goodwill.

The Fulbright Educational Exchange Program originally established in Burma under a 1947 agreement was extended by the two governments on 30 August 1961. Proceeds from the sale of surplus American equipment left in Burma at the end of World War 11 amounting to US\$ 2,3787,344 had financed the Fulbright Program until now. With the near depletion of those funds, the new amendments to the original agreement permitted the continuation of the Fulbright Program using funds derived from the sale of PL 480 American agricultural commodities. Burma's Fulbright Program, now the oldest in the world, had made it possible up to this date for 280 Burmese students and teachers to study in the United States and had brought 172 American professors, teachers and students to Burma. In addition 326 Burmese girls had received nurse's training with Fulbright assistance.

Ambassador Everton, as a former Director of the Ford Foundation in Burma, was very much concerned with continuing US assistance to Burma and on 8 November 1961, he announced that a new United States foreign aid agency, the Agency for International Development (AID) had replaced the former International Cooperation Administration (ICA) and the Development Loan Fund as of 4 November. In making the announcement, Ambassador Everton pointed out that the basic purpose of the new agency, like that of its predecessors, was to assist less developed countries, both neutrals and allies of the United States, to maintain their independence and to improve social and economic conditions.

The people of the United States and the Union of Burma share a long history of economic cooperation. The Agency for International Development was based on five main principles: recognition by the recipient nations that they bear the ultimate responsibility for their own development; long-range planning of integrated programs; long-range commitments by both the United States and the recipients; the need for marked social progress for the mass of people in developing countries; and the maximum amount of participation by other nations in the free world.

The AID was responsible for the administration of economic cooperation aid programs. In order to be of the greatest assistance and to avoid lowering Burma's foreign exchange reserve, dollar-loans were made repayable in kyat, at Burma's option. Repayments were to extend over long periods of time and at low interest rates.

The sale of US agricultural commodities under PL 480 was also for kyat, thus preserving Burma's foreign exchange position. Most of the kyat proceeds of these sales were given as loans or grants to the Government of Burma for economic development projects. United States assistance during the period 1950 to 1961 amounted to US \$131.769 million.

At about this time, Mr. Alexander Schnee, the new Counselor and Deputy Chief of Mission had joined the embassy. He was the most unpretentious American official I had ever met. He was urbane with a pleasant charm of manners. He was tactful in his dealings and warm and friendly in his personal relationships, especially with the Burmese. His dealings with officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs soon won him their esteem.

The political situation in the country was rather gloomy. Despite an overwhelming victory in the recent general elections, the Union Party was again beset with schisms. The conflict was now between the intellectuals and the leftist Thakins. This did not augur well for the country. The New York Times 8 February 1962 said of the rift in an editorial:

"The traditional, xenophobic leftist Thakins have wrested control away from the more outward looking intellectuals who formerly held most leadership posts. So far this has not caused a breakup of the party; but this is a future possibility.

In recent years Burma has been edging into closer ties with Communist China. A border dispute between the two powers has been settled, Since Burma trade has increased and Chinese contacts and influence among Burmans expanded. Burmans know that quarreling with Communist China would be risky.... For their part, the Chinese have been discreet enough in their pressures and activities not to arouse general Burmese alarm and resentment.

The change in leadership of the Union Party could mean more aloof Burmese relations with the West and more economic nationalism. It might provide the Chinese communist with new opportunities and advantages. The net effect could be a leftward drift without compensating social and economic gains. This situation and the increasing tendency of the Shans, Kachins and other minority groups to resist collaboration with the majority Burmese add up to a cloudy future for Burma."

In terms of future American-Burmese relations, the New York Times analysis of the situation was not so wide off the mark. But the portents were ominous.

## Chapter Fifteen

### **The Revolutionary Government**

On 2 March 1962, General took over power in a coup d'état. The Union Party Government of U Nu was replaced by the Revolutionary Government of General Ne Win. The demand for increasing autonomy by the States was probably the issue which finally made General Ne Win step in to control the situation. Just prior to this, a National Seminar on Federalism, attended by the leaders of the various States, was held in Rangoon and this time, the leaders insisted upon new constitutional guarantees of increased autonomy and also perhaps, the creation of new States. They made veiled threats of secession from the Union, if their demands were not met. U Nu was aware of the extreme nature of some of the States; demands and sought to maintain control of events by parleying with the different minority group.

However General Ne Win considered the situation to be deteriorating and beyond the control of U Nu and he, along with members of the cabinet, was taken into "protective custody," as were the President of the Union U Win Maung, Chief justice U Myint Thein and ex-President of the Union Sao Shwe Thaik, who died in prison. A 17-member Revolutionary Council with General Ne Win as Chairman set about the tasks of building a really socialistic state. The new government was called the Revolutionary Government of the Union of Burma (RGUB). On 3 April the RGUB published their ideology, the Burmese Way to Socialism, made up of Buddhist metaphysics, socialist ideology, nationalism and xenophobia. On 4 July the Burma Socialist Program Party was formed

On 7 March 1962 Ambassador Everton personally handed over the American Government's Note recognizing the RGUB to U Thi Han, the Foreign Minister. Embassy officials, however, were rather skeptical about the Burmese Way to Socialism, the policy declaration of the Revolutionary Council. To them, the Myanma Lanzin as it came to be called colloquially in Burmese, smacked of communism. They suspected that despite the Revolutionary Council's reaffirmation of its policy of strict neutrality, Burma was leaning more towards the left. What gave them grounds for this feeling was the decision of the Revolutionary Council to terminate the services of the Ford Foundation and the Asia Foundation. Henceforth, the Burmese Government would restrict its acceptance of foreign aid programs on a government-to-government basis. The two American foundations had been functioning since 1953 and both were privately financed. The American Embassy was also notified that the Fulbright Cultural Exchange Program was being suspended. This action of the Revolutionary Government drew some harsh comments from the American press. The New York Times in an editorial on 23 April 1962 said:

"The Ford Foundation, the Asia Foundation, the British Council and the Fulbright Cultural Exchange Program that have been asked to phase out activities have all been of far reaching assistance to a country surely in need of almost every kind of aid. The motivation for the new military government's move ..... appears partly to be a xenophobic totalitarian desire to end the relations between Burmese and Western individuals and agencies not entirely subject to government channels and supervision.

Burma's rate to economic growth and social improvement is one of the lowest in Asia.... It is unlikely that General Ne Win will find Western governments ready to assume

the burdens the private agencies are being forced to give up. Politically, economically and socially his action is a disservice to Burma."

The Burmese press and people were understandingly resentful of such comments. The matter did not end with the New York Times editorial. In fact, it was just the beginning of the end of what had been, so far, harmonious relationship between the American and Burmese people and the person responsible was none other than the American Ambassador Mr. Everton.

On the evening of 24 April, the day on which excerpts from the New York Times editorial appeared in the local newspapers, the American Newsfile published by the Information section of the American Embassy reproduced the New York Times editorial in full. The excerpts quoted above were sufficiently derogatory to the prestige of General Ne Win, but the full editorial reproduced in the American Newsfile added insult to injury. The portion of the editorial which the Burmese found objectionable is reproduced below.

"A Chinese proverb that derides the person who slaps his own face" is an appropriate characterization of General Ne Win's action in ordering the termination of all but strictly government-to-government Western aid programs in Burma."

The publication of the editorial in full in the American Newsfile, the official organ of the American Embassy gave the impression that the American Government as represented by its embassy in Rangoon was in full agreement with the views of the New York Times. Moreover, it was clear to readers of the Newsfile that the inclusion of this editorial was an afterthought and a deliberate attempt to downgrade General Ne Win's prestige. What pointed to this fact, was that all the news items in the Newsfile of 24 April, except the New York Times editorial which appeared as the last item, were typed on one machine whereas, the NYT editorial was typed on another machine, as distinguished by the type face, disclosing that on completion of all news items, the editorial had been added as an afterthought. It was indeed an historical blunder and folly on the part of the USIS to have done so, for the Burmese regarded it as an insult to their Head of State.

No explanation can cover this official action, but the Burmese press and people held the American ambassador responsible. The only possible excuse I can see is that the Burmese Government's action must have provoked them a great deal. The Foreign Ministry immediately called in the American ambassador and handed him a strong protest Note to be transmitted to the American Government. The Htoon Daily, a Burmese paper in an editorial of on 27 April 1962 headlined "American Interference" voiced the public indignation.

"The American Newsfile of 24 April, reproduced on page 8 and 9 the full text of the New York Times' editorial which was an attack on the Burmese Revolutionary Government, headed by General Ne Win.

The New York Times published this editorial on 23 April and it was reproduced by the foreign wire services as a news report, because it is their job, But we must strongly object to the publication of the full text of the editorial by the Information section of the American Embassy, a diplomatic representative of the American Government, which has proclaimed itself a friend of Burma. The reproduction of the full text of the editorial by the USIS shows that-

1. The American Government accepts the views expressed in the New York Times editorial.

2. By such acceptance, the American Embassy is equally insulting, being in agreement with the editorial which says in part, 'General Ne Win's action is like slapping his own face – his actions are a disservice to Burma politically, economically and socially.'
3. The American Embassy is directly interfering in the internal affairs of Burma, because the American Newsfile is distributed to government officials and employees and people throughout the country.

This may appear to be trivial, but since it is an uncalled for insult and interference at a time when Burma's revolutionary period is still young, we do not think, a protest through diplomatic channels by the Foreign Ministry will suffice.

The entire people must severely condemn this interference in Burmese internal affairs and the personal insult to General Ne Win, who is the Head of State.

In all sincerity, we remind the entire Union that they must cooperate with the Revolutionary Council in fearlessly fighting against every form of aggression and interference by the imperialists."

This was a diplomatic faux pas of high magnitude, but the position was worsened by the ambassador's insistence to call on the leading politicians who were still free then. Most of them were openly against the takeover. In May 1962, the ambassador's secretary informed me that the ambassador proposed to make a round of calls on former political leaders of the AFPEL and the Union Party and that I was to arrange the appointments. Knowing the ambassador's penchant for the blunt approach, I was alarmed over his proposal to call on the political leaders, when it was only two months ago that they had lost their leadership of the country.

I took my worries to Mr. Schnee, the DCM, who agreed with me privately that the proposal was ill-timed but he could not do anything about it. So with a sense of foreboding, I went about the task assigned to me. When I phoned Thakin Kyaw Dun, the ex-Secretary General of the ABPO, he wanted to know why the American ambassador wished to call on the ABPO leaders. Although I could guess at the reason for the ambassador's call, I replied tongue in cheek, that the ambassador was making a courtesy call on Burmese political leaders, just to get acquainted with them. While it was quite in order for me to hobnob with former political leaders since most of them were my friends, an American, even the ambassador could not do this without exposing himself to the likely charge of interference in Burmese affairs.

On 28 May 1962, Ambassador Everton began his round of calls on the political leaders of the AFPEL, UP and the ABPO. The visits, however ill-timed would have been innocuous had they been merely social calls, but Burmese press reports soon revealed the embarrassing nature of the ambassador's visits. Ambassador Everton was reported to be not only indiscreet, but also very provocative in his interviews with the political and business leaders of the ousted Pyidaungsu (Union) Government.

The Botataung 31 May 1962, editorial, "Imperialist Interference" said: "The other day, newspapers reported that the American ambassador had visited UP and ABPO leaders for discussions. Reports have it that he had already met and discussed privately with AFPEL leaders before meeting with the UP and ABPO leaders. It is said that when he met UP and ABPO leaders, the ambassador asked them, "Is not the Burmese Way to Socialism a communist program?" This is a leading question and in our opinion, a question deliberately

posed to convey the ambassador's own opinion. According to information received by us, the ambassador asked AFPEL leaders, leading questions as to more clearly bring out an anti-Burmese Way to Socialism attitude. In these circumstances, we are inclined to think that the American ambassador's activities amount to launching a campaign against the Burmese Way to Socialism."

I find that more troubles are caused by people saying what they mean right out. Americans, I have found, are typical in this want of tact. They want to bring things to a head. They are brutally frank and this trait has not endeared them much to people. It is in great contrast to the Asians' regard for other people's sensitivities, their reluctance to cause embarrassment to others. A harsh word is avoided except in extreme anger.

Later in connection with the resumption of US nuclear tests in the atmosphere and protests against it by the Burma Council for Disarmament on 1 June 1962, The Botataung 7 August 1962 summarized the situation in an editorial, "Nosey Foreigners."

"No one in the world can deny that the US Government has been losing its reputation due to its undue interference in internal affairs of other countries. In Burma also, the American ambassador interfered in internal affairs from time to time. Soon after the Revolutionary Council's takeover, American Ambassador Everton personally called on AFPEL, UP and ABPO leaders and sounded their attitude to the Burmese Way to Socialism, asking questions as to whether it leaned towards communism. On the federal issue, the ambassador's remarks: "I do not think this problem can be solved peacefully. What do you say?" are obviously against diplomatic etiquette, as it flouts the international principles of non interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

"The editorial of the New York Times of 23 April commented on the Revolutionary Council's action in terminating the services of the Asia Foundation and the Ford Foundation. It said that General Ne Win's action was like slapping his own face and it was a disservice to Burma politically, economically and socially. We have nothing to say against the comments of the New York Times, but the matter did not stop there; the American Embassy reproduced these comments in full in the American Newsfile and the Foreign Ministry had to lodge a protest. The latest instance of interference is as follows:

It appears that the US Embassy in replying to a letter from the Reverend U Pyinnya Zawta, President of the Burma Council for Disarmament (BCD) protesting against the resumption of US nuclear tests in the Disarmament to protest also against resumption of nuclear tests by the Soviet Union. The US Embassy's reply says – "The BCD which protested vigorously against American nuclear tests, is now keeping quiet when the Soviets are about the Soviet tests, the BCD must be recognized as a pocked organization of the Soviets and nothing else."

We think the duty of the ambassador when a letter of protest is sent to him, is to forward it to his government. Whether the BCD protests against the Soviet nuclear tests is its own affair and has nothing to do with the ambassador. The open interference by the American Ambassador through the Burmese press in the private affairs of a public organization such as the BCD must be regarded as an outrage against the privileges of the Burmese people. If this state of affairs is allowed to continue, the American ambassador and his embassy in Burma could become an Internal Board of Political Advisors, creating

undesirable confusions including East-West struggles in the country. We would therefore sound a note of warning that such actions be stopped in time."

The text of the embassy's letter to the Burma Council for Disarmament was published in the local newspapers on 5 August 1962. The BCD on 28 August replied to the embassy's letter in which it reaffirmed its policy to protest against nuclear testing by any country. It also declared that it was not in favor of Soviet nuclear testing, but expressed regret that the embassy's "letter is not an ordinary reply but one couched in terms interfering in the internal affairs of an organization."

The American Embassy in Rangoon was earning a bad image for the Burmese people. The man, who also helped to bring this about together with the American ambassador, was Mr. Smarter, (a fictitious name) the Press Officer in the USIS. He tended to treat the local employees, Burmese or others, with little courtesy and was often very rude to them. His request for anything was done in a bullying voice. At that time, I was also the supervisor of the Translation Pool, which turned out a Daily Press Summary (of the Burmese and Chinese language newspapers) and the three translators translated requested news items. They always worked under pressure because the daily demand for news translations was heavy. While other officers understood the heavy burden imposed on them, Smarter was not. He would come in about 11 am and demand that he wanted translations of eleven items, mostly editorials and lengthy articles, done by lunch time, which is 12:30 pm. Many days, my translators went without their lunch to finish Smarter's requests, rather than bear his vituperations. As soon as I came to know of this, I reported the matter to Mr. Reddington, the Administrative officer, and the situation improved.

Smarter was also responsible for driving his Press Assistant, U Myat Kyaw, as if he would a common servant, so that the latter finally resigned his job and then told off Smarter to his face, what he thought of him. Among the Burmese employees in the USIS, U Myat Kyaw was respected and well liked by his fellow workers, because he was a quiet and well-mannered person, who often as not would make himself inconspicuous in company. He was also an educated person and an experienced journalist, but these qualities apparently did not satisfy Smarter, who believed a loud bullying tone of voice and manner, in lieu of the whip, was the way to deal with colored people.

This was Smarter as he appeared to the Burmese. But when he was with the ambassador, he was a different person altogether. He kept at a respectable distance and assumed a respectable posture. I know, because he and I were with Ambassador Everton when the Reverend Sayadaw U Pyinnya Zawta and two other representatives of the Burma Council for Disarmament called on the ambassador on 1 June 1962 to present a Note protesting against the resumption of nuclear tests by the United States. I interpreted for the ambassador, while Smarter made notes and later released the press handout about the meeting. He was, as the Press Officer, also responsible for the follow-up in the local newspapers over this affair which earned the American Embassy some harsh comments from the local press.

I learnt later that it was Smarter who, probably with the ambassador's approval had reproduced in the American Newsfile, the derogatory remarks expressed by the New York Times of 23 April. The two between them destroyed Burmese goodwill which had been so painstakingly won by their predecessors. The American press with its biased reporting also helped to accelerate this process.

Newsweek 11 March 1963 had this article: BURMA: Left Full Rudder

"When the dashing General Ne Win and his army cohorts seized power in Burma a year ago, they promised the nation a Burmese Way to Socialism. Exactly what this meant (other than death of democracy) was never spelled out. Indeed, before long, the 17 army, navy and air force officers who composed the Revolutionary Council disagreed among themselves and the split into feuding factions.

Brigadier Aung Gyi, the half-Chinese Vice-Chief of Staff and Minister of Trade and Industry, favored a gradual return to civilian rule and cooperation with private industry. A strong Marxist faction led by the 'red brigadier' Tin Pe wanted a 'total state control.' Aung Gyi (father) Ne Win seemed to straddle the fence. He attacked 'pernicious economic systems,' by which he meant private enterprise, but maintained there was a place for it in Burma. Aung Gyi finally came down for the Marxists, whereupon Aung Gyi, heretofore mentioned as his heir, was ousted from the council. The government nationalized all commercial banks, announced plans to take over the import and export business and the rice trade (Burma's chief source of foreign income) and decreed that no further private industries could be established.

Last week, Ne Win said the nationalization steps represented another "slab in the foundation of the Burmese Way to Socialism." But with Aung Gyi gone, the field is now clear for the Marxists in the government. Moreover, Burma has become increasingly dependent on its Chinese neighbor with whom it shares a 1,370 mile border. Peking is now one of Burma's major rice customers and recently granted her an \$84 million loan along with 300 technical experts. Whether Burma will be sucked into the Chinese orbit or remain a neutralist socialist military dictatorship along the lines of Nasser's Egypt) hangs in the balance. The only thing certain is that the traditional easy-going Burmese way of life is in for a change."

What with the prejudice displayed by the American press and the activities of the American Government's representative which were resented by the Burmese press, matters soon came to a head. On 9 May 1963, the American Embassy in Rangoon announced the resignation of Mr. John Scott Everton as American ambassador to Burma.

## Chapter Sixteen

### **New American Diplomacy**

Mr. Alexander Schnee, the Deputy Chief of Mission became the Charge d'Affairs a.i. pending the appointment of the new American ambassador to Burma. Mr. Schnee, as I have mentioned, was an experienced career diplomat and he set about to undo, as much as he could, the damage done by his late chief. He had already established himself well in official, diplomatic and unofficial Burmese circles. His tact and charm of manner were of great assistance in regaining Burmese goodwill. He was also ably assisted in his task by his very gracious wife Lala (to friends) and two charming young daughters, Susan and Sandra. Even while Ambassador Everton was in residence, the Schnees' house was never a day without Burmese friends making informal visits as was the custom among the Burmese people. The official residences of the ambassador and the deputy chief of mission were located in the same compound, No. 86 and 84, Prome Road respectively.

One day, at my suggestion, Mr. Schnee invited U Thein Pe Myint, the Chief Editor of The Botataung daily, a widely read Burmese language newspaper, to lunch at his house. U Thein Pe Myint, besides being a journalist and a well-known author, was also a political leader who had since his youth participated in the national struggle for freedom. At one time, he was a member of the Central Committee, Communist Party Burma. He fell out with the Chairman Thakin Than Tun and resigned from the party in March 1948 just before the CPB went underground. Later, he became a leader of the National United Front and was elected to parliament. He was also a widely-traveled man and had been to the United Kingdom Europe, the USSR and Red China. He had also been to the USA in September 1961 under a Fulbright-Smith Mundt leader exchange grant. His travels must have broadened his horizons because he became a more sincere socialist than the diehard communist he used to be. Though he was not a very influential person, he was one of the leaders of the Burmese revolution and very knowledgeable about politics in Burma and also being a widely-read person, he was a very good conversationalist. His regular column in the Botataung under his own byline was read with great interest by the political officers of our embassy.

Mr. Schnee and U Thein Pe Myint got on famously and the discussions after lunch continued well into the afternoon. U Thein Pe Myint was also quite impressed with Mr. Schnee with whom he found many grounds for agreement in the wide range of discussions they had that day. Mr. Schnee saw more of U Thein Pe Myint, before he left Rangoon at the end of his tour of duty.

On two occasions, I arranged for Mr. Schnee to entertain in turn ex-members of parliament of the AFPEL and the Union Party. These politicians who had enjoyed power for ever a decade were like other displaced persons, bewildered about the changes going about them. They held on to hopes of a return to constitutional and an elected government. The American officials who were present at these receptions, for once found themselves in the reversed roles of having to answer questions, rather than asking them! Most of the Burmese politicians wanted to know what the American reaction was to the changes taking place in the country. I must say, that Mr. Schnee and the Americans he invited conducted themselves with great credit and the parties on both occasions were a great success. In the early days of the new Revolutionary Government and before the mass arrests of politicians took place, Burmese leaders were less inhibited in expressing their views and were also willing to meet foreign diplomats, if only for the personal satisfaction of knowing that, despite changes, they also were still regarded and sought after as political leaders of Burma.

I remember also two other occasions when I took Mr. Schnee to call on two elderly Burmese gentlemen, both of whom I knew very well. This was during the time of the Union Party government of U Nu. I arranged the visits, because, frankly speaking, I wanted to show off Mr. Schnee, who in my opinion and experience of many Americans was a gentleman of the first order and a very unusual American in his behavior towards other people, which was characterized by a never failing courtesy.

Our first call was on the Hon'ble U Myint Thein, Chief Justice of the Union. He was not only an eminent Jurist, but also a learned scholar. He studied at Queen's College, Cambridge, and was called to the Bar from Lincoln's Inn in 1925. After a distinguished legal career and a few years as Burmese ambassador to both China and the UN; U Myint Thein was appointed Chief Justice of the Union on 6 June 1957. Apart from all this eminence, U Myint Thein had a warm and genial personality and in my opinion, epitomized the true Burmese character.

As the hour of our appointment drew near, I reminded Mr. Schnee that it was time to go, but unfortunately, he was delayed a few minutes. By the time we arrived at the chambers of the Chief Justice, both somewhat short of breath, we were a good quarter of an hour late. When I presented Mr. Schnee to the Chief Justice, he won the approval and immediate pardon of the CJ for our tardiness, by the charming and profuse apologies he offered. We sat down to tea and conversation and I think Mr. Schnee made a good impression, because our courtesy call extended to a good hour and a half. The Chief Justice was a most genial host.

The second call we made a few days later, was on Dr Ba Maw, Burmese elder statesman. He was the first Prime Minister in pre-war Burma and Head of State, during the Japanese occupation of Burma in World War II. Apart from his political prominence, Dr Ba Maw was also a brilliant scholar. He studied at Cambridge University, England and at the University of Bordeaux, France. He was called to the Bar from Gray's Inn, London in 1923. Our meeting with Dr Ba Maw passed off very well. Mr. Schnee was also very much impressed with the old world Burmese style of manner and dress of his host. The two men took to each other, reminiscing over their student days in London. Mr. Schnee too had studied at the London School of Economics as a Rhodes Scholar in 1933. Dr Ba Maw later told me privately that he was much impressed with Mr. Schnee, because Americans like him were not often met in Burma. When Mr. Schnee was preparing to leave Rangoon when his tour of duty ended, he showed me a finely wrought silver candy casket on a stand, which he had received as a farewell gift from Dr Ba Maw. It was a costly present and I told Mr. Schnee that Dr Ba Maw must have thought very highly of him to give him such a valuable gift. I think Mr. Schnee was pleased with my comment.

On 3 August 1963, the Foreign Ministry announced that the RGUB had agreed to the proposal of the American Government to appoint Mr. Henry A. Byroade as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Union of Burma in succession to Mr. John Scott Everton. Mr. Byroade was born in 1913 and was a graduate of West Point Military Academy and Cornell University, holding degrees in Engineering. He joined the US army in 1937, advanced through various grades to the rank of Brigadier-General in 1946, and resigned his commission in 1952. During the years 1942 to 1944, Mr. Byroade served in the China-Burmese-India theater of war. In 1949, he proceeded on loan to the Department of State and was designated Director of the Bureau of German Affairs. Mr. Byroade was appointed Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian and African Affairs in 1952. His

diplomatic assignments abroad as US ambassador have included Egypt from 1955 to 56, Union of South Africa from 1956 to 1959 and Afghanistan from 1959. He also served as Disarmament Advisor with the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

This then was the experienced and distinguish diplomat sent to Burma to salvage American-Burmese goodwill and relationship. He was also a personal friend of American President Mr. John F. Kennedy. When Ambassador-designate Henry A. Byroade was sworn in at Washington on 13 September 1963 Secretary of State Dean Rusk described him as one of the country's "most distinguished career foreign service officers" and predicted the ambassador's assignment would lead to a "promising new chapter" in US-Burmese relations

That predication was to be fulfilled. But this sincere efforts of US diplomats like Ambassador Byroade and his deputy, Mr. Schnee, to strengthen and develop friendship and understanding between the two countries were greatly handicapped, if not marred by the irresponsible and biased reporting of the American press. It is true that the press in America is free, but too often, in the eyes of Asian people, this freedom is abused when it tends to provoke animosity and misunderstanding between governments and peoples through misrepresentation or willful bias.

## Chapter Seventeen

### A New Approach

Ambassador Byroade presented his credentials to General Ne Win, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council on 7 October 1963 and on the same evening issued a statement which signified the stand he would adopt in his relations with the Burmese Government. He said:

"My country is committed to a belief in a world of diversity where each nation can evolve its own political and economic forms, free from the threat of force or coercion. In this also, I am sure Burma and the United States stand together and I look forward to continuing and enlarging this community of interest between our two nations." It was his assurance that he would not interfere in the internal affairs of Burma.

On 22 November 1963 the Burmese people joined the American people in mourning for President John F. Kennedy who was assassinated in Dallas on that day. Burmese leaders and ordinary people paid tribute to the world-statesman like qualities and leadership of the late American President. General Ne Win cabled his personal condolences to the new US President, Mr. Lyndon B. Johnson.

Ambassador Byroade who returned to Rangoon on 24 December, after a brief consulting visit in the United States, declared that President Johnson had said he would carry on the policies of President Kennedy and definitely there would be no change in American foreign policy regarding Burma. Ambassador Byroade went about his tasks with a clearly defined objective of winning the Burmese people's goodwill and friendship. He issued no further statements and made no attempt to force himself on the Burmese. What he did was strictly in keeping with his functions as American ambassador. This correct attitude and the warm personality of the ambassador soon paid off and he was accorded the respect and friendship of many Burmese officials and ordinary people. U Thi Han, the Burmese Foreign Minister also came to have a very high regard for him and some years later, when I met U Thi Han at our July Fourth reception, he told me that Ambassador Byroade was one of the best ambassadors he had ever met. U Thi Han and I have been friends since our college days and he made this remark gratuitously and I think, sincerely. When I passed on the compliment to Ambassador Byroade, he was quite pleased and told me in reply that he also considered U Thi Han 'a very fine man.'

The first gratifying function which Ambassador Byroade attended was when he opened the Namsang water project on 26 April 1964. This project, carried out jointly by the American and Burmese governments, with the former providing technical assistance and a grant of \$750,000 and the latter supplying K 1710,000 for the project. It would eventually provide water for some 7000 Burmese pioneers in the Namsang Resettlement Project for ex-army personnel. Ambassador Byroade in his reply to the Burma Army area commander at Namsang said:

"We are glad to have had a part in what you are trying to do. If this makes it possible for you to succeed in what you want to do here, that's really all the thanks we need."

The simplicity and directness of the ambassador won him the esteem of the Burmese people. There was no sign of xenophobia, widely attributed to the Burmese by the American press, in their dealings with and regard for Ambassador Byroade. He also got on extremely well with the senior officers of the Burma Army. This was not strange, because he was

among his own kind. During World War II, he rose to the rank of Brigadier General and once served in the Burma theater. He always looked competent and confident, which he was. He was also an outdoors man, the kind that got along well with men. He had shot big game in Africa when he was American ambassador to the Union of South Africa in 1956 and had some fine heads of animals he had shot, displayed on the walls of his living room. The one I admired most was the head of a Cape buffalo, a big one, forty-eight inches or so on the inside curve. A glass-fronted gun cabinet held a fine collection of rifles, shotguns and pistols. While in Burma, Ambassador Byroade did some shooting, but unfortunately, did not have a chance at big game.

## Chapter Eighteen

### **Diplomats and Diplomats**

An ambassador's mission to gain the friendship and understanding of the Burmese is difficult enough, due to many differences between the two peoples, politically, economically, culturally and socially, without the irresponsible outpourings of the American press, which tend to counteract against all efforts of American diplomacy to build a friendly image. But this is an occupational hazard of all American ambassadors abroad, because the American press is not only free, but also a mighty institution in its own country.

Another occupational hazard, if I may use the term again, is the American Foreign Service officer, who either through bias or ignorance, treads on the sensibilities of the Burmese people. The sensitivity of newly independent Asians are wrongly interpreted as xenophobia by the American press. Asians may not understand foreigners, but they do not fear them. The ignorant or willfully biased Foreign Service officer can do much harm to an ambassador's mission. To underscore this statement, I will now relate what happened when I accompanied the First Secretary of the Embassy on a field trip.

Mr. Kenneth Swan (a fictitious name), who was the First Secretary and my chief, wanted to visit Magwe, a riverside town in central Burma and the divisional headquarters of the government. His interest in that town was to see the Myathalun Pagoda festival. I myself had never been to Magwe, but fortunately, the Commissioner of Magwe division was my old friend U Shan Lone, and he promised to arrange accommodation for us. There are no hotels or inns as Westerners know them in towns in Burma, except in Rangoon and recently in Taungyi, Pagan and Sandoway. Burmese people traveling about the country find accommodation in relatives' or friends' houses, and even a total stranger in any part of the country will be readily accommodated at the local headman's house or the monastery. Hence the absence of hotels, since the need for them does not arise. But for foreigners traveling in Burma, towns in which the District Commissioner has his headquarters, there is a circuit house and/or a 'dak' bungalow, where they may find accommodation for a small per diem charge. Meals are obtainable at the former but not at the latter. These accommodations are for touring government officials who have first priority.

It was one afternoon in September of 1964 that Mr. Swan and I took the train for Prome, where we were to embark on the RV Myasanda, a side-wheeled double-decker steamer of the Inland Water Transport (formerly the Irrawaddy Flottilla Company). We arrived in Prome about 7 p.m and at once went on board. We were immediately accosted by security men who wanted to know the itinerary and purpose of our trip. I explained everything to their satisfaction; that we were just on a tourist trip, even for me.

After an excellent dinner, we both retired to our cabins for the night. Early the next morning, the steamer slowly made its way up the Irrawaddy, because it was encumbered on both sides by flats heavily loaded with goods sent by the Central Trade to up-country towns. The landscape on both sides of the river was a monotonous series of flat fields, while the Pegu Yoma mountain range loomed in the distance. Both Mr. Swan and I spent the days in desultory snatches of conversation or reading the books we had brought with us, or sometimes with the skipper's permission we would climb to the bridge on the upper deck and Mr. Swan would air his Burmese with the pilot and helmsman. His conversational efforts amused the two Burmese, but he got along famously with them, though he sometimes asked awkward and unanswerable questions.

Everything was plain sailing until we got to Thayet Myo, our first major port of call. The steamer began to unload goods and we took advantage of this long stop to visit the town. Thayet Myo is not a very large town, but it is the headquarters of the District Commissioner and therefore administratively important. We took a pony cart to the center of the town where we visited the market. Here Mr. Swan enjoyed himself hugely, surprising shopkeepers with his questions put in quaint but understandable Burmese. I was pleased that he was enjoying himself and did not spoil his fun by doing any interpreting for him. From past experience I know that it would be a question and answer session.

In the course of our meanderings, we came upon a typical rural barber's shop. It was made of thatch and bamboo. There were some youths waiting their turn and Mr. Swan suddenly had a bright idea. It was that we should ask them about the political situation in Thayet Myo and I was to interpret for him! I was thunderstruck. We were already conspicuous; here was a white foreigner accompanied by a Burmese who in appearance and dress was not a native of these parts. To ask questions, which would be embarrassing to say the least, was the last thing we should be doing. I told Mr. Swan so, and raised objections to his idea. He was still full of it and would have persisted in doing so, had I not told him he could do it himself without any help from me. The Burmese, like other Asian peoples, dislike saying anything that is unpleasant. They would rather say what they think the other person wants to hear. But this was not the time for such niceties; I had to be blunt. He was plainly annoyed, but I stood my ground, for I knew the construction that people would put on our doings and the conclusions they would draw. We had the security people on our tails and I would rather be charged with insubordination by Swan, than be charged by them as in American spy! I was taking no chances on that happening. To my relief my views prevailed and we returned to the steamer without further mishap. But I noticed that Mr. Swan's manner was noticeably cooler towards me.

We arrived at Magwe on a very hot afternoon. Central Burma, even after the rainy season can be very hot with temperatures at 104° Fahrenheit or more. Although an important riverside town and a divisional headquarters, Magwe did not have a good jetty, nor did it have a good road alongside it. We were met by two Burmese officials who introduced themselves and said that they had been sent by the Commissioner to look after us. Here, I must explain that it is not part of the Commissioner's duties to send welcoming parties to meet foreign guests visiting his headquarters. Being the administrative head of the division, he does not normally see these visitors until they call on him. But my friend, the Commissioner, was going out of his way on my behalf and I was grateful for all the help he was giving us.

The two officials, one who was U Ba, the Headquarters' Assistant and the other, U Ko Gyi, Personal Assistant to the Commissioner, took us to their car. It was a small, old model, Austin parked in the sun, there being no shade trees to park under. Its interior was as hot as an oven and this showed that the two men must have been waiting for the steamer's arrival for quite a long time. Unfortunately, the car's starter did not function immediately and there was a slight delay. I was feeling uncomfortable in the closed heat, but tried not to show it out of consideration for our hosts; but not so Mr. Swa, who could not hide his impatience. To my embarrassment, he demanded in a loud voice. "How long are we expected to sit in this heat?"

It was a rude remark since our hosts understood English. Swan's manner must have shocked them, but they did not show their feelings. Eventually the car started and we were

driven to the dak bungalow which was, at the time, serving as the office of the Superintending Engineer of the Public Works Department. One room had been temporarily vacated and made available for our use. In the evening, just when we were preparing to go and call on the Commissioner, he arrived at our place, "to see if you chaps are comfortable."

We accompanied him back to his house where we were joined by his two officers. We had a pleasant visit which was slightly marred by the persistent and tactless questions Mr. Swan put to the Burmese officials. The Commissioner, who was a very experienced senior administrator and used to dealing with foreigners, politely but firmly told Swan that he should stop asking irrelevant questions. In other words, to mind his own business.

That same night U Ba and U Ko Gyi took us to the Myathalun Pagoda Festival. Pilgrims in their thousands from all over the country attend this festival which is also like a fair, with numerous stalls selling all kinds of household goods catering to the needs of the rural people. Villagers worship at the pagoda and also enjoy themselves at the fair, buying their requirements for the whole year. There are dramatic shows and also film shows for the entertainment of the people. A Burmese pagoda festival is not only a religious occasion, but also a colorful one which provides enjoyment and pleasure for the people, who as the Burmese saying goes "worship at the pagoda and at the same time dig for turtle eggs" – piety and pleasure going hand in hand.

Our visit to Magwe came to an end and we took a ferry boat to Aunglan where an embassy car was waiting for us. Like our arrival in Magwe, our departure from it was also attended by some unpleasantness. Again, it was Mr. Swan who caused it. The ferry boat was to leave at 5.30 a.m. U Ba and U Ko Gyi, who were not obligated to see us off, went out of their way to make sure that we did not miss the steamer, by calling for us at 3.30 in the morning. They were over-zealous no doubt, but their intentions were sincere. However, Sean did not take it in the right spirit and was annoyed for being called so early. He showed his annoyance so plainly to the embarrassment of our two friends. His ill-humor did not leave him when we arrived on board the steamer. It was pitch-dark as the lights were not functioning and we three Burmese sat together and being among ourselves, conversed in Burmese of inconsequential things. Suddenly out of the darkness Mr. Swan said: "You three are rude speak in Burmese in front of me. U Tin Tut, I want you to give me a translation of what you three said."

It was dark and I could not see how my two friends reacted. But I was shocked at Swan's boorish behavior and then I was angry at his ingratitude and insult to our good hosts, who had looked after us so well during our short visit to their town. I remembered that Swan had not even thanked them. I told him rather shortly that there was nothing of interest to translate for him, which in fact was true.

The rest of the trip was uneventful and we arrived back in Rangoon the same evening. I vowed never again to accompany an American on a field trip.

During the days following our return, I debated with myself as to whether I should report Mr. Swan's conduct to the ambassador or his deputy. I felt that Swan had behaved abominably towards the Burmese officials who had looked after us so well while we were their guests. His conduct too, I felt had reflected very badly on the American Embassy and the Burmese were not going to think highly of any American, having once met someone like him. Finally, I decided not to pursue the matter, for even if Swan was reprimanded, I would

still have to continue working with him. Swan without any grievance was bad enough, but Swan with a grievance against me would, I could imagine, be worse!

However, the matter did not end with me. One evening when I was visiting Mr. Schnee at his house, he suddenly turned to me and asked, "Are things alright in your office?"

"Why do you ask? Everything is alright as far as I can see," I replied. His answer surprised me.

"I don't like Swan's question and answer report about your trip to Magwe."

"Did he mention anything else?" I asked. "Yes, he said something about you" was his reply.

I then decided that Mr. Schnee as DCM should be told all the facts, since Swan had made some comments about me in his report. I told Mr. Schnee everything, not leaving out even the smallest detail. I told him of Swan's arrogant behavior and his gratuitous insults to his hosts whom he did not even have the decency to thank for all the help they gave him, taking everything done for him as his rightful due as First Secretary of the American Embassy. Mr. Schnee had a fine sensitive nature and he must have been pained and shocked to hear my report about Swan. My final comment was, "That kind of man will undo all the goodwill you and Ambassador Byroade are trying to build up."

Mr. Schnee was in entire agreement with me, but while he sympathized, I knew he would not take any official action, because he was leaving in a week or so, having completed his tour of duty. All of us who were privileged to know him were sad at his going away. He was a fine gentleman, who by his personal conduct and warm personality had done a great deal to regain the goodwill and understanding of Burmese foreign policy and the aspirations of the people. In a broadcast in the Voice of America program on 4 January 1965, when he was back in the States, Mr. Schnee said:

"The matter in which Burma pursues her foreign policy significantly contributes to the peace of the world. A prime example of Burmese support for peace has been her unquestionable desire to live in peace with her neighbors as can be seen in her policy of non-involvement. While, to some observers, this sometimes seems to be an attitude of anti-foreignism, the Burmese think it can more properly be termed pro-Burmese. It aims at preserving Burmese independence and national unity in a geo-political position that finds her wedged between two more powerful and populous neighbors, India and Communist China.

Concrete examples of other positive aspects of Burma's foreign policy include her strong support for the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and her efforts in assistant in the search for an equitable disarmament agreement by careful stages through the 18-nation Disarmament Conference. On the whole, we must recognize that the Burmese are pursuing their policies of non-involvement in a manner that tends to support the forces of peace in South East Asia.

Regarding Burma's non-involvement policy in relation to the United States activities in Burma, some activities in educational exchange and economic assistance have tended to dwindle, but not to the point where we do not continue to have fruitful relations in these fields.

Burma today, does not want to accept any foreign assistance if she can possibly manage without it or provide it from its own resources. But she fully realizes that there's an awful amount of talent, capabilities, experience and even material things around the world which Burma needs and if it will help Burma's independence, Burma will continue to use

these resources, usually preferring the multi-lateral channels, such as the Colombo Plan, rather than purely bi-lateral arrangements."

It is men like Ambassadors McConaughy, Byroade and other American officials like Alexander Schnee, Albert Franklin, Herbert Spivack and 'Skipper' Purnell to name a few, who, with their understanding of Burmese motives and aspirations, contribute largely to the success of the American mission in Burma, in fostering friendship between the two countries. Fortunately for the mission, persons like Smarter and Swan are not common and they do not stay long enough in the country to leave their mark.

Mr. Philip H. Chadbourn Jr. succeeded Mr. Schnee as the new Deputy Chief of Mission. He arrived in Rangoon in mid-1964 on transfer from Laos, where he had spent some three years. He spoke Laotian and Thai, besides French and English and while not exactly an expert on Asian affairs, he had considerable knowledge of the Indo-Chinese peninsula. He was open-hearted and natural in his dealings with people and was soon a popular figure in Rangoon society. I got to know him very well and Phil and I became good friends. I was also sure that he would be able to contribute a great deal to strengthening relations between his country and mine. Unfortunately for us, his experiences in Indo-China claimed him for a more important assignment in South Vietnam and he left Burma in August 1965 after a very short stay, to join the American Embassy in Saigon. He was later transferred to Marseilles in December 1968 as American Consul-General and when I heard from him last he was still there. He sends me a card every Christmas.

## Chapter Nineteen

### Cultural Exchanges

American policy during this period was the continuation of aid to Burma in various forms, though somewhat on a limited scale. Cultural exchanges, especially in the field of sports, were jointly sponsored by the American Embassy and the Burmese Government. Among the aid programs the most noteworthy was the Thamaing College project which was started in 1959, by a grant of US \$2 millions and Ks. 12,847,240 from the United States Government. Another agreement was signed by the two governments for the erection of 65 more buildings for this project, for which a grant of US \$ 540,000 and Ks. 8,450,000 from 480 funds were given by the United States Government.

Since the suspension of the Fulbright Educational and Cultural Exchange Program in early 1962, the exchange of goodwill visits sponsored by the American Embassy and the Burmese Government was mostly in the field of sports and was also almost uni-lateral. In the following four years, no Burmese goodwill mission had visited the United States. The first Burmese official delegation to do so was a group of Burmese Information officials led by Deputy Secretary U Tun Tin, who left on 7 June 1966 for a month's tour of the United States.

Noteworthy among the cultural exchanges between the two countries were the visits of world famous golfer Gene Sarazen in May 1965, the visit of the US Davis Cup team the following year and the goodwill visits in 1967 of the famous Dallas Tornado Soccer Club and the Globetrotters professional footballers from Texas. The last two visits were great successes, the Burmese being great soccer fans; football being almost a national game in Burma. A lot of goodwill was achieved and it inspired Ambassador Byroade to suggest that a Burmese soccer team visit the United States. He said that his invitation was perhaps also inspired by selfishness as a team with such professional capabilities will do a great deal to stimulate the sport in America. The Dallas team leader Bob Kap, speaking at a farewell dinner given in honor of his team, happily endorsed the ambassador's suggestion and promised that should the Burmese team come, "we will give you our hearts."

However, the most memorable goodwill visit to me personally, was by Paul Harney, a well-known American golf professional, who arrived in February 1967. It was memorable to me for two reasons. One, as a keen golfer myself, I was going to see a modern golf pro, who played the game somewhat differently from old timers like Gene Sarazen, whom I had always admired since I began playing golf in 1946.

The other reason was something which concerned me personally and which coincided with Paul Harney's visit. Paul Harney was given a very warm welcome by the Burmese golfers, who seldom had a chance to see a modern American pro golfer in action. Paul's clinics were well attended by young and old golfers, eager to check up on their swings. He was also surprised by the young boys' eagerness to learn. He told them, "It's amazing how you boys pick up in two minutes, the teaching that would have taken two hours with the boys at home."

But then Paul Harney is not only one of the best-liked golfers in the States, he is also a great teacher. His teachers are also not only simply and easily understood, but also very effective. The Burmese golfers benefited a great deal from his teachings. With General Ne Win himself a keen golfer, golf had become a popular game in Burma. Paul Harney's visit was highlighted by an exhibition match with Mya Aye, Burma Open champion, who played

an inspired game to beat Harney, who was tried after three days of strenuous golf demonstrations. No one will claim that Mya Aye is a better golfer than Paul Harney, but the exhibition match unintentionally helped Mya Aye's brilliant performance to be noticed. Harney suggested that Mya Aye should be encouraged to play in international tournaments, like the Carling World Championship. Incidentally, it was through his suggestion that the Revolutionary Government sent Mya Aye to participate in that tournament, in which he was placed and won \$600 and to make a tour of the American golf circuit. Paul Harney's visit was an unqualified success. As the Working People's Daily, 14 February 1967 reported:

"There is also no doubt that the American golf ambassador's visit has been an unqualified success as the Burma Golf Federation's President Colonel Min Thein stressed in his eulogy after a lunch in Harney's honor. The Federation president also expressed the hope that Paul Harney would be able to come to Rangoon again and told him that Gene Sarazen and he would be always remembered by Burmese golfers " with gratitude and affections " for what they had done through advice, suggestion and demonstration for the uplift of golf in the country."

Thank to the efforts of the American Embassy and the friendly generosity of Paul Harney, he made a second 10-day visit to Burma in February 1968. This visit was also a great success for Paul, who again endeared himself to all the Burmese golfers by his sincerity and unassuming manners. The "goodwill through golf" representative of the United States, rounded off his program of active golf in Rangoon by playing round of 18 holes at the Defense Service Golf Club with General Ne Win as partner against Brigadier Sein Win and Colonel Ko Ko.

At a dinner given in his honor by the Burma Golf Federation, Paul received not only presents as symbols of Burmese gratitude and affection but also a Burmese name from Ambassador Byroade who suggested that he should cease to be known as Paul Harney in Burma, but as U Putt, since both on this trip and also last year, Paul had failed to master the greens on the Danyingone course. Paul also visited other towns to teach district golfers and on his last night in Rangoon, he was honored by an unscheduled dinner given by Chairman General Ne Win and Daw Khin May Than.

The finest appreciation of Paul Harney's goodwill visit was expressed by Burma's noted writer U Ko Ko<sup>14</sup> of "Motley" fame in The Working People's Daily, 10 March 1968.

"Paul Harney, the American golfer, or U Putt as his country's ambassador calls him, has come and gone. He seems to have enlarged the niche he occupies in the hearts of these golfers who have improved their game as a result of his previous visit. He has also managed somehow to creep quietly into the hearts of "golfers" who haven't quite recovered from the effects of the devastation in the wake of the visit. The obvious sincerity of the man, his unquestionable sporting spirit and his total lack of any form of patronization or ostentation have definitely accomplished much more for his country than what may be possible with dollars or guns."

These goodwill visits by American sports personalities, for which Ambassador Byroade is to be congratulated, helped most towards the re-establishment of goodwill and understanding between the Burmese and the American peoples.

## Chapter Twenty

### **A Rude Awakening**

Now I must relate an incident which concerned me officially as an employee of the embassy and which occurred at about the time of Paul Harney's first visit to Burma in February 1967. All of us in the embassy were aware of the reduction-in-force program that was being carried out in American embassies all over the world under orders of the President of the United States. Many Burmese local employees, including drivers, who were found surplus to the requirements of their sections, were given notice. I found myself one of them.

On 4 February 1967 Mr. Edward Ingraham, the First Secretary who had just then joined the embassy, called me in and told me he regretted that his first official business with me was to give me a verbal notice of termination of service. He said the official notice would be given me on 1 March 1967. When I asked Mr. Ingraham what was the reason for the termination of my services, and whether it was due to unsatisfactory work on my part, he replied rather generally that the cost of the Vietnam War was getting very heavy to the US Government which necessitated cut downs in expenditure and this was one of the occasions.

I returned to my office feeling rather depressed. I sat at my desk thinking of the many years service, nineteen years to be exact, I had given to the American Foreign Service. I would be eligible for an immediate annuity if the termination of my service were to be one year later. I would then qualify by age and length of service for an annuity under the involuntary separation clause. I reflected that I had given the best years of my life in their service and yet even this aspect of my service had not been considered by the Americans. I had received commendations from most of my chiefs, and ambassadors had been pleased with my usefulness to the embassy. Ambassador Byroade usually introduced me to visiting Americans, with the words, "He knows everybody in this country." But to what avail.

Suddenly a thought struck me. The ambassador concerned himself with policy and left administrative matters to the DCM Mr. Ranard. Surely Ambassador Byroade, who knew me very well and liked me, I think, would not have sanctioned such an action if he knew anything about it. Heartened by this thought and encouraged by a good friend to whom I had related my circumstances, I sat down and wrote a letter to the ambassador about my case, ending on this note: "pardon me if I sound bitter. I look back to the 19 years I served here and can find no reward for them except in the friendship and esteem of some fine American friends I made during all these years."

On 9 February, I attended the ambassador's reception for Paul Harney. As soon as he saw me, Ambassador Byroade said he knew nothing about my case and that he would look into it and also that I was not to worry. A great load was lifted off my mind and I was able to enjoy myself that evening. On 14 February, Mr. Ingraham informed me that as a result of my letter to the ambassador, my case had been dropped and further, there would be no reduction in force in our Political Section.

I knew Ambassador Byroade was a just man and would not stand for any unfairness to us. I have always had the highest regard for him and considered him as one of the best American ambassadors to my country and I do not think I am alone in my estimation of Ambassador Byroade. U Tin Han, the Hon'ble Minister for Foreign Affairs also shared my views and I think the United States Government also had a similar regard for Ambassador Byroade's qualities, because among all the American ambassadors to Burma, his term of

office was the longest, being almost five years in all. This fact alone attested to the high confidence placed in him by his government and to his achievements in strengthening and developing friendship and understanding between the two countries.

When Ambassador Byroade succeeded Mr. Everton, relations between Burma and the United States were at a low ebb, due to the blunders perpetuated by Mr. Everton. Burmese mistrust of American intentions was worse than it was in 1953, when the CIA was suspected of assisting the Kuomintang irregulars in Burma. It was also a period with the policy of the Revolutionary Government was to close all doors to foreign intrusion and influence. Government officials stepped warily, because fraternization with foreigners, and at that time, with Americans especially, was not encouraged. It was a difficult time for all diplomatic missions in Burma, cut off, as they were, from contacts with the Burmese people, except when they had official dealings with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It was Ambassador Byroade's job to dispel this atmosphere of mistrust and ill-will that surrounded the American mission in Burma.

It is to the great credit of Ambassador Byroade that he was finally able to regain the goodwill and trust of the Burmese Government and to restore the prestige of the American Embassy in Burma. In achieving this, he displayed all the finest qualities of an experienced diplomat, but more than that, was his personal understanding of Burmese aspirations and desire to direct their own destiny without outside interference, and the warmth of feeling he had for the Burmese people. In the process of winning goodwill and understanding for the American Government and people, Ambassador Byroade won for himself many Burmese friends. It was one of his biggest achievements too in the circumstances prevailing, to arrange for General Ne Win's State visit to the United States in September 1966.

General Ne Win was the first Burmese Head of State to pay a state visit to the United States. His visit was a great success in bringing about a better understanding of each country's policies. This came about at a time when relations between Burma and communist bloc countries, especially with the Soviet Union and Red China were unusually friendly. It was natural for Burma, seeking to establish socialist democracy, to achieve better rapport with other socialist countries. However western observers looked askance at such doings and counted Burma as one of the new democracies. Hence, Ambassador Byroade's achievements, to be really appreciated, must be measured against this background. In the prophetic words of Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Ambassador Byroade had indeed opened "a promising new chapter" in US-Burmese relations.

Thanks to Ambassador Byroade, my future prospects were assured. On 28 May 1968 I received from him my 20 year Service Award Certificate in a ceremony held in his office. As he congratulated me, he also said, "John, I am honored to do this." I replied very sincerely, "You made this possible, Mr. Ambassador and I thank you very much."

Before Ambassador Byroade left Burma, I found out the name of the person who was responsible for initiating the termination of my services under the economizing program and why. I was told that before he left Burma, Kenneth Swan had strongly expressed his opinion that while I knew a lot of ministers and political leaders of the past regime, my usefulness was now very much limited, because I know very few of the military leaders of the present Revolutionary Council and Government, and for that reason, my services should be terminated under the reduction-in-force program. I do not know how much also the second secretary of our Political Section had to do with this, and I did not ask, though I had my

suspicious. I knew both did not like me, for I always stood up to them when I considered them to be in the wrong. They could find no fault with my work, which my efficiency reports, prior to their estimation, attested more often than not as "Performance clearly exceeds basic requirements." That underhand move was their way of getting back at me.

How little did they estimate me, and how little did they know their own jobs. It was for them to find out whether my usefulness was really ended. But they never did; had they bothered, I could have told them, what Ambassador Byroade knew, that I was a personal friend of the Foreign Minister U Thi Han. In the whole embassy, the ambassador and I were the only two persons privileged to ring up the Foreign Minister in his own home. Not even the DCM, Mr. Ranard could do this. Brigadier Thaug Dan, member of the Revolutionary Council and Minister for Information and Culture is my first cousin, and Brigadier Sein Win<sup>15</sup> a good friend. I claimed nothing from these relationships, because as an employee of the American Embassy, I considered it a better policy not to do so.

Moreover, I was privileged and honored to know General Ne Win, whenever we met, always addressed me as "Ko John." I first came to know him many years ago, when he was Chief of Staff, and I played a round of golf with him and the late Dr U Tin, at the Rangoon Golf Club. I remember my partner was U San Tin, an engineer of the Municipal Compressor Station. In those days, whenever General Ne Win played on the Burma Golf Club, I as a member of the club council would be present, to see that everything was in order, to ensure him an enjoyable game and a pleasant outing on our course. He was always appreciative of the club's solicitude for his welfare. I met him again on other occasions in my capacity as Secretary of the Burma Golf Federation, in 1956, and I was at his reception for the Thai-Burma Goodwill golf teams, which played their annual match in Rangoon that year. I remember General Ne Win as an unassuming and genial host, whose informal manner won the regard and respect of his Thai guests.

To add to the long list of distinguished Burmese I counted as friends, there was my old friend, Dr Maung Maung, then Chief Justice of the Union, and now a member of the Council of State; Justices U Sein Thinn, and U Thet Pe, of the Chief Court were also old friends. U Ba Sein, the Attorney-General was another, and his successor U Hla Thinn, who later became the Chief Justice, was also an old friend. Too many other friends, to add to the list, were high-ranking military officers, and among the civilians, were Secretaries of Government, Commissioners of Divisions etc. Without exaggeration, the names of my friends and acquaintances would read like a Who's Who in Burma<sup>16</sup>.

The years following March 1962 and the change of government were critical years concerning Burma's relations with other countries, especially with those of the Western Democracies. Burma was under a government with a revolutionary program of socialization, more rigid than that of previous socialist governments. It was a period of more fraternal dealings with socialist countries, both eastern and western, and a period of restraint and caution in dealings with capitalist countries, both east and west. Unfortunately, American officials in the State Department, according to press reports, were critical of the course of events in Burma.

It was a period which called for a careful and understanding approach by diplomatic missions in Burma. Ambassador Byroade was well aware of this need and set an example to members of his mission, both Americans and Burmese, by discharging his duties without ever ruffling the nationalistic and socialistic sensitivities of the Burmese Government.

Unfortunately, however, at such times when the American Embassy needed experienced officers of high caliber and integrity, who were prepared to be understanding of the changes taking place in Burma, there were few of them.

It was indeed unfortunate, that after 1962, there were quite a number of American officers who totally lacked this understanding in their dealings with the Burmese. Prior to 1962, when Burma was under a parliamentary government, and relations between the two countries were not so inhibited, American diplomats then serving in Burma were of a type, whose understanding of Burmese problems, and their sincerity in dealing with the people contributed towards the establishment of closer relations between the two governments.

## Chapter Twenty One

### **Renewed American Assistance**

The new American Ambassador Mr. Arthur William Hummel Jr. presented his credentials to General Ne Win, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council on 11 October 1968. This was his second assignment to Burma. Mr. Hummel was Public Affairs Officer of the United States Information Service in Burma from 1960 to 1967.

Mr. Hummel was born in China of American parents in 1920. He attended Antioch College in the United States from 1937 to 1939; the College of Chinese Studies in Peking from 1940 to 1941, and the University of Chicago in 1959 where he received a Master of Arts degree in Chinese. Prior to his appointment to the Department of State in November 1950, he taught English at the Fu Jen Middle School in China, where he was interned by the Japanese in 1941.

From April 1955 to September 1957, he was Deputy Public Affairs Officer at the American Embassy in Tokyo. He attended the National War College in Washington, D.C., from August 1960 to June 1961, and then served as Deputy Director of the Voice of America of the United States Information Agency in Washington. Between September 1963 and August 1965, he was Deputy Assistant Secretary of States for Educational and Cultural Affairs. For the past three years, Mr. Hummel served as DCM at the American Embassy in Taipei.

From the short sketch of his career given above, it was obvious that the new ambassador was of an outstanding caliber, besides being well versed in Chinese affairs. His assignment to Burma as the American ambassador had, I think, a definite purpose. His previous experience in Burma, valuable as it was, must have been a secondary consideration. His considerable experiences in China, both old and new, and his knowledge of the Chinese language and Chinese affairs, were, I think, the criterion for his assignment to Burma, at a time, when Sino-Burmese relations were strained.

In June 1967, a Sino-Burmese riot had broken out in Rangoon and soon afterwards throughout the whole country, over the wearing of Mao badge. With ill-considered timing, the local Chinese took up the matter very aggressively and this sparked off the riots, which led to an assault on the Chinese embassy itself by the outraged Burmese. One Chinese technician within the embassy was killed. Chinese elders and youths who had instigated the riots were arrested, tried in court and jailed. The Chinese ambassador, who was away in Peking, never returned to his post and in retaliation, the Burmese ambassador the Sama Singa Dawa Kaung, was also recalled. Diplomatic relations worsened, when the People's Republic of China, openly announced its support for the Communist Party of Burma (White Flags), which had been in revolt against the Burmese Government since 1948, and Radio Peking daily denounced General Ne Win's Government.

It was definitely to the interest of the American Government to observe closely the course of future relations between China and Burma, and President Nixon may have had this in mind, when he appointed Mr. Hummel as the new American ambassador to Burma. This rather elaborate analysis, of what may just be a routine assignment, is based on the changing political scenes in Burma and its related significance to US-Burmese relations; the American Embassy in Burma had long been a China-listening post.

The United States' assistance to the Burmese Government in the various fields continued to be the keynote of US policy in Burma. Victims of floods in Arakan and disastrous fires in other parts of the country received prompt American financial and material assistance. The AID assistance program in the new out-door patients wing of the Rangoon General Hospital, the completion of the college buildings at Thamaing, the construction of a modern timber mill at Okkyin and many unfinished projects continued. On 18 November 1968 Ambassador Hummel presented 15,000 brand new American university-level text books to Dr Maung Maung Kha, Rector of the Rangoon Arts and Science University. The aim of gift was to help in "furthering Burma's educational objectives." The collection consisted of 165 titles, all of them selected by Dr Nyi Nyi, Secretary of the Ministry of Education.

The Apollo 11 moon landing on 21 July 1969 was warmly acclaimed by the Burmese people and press. A song to hail the landing, composed by Bogale Tint Aung, and sung y Aye Aye Thwe with music accompaniment by Gita Lulin Maung Ko Ko's troupe was sent to the Voice of America as a tribute to the three astronauts.

A poem "Men on the Moon" by Hla Min was another tribute to the American achievement.

The Eagle made a soft descent  
And perfect rendezvous  
Does not the module represent  
A fantasy come true?

To travel through the cold, void space  
To have that faith in science  
To face death squarely in the face  
Yes, man acted with defiance,

Men set foot on an alien world  
In July sixty-nine  
That small step from the bravest man  
Was a giant leap for mankind.

The walk in one-sixth gravity,  
Rock samples from the moon  
Three men who spoke with brevity  
For science what a boon

Oh! Three courageous gentlemen  
We give you our salute  
To countless other helping hands  
We humbly pay tribute.

No event can ever equal  
This sublime unique mission  
The Apollo's triumph will make the people  
Extend their own visions.

Are we not brothers on the earth?  
So let us all unite  
There will be heaven here on earth  
If we all cease to fight

At the time of the Apollo landing, the USIS also published a cartoon in the local papers, depicting the man in the moon welcoming the astronauts. Probably due to an oversight, the rabbit of the Burmese nursery rhyme and so dear to the hearts of all Burmese children, did not figure in the cartoon. In commemoration of the occasion and to correct this omission, Chief Justice U Myint Thein sent his version, in English, of the rhyme to Ambassador Hummel.

Grandpa says that very soon  
I many travel to the moon.  
An old man lives there....so he said....  
Who pounds his rice at time for bed.  
By his side in moonlight glow  
A bunny rabbit crouches low.  
Can it be that Grandpa tells  
Fairy tales to stop my yells?

On 21 August 1969 the "Man on the Moon" exhibition sponsored by the American Embassy, opened in Rangoon for over a month, and queuing for admission almost every day. Over 1,500,000 people attended the exhibition in Rangoon.

American prestige in Burma was high.

## Chapter Twenty Two

### Out of the Top Drawer

In 1969 Mr. J.M. Blueblood (a fictitious name) arrived at the embassy as Second Secretary and Mr. Robert J. Martens had replaced Mr. Swan as First Secretary and Chief of the Political-Economic Section. Previously, the Political and Economic sections were separate, but with the reduction in force the two were combined and the First Secretary of the Embassy took charge of both.

Mr. Blueblood was my immediate supervisor and he and I got on well enough and soon we were on first name terms. By this, I do not mean that we became close friends. I think it was just a good old American custom to establish a less formal working relationship. I was soon to find out that even this workaday relationship between us was not to last for long.

I had been told by other local employees of the embassy what he was the son of a famous general and that his family was high in the list of the Social Register. I do not know if this had anything to do with his behavior to other people in the office, both Americans and Burmese. He was not an easy man to get along with, which I soon found out for myself and which was also confirmed by people who had dealings with him. He was arrogant and a bit of a snob on the side. Other Americans described him more pungently.

To really understand Blueblood, let me describe an incident which a colleague related to me. On one occasion Blueblood planned a field trip to the Tenessarim Coast. My colleague, who is a native of those parts, was to accompany him to facilitate things on the trip. This was routine with us; American, either went on their own or had a Burmese local employee accompany them. As I mentioned earlier, I have had experiences of traveling with them, and since my last tour with Kenneth Swan, I had always excused myself from accompanying anyone on such trips.

This colleague wrote ahead to his friends in Mergui, Tavoy and Moulmein<sup>17</sup>, arranging programs for Blueblood and another officer who was accompanying him. On the eve of their departure, my friend found he could not make the trip with them due to a family emergency and he told me later that Blueblood did not appear pleased when he told him that. Well, off went Blueblood, and despite my friend's absence, his contacts looked after Blueblood with the usual open-hearted hospitality.

What transpired on that trip was related to me by my colleague when he received letters from his friends in Mergui, Tavoy and also from his father in Moulmein. He was annoyed, to say the least. His friends, he said, all wrote, "Next time don't send such a bastard to us." His father's letter was more mildly phrased, but carried the same import. This was what happened on that trip.

Because of his son's request, the old man, who is a well-to-do businessman in Moulmein, entertained Blueblood with the usual famous Moulmein hospitality. Burmese people everywhere are very hospitable to their guests and they do so because it is a Burmese way of life. It was reported that Blueblood, on his departure, thought it befitting to leave a quarter-full bottle of Scotch whisky, some remains of preserved fruits in open-used cans, actually all leavings from his table, as parting gifts to his host! The old man was naturally

furiously at this insult to his hospitality and told his son never to bring or send again such a type of American to his house.

I would also like to relate another incident, just so one can obtain a proper evaluation of Mr. Blueblood. The Russian Ballet was performing in Rangoon, the visit arranged under the Soviet-Burmese Cultural Exchange program. They were putting on Swan Lake and the performance was wonderful, even to our unsophisticated Burmese audience. Tickets for the show were hard to obtain and Daw Yin Tin, a Burmese woman employee in the USIS was beseeched by wives of American officials to try and get tickets for them, It will be appropriate, I think, to introduce Daw Yin Yin a fictitious name to the readers, to prepare them for what was to happen to her later. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Rangoon University and won a State scholarship to the United States where she studied at the University of Michigan and received her Master's degree in Education. She was in every respect an educated and cultured Burmese woman and she moved in the best circles in Rangoon society. Her father was a prominent lawyer and her elder brother, served for many years as Burmese ambassador abroad. She had also been a long time with the USIS and was well liked and respected by her colleagues, both Americans and Burmese.

Now Mrs. Blueblood had also asked Daw Yin Tin's help in obtaining tickets for the ballet. After calling here and there she managed to get the tickets and had them sent to those who had requested them. On receipt of his two tickets, Mr. Blueblood was pleased and straightaway he went to Daw Yin Yin to show his appreciation@ he tipped her Ks. 5 which would be about a dollar.

In all my years with the embassy, I have never come across such rudeness in a man. It was either arrogance or just stupidity on his part, and when the story got round, Blueblood's stock in the embassy, which had never been high, fell to an all-time low. He appeared unaware of having committed a serious solecism. Mr. Blueblood was one who took himself seriously. As I said, he and I got along well enough and I gave him no cause to criticize or find fault with my work. In fact, he would grudgingly have to say of my reports, that I had done them very well. I was kept on a busy schedule at that time, because of important political events place in the country.

## Chapter Twenty Three

### **Endeavors of the Revolutionary Council of the Union of Burma**

On 27 October 1966 the ex-president of the Union, U Win Maung and ex-Prime Minister U Nu and other political Leaders had been released from detention. By early 1968 the political atmosphere was more relaxed, except for the darkening clouds on Burma's border with China following the anti-Chinese demonstrations of June 1967. If the country ever needed to be united and strong, such a time was now and General Ne Win well knew it. At the Commanding Officers' conference held on 18 September 1968, he stressed the need for national unity, a unity in which the Armed forces were one with the working people. He preferred his hand to the political Leaders and asked them to sink differences and strive one and all with sincerity and resolution for the good of the nation and the people. Again, speaking at the Burma Socialist Program Party seminar on 23 September 1968 he made the same gesture and repeated the same message.

The call for unity and that for improvement of the economy made by General Ne Win at both the Commanding Officers' conference and the BSPP seminar was of great significance to observers of the Burmese political scene like myself and the American officials of the embassy. We speculated a great deal in analyzing General Ne Win's statement in his address at the COs' conference on 21 September, when he said:

"They (politicians) should work with us so that we can serve our country better it is for the welfare and progress of the nation. This is the correct attitude when they join us, some may be entrusted with the highest task, such as working in the council of ministers and some may have to work in the lower bodies. Supposing Burma may have to go to war, these politicians may also have to fight shoulder to shoulder with us. Would it be just not to accept their services in time of emergency? "

This was the first time a note of warning was sounded on the vital need for national unity. It was obvious that the deteriorating relations with China occasioned this need. Rumors following this statement also indicated reconciliation with the former political leaders. These were confirmed later, when General Ne Win invited 33 of them to advise the Revolutionary Council on the means of achieving national unity that would be beneficial to the people in future Burma. The ultimate aim was to bring about a new constitution for the Union.

On 4 December 1968 General Ne Win formed the Union of Burma Internal Unity Advisory Body, made up of the 33 political leaders invited to assist the government. The leaders of the former Union Party, AFPFL and the National United front and other minority groups, went into deliberations which were to last six months. I knew most of the political leaders, but realized that it was not the time to be seen with them. Therefore, I kept away from any contact with these leaders, who were entrusted with a task of great national importance.

However, embassies have their own resources, and a week later, Blueblood came to my office and gave me a Thermo-fax copy of the "top secret minutes of the meetings" held by the National Advisory Body. I satisfied myself that they were the genuine article; but how such documents came into his possession, I do not know, nor did I ask. I do know, of course, that it is common practice among embassies anywhere to acquire such documents in one way or the other. As the documents were classified, I personally translated them, and I can now

report that the American Embassy was kept well informed of the proceedings of the NAB, up to its final reports made to General Ne Win on 2 June 1969. It was believed that U Nu had circulated copies of his memorandum to embassies of the Western bloc before it was submitted to the Revolutionary Council. The majority members of the NAB led by U Nu, and made up of the Union Party and AFPFL, recommended a return to parliamentary democracy, while 11 members of the left-wing NUF, including a few new supporters from the other two political parties, supported the present ideology and program of the RGUB.

General Ne Win, however, did not accept any of their recommendations. This was a foregone conclusion, because from the very beginning, he and members of the Revolutionary Council and Council of Ministers, and also senior commanders in the field were opposed to a return to parliamentary democracy and were also adamant about establishing a socialist democracy under the leadership of the Burma Socialist Program Party.

Foreign observers, notably those of the American news magazines such as TIME and Newsweek\_were very critical of General Ne Win's regime and at times, published exaggerated and colorful but incorrect accounts of happenings in Burma. One charge was that the RGUB was xenophobic because fraternization with all foreigners, especially those from the diplomatic missions, whether of the Western or Eastern blocs, was discouraged. This existed probably for national security, at a time when revolutionary changes were taking place in Burma.

Government officials and army officers too, had to request permission to accept an invitation to a reception given by any embassy. Such being the case, fewer government officials were seen at diplomatic functions. Former political leaders of the Union Party and the AFPEL were also reluctant to meet foreign diplomats, especially those of our embassy, not because of any prejudice, but for fear of being misunderstood by the government.

In the past, I had been able to invite political leaders to private lunches and dinners with officers of our embassy or arrange for the Americans to call on them. Talks on these occasions were always on the political situation in Burma, for after all, it was their job to know developments in the country in which they were stationed. It was always a serious affair for the American diplomats and small talk and trivialities were not indulged in at these meetings. I was usually present and the next day, my duty would be to prepare a memo of the meetings. I did this from memory and these social affairs usually left me mentally exhausted.

The RCUB too, was seeking to establish closer relations, politically and economically with the Eastern bloc, especially the Eastern European countries. While the RGUB still maintained friendly relations with the United States, it had stopped sending state scholars and government officials on observation and study tours of that country, lest the capitalist economic system render them useless in the task of building a socialist society in Burma.

Under these circumstances, diplomats from the various foreign missions in Rangoon found themselves thwarted in their desire for communication with the Burmese people. I had many friends in high places in the government, but being an employee of the American Embassy, I felt I would embarrass them by calling on them, even if my visits were purely social ones. Therefore, I stopped seeing them purposely and only met them at the golf club or at occasional social functions. I maintained, what I considered was a correct attitude. But this was not appreciated by Blueblood whose idea of diplomacy was the direct approach, regardless of whether it caused embarrassment to others. If it would serve his purpose, his

attitude would be, "to hell with them". My attitude irked him and when I explained that I must respect the unspoken wishes of my friends that I do not seek them or ask embarrassing questions, which would create misunderstanding, his only remark was, "Please don't be so scrupulous with your friends."

On one occasion, I was asked by the senior officer of the Economic Section to brief him on certain matters, as Ambassador Hummel had an appointment with Colonel Hla Han the Minister for Education and Health. Blueblood was also present, and on one point involving a delicate question on a purely Burmese internal matter, I suggested a round-about approach rather than a direct query. When Blueblood was asked his opinion, he replied with typical arrogance and typical ignorance of our culture nuances: "I don't see why the ambassador cannot come out with a straight question."

As a matter of prudence, I do not know how the ambassador could do that; but this would not have occurred to a man like Blueblood.

## Chapter Twenty Four

### **Following U Nu's Defection**

The Burmese political scene took a sudden turn which was later to have repercussions on the American mission in Burma.

On 3 September 1969, the Burmese press published full reports of U Nu's declaration to the London press on 29 August that he would oppose General Ne Win's government militarily. Earlier in April, U Nu and some members of his family had left for India, ostensibly on a pilgrimage and to take Aryurvedic treatment. This was made possible because of a promise made by General Ne Win at the time of U Nu's release from detention in October 1966.

U Nu was in ill-health then, and General Ne Win told him that he could go abroad for medical treatment if he so wished. U Thi Han, the Foreign Minister, who was also an old friend of U Nu, facilitated all the arrangements for U Nu's trip. Bo Letya, one of the Thirty Comrades and a former Deputy Prime Minister, also accompanied U Nu. U Thi Han felt secure in helping U Nu since the trip had received official blessing. Later, repercussions were to follow. In the rising political tensions following U Nu's defection, and the spate of rumors circulating about U Nu and foreign assistance for his venture, U Thi Han's loyalty became suspect and he resigned as Minister for Foreign Affairs and National Planning on 18 June 1969. Colonel Maung Lwin, a member of the Revolutionary Council became the new Foreign Minister.

From India, U Nu and his family accompanied by Bo Letya arrived in Bangkok on 6 August 1969. He was also accompanied by U Law Yone, former Chief Editor of the Nation newspaper, Rangoon and who had since left Burma for good. U Nu requested and was given political asylum for himself and his family by the Thai Government, and U Nu made Bangkok his base. His appearance in London and his declaration to oppose General Ne Win's government were the first signs of his defection. U Nu had been in detention for more than four and a half years, and this must have been worse than galling to a man of his nature. Except during the short period of the caretaker government of 1958 to 1960 under General Ne Win, U Nu had been Prime Minister of Burma from 4 January 1948, the day Burma declared her independence, until 2 March 1962, when his government was overthrown. U Nu believed wholeheartedly in parliamentary democracy and he found it impossible to accept the monolithic political structure of the RGUB. Be that as it may, he had now gone into exiled opposition.

His declaration was read out by U Law Yone, General-Secretary of the Parliamentary Democracy Party (PDP) which U Nu established in Bangkok. The declaration was a reiteration of democracy prevailing in a parliamentary system, since the inception of the Union of Burma as a sovereign, independent state, and leading to the establishment of the RGUB. It was an indictment against with U Nu described as "a reign of oppression." U Nu pledged himself to the people of Burma that he would not rest until parliamentary democracy was restored to Burma, when the people could freely choose the system of government they wanted and the leaders under whom they wished to be governed.

U Nu's campaign abroad was closely followed by that of the Burmese Government and press, and an intensive anti-U Nu campaign was launched. Within the country, former politicians and adherents of the Union Party and AFPEL were under constant surveillance, so

that they avoided meeting friends and other people. On the few occasions I met them, usually passing by, we would exchange greetings and we would part ways immediately. Friends of U Nu were also watched. Tensions increased as some political leaders fled the country to join U Nu, and people with leanings towards parliamentary democracy became suspect.

Rumors made the rounds, and officials of diplomatic missions snatched at them. Personnel in our section reported and exchanged the latest rumors heard in town and elsewhere. This became my daily chore first thing on arrival at my office and a memorandum "Rumors" would be sent up to Blueblood. This had to be done, because Blueblood was a type of person who relied on grasping at rumors, rather than the arduous task of political analysis. Under such circumstances, members of our section moved about with circumspection.

Ambassador Hummel's orders too, were that we should do nothing that would affect the integrity of the American Embassy. Ambassador Hummel, who was being importuned by a Buddhist Sayadaw he knew, on behalf of a disciple who was planning to migrate to America, did not renew his acquaintanceship with the Sayadaw, for fear of rousing unnecessary suspicions. I was given the task of appeasing the Sayadaw and helped him with such things as information on visas etc. I was careful too, not to go and see the Sayadaw and arranged by phone all he wanted me to do. A Burmese visiting a Sayadaw in his monastery was innocuous by itself, but the Sayadaw was an Anglophile and I was an employee of the American Embassy. Moreover, there was an air of uneasiness over the capital city.

One persistent rumor that made the diplomatic cocktail circuit following ex-Premier U Nu's defection, and made the diplomats quiver with excitement, was that U Thi Han, the former Foreign Minister, had been arrested! The rumor was that he had incurred the displeasure of the top brass, for the assistance he had given to U Nu and family when they went on a support pilgrimage to India, and finally into political exile. Though U Thi Han had resigned his position, I learnt later that he was never under open or close arrest. No official confirmation would be available; it was such a delicate situation, that beyond reporting to Blueblood that I had also heard the rumor, I kept away from it. But it was not to be. One day, in September 1969, Blueblood spoke to me about it.

"Can you go to U Thi Han's house and check if the story of his arrest is true?"

"I could, but it would be most unwise, because if the story is true, his house is bound to be under surveillance and visitors would come under suspicion and they may be questioned. I don't want any of that."

"Well, what can they do to you?"

"They will know I am from the American Embassy, and with U Nu on a tour in America at this very moment, planning subversion against the RGUB and seeking American assistance, it would be the height of folly to court possible trouble by visiting U Thi Han at such a time. I really have no business there, and I am sorry I cannot do what you want me to do." I replied at once.

This did not please Blueblood, who liked having his own way. However, soon afterwards, we were told that ambassador wanted all employees, both Americans and Burmese, to be correct and circumspect in going about with our work, and at all times not to appear to be interfering in the affairs of the country. It is a tricky enough business making inquires, without giving the appearance of interfering in government affairs. This caution was imposed on us with good reason, because of an incident which involved the Air Attaché of our embassy.

In the anti-U Nu demonstrations staged throughout the country, there had been occasions when the CIA was linked with U Nu. This was because U Law Yone, General Secretary of U Nu's party had served with the American OSS during World War II and was suspected of being an CIA agent. This coupling of the CIA with U Nu did not sit too well with the American officials in the embassy and the ambassador made a formal protest to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Matters were brought to a head, however, when Major T.R. Schornak, the Air Attaché, returning from a party in the small hours of the morning on 1 January 1970 saw some Burmese putting up posters on the roadside, which contained allegations about the CIA's assistance to U Nu. Major Schornak, who was slightly inebriated, rather foolishly chose to make an issue of it and tried to obliterate the offending posters. This led to words with the Burmese, who turned out to be BSPP member, who rightly considered him to be interfering in their affairs, and also thought that Schornak's behavior confirmed the truth of their allegations that the CIA was aiding U Nu in his nefarious plans.

They reported the matter to the BSPP, which in turn reported it to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The incident was given wide publicity in the press with resulting unpleasant repercussions. Major Schornak, poor fellow, was sent away immediately by the ambassador before the Ministry of Foreign Affairs could lodge a protest.

Under these circumstances, I prudently kept to myself and avoided contacts with people outside the embassy in relation to my work. But this did not suit Blueblood. Once, he said to me. "Could you go snooping round the Labor Exchange and find out how many workers have been registered?"

This was a dig at me, so I replied rather shortly. "My job here is not to go snooping round. Besides, the information you want, is in the People's Workers' Gazette. It is available in the Commercial Reference Library."

He was annoyed with me, and frankly speaking, I was annoyed with him too. But what led to a cooling off in our relationship and later open animosity on his part, came about this way. One day, he invited me to a small party at his house and said he was not sure when, but would send me a card. So I left it at that. Moreover, such social amenities are not extended to the local employees out of a desire for our company. Attendance at such functions sometimes is an extra chore for me, as I am invariably asked the next day to prepare a memorandum of the conversation which took place at the party. I must say, however, that there are many Americans who invite us to their homes, because they genuinely like us.

I think it will be pertinent at this point to describe some Burmese social customs relating to entertaining friends in our homes or visiting them in theirs. Except for important and major social functions, like weddings and ceremonial socio-religious functions, informality is characteristic of our social relations. A verbal invitation will suffice, even for a formal dinner; but more often than not, casual visits will end up with an invitation to stay for dinner, if the evening is late. American, who have won Burmese friends, soon fall in with this easy-going custom and exchange of visits with them, and become casually Burmese in character.

As an invitation card did not come from Blueblood after a few days, I assumed that the party had been postponed, and thought no more of it. Besides, I was busy keeping up with the now developments in the country. I did not know that the party had been held or that

Blueblood was angry because it appeared to him that I had deliberately absented myself and he thought my conduct unpardonable.

I was unaware of all this, until one day when he blew his top because I was not immediately available when he phoned my office. My assistant, who usually answers my phone, was out of the office and one of the girls answered and without verifying my presence, told him I was out. As a matter of fact, I was at my desk when Blueblood phoned. I immediately called back and was told to come up and see him. When I entered his office, he glowered at me and said I was never at my desk whenever he wanted me, and that in future, I was to notify him anytime I expected to be away from my desk for more than fifteen minutes during office hours. This was an unfair charge, but seeing how he was, I did not raise an issue. Then, he suddenly demanded. "Why didn't you come to my party?"

"Well, I didn't know what day it was and you never sent me a card." I replied.

When he said, "You could have checked with me" I just shrugged my shoulders for answer, for to tell the truth, I was just about fed up. I was aware that an invitation from the ambassador, was more or less a command for both Americans and local employees, but I was not aware that Blueblood had the right to adopt a similar attitude.

From that day onwards, until the day he left, Blueblood and I were not on good terms. I soon discovered how much he disliked me when he made the following comment in my Efficiency Report, just before he left Rangoon at the end of his tour of duty.

"U Tin Tut is a veteran and highly qualified observer of the Burmese political scene. He maintains good files and can come up with a background memorandum on a political subject in good time. He supervises the embassy typing and translation pools, as well as one political assistant. Although such supervision is not demanding in terms of time, U Tin Tut deserves a measure of credit for the comparatively smooth running of the translation and typing pools. His performance in this connection meets or exceeds basic requirements.

Somewhat in contrast, U Tin Tut's performance in those duties which require him to maintain and initiate contacts with Burmese nationals who are knowledgeable concerning the political scene and to initiate ad hoc analysis of political developments as they occur, is susceptible of improvement. Although he is the embassy's senior Political Advisor, with more than twenty years' service behind him, U Tin Tut has had comparatively little comment concerning the political changes which have evolved over the past year. *He is not active in seeking out information* and as a result he has provided less than have other embassy employees for whom political reporting, is a secondary responsibility. U Tin Tut's ability and knowledgeability are not in question. It remains to be seen, however, whether he can adapt his personal preferences to the demands of his position."

The italics are mine. For one thing, it is not my duty to seek out information, but only to relay it. This I have always done, even if Blueblood, for his own convenience, chooses to forget it. It is the function of the intelligence experts to seek out information, and we local employees are not paid to perform such duties. In a closed society like ours, political information can be obtained only by clandestine means, for which I have neither the training and expertise nor inclination. Of course, there are a few obsequious local employees, who convey all sorts of information, true or false to American officials just to win their favor, but I have never worked that way. I have come across instances when such employees have been

given official rewards for "meritorious services." What these services are I do not know, but as Blueblood spells it out, these employees must have been useful informants to the Americans. However to be fair, some employees have really deserved these awards.

Regarding Bluebloods comment that I had "comparatively little comment concerning the political changes" I can only say that if my work had been unsatisfactory, I would not have remained in my position for so long. As a matter of fact, the ambassador and his senior officers have always been kept informed of important changes or likelihood of such changes in our political scene. What caused Blueblood to forget this and make such a gratuitous remark, was, as related earlier, my refusal to go to U Thi Han's house and check up on the story of his arrest. As for inviting Burmese political leaders to meet him, I had deliberately not done so, for I had no desire to inflict a man like Blueblood on my friends.

I was not disturbed by his remarks in my efficiency report, because in all my years with the American Embassy, he was the only person to make such remarks. I had been highly commended by ambassadors and other senior officers of the embassy, in appreciation of my services and I did not lose any sleep over Blueblood's remarks, which I considered rather petty and made through spite.

On 17 March 1970, he left Rangoon on home leave. I believe he had asked for an extension of his assignment in Burma, but his request was not recommended by his superior officers. On what grounds this was done, was not known, but it was common knowledge that Blueblood never got on well with the other Americans in the embassy. His general attitude to the Burmese too, did not help to enhance American-Burmese relations. It was a common practice for American officials leaving the post, to say goodbye to local employees in their section. But characteristically, Blueblood had no use for these civilities.

However, in leaving, he also left behind an indelible impression of the Blueblood character. One day before his departure, he went to the Personnel Office to pick up his travel documents. A Burmese lady assistant to the Personnel Officer explained that the assistant who was in charge had the documents ready, but was out at the moment. Blueblood, who never had any patience, was annoyed. Red in the face, he told her, "I don't give a damn where he is, I want my papers right now."

Well, what can you say of such a man.

## Chapter Twenty Five

### Increased Cultural Exchanges

The year 1970 saw more improvements in the relations between the two countries. Cultural exchanges were made, though it was the United States Government which had more of these exchanges, by sending various persons to Burma, eminent in the field of science, education, culture and sports. Scientific and educational exhibitions were held by the American Embassy. The American ambassador also made gifts to the Burmese education and information ministries, of many American books on technology, science, general education etc.

An exhibition which roused great interest among the Burmese was the moon rock display at the Envoy Hall on 24 January 1971. The rock was collected by astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin Aldrin, when they became the first men to walk on the moon, during the Apollo 11 moon mission on 21 July 1969. The exhibition was well attended.

A very welcome visitor, Duke Ellington and his band arrived in Rangoon, under the cultural exchange program, and gave two performances on 31 January and 1 February. To the Burmese, who are true music lovers, this visit was considered a welcome goodwill gesture by the United States Government.

An equally important and welcome visit was by Apollo 12 astronauts Charles Conrad Jr., Richard Gordon and Alan Bean. They arrived in Rangoon on 16 March. The same evening, the astronauts rode in a motorcade around the city and were given a tumultuous welcome and wildly cheered by the Rangoon citizens. The Minister for Information and Culture, Brigadier Thaung Dan, held a dinner in their honor at the Inya Lake Hotel and he was presented with a small Burmese flag which had been taken to the moon, along with the flags of other nations on Apollo 12 brought back to earth.

Another landmark in the growing relations between the two countries was the official handing over of the University of Natural Sciences buildings at Thamaing, built with the co-operation of the AID, by the American Charged' Affairs, to the Deputy Minister for Education, on 25 August 1970. Construction of these buildings was started in 1967. The Deputy Minister expressed the Burmese Government's appreciation of the generous gesture of the United States Government and the people, in helping to expand education in Burma.

Among the more earthly visitors from the United States, were a field and track coach, basketball experts and the American golf pro Paul Harney, who was accompanied on this visit by his 12-year old son Christopher. Paul Harney was no stranger to Burmese golfers, since he had first visited Burma in February 1967 and again the next year. He was a most popular visitor and on this third visit, he was in Burma for sixteen days, holding golf clinics and playing exhibition matches in Rangoon, Moulmein, Taunggyi, Mandalay and Maymyo on his "goodwill through golf" mission. At the end of his visit, the Burma Golf Federation hosted a farewell dinner in his honor at the Inya Lake Hotel and he was presented with many gifts by the Federation officials.

U Aung Zin, President of the BGF on behalf of all Burmese golfers said in his speech, "This is the third time that you have come to us as a golf ambassador from the United States. It is usual, I believe, to refer to an ambassador as "extraordinary and plenipotentiary." I don't know about the plenipotentiary part of your ambassadorial mission, but we do believe that

you are extraordinarily gifted with the qualities of charm, sincerity and dedication to the teaching of golf which have endeared you to the hearts of Burmese sportsmen."

Paul Harney ended his third goodwill visit to Burma on 1 December 1970.

Another American sportsman who had a large following in Burma was Muhammad Ali or Cassius Clay. During his title defending bout with Frazier, the portico and pavement in front of the American Embassy was jammed with his boxing fans, and on such occasions, the embassy appeared to be undergoing a siege, except for the smiling faces and enthusiastic partisanship displayed by the fans, almost all of whom were Muslims, like Ali.

American officials also visited Burma as part of their tour of South East Asian and Far Eastern countries. One such visit was by Assistant Secretary of State for Education and Cultural Affairs, Mr. John Richardson and Francis Tenny, Director of the Far East and Pacific Area of the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, in May 1971.

The Burmese Government also began a reciprocal program, and for the first time since the General Ne Win Government came into power, a Burmese medical study team, made up of top medical men led by Physician and Professor of Medicine, U Hla Myint, left in May 1971 for a month-long study tour of the United States. More Americans, officials and officially sponsored men of music, of education and science, visited Burma during the thawing stage of the Burmese Government's foreign relations, which, however, remained in principle, non-aligned.

This policy of non-alignment was the subject of some remarks by the Secretary of State William P. Rogers in his 617-page special foreign policy report to Congress in March 1971. The remarks, contained in only two paragraphs, nonetheless summed up clearly the state of relations between the two countries.

The Secretary said: "the Administration has continued the long standing US policy of respecting the Burmese Government's non-aligned foreign policy and its desire to deal with its internal problems in its own way, without outside interference. We support its objectives of maintaining Burma's independence and territorial integrity, and of re-establishing internal stability. The US presence in Burma is small, and in accordance with the wishes of the Burmese Government, we have no plans for new US programs there.

During the past 12 months, however, the US cultural program in Burma, heretofore limited, has been active. The program included the Duke Ellington and Count Basic orchestras, the Apollo 12 astronauts, several athletes, a moon rock exhibit, a scientist, and several educational exhibits. We hope to continue such cultural and educational contacts with Burma."

The above remarks by the Secretary of State were made in his special foreign policy report to Congress, glossing over the information given out earlier in August 1970 by his Department of State.

The UPI report, datelined Washington, 25 August 1970, reads:

"The US State Department, today, confirmed a report that the United States had granted Burma a total of about \$8.8 millions in military aid since 1958. It is said there was no more money set aside in the current military aid program for Burma, but there was "still a small confessional sales program" which was in the process of being terminated. Information

on the Burma (military) aid program has been suppressed because of the desire of General Ne Win, Chief of State, to present his country as completely neutral."

This is a slur on General Ne Win's integrity, and also untrue, as this information is open knowledge to the Burmese people. Aung Bala, a noted columnist, writing on Burmese - American friendship in the Working People's Daily, on 26 August 1974, wrote:

"Commencing from 1959, Burma also received US \$8.8 millions in military aid, but this ended in 1970."

This sort of contradictory disclosures by the State Department and at times by officials of the US Government, make it difficult for the Burmese to understand the US Government's real attitudes. If it respects Burma's non-aligned policy, why did the State Department make statements purporting that Burma's non-aligned policy is a sham, that the Burmese Government had to suppress news of US arms aid to Burma, in order to concur with General Ne Win's wishes to present Burma as a completely neutral country? Such contrary statements tend to make the task of the American ambassador in Burma, an embarrassing one.

Burmese observers considered that such statements were made to embarrass Sino-Burmese relations, especially at a time when the Burmese Government was making some headway in its efforts at a rapprochement with the People's Republic of China, after a setback in the relations between the two countries following the June 1967 riots involving Chinese students who had tried to bring about a cultural revolution in Burma. In October 1970, Burma was able to resume full diplomatic relations with China, with a posting of a new Burmese ambassador to that country. The previous envoy had been recalled in 1967. Fortunately, however, the above two news reports, which appeared in the local newspapers, escaped comment.

## Chapter Twenty Six

### **Improving Relations**

On 29 July 1971, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that the Government of the Union of Burma has agreed to the appointment of Mr. Edwin W. Martin, as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America, to the Union of Burma, in succession to Mr. Arthur W. Hummel Jr. The new American ambassador-designate, was no stranger to Burma. He had served in Rangoon as Second Secretary from 1950 to 1951. I had known him in those days, as he also was in the Political Section and I was happy to be associated with him again. On 1 October 1971, Mr. Edwin Martin, presented his credentials to General Ne Win, Chairman of the Revolutionary Council, and Prime Minister of the Government of the Union of Burma.

The early months of the new ambassador's term of office saw an expanding program under the cultural exchange agreement between the two countries. As a reciprocal gesture to the recent visit of the three Burmese doctors to the United States, three top American medical specialist, Dr Abraham Issac Braude, Dr Fred Kern Jr., and Dr John W. Yarbrow, visited Burma in November 1971 for a six-day visit. An interesting schedule was drawn up for them, and the visit was mutually beneficial. It was quite a long time since American medical specialists had an opportunity to meet and exchange views with their Burmese colleagues. Most medical specialists visiting Burma had been sponsored by the WHO.

A familiar and endearing visitor to Burma, Duke Ellington, brought his 19-man band again to Burma in January 1971, for a weeks program of concerts in Rangoon and Mandalay. As usual, his concerts drew large and enthusiastic crowds. The Burmese were genuinely sad, when later they heard news of his death from cancer.

Exchange of visits under the cultural exchange agreement increased. Among the noteworthy visitors during this period was Dr James Warren, Chairman of the Department of Medicine, Ohio State University who arrived for a three-day visit on 14 March 1972. He held a seminar with Burmese doctors and the exchange of medical knowledge was mutually beneficial. Later, in October, five American cardiologists arrived for a three-day visit and gave a series of lectures at the Burma Medical Association. It was a rewarding experience for the visiting American visitors and also for their Burmese hosts. This was the second visit of a college faculty to Burma.

A prominent political leader, US Senator Charles H. Percy, (Republican) visited Burma in December 1972. He was accompanied by his wife and daughter. During his four-day visit, Senator Percy and his family visited cultural and historical sites in Rangoon, Pagan and Mandalay. It was a private and getting-to-know-Burma sort of visit.

Another significant result of improving relations between the two countries was the assignment of an American senior scientist for the Rangoon Arts and Science University. Dr Robert Mayer Kloepper, American senior scientist in physics and electronics, International Business Machines, Owego, New York, arrived in Rangoon on 1 October 1973, to take up a one-year assignment with the Physics Department of the RASU. No American professor had been assigned to any of the universities and institutes in Burma since March 1962.

On the Burmese side, a four-man Information delegation, headed by U Saw Aung, Managing Director, Printing and Publishing Corporation, left for a two-week study tour of

the United States on 10 June 1973. Later, another group of Burmese officials went to the United States for further studies. Five geologists of the Myanmar Oil Corporation and the Department of Geologist Survey and Exploration were selected by the Burmese Government for higher studies in American Universities. This was a departure from the Burmese Government's policy of so-called isolationism. The Burmese geologists left for the United States in January 1974.

Another high American official who visited Burma was Mr. Robert S. Ingersoll, US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, who arrived in February 1974. He met the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council and Prime Minister U Ne Win, who hosted a dinner in his honor. Coming on the eve of impending changes and the adoption of a new State Constitution, Ingersoll's visit must have been interesting and fruitful, because, we in the Political Section had already prepared all the documents, such as the new State Constitution, which was to establish the new Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, and the schedule for its promulgation and the elections to the first Pyithu Hluttaw and People's Councils at different levels, and finally for the handing over of State power to the Pyithu Hluttaw at its first session on 2 March 1974.

Ambassador Martin was succeeded by Mr. David L. Osborn, who presented his credentials to President U Ne Win on 22 March 1974. The task of maintaining and improving the cordial relations between the two countries continued with the exchange of official visits, and also with the presentation of more than 4700 American medical books and 2500 medical journals by Ambassador Osborn to Dr Khin Maung Win, Director General, Department of Medical Education, for use in Burma's medical schools, institutes and hospitals. It was a great boon to the Department of Medical Education, which was an entirely new set-up. Previously, medical education was directed by the Ministry of Education, but was now under the Ministry of Health. In making the presentation, Ambassador Osborn noted:

"I am continuing a association between our two countries, in the field of medicine, that began over 10 years ago, when Maung Shawlu great grandson of the King of Myawaddy, entered Backnell University in Pennsylvania to study med medicine."

Since 1966, the American Government has presented over 10,000 medical texts and journals to Burma. It will only be an exercise in numerical additions, to list the exchange of visits of scholars, scientists, sportsmen etc., between the two countries. It will suffice to say that a new era of closer relationship between the United States and Burma had been established.

In August 1974, floods inundated a large part of the country in central and lower Burma, causing widespread damage to property and crops, and rendering thousands of people homeless. In some areas, it was the worst in a hundred years. According to reports, floods occurred in 68 townships of the ten States and Divisions, affecting 270,000 houses, 1,400,000 people, and 1,100,000 acres of land, 750,000 acres of cultivated fields and 200,000 head of cattle.

The Burmese Government immediately carried out relief measures and also made a world-wide request for flood disaster relief. The United States Government, in response to this request, immediately air-lifted approximately 40 tons of antibiotics which arrived on 26 August. More arrived the next day. The emergency relief aid donated by the U.S. Government was valued at US\$ 350,000. In addition, Ambassador Osborn donated US\$

25,000 for the purchase of other required relief supplies. As always in such situations, American ambassadors, I am glad to say, have not been slow in offering assistance to victims of floods and other disasters. Their donations have always been unstinting, and this gesture of sympathy and goodwill from one people to another has been a cornerstone of friendship between the peoples of the two countries.

The re-establishment of the former close relations between Burma and the United States was again evidenced by the dispatch of a three-man press delegation to the USA on 25 August 1974 for a six-week study tour, under the cultural exchange program between the two countries.

However, despite the reorientation in Burmese- American relations and the re-activation of the cultural exchange program between the two countries, American officials concerned failed to win the approval of the Burmese Government for re-opening the student exchange program, which would enable Burmese and American students to take up graduate or post-graduate studies in each other's countries. The possible contamination of the Western bourgeois-capitalist influence, which could affect socialist indoctrination of our youth, appear to be ever-present in the minds of the Burmese leaders.

During the short period of his arrival in Burma, Ambassador Osborn has been able to extend cultural exchanges between the two countries. The ambassador has a quiet and friendly personality and unlike some of his predecessors, likes to meet with the Burmese people. He may be seen ambling along Rangoon's crowded sidewalks, stopping by at stalls to chat with the sellers of all assortments of wares. He also has an informal approach in his relations with the staff, both Americans and Burmese, especially with the latter.

I noticed that Burmese names presented no difficulties for him. He remembered them and pronounced the names correctly. One thing about the ambassador, which pleased the local employees, was his fondness for Burmese food. On many a workday, he would come down to the embassy snack bar and have a Burmese lunch, and would be most disappointed, if none was left. This was something, which none of his predecessors had done and I was so pleased that I suggested to the cook that he always keep a Burmese lunch in reserve for the ambassador, whether he came for it or not.

With this sort of informality and a desire to mix with the people, Ambassador Osborn should be very successful in strengthening and developing the friendship between the two countries.

## Chapter Twenty Seven

### **Towards International Cooperation**

Hitherto inward looking, Burma was now becoming an outward looking country, with a realization that not only regional cooperation, but also global fractionalization, especially with the developed countries of both east and west, was an essential need for a developing country. One such move was the opening of off-shore oil exploration to western oil companies on a contract basis. Previously the Burmese Government had carried out off-shore oil exploration and drilling by itself, with financial assistance from Japan; but these attempts had proved unsatisfactory, if not disastrous. The Burmese Government now adopted a more realistic policy in undertakings for which it had no real expertise or the financial resources to make such ventures successful and profitable.

One result of this change in policy was the influx of American private capital and increased commercial relationship between Burma and the United States. In a roundabout way, it also had a bearing on my personal affairs on which I will comment later.

The Burmese Government followed Indonesia's lead in signing Production-Sharing Contracts (PDC) with the foreign companies. Esso, an American oil company had also been allotted some blocks for off-shore drilling, and was reported to be willing to lay out US \$96 millions over a three-year period, for exploration in a block which had not yet been surveyed.

The PDC is Indonesia's contribution to the oil world. Unlike the traditional concession agreement, under which an oil producing country grants unlimited exploration rights to a foreign oil company in return for payment of royalties and profit tax, the PDC contains two important clauses; a management clause which rests final decision-making power in the hands of the producing nation; and the requirement for a foreign company to surrender a share of the oil produced rather than profit, to the Burmese Government. The Burmese Government remains the sole owner of petroleum resources; the contractors provide the expertise, funds and equipment, and if no oil is found, they receive no compensation or reimbursement. The advantages of the PDC were explained to chairman U Ne Win, when he visited Indonesia in June 1973, by Lt. General Dr H. Ibnu Sutowo, head of the Indonesian State Oil Company.

The Burmese Government also reversed its policy of spurning offers of assistance from the United States for its narcotics control program. It asked the US Government to provide on a grant basis, six Bell 25A civilian utility helicopters to help locate heroin refineries and caravans transporting drugs along secret jungle routes. Another twelve helicopters were scheduled for delivery in 1976. However, no American personnel will be used to operate or maintain the crafts. This report appeared in the Far Eastern Economic Review (2 August 1974). Previously, the Burmese Government turned down US offers of vehicles and communications equipment for a beefed-up anti-opium effort, insisting that such help would threaten its non-aligned policy.

However, the increased drug traffic flowing from the Golden Triangle area, the wild, mountainous region of Burma, northern Laos and Thailand, was causing grave concern to the Burmese Government, as the greater part of the Triangle's opium, some 400 tons of the best quality opium annually comes from Kokang in northeastern Burma. Tachileik, in southeastern Burma on the border with Thailand to which the opium caravans finally reach, is the processing and refining center of the Golden Triangle.

Drug control in South East Asia, was no longer the sole concern of the United States and Thailand. Heroin sales and eventual addiction to it began to appear in early 1973 in many towns in Burma, with the youths as the chief victims. The problem became a pressing one and the Burmese Government passed the Narcotic Drugs Law in 20 February 1974, with severe penalties for offenders ranging from a minimum of five years imprisonment, to life imprisonment of fifty years, or a death sentence. The Burmese Government, recently took some steps to curtail the activities of traffickers, and it permitted a three-man UN team to come to Burma to study ways in which other cash crops could be substituted for opium in the producing areas.

The American Embassy in Rangoon has the First Secretary also function as Narcotics Control Coordinator, who is responsible for coordinating measures for suppression of narcotics and also obtaining the cooperation of the Burmese Government in a regional program to stamp out drug manufacture and sale in the international market. In this connection, Reuter, with a Washington dateline 18 September 1974, reported:

"Probably the most encouraging developments in the battle against drug trafficking have come from the Far East. After years of prodding by American diplomats and international narcotics experts, Burmese troops are now harassing supply trails, linking huge opium farming areas in the remote Shan States to Thailand. No clear evidence has been produced that Burmese cultivation has been cut back, but supplies in Thailand have been reduced."

American concern over drug addiction in their country is understandable but Americans, at times, tend to get tough with recalcitrant countries which do not cooperate closely enough with them. In 1970, Mr. John E. Ingersoll, Director, US Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, attending the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, urged a drastic revision of international law to replace current "voluntary" drug control, with tough enforceable standards. The UN reaction, however, was disappointing for the American; communist and neutral countries tended to shrug off drugs as a "US problem."

However, American official reaction was something else. In the case of Turkey, (80 per cent of heroin in the United States originated from that country) they even discussed an economic embargo on her, or cessation of all aid. However, the idea was dropped for fear of enlarging anti-US blocs. Later though the US President was voted full powers by the House of Representatives in 1970 to cut off aid to any nation not fully cooperating with the United States in ending the international drug traffic. More drastic measures were later proposed by the chairman of the US House Special Committee on International Drug Control, Mr. Lester Wolff (Democratic-New York). At a news conference held in Washington in January 1975, he said that economic and political sanctions should be employed against nations failing to co-operate in "the war on heroin."

He added that such sanctions should include "as a last resort" the withdrawal of diplomatic relations. "He pointed to the mountainous jungles of Burma and Thailand as source of heroin production, but cited Burma as a "chief stumbling block" since Thai officials have worked to reduce opium traffic.

"The Burmese are more concerned with fighting the insurgents in the hills who produce an estimated 700 to 1,000 tons of heroin poppies annually," he said, "than they are in stopping the drug trafficking of the warring Shan tribes." Washington (UPI) – Bangkok Post, 18 January 1975.

The American concern is understandable, but what they keep forgetting is that, Burma as a sovereign state has the right to handle her own internal problems in the way she thinks fit. The insurgency and opium trafficking are Burma's own internal affairs. The Burmese Government and people do not like been coerced or threatened into doing things or at the behest of others.

It is mainly for such reasons that Burma has chosen not to accept US aid, and, AID programs in Burma are being wound up. All present United States aid activities in Burma are a continuation of commitments made from 1957 to 1963. No new dollar aid or surplus commodity sales have been requested by the Burmese Government since 1973. AID Development Grant funding was discontinued as of 30 June 1969. At present, AID is engaged in monitoring the on-going projects and an orderly fiscal closure of all projects which have been financed with AID funds.

The US Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (BNDD) does not operate in Burma, but only in Thailand in cooperation with Thailand's Special Narcotics Organization (SNO). However, they keep an alert eye on the narcotics trade in Burma and co-ordinate their efforts with those of the Burmese Government. International concern over this widespread and increasing traffic in drugs was initiated by President Nixon, who declared a national emergency in the United States in June 1971. The highest incidence of heroin addiction is in America, though no opium is grown there and no heroin processed.

Hence America was forced to take up the leadership to stamp cut this evil trade at its source in South East Asia. Thus Burma, with the largest production of opium, 80 per cent of an estimated 1000 metric tons in the area, became a focal point in the international effort to stem drug marketing. With heroin sales and addiction to it becoming widespread in Burma, it became a serious concern to the Burmese Government, not only to do what it could towards its suppression, but also to accept outside expertise and equipment in speeding up an anti-narcotics drive. At present, 18,744 acres in the Shan States are still under poppy cultivation, which has been going on for ages. However, the Burmese Government's plans envisage that poppy cultivation will be totally eradicated in three to five years, with 1 March 1979 the target date. Fortunately too, with the arrest of Lo Hsing-Han, the Opium King of the Golden Triangle in August 1973, the opium traffic has slowed down considerably.

## Chapter Twenty Eight

### **Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma**

In early 1974, far-reaching constitutional, political and economic changes took place in Burma. On 3 January the new State Constitution was adopted by an overwhelming majority of the people. The elections to the first People's Congress and People's Councils at different levels were held from 15 to 31 January 1974.

On 2 March 1974, the Revolutionary Council fulfilled its pledge to the people and handed over State power to the first People's Congress, and the new Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma emerged. U Ne Win was elected President of the Union of Burma, and Chairman of the Council of State. General San Yu, number two in the country, was elected Secretary of the Council of State. Simultaneously with the first session of the People's Congress, People's Councils at different levels, i.e. State, Division, Township, Ward/Village levels, throughout the country held their first meetings. For the first time, the people were running their own affairs, under the director of the Burma Socialist Program Party, which remained the sole political party in Burma, giving leadership to the State.

The State structure is based on the system of local autonomy under central leadership, on the principle of democratic centralism. The political structure of the State is made up of seven states and seven divisions. Its economy is a socialist system of economy, in keeping with the Burmese Way to Socialism. It is based on the two pillars of national strength, the workers and the peasants.

Despite the constitutional changes, its foreign policy is unchanged. Burma still pursues a non-aligned independent policy. Burma is still a developing country, but with the Burmese leaders' awareness of changing world conditions, politically and economically, changes in economic policies are likely to be made so that Burma can fully cooperate and compete with other South East Asian nations in national and regional development on the lines of the European Economic Community. For without competition, there can be no progress, and without contribution to regional welfare, there can be no cooperation and goodwill among the countries of South East Asia. Countries, whatever their political systems, must learn to live together in harmony in this nuclear age if they are to survive.

The Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma has begun to shake off the country's self-imposed isolation and President U Ne Win realizes the interdependence of countries in a fast changing world, and liberalization of economic policies are slowly beginning to take shape. Geographically, politically and economically, Burma occupies a strategic position in South East Asia. Its near proximity to the People's Republic of China in the north, with over 1700 miles of frontier, long stretches of which are unmanned and unguarded, and with Thailand, a member of SEATO in the south, and with war-torn Indo-China on its eastern borders, has made Burmese leaders increasingly aware of the need for establishing goodwill with these countries. To bring this about, Burma has established diplomatic relations with all the countries in the region.

But, of far more importance is the adoption by Burma of a non-aligned independence policy in her relationship with other countries of both Western and Eastern blocs. Burma's foreign policy, especially in the earlier years, was greatly misunderstood by Western leaders. Herrison E, Salisbury, in an interview with General Ne Win, may help dispel doubts of the

validity of Burma's foreign policy. The Associated Press dispatch, datelined New York, 20 June 1966, reporting on the interview, said:

"The General regards neutralism as the only viable policy for an Asian nation that wishes to avoid being sucked in and probably under the violence churned up by great power conflicts. General Ne Win, far from being anti-American, has the warmest regard and respect for the United States, man prouder of the effective fight he has carried out against communists in the past and at present."

Paradoxically, Burma, which is not opposed to communism abroad, is waging a relentless war against the communist rebels in the country. At the same time, Burma, has avoided entanglements with the West, whether politically, economically, or militarily. Burma has set an example of what Asian nations can do in the face of Western expositions of the communist threat in South East Asia. Western powers have given immense help to developing Asian countries in rehabilitating their economy and political stability; but they have never failed to draw the attention of Asian leaders to the threats of communist imperialism, and it appears to Asian leaders that Western policies aim at driving neutral Asian countries into its sphere of influence, through economic and other aids, while pointing out the communist threat as an alternative.

It is therefore necessary for developed countries which give economic assistance to developing countries of SE Asia to do so with an understanding of their needs and aspirations, and with a genuine desire to assist in their development, without any ulterior purpose. In the context of this fast changing world, the developed countries cannot keep their wealth and prosperity to themselves, without sharing them with the less developed countries. The interdependency of nations can no longer be ignored, if a nation wishes to maintain its political and economic stability and ensure its perpetuity. In the present international situation, no country, however progressive, can afford to stand alone.

Significant changes in Burma's foreign relations attitude have been noticed in the past few years. Burma and other Asian nations are drawing closer in a regional cooperation. Burma, is now linked with the Asian Development Bank (ADP), though not with the ASEAN. However, U Ne Win, while on a visit to Singapore in April 1968, expressed a strong interest in regional cooperation, when he said:

"Though the conflict between the forces from outside the region casts its shadows over the political scene, we in Burma believe that ultimately, only the forces of the region will prevail and play a decisive role in determining the kind of SE Asia we shall have to live in. For our part, we look forward to the kind of SE Asia in which every nation will be free to live its own life, in its own way. We believe that in such a community of nations, it will be possible for each nation to also live in peace and friendship with its neighbors. But such a situation will not come by itself; all nations of the region will have to work for it steadfastly."

Following Washington's détente with Peking and Moscow in 1972, U Ne Win's visits to Indonesia and Malaysia in June 1973, were seen by observers as a positive sign that Burma was gradually abandoning her isolationist attitude. U Ne Win's talks with the Indonesian and Malaysian leaders also included the expansion of ASEAN and the neutralization of the region with guarantees from the big powers. Neutralization of SE Asia was initiated by Malaysia in 1972, and other countries in the region had been persuaded to accept this plan, which was to ensure the region's safety from big power conflicts. Singapore, which came to accept the idea later, was cynical at first. Said Foreign Minister Rahim Ishak:

"If the Chinese, Russians and Americans agree that neutralization is in their joint interests, there could be a neutral South East Asia."

While this idea has won acceptance among members of ASEAN, Burma, which is not a member, is still skeptical of the degree of neutrality of the member nations, and has not yet shown any marked interest in Malaysia's concept of neutralization. U Ne Win, in his meeting with Malaysian Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak, when the latter visited Burma in April 1974, only promised to work with other countries in the region, "when they are all neutral in the real sense." However, as an outcome of his talks with the Malaysian Prime Minister, observers think that U Ne Win may, one day bring Burma into the ASEAN and play an effective role in promoting regional cooperation. During his visit to Indonesia, U Ne Win spoke on the need "to strive for peace and stability in our region." He said: "When circumstances are favorable, it will be necessary for nations of the region to get together and confer on ways and means of how to achieve this objective."

Burma has now shown a greater interest in the ASEAN than hitherto, and with increasing contacts and cooperation with other Asian countries, Burma may join the ASEAN one day. Observers consider that neutralization of SE Asia will now get a broader support from countries, including Burma, which have not yet become members of the ASEAN. They believe U Ne Win's idea, for a conference of South East Asian nations to discuss the best ways and means to guarantee peace and stability in the region, feasible and practical of bearing results.

U Ne Win has paid goodwill visits, usually on an informal basis, to other South East Asian countries and held talks with Asian leaders on bi-lateral and regional cooperation in social and economic development and cultural exchanges and to establish firm ties of friendship between Burma and other Asian countries. Relations between Burma and Thailand however, are not as close as before. This may be due to recent changes in the Thai Government, and the transition period from a military to a civilian government is still unsettled, as U Tun Win, Burma's ambassador to Thailand, had cause to complain; he said that the Thai Foreign Ministry's authority had been superseded by the military. The Burmese ambassador voiced his frustrations in an interview with the Nation an English language Thai newspaper, on the eve of his return to Burma in September 1974, after a six-and-a-half year's assignment in Thailand. He complained bitterly that although the Thai general border committee is headed by the Foreign Minister, "the final authority, when it comes to making a decision, does not, however, rest with the Foreign Ministry. (The Nation Bangkok 2 September 1974)

Burma's ties of friendship with Thailand can be meaningful and close, because of territorial proximity and common religious and cultural backgrounds. These ties, however, will need to be fostered with care and mutual understanding, because of political changes in the two countries, and restored to the former level of sincere goodwill and friendship.

Asian leaders have exchanged visits and as U Ne Win and the Malaysian Prime Minister both agreed, this "new trend of working visit" was much better than official visits and helped towards better understanding of each other's problems, international developments, and particularly the situation in South East Asia. The links of friendship forged by Asian leaders during these exchanges of visits are based on common ties of history, social order and culture, and it is these, that will lead to the formation of common attitudes

and approaches of the countries in the region, to present-day problems, both regional and international.

Burma does not see regional togetherness as a military alliance like SEATO. She views it as a collectivity of Asian nations, working for the benefit of each nation and also of the region as a whole. While Burma continues to stress the validity of the concept of non-alignment in the present international situation, she also realizes that the realities of international politics require that there should be greater cooperation among the nations in South East Asia.

One assurance of bringing this about will be the liquidation of SEATO, since not all countries in SE Asia are members; the only such members being the Philippines and Thailand. Moreover, the main purpose of SEATO, to protect member countries from external aggression appears no longer to exist. At its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations on 8 September 1974, held at its headquarters in Bangkok, the Secretary-General, Sunthorn Hongladaron in his annual report noted that member nations now no longer faced external threats – the enemy now was from within, although the report also added that SEATO military plans could still be "re-activated and revised" at the direction of the member states. However, at least two of the remaining six members are known to have serious doubts about the validity of SEATO.

An alliance like ASEAN, to be completely successful, must be a close knit entity, not made up of nations with divergent interests and loyalties, because of their membership in SEATO. The liquidation of this organization will pave the way for better understanding and cooperation between the peoples of South East Asia.

The recently achieved East-West détente has made it necessary for Asian countries to re-evaluate their economic and political attitudes in their dealings with Peking. Even Indonesia which has pursued a strong anti-communist policy since the abortive communist coup in 1965, is reshaping its foreign policy to adapt to the East-West détente, and is preparing to re-open diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China.

While SE Asia nations are reshaping their foreign policy to adapt to the East-West détente, Burma has not found the need to do so. This, in itself, has proved the validity of Burma's foreign policy of non-alignment and has won her the respect of other countries. The Washington-Peking détente, while not affecting American-Burmese relations, had its reactions among other Asian nations, some of whose leaders are American client-politicians, and, which have no diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. However, except Taiwan, and South Korea, other Asian countries have accepted détente as a fait accompli, which to some extent eased East-West relations and offered prospects of commercial and cultural intercourse with the PRC. These countries have cautiously begun to open their doors for trade and diplomatic relations with China. Burma, because of her diplomatic and fairly good relations with China and the USA, no longer needs to walk a diplomatic tight-rope in her East-West relationships.

The Détente was achieved by President Nixon, and when he resigned on 9 August 1974, there was some apprehension among Asian leaders, especially in Indo-China, South Korea and Taiwan, that US foreign policy towards them might change<sup>18</sup>. Burma, on the other hand, took Watergate and President Nixon's resignation calmly, and offered no comment either on this or on the new US President Mr. Ford. Burma, fortunately, had no large

.commitments or aid programs with the United States and therefore, had no cause for concern with the change in the US Presidency and a possible change in American foreign policy and aid programs. However, should the new administration under President Ford change its policy towards China, Asian countries, with the exception of Burma, may have to reassess their own relationship with that country. So far, President Ford is following Nixon's China policy, and also, there are no indications of any changes.

American-Burmese relations will go on as before, but with understanding and friendship, there is no reason why the two countries and peoples cannot come closer in this age of global cooperation and interdependence.

Aung Bala, a noted Burmese writer and columnist, writing on "Burmese- American Friendship" in the Working People's Daily (26 August 1974), on the eve of his departure for the USA as a member of a press delegation, noted that the bridge on Burmese-American friendship which was first built over a hundred years ago by King Mindon and US President James Buchanan, has today developed into a firm and strong structure. However, on economic relations, he pointed out that while America as a good friend had assisted Burma in times of need, the trade balance between the two countries was one-sided. During 1971-72, exports from Burma to America totaled only Ks 18 millions, while imports from America amounted to Ks 49 million. He was, however, optimistic that economic relations between the two countries would soon expand, because American companies were now participating in offshore oil exploration and drilling in Burma's coastal waters. Regarding the Burmese press mission's visit to America, he wrote:

"Thus, friendly relations having been established from historic times, a press delegation will now be sent to America for the promotion of culture between the two countries. It is hoped that this delegation which includes an editor, a poet and a columnist will be able, in some measure, to take part and work in programs which are connected with the welfare of the people of both countries as envisaged by King Mindon."

Relations with the United States remain good, despite Burma's unhappy fears over the suspected involvement of the CIA in the Burmese expatriates' counter-revolutionary activities. During the last few years, bi-lateral cooperation between the two countries have greatly improved, and it is for the American ambassadors to Burma, to take imaginative and effective measures, not only to expand the areas of cooperation in all possible fields for mutual benefit, but also to win the friendship of the Burmese people, and further develop and strengthen relations between the two countries.

From my observations of US policy towards the countries of the world, big and small, it is evident that the United States cannot withdraw from the world and its problems and challenges, or be indifferent to the fate of nations, especially those of small developing countries like Burma. Its policy towards them should be based on a genuine interest and desire to promote their welfare and not so much as to make them obligated, either through fear or gratitude, to become a satellite of the United States. There must be no coercion or persuasion towards this end. US policy must be to win universal friendship by deeds which show its concern for the well-being of mankind. Success in achieving these objectives will be measured by the personal conduct of officials in American missions abroad, who will implement these policies. From my many years of dealing with the Americans in the embassy, I am convinced that they can, by the qualities of personal relationship, promote friendship and understanding between the two countries.

## Chapter Twenty Nine

### **Some 'Normal' Routines**

The American Embassy is one of the biggest diplomatic missions in Burma and quite a large number of Burmese nationals and some non-nationals are employed. At one time, there were between 650 and 700 local employees in the embassy. However, with the close down of affiliated agencies such as the AID, MEDT? USEFB and the USIS library, the number of local employees at present is about 120.

Some, like myself, hold senior positions and many have completed long years of service with the embassy. They work a 40-hour, five-day week, but can look forward to a long week-end which might be enhanced by an American holiday, which is given on the Monday following the week-end, regardless of what day it falls. The only exceptions are American Independence Day on 4 July and Thanksgiving Day. This is a very sensible and practical arrangement, for it enables the employees to take holiday trips out of town or have a three-day rest and recreation at home. Incidentally, both Saturday and Sundays are not part of the work-week, so that when an employee goes on leave, these two days are not counted as part of the leave period. This is an advantage over the leave and holiday rules adopted by the Burmese Government, where Saturday, Sundays and other holidays count as part of the leave taken by the employee, and also public gazettes holidays are forfeited if they fall on a Sunday. In all my years with the embassy, the sometimes heavy work-week has been relieved by the prospect of the long week-end to be enjoyed.

A disquieting aspect of service in the American Embassy is that the personal likes and dislikes or for that matter, whims of the American officers, rather than an established policy, determines the fate of local employees. The words "official recognition and appreciation" mentioned in the long-service certificates presented to employees on completion of 10, 20, 25 and 30 years service with the United States Government, do not mean much in reality to those who come for a two or three-year tour of duty.

. In one case, a senior employee of the USIS incurred the displeasure of his supervisor for explaining why a project the supervisor wanted carried out could not be done, especially in the circumstances prevailing today. The employee had had similar projects proposed in the past, which had never gone beyond the preparatory stage, because they would not be acceptable to the Burmese Government. But because of an understanding supervisor, such projects had been dropped. Now it happened that the newly arrived American Information Officer of the USIS wanted a similar project launched in connection with the AID associated Okkyin saw mill, and felt rebuffed when his assistant gave reasons, supported by records of previous experiences in dealing with such projects, as to why he could not carry out the assignment.

The reasons were valid, but all that the American supervisor knew was that his local assistant had refused to carry out his orders. The sequel to this was that the employee had his promotion stopped, and another less experienced local employee promoted and given the job. Naturally, he failed and the work of that particular section in the declined sharply. The American supervisor has left the post, but as a result of his lack of understanding of the prevailing situation and obstinacy in wanting to have his own way, that section of the USIS is not progressing as it should. Local employees of the American Embassy tend to come under suspicion of local security authorities, and they have to be very circumspect in carrying out their duties. Under such circumstances, they cannot always please their supervisors.

Coming to my own section, efficiency reports of my staff, until just before I left, were prepared by me and American supervisors added their comments. However, I have noticed that Americans, when rating the efficiency of some local employees, tend to be influenced by personal bias. They come and go after a tour of duty and therefore, have only a short-term acquaintance with the work done by the local employees. Some of the employees also find it politic to please the Americans, when they sometimes have been casual with their daily routine jobs. Typing chores for the Americans are carried out with neatness and dispatch. But in their daily routine, typing of letters, reports and translations are sometimes done without regards for proper layout or margins, so that the text on the typed page appears to have been thrown together haphazardly.

As the immediate supervisor of my staff over the years past, I have come to have a fairly correct assessment of their ability, and I have always tried to be fair and impersonal in my ratings of their efficiency. But this was not always the case with American supervisors. Their appraisal sometimes tends to lose its objectivity because of personal considerations. They are sometimes too flattering or adversely so in their comments, and therefore, do not always present a correct measure of the employees' efficiency and capability.

Although I served as the Political Advisor, the title did not mean much. Though I offered suggestions, I tendered no advice unless I was asked, and I found it wiser to work this way. As in the case of Ambassador Everton, all my instincts told me to persuade him not to go round sounding off ex-political leaders and asking for their comments on the new Revolutionary Government, but I could not do so. Even the DCM declined to step in, so what could I, a mere local employee, albeit the political advisor, do but carry out his orders, look on and hope for the best? My primary duties and responsibilities lay mainly in analyzing and assessing political situations, making reports thereon and briefing American officers from day to day.

I am sometimes asked by my supervisors to sound off government officials when they want to do something which they are not sure how the Foreign Office will react to if approached officially. But having to do it, unofficially, sometimes left me open to the suspicion that I am party to a covert undertaking. Such an incident occurred in February 1965 when the Union Day celebrations, which are usually held in rotation in the capital cities of the five constituent States, were scheduled to be held that year in Paan in the Karen State.

Mr.. Kenneth Swan, the first secretary, had an urge to attend the Union Day celebrations though he very well knew that members of the diplomatic corps, even ambassadors, were not invited to attend these celebrations. During the parliamentary regime, senior members of foreign diplomatic missions were invited to the Union Day celebrations, because these were picturesque affairs, high-lighted by dances the various races, in which the participants were their colorful native dresses. Even the half-naked Nagas looked magnificent.

But the Revolutionary Government considered that these were purely local affairs and since 1963, no foreign diplomat has been invited to these celebrations. I tried to dissuade Mr.. Swan by telling him that there would be no accommodation for us so he said that we would sleep in the embassy touring car. When I pointed out that there would be hardly room for the two of us and the driver, he replied grandly that we would sleep in pup tents! I told him the idea was preposterous and that we would be making a spectacle of ourselves and drawing

undesirable attention to our presence in a place, where in all good sense we should not be. Finally, I said that our proposed trip was not likely to be approved by the Foreign Office. That was when Swan asked me to sound off the Foreign Office; he had a one-track mind. As expected, our proposed trip was not sanctioned and the Permanent Secretary, who was an old friend, remarked half-jokingly, "What are you up to this time?"

When I reported back to Swan, he just shrugged off the rebuff, but the fact that he had unnecessarily caused me to be suspect of covert intentions did not appear to concern him.

For senior local employees of the P/E section, the establishment of good public relations is an important aspect of their duties. They maintain contacts with official and other personnel of various government departments, who can contribute to their knowledge and appreciation of Burmese affairs. This in turn has also enabled them to assist Americans in the embassy to understand conditions in Burma. In the course of such ramblings, they occasionally come to hear of things concerning American officials, part of whose duties are to liaise with government officials who are their counterparts.

Some of these reports are to their credit and some not. One of my colleagues, while on a visit to a Burmese official, was informed of an American official's proposal to the Burmese Government, which in the first instance should never have been initiated if that official had any understanding of the political changes in Burma, or if he had sought the advice of a senior local employee in his section. As related to me, the project proposed by an official of the USIS to the Ministry of Education, was to hold a Political Seminar, in which the participants would be both Americans and Burmese. The Burmese authorities unofficially dubbed him and his idea "foolish and impossible." The official reply was that the government had no objection to the holding of such a seminar, but they regretted they could not facilitate it. The reply was couched in diplomatic language, but the purport was obvious - the Burmese Government would have nothing to do with it. The proposal was finally dropped for lack of support from other embassy officers.

It is normal to assume that personnel about to be assigned to a new country would have received sufficient briefing about situation prevailing in that country. Years ago, American personnel assigned to Burma were well briefed by U Khin, an instructor at the Foreign Service Institute on prevailing conditions in Burma, and on the culture and customs of the Burmese people. This was apparently lacking in the case of at least this USIS official.

I must relate another incident, which happened years ago. An English language newspaper reported the proceeding of the All Burma Peasants Organization conference in 1952, and the election of the president and other office bearers. It reported that U Ba Swe, President of the Trade Union Congress, Burma, had also attended and delivered a speech.

Thakin Tin, the ABPO leader, was re-elected President of the ABPO at this conference, but the reporter, probably mesmerized by the close proximity of the words "President" and "U Ba Swe" reported instead, that U Ba Swe was elected President of the ABPO. This, naturally, caused great excitement among the American officers.

As we very well knew, the delineation of powers within the AFPEL was clearly drawn. U Ba Swe was President of the TUCB and Thakin Tin was President of the ABPO, the two powerful mass organizations on the AFPEL infrastructure. But here was U Ba Swe reported as being elected President of the ABPO. Questions came naturally. Where was Thakin Tin? What had happened? Had he been ousted by U Ba Swe in a secret power struggle? Was U Ba Swe, with both the TUCB and the ABPO under his control, planning to

be top-man? But there were no immediate answers. One bright Foreign Service officer prepared a short air gram which was dispatched to the State Department. No one had thought of asking me, and when I drew my chief's attention to the newspaper error, he would not believe me and showed me the newspaper report. To convince him, I used his telephone and called Thakin Kyaw Dun, Secretary-General of the ABPO, who confirmed that it was Thakin Tin who had been elected President of the ABPO. So before Washington called for a follow-up report, a cable was immediately sent explaining the error. I have found from this experience and later ones, that Americans set a great store by the written word.

In this connection, I must relate another instance which occurred later. A lady Foreign Service officer who had a smattering of Burmese, relied rather heavily on Professor John F. Cady, Professor of History, Ohio University as an authority on Burmese history. I had prepared a list of common abbreviations which included the initials, G.C.B.A. I gave the correct term – "General Council of Burmese Associations." The FSO disagreed with me citing Cady as an authority for he had called the GCBA- 'General Council of Buddhist Associations'. When I insisted she was wrong, she was annoyed. Therefore, I went to the National Library and copied out an extract from the Burmese Encyclopedia, Vol. III, page 126, which was a transliteration in Burmese of the words "General Councils of Burmese Associations." Translated, it means, "The name of the Burmese association in English is known as the "General Council of Burmese Association." It is also known by its initials – G.C.B.A."

Where Professor Cady had erred was in confusing the name of the Buddhist Association which was the forerunner of the YMBA. I knew some of the leaders of the GCBA personally so I was naturally better qualified to know the facts of the political events in my own country. Besides, all Burmese authorities and political observers use the correct term, "General Council of Burmese Associations."

I also prepared numerous reports on all kinds of subjects, some of a non-political nature. These were circulated among the officers of the P/E section and were also read by the ambassador and his deputy. A major project of mine which won commendation from the Department was a report covering the political events of the period of 1948 to 1951 entitled, "Burma: The First Four Years of Independence." It was edited by my chief, Mr. Albert Franklin. Since this report appeared to be worthwhile, I followed it up with others, which collectively, I called the Burma Series until I had completed three volumes<sup>19</sup> and had covered over a decade of the major political happenings in Burma from 1948 to 1959.

I was able to prepare such reports and others on various topics with no great hardship, because I maintained files of newspaper clippings on every subject relevant to Burma. The files were classified according to subject and as a result, any query from anyone in the embassy could be answered within minutes. Some of my files go as far back as 1948 (the year I joined the embassy) and with daily additions, have grown into large numbers, filling all five steel cabinets in my office. Beyond periodical check-ups and thinning down, I have kept all of them despite instructions from some of my supervisors to destroy them after a few years. I am glad I kept them for they have been of great help to me and other reporting officers. They also provided material for visiting Americans doing research on Burma. I remember one such visitor who wanted information on the Communist Party, Burma. He was Dr Robert A. Scalapino, a professor of political science at the University of California (Berkeley). His area of study is on Far Eastern politics and he has authored many books on the communist movement in those parts.

His article, "Patterns of Asian Communism" is a clinical study of the rise of communism in Asia and its tenacious hold on the people, once it has firmly established itself. It is also a provocative article on future trends in Asian countries, not yet subject to communist infiltration and dominance. I do not remember exactly, but I think he first came to Burma in 1963. One morning, he came to my office at the direction of my chief, for any information I had on the communist movement in Burma. I obliged by giving his free access to all my files and reports on the subject and Dr Scalapino spent a busy day taking notes from my files. He was engrossed in his work when I left for lunch and was still at it when I returned an hour later. I don't think he thought of lunch and worked till almost closing time. He was grateful for the assistance I was able to render him in making his research in Burma so expeditious and fruitful.

He was especially interested in the White Paper released by the RGUB on its abortive peace parleys with the two communist parties, and other insurgent groups in an attempt to bring peace to the country through negotiations. I too, was glad to have been of some assistance in furthering his research in a field I was deeply interested in, as the communist insurrection in my country had been with us ever since Burma refrained her independence, and in those days, its eventual disintegration appeared to be far off. The beginning of the fall of the CPB began with the death of its chairman, Thakin Than Tun in September 1968.

I can say without undue pride that files of news clippings and reports I prepared, have been of use not only to scholars like Dr Scalapino, but also to my friends in other embassies, who have often asked me for information dating back many years, which they did not have. Even some of our Burmese newsmen have had to rely on my files for reference purposes, since not all Burmese newspapers maintain a proper morgue.

Another major political reporting program I initiated was the compilation of "Political Organizations in Burma." Mr. Spivack, my thief, gave me all the time I wanted, because in early 1958, there were over sixty political organizations. The program was an ambitious one and to do justice to it, I took some months to research and write it. Finally, it was done, and Mr. Spivack remarked that my work could have earned me a Masters degree at least from any University in the States. Our satisfaction, however, was short-lived: the AFPEL the ruling party for a decade, split into two factions in June 1958, and the consequence was for me to re-write and up-date the report, as various parties took sides in the struggle for power. As a matter of fact, with the formation of the Union Party and the new Union Government of U Nu after the General Elections held in April 1960, the revised report went into three editions and 246 single-space typed pages. Mr. Spivack was very pleased with the result of my labors, and when he left the post on transfer to the States Department shortly afterwards, he took with him a copy of my report for reference. He was always unfailingly kind and encouraging, and was the kind of American officer, for whom a local employee will extend his best efforts.

To local employees the idea that they are serving the US Government is not as real as the fact that they serve individual American officers at different times during the tenure of their service in the embassy. Once an American supervisor has established a harmonious working relationship, and is understanding of the conditions under which the local employees have to work, he will find them enthusiastic about their work and cooperative. Local employees can be of real assistance to Americans, many of whom have but a sketchy knowledge of conditions in Burma.

Routine chores in my office are handled by my assistant, U Win Tun, who joined my staff in late 1968 when Ko Ko Gyi retired. At one time, I had under my supervision six local employees, a political assistant, three translators and two typists. Soon after President Nixon took over the Presidency, he ordered a ten per cent reduction of personnel both Americans and locals in all US missions abroad, as a measure economy in view of the high cost of the war in Vietnam. So I lost quite a number of my staff, until only the political assistant, a translator and a typist remained. Fortunately, workload had also decreased, and we were able to cope with the occasional deluge of work.

The Translation Pool, which I supervised, turns out a daily news sheet called "Burmese Press Summary," covering five State-owned Burmese newspapers, which gives summarized translations of editorials articles and news items and are circulated not only within the embassy but also to other friendly diplomatic missions. Copies of translation are also distributed to some of these missions. The British Embassy reciprocates by sending us copies of their news summary. But even if I do say so myself, the American Embassy's Translation Pool turns out a far better news sheet.

There is one erroneous impression, which Americans have about the Burmese employees in the embassy, which needs to be corrected. Some of them appear to be under the impression that Burmese employees enjoy an enhanced prestige in social and official circles because of their employment in the American Embassy. Here, I must state, categorically, that precisely the opposite is true.

I became aware of this fallacy when Marshall Noble was assigned in 1960 as Political Officer in the embassy. I had known him very well since 1949, when he was the cultural officer in the USIS. One day, he asked me quite seriously, if I did not think my personal prestige had not been enhanced because of my position as political advisor in the American Embassy. I replied that I did not, and that it was only my personal standing that gave me entry into high government and social circles.

Beginning with the prime minister, ministers and high government officials, both civilian and military, many were old friends of mine. For his information, I added that local employees, far from being considered prestigious because of their employment in the embassy, were regarded with suspicion and sometime with veiled contempt, as "running dogs of foreigners." Even our loyalties to our country were sometimes suspect, because of our employment in a foreign embassy. Such aspersions have been cast, more on us than on local employees of other embassies, inclusive of even local employees in diplomatic missions of the communist bloc.

A Burmese national, whose services have been terminated by the embassy, can never hope to obtain employment under the Burmese Government. A large number of local employees lost their jobs when the USIS library closed down in April 1964 on orders of the Burmese Government and many are still unemployed, while a few have obtained jobs in private concerns. Local employees who were retrenched later are in a similar plight. It is under such circumstances that local employees of the American Embassy perform their duties.

A trying but amusing interlude which I must relate concerns an elderly Buddhist monk. He paid regular visits to the embassy and it became one of my duties to ascertain what he wanted with us. I soon discovered that he was suffering from megalomania and he

appropriately styled himself as King Maha Vihaka of Kingdom of Kanbawza. The purpose of his visit was to see the American ambassador. Being a Buddhist myself, I had to handle him gently and did my best not to ruffle him. It was one of my unpleasant duties to keep away eccentrics and neurotic types from disturbing the ambassador and other officers of the political section and it was invariably only such officials that these persons wanted to meet. I succeeded in giving the reverend monk plausible excuses and pacifying him, so that he would be content and go away, but always leaving behind, a bulky envelope for the ambassador. This he would do regularly and I always received two letters of his each week.

His letters which he wrote on good quality paper and began sending in early 1963 soon filled one whole drawer of one of my filing cabinets. It must have cost him quite a tidy sum of money as his letters ran into the hundreds. Only one or two were translated for the ambassador's information (and amusement) and the rest I hoarded, much as if they were collector's items. As letters from cranks go, indeed they were.

This King Maha Vihaka always addressed himself to the President of the United States of America, who as Head of State he considered his equal. The ambassador never got any letter addressed to him personally, but was always treated as a transmitting agent. In grandiloquent Burmese, the king called for an alliance between his country and the mighty United States, and always solicited military and financial aid. One thing must be said of him; he believe in doing things in a big way, and his requests would always be for aircraft carriers, battleships, submarines, modern supersonic bombers and fighter planes to fight the communist hordes. His requests for financial aid would also run into astronomical figures.

In dull moments, his letters made amusing reading, but I am sorry to say he must have died sometime in 1965 or thereabouts, because he no longer appeared at the embassy. His letters, of course, have now been destroyed.

## Chapter Thirty

### A Time to Go

In all my twenty six years with the American Embassy in Burma, I have served under eleven ambassadors, beginning with the first, Mr. Klahr Huddle. They come and they go and now it was my turn.

Just before his departure from Rangoon, on 10 August 1974, Carl Taylor, Second Secretary in the P/E section, came to my office and told me rather apologetically, that the position of Political Advisor had become redundant, because the State Department did not feel justified in keeping on two local political officers to observe the Burmese political situation, which was more or less becoming uneventful. Also with the advent of American investments in oil exploration etc., the embassy expected more commercial intercourse between the two countries. He also told me that the embassy planned to appoint a Commercial Assistant, in view of the expected increase in commercial activities. Funds for this appointment were to be met with the funds available from the withdrawal of my position. That is how, as I said earlier, the entry of American private firms into off-shore oil exploration and drilling, had a bearing on my private affairs.

I accepted the news philosophically, and now that I had reached the age of sixty, the prospect of long days of rest and leisure appeared pleasant. Like other employees, I did hope to serve out my full term of thirty years service, and then retire. Carl appeared to be more affected than I was by the turn of events, and kept saying how sorry he was about all this. I told him not to be sorry about me, because twenty six years' service was quite something and I was looking forward to a well-earned rest. I can honestly say also that my long years of service in the embassy have been satisfying and I have had no regrets, although there have been moments of doubts and frustration. I arranged with the Personnel Officer to make my retirement effective 1 October 1974.

On my last day in the embassy, I cleared my desk and put away a few personal papers and belongings in my brief case. I looked round the room which had been my working den for many years. It was air-conditioned like the rest of the rooms in the embassy, and this had made it a pleasant place to work in despite the heat outside the building. When the rooms were being repainted during the earlier part of the year, I was given the choice of the color for my room, and I chose a light buff color for the walls, which gave a warm feeling to the room.

To relieve the austerity of the functional steel desk and other pieces of office furniture, I had hung on one wall a landscape painting in oils done by my daughter, who is quite a promising artist. The painting brightened the room and gave it a homely touch. It also gave me an excuse to show off my daughter's work. This painting, I now took down from the wall. Curiously, there was no feeling of nostalgia or regret, though I had been happy working in this room all those years.

Earlier in the day, I had made my farewells to Ambassador Osborn and Mr. Lacy, the DCM. During my visit with the ambassador, he expressed his satisfaction that American-Burmese relations were getting on well, and with the Burmese Government opening opportunities for private American investment, especially in the field of oil exploration, he hoped for greater cooperation and development of economic interests between the two countries. I remarked that cultural exchanges were also getting underway and that everything should be done in this field, to enlarge its scope and promote better understanding between

the two peoples. My next visit with the DCM was also gratifying. Among other things we discussed, he told me that he had read my reports with great interest and edification, before these were dispatched to the State Department. He remarked that the local employees were so well-qualified in their jobs that the American Embassy was the envy of other diplomatic missions in Rangoon.

When the office closed for that day, 30 September 1974, I took a last look at my room, wished my assistant Win Tun and other members of my staff goodbye and left the embassy for the last time.

## Appendix

### American Ambassadors to Burma

|     |                               |             |
|-----|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 1.  | Mr. Jerome Klahr Huddle       | 1948 – 1949 |
| 2.  | Mr. David McKendree Key       | 1950 – 1951 |
| 3.  | Mr. William J. Sebald         | 1952 – 1954 |
| 4.  | Mr. Joseph C. Satterhwaite    | 1955 – 1956 |
| 5.  | Mr. Walter P. McConaughy      | 1957 – 1959 |
| 6.  | Mr. William P. Snow           | 1959 – 1960 |
| 7.  | Mr. John Scott Everton        | 1961 – 1963 |
| 8.  | Mr. Henry A. Byroade          | 1963 – 1968 |
| 9.  | Mr. Arthur William Hummel Jr. | 1968 – 1970 |
| 10. | Mr. Edwin W. Martin           | 1971 – 1973 |
| 11. | Mr. David D. Osborn           | 1974 –      |

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<sup>1</sup> Formal name prefix for men

<sup>2</sup> Formal name prefix for women

<sup>3</sup> Pansodan Street

<sup>4</sup> Prefix used by male nationalist politicians meaning 'Master'. Thakin-ma was used by the women.

<sup>5</sup> Prefix in the Shan language meaning 'prince'

<sup>6</sup> Pyay Road

<sup>7</sup> The residences of the American Ambassador and the Deputy Chief of Mission were built by the MacGregor Company. The young Scot John MacGregor arrived in Burma in 1869, made his millions in timber, transportation and electrical supply. He passed away in 1900, leaving half his fortune to the poor of Glasgow, half to the poor of Rangoon. The Ambassador's residence was built in 1930 and called 'Tighnamara'. The house of the DCM was built in 1938 and named "Tighnabruaich". Ma Thanegi. Myanmar Architecture: Cities of Gold. TIMES Edition, Singapore, 2005

<sup>8</sup> Manawhari Road

<sup>9</sup> Kuomintang Aggression Against Burma. Ministry of Information, Government of the Union of Burma. Published 1953. Page 15

<sup>10</sup> Bago

<sup>11</sup> Tin Tut's name at school was John

<sup>12</sup> Rakhine

<sup>13</sup> It was strongly believed but never publicized by the newspapers that he was in love with a young Burmese woman and defection was the only way for them to be able to marry

<sup>14</sup> U Ko Ko. a columnist for the English Working People's Daily wrote hilariously satirical pieces under the name Motley Ko Ko ..... 'and if I laugh at any mortal thing, 'Tis that I may not weep'.

<sup>15</sup> Prime Minister from 1974 to 1977

<sup>16</sup> The author wrote 'Who's Who of Burma' published by his friend Thakin Kyaw Sein of the People's Literature House in 1961, several months before General Ne Win took over power in a coup d'état

<sup>17</sup> Myeik, Dawai and Mawlamyaing

<sup>18</sup> This is no longer relevant for the new leaders in Cambodia and South Vietnam. The former fell to communist forces on 17 April 1975 and the latter on 30 April 1975

<sup>19</sup> 1948 - 1951 Burma: The First Four Years of Independence  
1951 - 1955 Burma: Towards a Welfare State  
1956 - 1959 Burma: The End of the AFPFL Era