

“A Voluntarily abdicated Majesty” or “A Usurper”

A Brief Political History of Ne Win

Written by a “Burma-Scholar”



(General Ne Win in 1962)

Ne Win ruled Burma officially from 1962 to 1988 with an Iron Fist. In fact he was ruling Burma even before 1962. From September 1958 to March 1960 he was the Prime Minister of Burma during the Caretaker Government and after 1988 too, he was the de facto ruler because he was known to have pulled the strings from behind the scenes.

Someone who has occupied himself with Burma, Dr. Zoellner from Hamburg, mentioned in an interview that General Ne Win was the only person who gave up power voluntarily within two thousand years. Not only as a born Burmese but also as a former Lecturer in Burma studies at the Humboldt University, Berlin, Germany and Ohio University, Athens, Ohio USA, it was immediately evident to me that this statement was not true and that I could not share his general view although Dr. Zoellner and I have been working together in his “Nagani Project” since 2005 and are still working together in this same project with the new name “Myanmar Literature Project” having become his consultant for Burmese Literature, Language, History and Culture.

Upon reading his interview I am obliged, as his friend, to point out some historical and political facts which he has neglected to mention.

A study of the Burmese Chronicles reveals that in fact there were some kings and even a queen who gave up their power voluntarily. One example, the absolute monarch called *Bayinmagyi* Shin Saw Pu voluntarily abdicated and crowned her son-in-law, a former monk, Dhamaceti. She went to Yangon (Dagon in Burmese and Tigum in Mon and Tergu in Karen at that time) and meditated near the famous Shwedagon Pagoda (the Kyaik Tigum at that time). Her tomb can still be seen in Yangon. She became the queen by her divine right and not through marriage to a king, hence, she was Bayinma (Queen Regnant or one became queen by divine right like Queen Elisabeth II of England) and NOT Miphaya (wife of a king). In the Konbaung Dynasty, the Last Dynasty of Burma, some kings were also forced to abdicate.

When General Ne Win came in power in 1962, I was only 16. Now I have turned 61. The information I have collected over the years requires a turn of 180 degrees from his viewpoint. It is as follows:

1. Ne Win was only the number 5 or 6 in rank among the members of “the Thirty Comrades”. He wanted, however, to be the Number Two after Aung San, which the latter never allowed.

At the beginning Aung San appointed Bo Setkya and later Bo Let Ya his deputies. Ne Win was the commander of the Fourth Battalion and he organized the officers of that battalion. Later these officers, among them Aung Gyi, Maung Maung, Aung Shwe, and Tin Pe, became his protégés. When Aung San left the Army and became a politician he nominated and appointed Let Ya as his successor for his position in the Army. After the death of Aung San, Let Ya became the Minister of Defence as well as the Deputy Prime Minister in U Nu's Cabinet. Hence Let Ya was the "Second Man" in U Nu's government until 1949 and Ne Win regarded him with jaundiced eyes. Let Ya was totally against the forced retirement of the Karen, General Smith Dun, because some Karen Army units went underground and fought against the central government. However, when the majority of the cabinet ministers wanted to pension Smith Dun he recommended another Karen, Brigadier Saw Kya Doe, to be given the post of Army Chief. Ne Win wanted to get that post and so did Bo Zeya, another Thirty Comrade Member who became the 'Third Man' after Aung San and Let Ya during the Japanese-trained Burmese Army Revolt against the Japanese in March 1945. Ne Win approached the Socialist Party Members headed by Ba Swe and Kyaw Nyein. In the mean time Bo Zeya went to U Nu and Bo Let Ya and requested them to name him Army Chief. When Ne Win learned of this there was a big quarrel between Ne Win and Zeya at the Army Headquarters each accusing the other to be an opportunist and power-mongering person. In that very night Bo Zeya went underground taking with him three well-trained battalions and joined the Stalinist Communist Rebels headed by Thakin Than Tun. Ne Win then became Army Chief and there were a lot of conflicts between the defence minister Let Ya and Commander-in-chief Ne Win due to Let Ya's plan to send military officers to go for further studies in the Military Academies such as Sandhurst (England) and West Point (USA). Ne Win never trusted the officers trained by the military academies of the Western Countries who at that time became the majority of the general staff of Burma Armed Forces. He wanted to dismiss all of them except Brigadier Saw Kya Doe, who had joined the Japanese-trained Burmese Army during the Japanese Era. Let Ya was against that plan, but Ba Swe, Kyaw Nyein and all the socialists, who were the majority in U Nu's government, backed Ne Win firmly. Let Ya became fed up with politics and resigned from both his political and military posts. These were given to Ne Win, who became Deputy Prime Minister as well as Defence and Home Minister. He thus could manipulate all Armed Forces in Burma as he wished and as soon as he took office he removed almost all British-trained persons from their posts, regardless of whether they were of Burmese or ethnic-minority descent. The first victim was the then commander of Lower Burma, Brigadier Aung Thin, a Burmese. He was dismissed and his position was given to Colonel Kyaw Zaw, the then commander of Upper Burma. The second victim was an Arakanese, Major General Htun Hla Oung, the Inspector General of Burma Police then. He was removed from his position and sent as the Burmese Military Attaché to the United Kingdom, a post which is only for colonels and was, hence, a type of demotion. The then Inspector General of Burma Prisons, U Ba Maung, whose son Major (later Brigadier in 1976) Tint Swe and son-in-law Captain (later Colonel in 1974) Hla Pe, a famous pre-war singer Pyay Hla Pe, were protégé of Ne Win, was appointed as the

Inspector General of Burma Police in addition to his real post. The posts of the Chief of Burma Navy as well as that of the Chief of Burma Air Force, both filled by Karens, were replaced by Burmese. Some British-trained Brigadiers and Colonels were also dismissed, although they were Burmese. Another Sandhurst-trained Karen, Brigadier Saw Kya Doe, mentioned above as Let Ya's preferred successor to Smith-Dun, was allowed to remain in the Burma Army for one or two years, not only because he and his battalion joined the Burmese Armies during the Japanese Era but also because he fought against the Karen and other rebels. Later he was fed up with the war, resigned from the army and joined his former boss, Bo Let Ya, who became one of the richest men in Burma through his Martaban Fisheries Co. Ltd.

2. The Burmese word for Commander in Chief is 'Theynarpati', which is deviated from the Pali word 'Senapati'. All of his predecessors, Aung San, Let Ya, Smith Dun were called 'Theynarpati'. When he became Commander in Chief in 1949 he was also called 'Theynarpati'. However, there is a Burmese word with very similar pronunciation 'Theynar Ngati' which can be roughly translated as 'the scoundrel who is suffering of a deadly sickness'. Since Ne Win was not a beloved person among the then senior officers, they named him secretly 'Theynar Ngati' instead of 'Theynarpati'. When he heard about that, he became very angry and changed the term 'Theynarpati' to a pure Burmese word 'Oo see choke' using the power of the minister of home and defence ministries. He gave his own explanation to the cabinet that 'Oo see choke' is the pure Burmese word and therefore even an illiterate person could understand easily, while the first one 'Theynarpati' is a deviated Pali word, hence it would be difficult for some illiterate Burmese and also for some people of the minority ethnic groups who were non-Buddhists.
3. In 1951 when the government became upper hand of the civil war and many cities were reoccupied by the government troops, Ne Win returned to the army. The socialists, Ba Swe became the defence minister and Bo Khin Maung Galay became the home minister. Since 1948 Union Military Police Force (UMP) about 25 battalions, Normal Police, Armed Police, Riot Police, Special Police and Border Police were under home ministry. Since that time, the socialists noticed that Ne Win became 'strong man' in all defence forces; hence, they put some socialist colonels in the key position. Apart from that, they just wanted to encounter the defence forces, so, they built some extra armed forces under the home ministry with various names such as Kar-Kwe-Ye (Home Guards), Pyu Saw Htee Forces (named after the Third King of the Pagan Dynasty who crushed all enemies) slowly and slowly. In fact, the armed forces under the home ministry were higher in men power than the defence forces. Ne Win had to regard these forces with jaundiced eyes; however, he had to tolerate it because the AFPFL Party was too strong. When AFPFL started cracking in 1957, he 'made hay while the sun shines' by promising secretly to back Ba Swe - Kyaw Nyein Fraction. In 1958, when the AFPFL really split he got the golden opportunity to take 'Lion's share' and came to power as 'the Care Taker Government'.

4. Ne Win became a Three Star General (Lt. General) as the replacement of Smith Dun in 1949 and became a Four Star General (General) in 1952 because of the invasion Kuoming Tan (Nationalist Chinese) Forces. However, his various deputies or 'second men' were only One Star Generals (Brigadier), so that the gap between him and his deputies remained large. Whenever the "Second Man" became very popular, he was dismissed or replaced. Kyaw Zaw, Aung Shwe, Maung Maung, Aung Gyi, Tin Pe, one after another, were dismissed or replaced. Only his protégé, San Yu, who was never popular and danced to all his tunes, remained the 'Second Man' until 1988.
5. Both U Ohn Khin, the owner of *Bama Khit* (Burma Times) and U Law Yone, the owner of the Nation newspapers became a foe of General Ne Win in the early 50's when their *Bama Khit* and the Nation newspapers, under the guarantee of press freedom given by U Nu's government, published the news of the secret marriage of Gen. Ne Win, the then Commander in Chief of Burma Army, Navy and Air Force, with a married woman by the name of Daw Khin May Than. Daw Khin May Than, also known as Kitty Ba Than, was a nurse and not yet divorced from her first husband. They also reported that, when their reporters wanted to congratulate the bride and the groom, General Ne Win hit the reporters and destroyed their cameras. In addition, *Bama Khit* published photos of Gen. Ne Win's first wife Daw Tin Tin and their children and a photo of Dr. Taung Gyi, the husband of Daw Khin May Than, who was then in the USA as a Burmese State Scholar. U Ohn Khin and U Law Yone, who were both good friends of U Nu, complained to Premier Nu about the incident. U Nu called an emergency cabinet meeting and decided to dismiss Ne Win. However, as a formality, the dismissal decree had to be signed by the President of the Union. At this point in time, one of the cabinet ministers, Thakin Chit Maung, revealed the decision of the cabinet to Ne Win. He in turn approached U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein, whose fraction was the strongest in the government, asking for help and promising that the Army would stand behind their fraction in case of necessity. Ba Swe and Kyaw Nyein then blackmailed U Nu with the threat of the withdrawal of all Socialist Party Members from the coalition government. U Nu had no other choice but to cancel his decision. (Later Ne win repaid his gratitude to Thakin Chit Maung. 20 Months after the military *coup de tat*, when many AFPFL members together with U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein were arrested and their party was dissolved, Thakin Chit Maung was not included among the detainees but was sent as an ambassador abroad). U Ohn Khin's destiny was to be different: in 1958 when Gen. Ne Win became the Prime Minister of Burma during the Caretaker Government, U Ohn Khin confronted him in his first and last press conference. Subsequently, during the entire Caretaker Government Era, Gen. Ne Win never attended press conferences but let one of his deputies, either Brigadier Aung Gyi or Brigadier Maung Maung represent him. U Ohn Khin was then one of the first journalists detained by Gen. Ne Win after the 1962 military *coup de tat*. U Law Yone was not arrested but fearing he could foresee his destiny easily he left Burma for good in 1965.
6. In September 1958, the three leading officers from the Burma Army, namely Brigadier Tin Pe, Colonel Aung Gyi and Colonel Maung Maung went to Premier Nu's resident and demanded to transfer power officially to the military or otherwise they could not prevent the military coup

planned by other officers. In the mean time Brigadier Aung Shwe (now chairman of the opposition NLD Party, the party of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi), the then commander of the Southern Command ordered some of his troops to occupy the Mingaladon International Airport and Insein Town, both of them are only ten miles away from Rangoon City Centre. The then home minister Bo Min Gaung, also a member of the Thirty Comrades, ordered some UMP troops outside Rangoon to come to Rangoon to protect the government, however, those troops were stopped near the Southern Burma Commands headed by Brigadier Aung Shwe and forced them either to go back to their units or they would be disarmed by the army. Just to prevent the unnecessary bloodshed between two government troops, these UMP battalions went back. Prime Minister U Nu had no other choice, but to surrender power to a Caretaker Government headed by General Ne Win constitutionally through the parliament just to prevent the army coup d'état. The Caretaker Government ruled Burma until March 1960. During the Care Taker Government, Ne Win dissolved the Pyu Saw Htee Forces, renamed and recruited them as Reserved Police Force. He could not stand the name 'Military Force' was under the home ministry. Hence, the Union Military Police Force was renamed to Union Constabulary and he sent the Army Colonel Min Thein to lead that force about two years and later Army colonel Tan Yu Saing, brother-in-law of Ne Win's protégé Brigadier Tin Pe was nominated as the Inspector General of this force. Hence, the Para Military Police Force was only by name under the home ministry, but de facto under the control of the army. The officers of the UMP troops marched to Rangoon due to the order of home minister were trialed during the care Taker Government, however, lucky for these officers that the multi-party election was held in February 1960 in which U Nu's party won with landslide majority and Bo Min Gaung became the home minister again. Hence, the trial was stopped.

7. In 1961, some high ranking army officers closer to the socialist party wanted to make the *coup de tat* naming Ne Win as their leader. He did not say 'yes or no', however, went to meet U Nu and reported the prime minister that some 'Ring Leaders' of the army wanted to make a *coup de tat* and therefore he had dismissed them already. Despite of arresting them he suggested them to be sent as ambassadors and military attaches aboard. U Nu thought it was the best and peaceful solution and agreed. Later, Brigadier Aung Shwe (now Chairman of the NLD Party) was sent to Australia as the Burmese ambassador. Brigadier Maung Maung was sent to Israel as the Burmese ambassador. Colonel Tun Sein was sent as the Burmese military attaché to Japan. Colonel Sein Mya was sent as the Burmese military attaché to Pakistan. Colonel Kyi Win, who was a brother-in-law of Socialist Leader U Ba Swe, some colonels and Lt. Colonels were dismissed. Colonel Khin Nyo, the younger brother of Socialist Bo Khin Maung Galay was not yet dismissed at that time, however he was also dismissed about two years after the coup, when all parties in Burma were dissolved and his elder brother Bo Khin Maung Galay was arrested. In that way, the whole army was free from the Socialist Party's Influence and should obey only his commands.
8. On the evening of 1st March 1962, at about 11 PM, Ne Win gave a closing speech at the National Theatre for a visiting Chinese Cultural Delegation. He said he had to close that

ceremony and give a speech on behalf of 'his elder brother' Premier Nu, who was very busy with the preparation of the important parliamentary debate on the next day. Then, three hours later, at about 2:00 AM of 2nd March 1962, the military *coup de tat* commenced. The President U Win Maung, Premier Nu, the whole cabinet, all Shan and Kayah leaders and even all judges of the Supreme Court were detained. All orders came directly from Ne Win. His deputy at the time, Aung Gyi was neither consulted nor informed. In July 1988 Ex. Brigadier General Aung Gyi, published a book with the name "An Open Letter to General Ne Win and BSPP Central Committee Members". According to that book, Aung Gyi knew nothing about the "Putsch". He claimed that he was single at that time and his house was like a 'Guest House' for some senior staff and friends. He was in deep sleep at about 7:00 AM on 2nd March 1962, when some colonels came to his bed room and woke him up and congratulated him as the 'Second Man' of the new government. He did not believe his ears and asked those colonels what had happened. The colonels thought, Aung Gyi had a sense of humour, they laughed loudly and told him not to pretend to be an innocent virgin. They said proudly that, as Aung Gyi definitely knew, the army was now in control and Ne Win had ordered him, because he (Aung Gyi) was the only person in the army who could give very good political speeches, to make a radio broadcast explaining to the people why the military *coup de tat* was a necessity. He had no other choice but to prepare a short speech and announced that the situation of the country was on the road to ruin and to prevent the disintegration of the union the army had to take over power. When he came back home he went straight to the bathroom and cried because he knew that Democracy in Burma was abolished and the Military Dictatorship would last forever. Later, Commodore Tommy Cliff, the then Chief of Burma Air Force, Colonel Tan Yu Saing, the then chief of the Union Para Military Police Force (former UMP, renamed Union Constabulary since the Care Taker Government's Era), Colonel Kyi Maung, the then commander of Naypyidaw Commands (later Rangoon Division Commands), Colonel Khin Nyo and Colonel Saw Myint stated that they too knew nothing about the military *coup de tat* although their names were in the list of the Revolutionary Council Members. The then chief of Burma Navy, Commodore Than Pe could not attest it anymore because he died about four months after the military *coup de tat*. The then Inspector General of the Burma Police, U Bo, whose name was not in the list of the Revolutionary Council Members was forced to retire a few months after the military *coup de tat*. The same fate befell U Ba Thein, the then Inspector General of Burma Prisons who had initiated many reforms in the Burma Jails since 1954. The Ministry of Judicial Affairs was dissolved, the prison department was transferred under the home ministry and all reforms were stopped. There was only one class of prisoners including both common criminals and political prisoners. All without distinction were forced to do hard labour. The police commissioner of Rangoon, U Khin Maung Maung and his brother U Tin Maung Maung, the police commissioner for Lower Burma, were detained by the Military Intelligence. U Balawant Singh, a Sikh and the then Commissioner of Pegu Division and U Carrot, an Anglo-Burman and the then Commissioner of Irrawaddy Division, suffered the same fate. Bo Setkya, who was a deputy to Aung San fled to Thailand.

9. At the beginning U Nu believed that the coup had been planned by the junior officers and that Ne Win had also been detained. Two weeks later, when Ne Win came and met him at the detention camp he knew exactly what had actually happened. According to U Nu, he told Ne Win that the way he saw the situation of the nation and the way Ne Win saw it were totally different. If Ne Win really thought the country was in danger, he could have told U Nu openly; then U Nu would have surrendered power officially through the parliament, like in 1958. Ne Win did not answer and left. U Nu had to stay in the detention centre for more than four years.
10. Ne Win came in power through an almost bloodless coup on 2nd March 1962. Only one person was killed by the army. A 14 year old son of Sao Shwe Thaik, the first president of Burma, was killed on that day. However, the first general bloodshed came 4 months later when the Burma Army gunned down more than one hundred student demonstrators on the Rangoon University Campus. The next day they blew up the Student's Union Building, which was the historical building for the Burmese Independence Movement. All orders came directly from Ne Win. Even his deputy, Aung Gyi, was neither consulted nor informed. Later in 1977, after the majority of BSPP Central Committee Members voted against him, he cleared his name within the Party by pushing the entire blame on Aung Gyi, as if he himself had known nothing about the case and the orders had come directly from Aung Gyi, the Second Man at the time. This statement was vehemently rejected by Aung Gyi in his 'Open Letter' in which he countered that he was in May Myo, about 700 Kilometres away from Rangoon, when these events occurred there on the 7th and 8th July 1962. When he had returned to Rangoon from May Myo, driving along Prome Road on the way from Mingladon Airport, he had been shocked to see that the University Campus was occupied by soldiers and the Students Union Building had been blown up. He argued that he could not have given the orders when he himself was not in Rangoon and knew nothing about what was happening there. Later Ne Win pushed the blames on Colonel Kyaw Soe, the then home minister. Kyaw Soe could not defend anymore because he was dead and gone already.
11. On 8th July 1962 Ne Win made a radio broadcast, threatening and warning the whole nation that he had used only a tiny part of his armed forces to crush "the Students rebellion". In case of necessity, he would use all of his armed forces to crush this kind of 'revolt' in the future. He would face 'sword against sword, spear against spear and guns against guns to defend his authority and his regime. The populace and even some Members of his Revolutionary Council were so upset that Ne Win felt he had to leave the county within two weeks after the massacre giving medical treatment as a reason. He stayed four or five months abroad. During that time Aung Gyi became acting head of state and the Revolutionary Council, speaking sugar-coated words to the public and making 'Kowtows' to the populace. People calmed down and Aung Gyi became very popular. On 1st October 1962, the National Day of the People's Republic of China, Aung Gyi had to send a Congratulatory Message as the Head of State of Burma. Due to the advice of the Chief of Protocol of the Foreign Ministry, who was a career diplomat, Aung Gyi signed as 'the Chairman of the Revolutionary Council of Burma' instead of 'Acting Chairman'. Ne Win looked with jaundiced eyes on Aung Gyi.

When he came back to Burma, within two months he sent Aung Gyi to Japan for War Reparations Talks. At a press conference in Tokyo Aung Gyi, answering a question of a foreign journalist, said that the Burma Army had no intention of staying in power for ever, an election would be held in due course and at a favourable time sooner or later, power would be returned to civilians and the soldiers would return to the barracks. Ne Win became very angry and Aung Gyi was dismissed from all posts two weeks after his return from Japan. Later Aung Gyi was detained. Between 1963 and 1988 Aung Gyi was detained at least four times and at times he had to stay for more than a year in a detention camp.

12. In November 1963, about 20 months after this army *coup d'état*, U Ba Swe, the then Chairman of the AFPFL Party, made a public speech and requested Gen. Ne Win to step down. U Ba Swe openly said: If General Ne Win really loved his nation, his army, his people and his religion he should resign immediately because his 'Forward Policy', had in fact become a 'Backward Policy' for the whole nation. As a result, Ne Win arrested his former "Gurus" U Ba Swe and U Kyaw Nyein within a week and abolished all political parties in Burma. Later, Bo Let Ya who led the Burmese Army and the Defence Ministry after Aung San had quit the army; was also arrested. Ne Win established a one party state in Burma and put Burma on the road to ruin. It was the beginning of the downfall of Burma in all fields.
13. Ne Win was a well-known party goer. During U Nu's Era he was the 'Chairman of Miss Burma Selection Committee'. There were some rumours that some ladies had to bribe him with their bodies to become Miss Burma. Three weeks after the Putsch, shock to everybody, Ne Win announced that all Dance Halls in Burma would be closed and Miss Burma Contests too would be forbidden in the future because they were against the Burmese Culture and unmoral due to Buddhism. However, whenever he was abroad, he attended dance parties and went to see 'Miss Selections'.
14. Ne Win was a famous gambler. His favourite gambling was Poker and he was a regular goer of horse races for gambling. That was the main reason that he failed thrice in the examinations at the second year in the university and had to leave the medical college during the British Colonial Era. Three weeks after the Putsch, shock to everybody, Ne Win declared that playing cards with gamble would be illegal and those people playing cards would be arrested. Of course, it was forbidden for the 'Normal Working People' but not for the 'Aristocrats' and the elite groups. The residents of Ne Win's youngest brother U Thein Nyunt, well known as Nyi Lay, and Ne Win's former wife Daw Tin Tin were the safe haven for the gamblers who wanted to play cards with gambling. Neither police nor Military Intelligence dared to touch them!
15. He also prohibited horse races in 1963 by giving reason that it was against Socialism and many people had to face bankruptcy because of gambling in the horse races. However, he totally forgot or did not even know that horse races were officially allowed in the East-European Socialists Countries then. Later, rumours came out through his inner circle that he was the owner of ten racing horses, unfortunately, none of them won in the races, except one horse named "Bazooka" won in some races and received negligible prizes. In 1966 the Life

Magazine published Ne Win's photos in the stadiums of horse race and dog race while he was in England for 'Medical Treatment'. Since that time the Life Magazine was banned in Burma.

16. After declaring Burma to be a one party state, on the basis of the advice of former communist party members who had already joined the BSPP, he declared the withdrawal of Burmese Currency from the British Pound Sterling Zone in 1964. At that time the Burmese Currency was very stable at the conversion rate of one US \$ to 4.75 Kyats for selling and one to 5.00 Kyats for buying. He had new Burmese Currency Notes printed in the former GDR (East Germany) and since that time the Burmese currency has not again been a convertible currency. Many soldiers were sent to the former GDR for this technology, but Burma had to pay the GDR Government in US Dollars for the training and for the machines supplied by the GDR, which were in fact of an inferior quality. In the mean time, an engineer trained in Western Germany, Colonel Maung Cho, became Minister of Industries. He had a German wife and a daughter in West Germany. Some West German Companies approached him and he reported to Ne Win about GDR's brazenness. Ne Win became very angry with the GDR and accepted the offer from West Germany to provide training and modern equipment free of charge. At the beginning of 1970 the project was transferred to West Germany. It was the beginning of the end of GDR-Burmese Friendship. Later the currency notes were printed inside Burma. Since that time, the value of the Burmese Currency has fallen gradually although the official conversion rate has never been changed. In 1988, the value of one US \$ was already 40 Kyats and now in 2007 it has become 1300 Kyats.
17. In 1969 Ne Win went to England for medical treatment. Tin Pe became Acting Head of state and the Acting Chairman of the Revolutionary Council. When he had to send Congratulatory Messages as the Head of State of Burma, in order to avoid the fate of Aung Gyi, he signed carefully as 'the Acting Chairman of the Revolutionary Council'. Even so, Tin Pe had to retire on medical grounds when Ne Win returned. Later, San Yu was even more careful. He neither used the term 'Chairman' nor 'Head of State', nor did he sign 'on behalf of'. He generally signed either as 'the Secretary of the Party' or 'Secretary of the State's Council' and sometimes he even added 'by order of the chairman'. That is why he could last as the Second Man from 1969 until 1988.
18. In 1969 U Nu went into exile and requested all Burmese to join his revolt. Bo Let Ya, the former Second Man of Aung San and co-founder of the Burma Army joined U Nu and established 'The Patriotic Burmese Army' in Thailand. At the beginning, U Nu and Bo Let Ya were successful. U Nu was able to go to China and he was accepted by Chairman Mao. Bo Let Ya was able to hire some planes and dropped pamphlets all over Burma in which he, as a co-founder of the Burma Army, requested all soldiers of the Burma Army to revolt against Ne Win. Following the advice of his astrologers, Ne Win changed the driving system in Burma from the left (like England & Japan) to the right (like Europe and America). Since the Burmese word for 'Right Hand Side' is Let Ya, the campaign was called 'Let Ya Maun Sanit' which can be roughly translated as: 'Let's Drive right' and seemed to be harmless, however,

as homonym it could also mean: 'Kick Out Let Ya!' The entire traffic system with the exception of trains was changed in 1969. The system of trains remains the same, 'Driving on the Left Side', until today. Why? The train is called 'Ya Hta' in Burmese and the homonym 'Ya Hta' means 'what one has already achieved'. Hence, the Slogan in 1969 was: "Let Ya Maun Sanit" and "Ya Hta Sanit Ma Pyaun" both could be harmlessly translated as: "Let us Drive Right, but the System for the Trains will not be changed", however, the homonyms could also be: "Kick out Let Ya; we won't change the system (in Burma) which we have already achieved"! So, the program had two meanings either 'Let's Drive Right'- or 'Kick out Let Ya'-Program! Whether his astrologers were too good or it was only an accident, only God would know, U Nu's and Bo let Ya's attempts failed and Ne Win remained as the 'Leader' of Burma.

19. From 1962 to 1988, that is to say during the 26 years of Ne Win's official era, there were many anti-government demonstrations. Between 1974 and 1978, the riots broke out on semi-annual basis, all calling for his resignation. All of them were brutally crushed by the army through his direct orders.
20. He invited U Pe Thein (well known through his pen name Shwe U Daung) to accept the post of Chief Editor of the government-owned "The Working Peoples' Daily", a Burmese newspaper, with the promise of press freedom. When all factories, firms, shops, schools, hospitals etc. etc., were nationalized U Pe Thein wrote in the 'Editorial' of his newspaper that it was a kind of robbery from the Buddhist point of view. U Pe Thein was forced to retire.
21. A similar fate befell Ne Win's former advisor U Thein Pe Myint, who was also an author. Once he wrote that the cost of the new clothes of the president was five hundred times higher than a month's salary of a normal worker and that the government should therefore review this question. Since that time no newspapers, journals, magazines, etc. were permitted to publish anything written by U Thein Pe Myint.
22. After the nationalization of all schools in Burma in 1965, Burmese replaced English as the official language used in the schools. Teaching the minority languages such as Shan, Karen, Mon and so forth was also forbidden. Only in the early 80s, when Ne Win's favourite daughter Khin Sandar Win failed the entrance examination in Singapore, did English once again become an official language. It was rather too late because there was then a shortage of experienced teachers able to teach the required subjects in English. Many experienced teachers and scientists who had been trained under U Nu's government began to leave Burma and settle abroad. The Burmese people have had to suffer under this burden until the present.
23. In November 1974, U Thant, the retired Secretary General of the United Nations, died in New York. In accordance with his last wish, his dead body was brought back to Burma to be buried in Rangoon. The whole BSPP Central Committee Members including San Yu wanted to make a state funeral with full honours; however, Ne Win vetoed it because U Thant was a closed friend of U Nu. One deputy minister who went to the airport was dismissed on the same day. Ne Win's wife at the time, Daw Ni Ni Myint, who was a lecturer in history at the

University of Rangoon, advised him that his attitude would be detrimental to his reputation in the history of the country. He became extremely angry, slapped her and from that time on lived separately from her without a divorce. As was to be expected, riots broke out in Rangoon. Ne Win, as the President of the Union and the Supreme Commander of all armed forces, declared martial law and ordered General Tin Oo, the then Defence Minister and chief of all defence forces (now NLD Vice Chairmen in jail) to crush the riots by all means. Tin Oo refused Ne Win's order indirectly by issuing another order that the then commander of Rangoon Division, Colonel Khin Ohn was fully authorized to handle the problem. Khin Ohn danced to Ne Win's tune and ordered the soldiers to fire in the unarmed crowds. Many unarmed civilians including monks, women, students and children were killed by the army. Tin Oo became very popular; however as it could have been foreseen, he was dismissed about fifteen months later and Colonel Khin Ohn was promoted to Brigadier-General and rewarded with a post of minister. About three months after his dismissal, General Tin Oo was accused of being an accomplice of the high treason plotted by some junior officers and was sentenced seven years imprisonment.

24. During the BSPP Era, on 31st December yearly, the New Year Ball was allowed in the big hotels with the permission of the Ministry of Culture. In 31st December 1975, Ne Win and his followers stormed into the New Years Eve Party held at the Inya Lake Hotel, hit the musicians, party goers and broke the music instruments. All people had to run away. His protégés gave an excuse that the party was so loud and disturbed their 'Old Leader' from his sleeping in his villa at the yonder bank of the lake. So, as a public nuisance they had to come and 'punish' these people. The truth was in that very evening, Ne Win Himself was celebrating the New Year Eve with his inner circle and he was drunk already. In that very moment he was informed by the military intelligence that the whole battalion of the Burmese army operating at the Chinese Border was totally crushed by the Communists Rebels. Then he became so sad and angry, became emotional and had to make the party music as scapegoats!. It was proven because he shouted while he was hitting the party goers: "You stupid bastards! You know only how to enjoy yourselves and wasting money but did not know what had happened to the country. This kind of unpatriotic people must be punished"! Newsweek and Time magazines covered this news and also some pictures of this incident. Two weeks long, the subscribers could not receive their copies because they were forbidden for those two weeks. After that incident all New Year Balls in the hotels were prohibited and the deputy minister of culture then was dismissed. Many people knew Ne Win's bad habits already and gossiped jokingly that the 'Thamada' (the President) and his 'Lugyan' (Stuntmen) stormed and destroyed the New Year Party. In fact, there was a film company called Thamada (President) Film Company owned by the famous stunt actor Shwe Ba and a group of stuntmen called 'Thamada Lugyan Aphwei' (President Stuntmen Group) headed also by Shwe Ba. This group was very well-known since U Nu's Era. Bad luck for the actor Shwe Ba and his stuntmen, they were not allowed to use that name any more and they had to change to another name and not as popular as earlier!

25. Without divorcing Daw Ni Ni Myint, Ne Win married Ratana Natmai (can be literally translated as Treasure Goddess) *alias* June Rose Bellamy, a descendant of King Mindon from one of his concubines and a family with British blood. She was citizen of a foreign state. Their marriage did not last even two years. After making a state visit to China she left him without divorce and went back to Italy. There were rumours that the Chinese accused her of being a CIA Agent. While she was the first Lady of Burma, all Burmese who changed their citizenship and lived abroad were allowed to come and visit their relatives in Burma. When she left him, however, those persons were not given visas anymore. She blackmailed him that she planned to publish a book about him in order to destroy his reputation. He had no other choice, but to go and meet her where she stayed and to pay millions of dollars as ransom. When he returned, Daw Ni Ni Myint became the First Lady of Burma again. That was one of the many reasons that a large number of BSPP Central Committee Members wanted to replace him with a younger person. They believed his attitudes and behaviour were shameless, unethical in the extreme and completely lacking the moral leadership appropriate to a head of state.
26. In 1977 during the BSPP Special Congress, the majority of the Party Central Committee Members voted against Ne Win. According to the existing Party and State constitution he should have had to step down peacefully from his posts as the State President and Party Chairman. Instead he ordered Brigadier General Tin Oo, the then chief of the Burmese Military Intelligence, to arrest all Central Committee Members who had voted against him. Dr. Annemarie Esche, another 'Burma Expert' of Germany, knew this story very well because her husband Dr. Otto Esche was the First Secretary of the then G.D.R Embassy in Rangoon. Dr. Sein Tun, who got his doctorate from the former G.D.R, was one of the Central Committee Members arrested by the MIS. (That is why, the joke later circulated that Dr. Sein Tun liked the abbreviation 'CC' so much that he was in the 'Central Committee' first and later landed in the 'Concentration Camp'). All East Bloc Embassies were shocked because Ne Win and the MIS did not respect the party's decision and did what they liked. Even in their One Party States the Central Committee Members could replace the Chairman or the Secretary General with someone else by vote.
27. In the late 70's Ne Win was nominated by some flatterers as the Chairman of the Burmese Language Commission. Although he was poor in both Burmese and English languages he accepted the position shamelessly. Later he ordered to make reforms in the Burmese Language, Orthography, Grammar and Syntax which totally deviated from rules, laws and discipline of the tradition. Many Burmese language teachers, writers, journalists and scholars could not and cannot accept it, unfortunately, nobody dared to talk against him and correct him inside Burma. Only writers, journalists and scholars abroad dared to give critics to that. Here I would like to cite a veteran author and journalist *Kyemon* U Thaung with pen name Aung Bala, who wrote: "Since Bo Ne Win, whose knowledge in Burmese language as well as in English language was very limited, proclaimed himself to be the "Chairman of the Burmese Language Commission" in the late 70's, the standard and level of our Burmese language became degraded and now it is in the hopeless condition". Here I would like to give

one specific example. Traditionally, Burmese use “Kyanmar Par Yei lar” (How do you do?) as a formal greeting word. He introduced the term ‘Mingala par’ (May joyous or auspicious or festive ones be with you!). He forced this word to be used everywhere as a greeting word. The Burmese word for funeral is ‘Ah-thuba or Ah-mingala’ (Non joyous or auspicious or festive thing!). Assuming one is going to a funeral and greets this word to a family member of dead person, how could that person feel? The traditional term ‘How do you do?’ is suitable for every occasion!

28. After 1988 he nominally resigned, but everybody knew that he pulled the strings from behind the scenes and that Senior General Saw Maung was his Puppet Dictator. When Saw Maung said in a press conference sincerely (perhaps stupidly from the standpoint of Ne Win and his followers) that he would return power to a civilian government after the elections in 1990 and would subsequently retire, sending the soldiers back to the barracks, Ne Win forced him to retire at once and replaced him with Than Shwe. The official reason given was Senior General Saw Maung retired because of poor health.
29. In 1995, his favourite daughter Khin Sandar Win had a car accident. The other driver was the daughter of the then Inspector General of the Burma Police, U San Thein. Being the daughter of the police chief, that young lady was unduly proud and called the traffic police to have them take Khin Sandar Win to the police station. The young policemen knew only the daughter of their boss and obeyed her commands without realising who the other person was. At the police station, when the officer on duty checked her driving license, he saw that she was Major Dr. Khin Sandar Win, Ne Win's favourite daughter and an officer of the Burma Medical Corps. Knowing exactly what kind of problems they would be now be compelled to face, the officer phoned immediately to the Police Chief U San Thein and requested him to come to their police station as soon as possible and solve this predicament himself. In the mean time, Ne Win's daughter had already phoned to General Khin Nyunt, the then the Third Man of the Junta, via her mobile phone. Both General Khin Nyunt and Police Chief San Thein arrived almost at the same time. Now, the hunter became the prey. The Great Police Chief San Thein became 'a small fish' in front of 'the shark' Khin Nyunt. He apologized for his daughter's misbehaviour, slapped her in front of them and had himself to beg for forgiveness. Finally, he obliged his daughter kneel down in front of Ne Win's daughter Khin Sandar Win and pay homage to her, in the traditional Burmese Buddhist fashion. He thought that he had then solved the problem. Unfortunately, however, on the following day the Police Chief San Thein was summoned by the Home Minister and was informed that his family was misusing power and he was therefore dismissed from the post of Inspector General. Nonetheless, the government was kind enough to grant him a post as the Burmese Ambassador to the Philippines. U San Thein had to stay about three years in Manila and was subsequently transferred to Berlin, Germany, where he remained from 2000 to 2003.
30. The present Dictator Than Shwe is not as naïve and obedient as his predecessor Saw Maung. Since he became the ‘Nominal First Man’ he seems clearly to have realised that he either had to abolish Ne Win and end his era or that he otherwise would be abolished by Ne

Win himself one day, just as Saw Maung had been. Starting from 1999 he felt that he had already a stronghold in the armed forces. Since that time he and his followers avoided Ne Win and his family. Ne Win was like an abdicated king but with the intention to return to the throne through a 'Palace Revolution'. Finally, in May 2002 Than Shwe showed that he was already stronger than Ne Win by arresting Ne Win's son-in-law and grandsons. Ne Win and his favourite daughter Sandar Win were put under house arrest and Ne Win died as a heart-broken dictator 7 months later.

31. Dr. Zoellner wrote that even King Mindon of the Konbaung Dynasty did not abdicate voluntarily, however Ne Win did. Unfortunately, Dr. Zoellner totally forgot that King Mindon was one of the most popular kings in the Burmese history and he never had to face revolts by his own people. Had he faced the riots like Ne Win and had people demanded his abdication, most probably King Mindon would have abdicated. Apart from that, he was only a 'figure head king' because all state's affairs were ruled by his younger brother and then crown prince, Kanaung. It was the main reason that the elder sons of the king became very envious of their uncle and assassinated him. After the death of his younger brother, King Mindon did not nominate any sons to be the crown prince. That is why, upon the death of King Mindon, his chief queen Hsinphyuma Shin, who had only three daughters but no sons, together with her collaborators arrested all elder sons and daughters of Mindon, killed them and crowned the young prince Thibaw, who was the lover of her second daughter. In one respect only was Ne Win exactly the same as King Mindon: both of them had many wives. Polygamy was very common during Mindon's Era. According to the book and film "Anna and the king of Siam", Mindon's contemporary King Monkut of Siam had also many wives. However, Ne Win's contemporary Thai generals practiced monogamy.

32. Before Ne Win came to power, Burma was one of Asia's rich and very prosperous countries. Unfortunately, after 26 years of his rule, Burma became one of the poorest countries in the world and had to ask for the Least Developed Countries (LDC) Status in the United Nations.

I think that it needs no more to prove that Ne Win never willingly wanted to give up power even until his dying days.

There is a Burmese proverb: "Pyinyashi Thati Phytke" which could be roughly translated as "Sometimes, even wise men can forget something". Hence, as even wise men can forget, why can not a 'Burma Scholar' like my friend Dr. Zoellner forgets? So, I have here pressed the 'Memory Recall Button' of his 'Calculator'.

I wonder whether he has some other hypothesis! Let me know his new comments.

Dear readers please don't misinterpret my article as charging Ne Win to be guilty at the criminal court. I neither am the public prosecutor nor is my friend Dr. Zoellner court-appointed defence counsel. You, my dear readers, too are not the jury. I do however leave a question for you to answer: Was Ne Win a "voluntarily abdicated majesty" or an usurper?

I wonder whether my friend Dr. Zoellner still likes to become an obligated defence lawyer by duty or voluntary defence counsel for Ne Win in the future!

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