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**THE ALLEGATION**

**British Betrayal Trust**

**The Relationship between Karen and British  
Government**

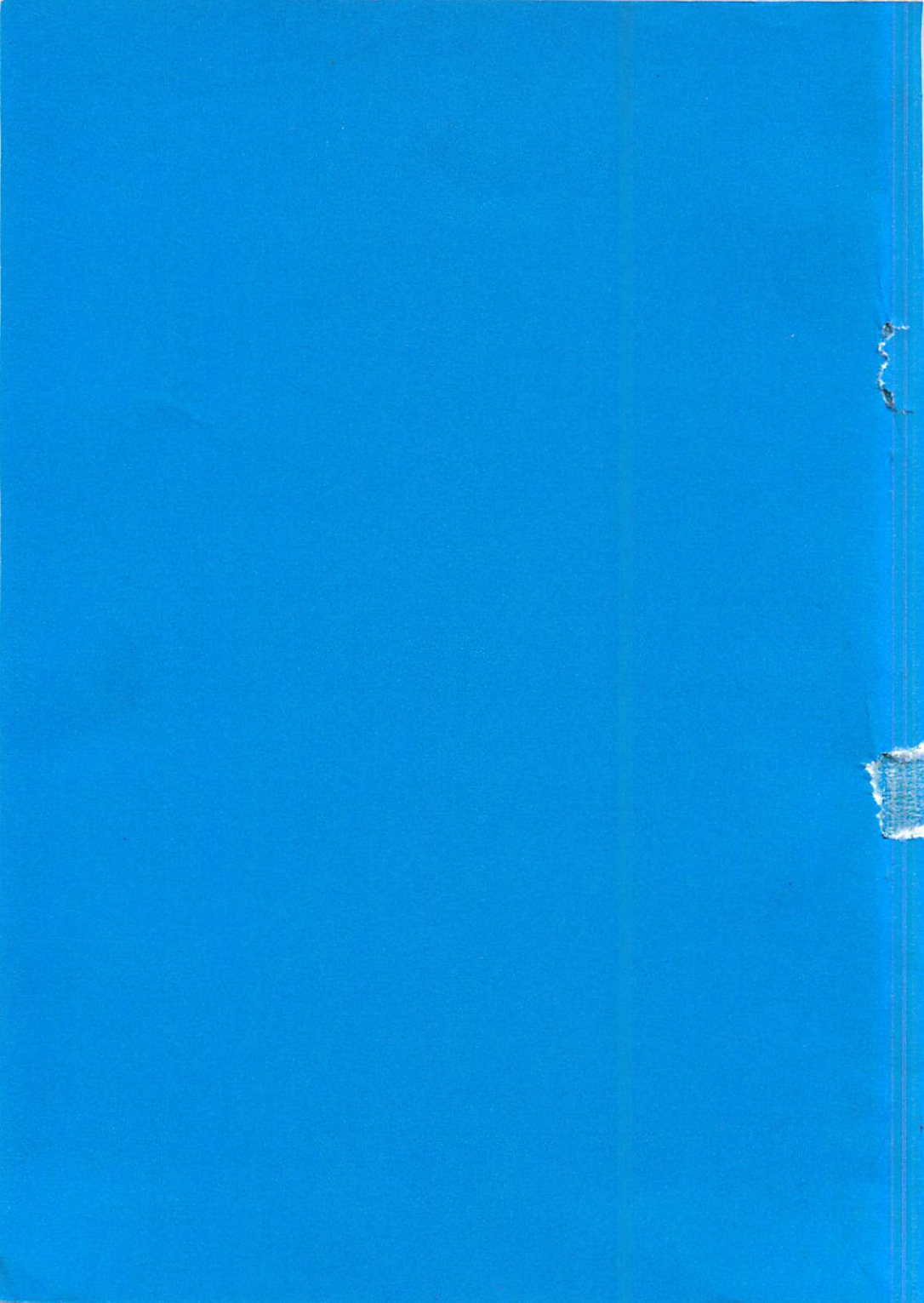
**AND**

**The Historical Journey of Karen-Burman  
Smouldring Racial Conflicts**

**Circular**

**By**

**Mae La Refugees Elders**



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## **The Relationship between Karen and British Government**

The years between the first and second Anglo-Burmese wars could be likened a chapter of Karen history of awakening as they learnt of the coming of the American missionaries' teachings and distributing pieces of letters and many tried to reach to them.

But the Karen experienced the wrath of Burmese hatred and jealousy when on the fall of Rangoon and the fleeing Burmese soldiers, Karen villages in the neighborhood and along the rivers were destroyed, persons caught were made slaves. This was a large scale of Burmese brutality ever underwent by the Karen. All Karen villagers flocked to Rangoon where Rev, Vintum and wife set up a mission and took care of them. It was said that two British ships belonging to East India Trading Company donated the rice for the Karen refugees. The first time refugees of Karen took a few months to last. The British at last set up proper administration and lay down law and order, at the end of the second Anglo-Burmese war in 1854.

The years between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Anglo-Burmese wars are the years the Karen were opportuned to make progress in educational field, in economic fields such as, enterprises as timber-work, paddy and fish cultivation and the likes.

American missionaries set up schools for the Karen and Karen graduated from the middle standards of education, were commissioned as township officers. This status of Karen achievement continued to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Karen total prosperity was apparently seem to hold on, but after the 3<sup>rd</sup> war and Burma as a whole was made a province of Indian Empire, the increase in number of Burmese migrants from Upper Burma, tilting the balance in favor of the Burman.

In the late 1870s and early 1890s, the Burmese decoiting bands from Upper Burma were sent down to harass the British Burma Government on the instigation that British rule was not only to terminate the monarchy of Burma but also to destroy Buddhism.

One Pa-Oh monk Mayan Chaung Pongyi, on the instigation that Buddhism was to be destroyed, rallied his followers and revolted. They spread from Thaton to Toungoo, where he was at last captured by a Karen women and the revolt was ended. The speedy ending of Burmese revolt was largely contributed by the volunteers from the Karen who armed themselves with bow and arrows, spears and knives in their old native fashion. In the Delta, under the leadership of Dr. Vintum and Dr. Nichols, and with the British officials, rounded up the dacoit bands in revolt and drove them back to Upper Burma. While in Toungoo district, Dr. Cross and Rev. Bunker, organized Hill Karen to fight and later on they were armed with smooth bored muskets by the Commissioner in Rangoon.

In 1883, under Dr. Vintum, 100 Karen were recruited and trained for combat. After the surrender of King Thibaw, and during the pacification of Upper Burma, these Karen (100) with five trackers and under the command of Captain Grandier were deployed to track down the Burmese King Pretender, Ottama. These Karen at last cornered Ottama and his gang in Minbu district. After a series of skirmishes, Ottama was at last captured dead.

In 1881, the Viceroy of Indian Dominion made a visit to Rangoon. While preparation was made for the reception of the Viceroy. Thra. T. Tha Byah asked the Commissioner to designate a position where the Karen would gather and welcome the Viceroy with a choir sung by Karen students. Thra. T. Tha Byah wrote a letter, thanking the British Government for their protection accorded to them under the British rule of law and order. On the commissioner's suggestion, Thra T. Tha Byah mentioned the population of the Karen to be 500,000 (approx) as directed by the Commissioner. This letter addressed to the Queen Empress Victoria was an acknowledgement of Suzerainty. It was placed in a horn of elephant tusk and wrapped in a silk bag weaved by Karen women. than e

The preparation was finished and on the arrival, the Viceroy had his coach stopped in front of the Karen gathering, and listened to the choir sung in his honor. The letter was also handed to him as he gave a nod on accepting the letter. On the following day, Thara T. Tha Byah was given an audience and from this occasion he was inspired to organize Karen National Association (KNA). The KNA was not politically motivated.

but it was organized to relieve the missionaries who on several occasions had to spend so many days attending court hearings on behalf of Karen wrongfully accused by the Burman of crimes they committed.

In 1896, whole Burma was annexed to be the Dominion of India with fast developments taking place. Burman from Upper Burma moved down, squattered and built several towns along the railways-lines and in the Delta large number of Burman by boats moved in. Very soon the Burman outnumbered the Karen in job-seeking and position holding. In all civil-in- services, were only Burman in position<sup>of</sup> influence.

The Karen have lived for many centuries in Burma, side by side, with the Burman and under the Burmese rule, they have managed to live apart by themselves and retained their nationality and characteristics. Then again, during and under British rule, a period of more than a hundred years, there have been frequent contact and often long association with other nationalities which would have stimulated inter-racial marriages but the Karen valued their national purity in mores and customs to preserve and conserve their nationality intact. This is the survival of Karen as a race. They cannot as yet inter-mingle with other races with any mutual benefit or good result. Practically, villages inhabited solely by Karen thrive and progress far better than those in which the two races are mingled.

The Karen is shy, seemingly aloof because of their clannishness. They lack the spirit of competition and would not strive for fame or position. Whereas the Burman are in extreme opposition, usually forward, assertive and aggressive, prone to be violent. The natural consequence is that the Karen is always at disadvantage when he has to compete with a Burman for a post or favor from the Government. It had been seen over and over again that Burmese boy with a middle school qualification would obtain a post in preference to a Karen boy who had passed the High School Final. Obviously there can be no real cooperation between two individuals or two parties as long as one of them feels himself to be unjustly treated and nurse a grievance. A Karen would lick his sore silently, But not so with a Burman.

The beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century brings in commercial enterprises and developments that paged in stride. Roads and water ways communications

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plying from Upper Burma to Rangoon. Rice mills and timber mills sprouted in every town where labor force was lack in numbers. Indian labourers were brought in to fulfill the labour force required.

The Karen National Association, as stated earlier, not politically motivated, concentrated solely towards spiritual uplifting, caring less of their secular values. Believing the British authority to be their ever lasting protectors, and in return, professed themselves to be loyal subjects to the British Crown. Being faithful and trust worthy and their steadfast loyalty, they were inducted to the police and military services.

The Karen have unreservedly rendered military aid to the British Crown in all the crisis ever since the British annexation of lower Burma. In the early stage of the British occupation, crime, plunder, decoying bands roamed very rampantly in the country side, and under the leadership of the voluntary missionaries, helped considerably in suppressions of crimes and petty revolutions. In the British maintenance law and order, the Karen armed personnel in suppressing risings such as the Chin hills rising, the Shwebo rising, the San Pe rising, the crime waves of 1925-27, and the Peasant revolution of 1930-32, in which not only the Karen of the regular services, but also leaders, elders and the Karen irregulars played their part. Again the Great world war 1, the Burma Sappers and Miners and the Burma Rifles, and in the Moplah rising the Burma Rifles acquitted themselves with credit.

Here again, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, Karen regular and Levies occupied no second place in Burma both in numbers, integrity and daring achievement. The outstanding feat was the demonstration of valor and loyalty in defense of King and country, performed by the Hill Karen irregulars (later on known as the "spiders" of force 136) twice help the British force with prevention from the encirclements by the invading Japanese forces, in 1942 and 1945 respectively. For the two feats, General Slim, Commander of the 14<sup>th</sup> Army, at the end of the Burma campaign, cited in minced words : the Karen are bad weather friends. But the Strategic Operation Executives (S.O.E) of Hill Karen Friend sent a bronze plaque dedication to the spiders of Karen Force 136, with this inscription: "As the going down of the sun, in the morning we will remember." (It is time to remember).

But the Karen attestation of Loyalty to the British Crown destined to fare a perilous experience of hated brutality under the hands of Burmese bad elements, during the Second World War and after.

At the end of War, the Karen from all liberated areas under Burma Military Administration (BMA) with their selected representatives met in Rangoon and unanimously agreed to send a delegation to London, entitled, "The Humble Memorial of the Karen of Burma to His Britannic Majesty's Secretary of State for Burma." Rangoon, 26 September, 1945. Quote in parts: "Every crisis in our history of the past century convinces us more and more strongly that the time has come for definite and determined effort to secure due recognition of our merit for adequate consideration of our just cause by the British when we have faithfully and conscientiously served and suffered for especially in this past war. May we, therefore quote a few instances how the Karen left in Burma suffered at the hands of Burmese opportunists. While Burma Independence Army (B.I.A.), under the Japanese General Minami, known in Burmese as Boh Mogyo, during the transitional stage, they branded the Karen to be spies of the British and as rebels, persecuted and tortured them in all possible ways and in certain districts resorted to whole sale massacre, not leaving babies, and set the Karen villages on fire. In Myaung Mya District alone, the official report revealed that about 400 villages were set on fire in this way, and more than 1800 Karen were slaughtered, including a Karen Judicial Minister of the British Burma Government and his whole family. Karen of the Salween Hill District, Papun, fared worse. All the leading men were slaughtered, and their wives and daughters before being massacred, were subjected to immoral degradation in the presence of their husbands and fathers. Taking advantage of the military administration, the Burman did all in their craftiness to brand the Karen with bad name, and Christian martyrs under horrible conditions. At that time no influential Burmese leader raised his hands and called a halt to such a senseless massacre were it not for the timely intervention of the Nippon Imperial Armies, we could not imagine how far the matter would have gone."

After some long delay, the Karen memorial delegation was permitted to go to London, but on restrictive conditions not to talk to the newspapers, not to broadcast, and to speak to people about the British liberation of

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them from the Burmese rule. With change of government from the Conservatives to the Labours, the Karen memorial supplication was buried.

“Geographically and socially, there should be no reason why the Karen and the Burman living on the same soil for so many centuries could not live harmoniously, and be united and treated as one race. Naturally, the outsiders can not realize or appreciate the situation as those who have to suffer, and live under circumstances of great strain both mentally and physically. Over a hundred years, before the British set foot in Burma, the Burmese Kings and the Burmese people literally made slaves of the Karen and persecuted them generally. Then the British came not only as a liberator, but also as a guardian angel, maintaining law and order, and preserving peace and giving protection. Under such a benign government, the Karen began to thrive but still with difficulty. There was no physical torture: but the mental torture still had to be endured. The Burman still treated the Karen with contempt socially, they still imposed on the Karen in business and post opportunity. They crowded out the minority races in official posts. In every sphere of life the Burman think of themselves as a master race, and when, once the British turned their back, they would be masters of all.”

*The Karen participation in the world-war 2* stemmed from the honest belief that their outstanding loyalty to HMG was [an] national integrity, honourable and morally correct, as the past history of British colonial rule over Burma proved they have aided the British Burma Government during the three Anglo-Burmese wars and the insurrection there after.

In 1941, there was strong indication the Nippo<sup>^</sup> Imperialist Army would surely make war on British Colonies. The Burma Army Units conducted several battle schemes, all of them were retreat and evacuation.

At the same time, Mr. H.N.C Stevenson, then the Director of the Burma Frontier Areas Administration mobilized the Hill Karen from Toungoo to Papun and the Karenni states in the north. These Karen levies were armed with British rifles and bren guns, and trained under Karen officers who were commissioned. They were Karen teachers from the three Karen High Schools in Toungoo.

In the early 1942, as the Nippon imperialist Army crossed the Burma-Siam borders in the east and marched into the country, the British troops retreated bound by bound according to plan. The particular performance of the second Burma Rifles comprised of 2 coys Karen, 1 Coy Kachin and 1 Coy Chin from Tavoy. Mergui in the south engaged several contacts with the enemy and reached Papun exhausted in the long march. Very soon they were reinforced by the Karen Levies whose guerrilla warfare hit and run tactics engaging the advancing enemy and at the rear of the retreating British troops. The action of the Hill Karen levies helped the British troops to safely reach Toungoo where the Chinese voluntary troops of Chang Ka Sheik army already built fortification for Upper Burma defense from several points the Japanese marched towards Toungoo to encircle the Toungoo defence, it failed because the Hill Karen Levies, day and night harassment helped the British and Chinese troops to withdraw safely to Mandalay.

The Karen Levies personnel dispersed through the hills, while the officers with a few batmen and orderlies marched across the Karenni states to catch ups with the retreating British troops. It was at Pekon, they were ambushed by the Burmese from the B.I.A and one Karen levy officer, Captain Saw Ba Thein was killed, while the rest managed to escape and proceeded north. It was Major Seagrim and two Kachin orderlies decided to return to Karenni state where Seagrim was welcomed and a secret hide-out was built for him. In Papun area, the Karen Levies were active but soon to lie low to the day Karen parachutists were drooped

The Chinese troops performed excellent rear-guard action that enabled Burma Army to successfully withdraw to India But they faced with danger at Myitkyina, to withdraw to China. India was the only alternative opted for them. These Chinese troops, however made a long trek through the thickly forested Hukaung Valley and the treacherous Naga Hills. They were short of rations and there were very few villages from where they could procure some food. Besides all villages deserted their homes as the Chinese approached nearby. Only a few hundreds managed to reach Assam. The rest died on the way from famine and sickness and Naga sore foot.

During the withdrawal from Burma to India, it was the second Burma Rifles unit, under the command of Lt. Col. O'colgan, that performed real guard action so gallantly and with such *esprit de corps* that not a single soldier deserted his officers and comrades. They reached India in full strength. 1002

The military evacuees from Burma were given 3 months leave, while they were organized and went under battle training. It was Wingate who were assigned to mobilize a special force for the purpose of penetrating deep into the heartland of Burma. But the target chosen was between Katha and Myitkyinna where the population was only Kachin. Wingate picked most soldiers from the 2nd Burma rifle and named his operation (the Chindit). This expedition was a success, collecting information such things as Japanese installation, troops strength and morale, and the situation of the civilians.

The second Chindit expedition was timed in conjunction with the American forces attacking the Japs in Myitkyinna (Kachin land) as the Ledo road from Assam was completed.

At this time also, Karen parachute personnel were dropped in Karen Hill regions and also in the Delta. Major Ninmon and Captain McCrindles were dropped along with Karen wireless operators. They were soon helped by Karen villagers to meet Seagrim. The whereabouts and presence of Seagrim in Karenni and Karen Hills was so black out, the Japanese Kampetai never had a hint of it.

Segrim was elated when the three British officers united in secrecy in the Karen Hills where the Karen villagers kept the presence of British and parachutists in tight secrecy and no news was leaked to Japanese. But in the Delta, one Karen parachutist fell into the Japanese Kempetai hand, and was threatened to reveal his mission, if not his family would be put to torture and ultimate-death. He succumbed and confessed that British officers were dropped in the Karen hills and to start organizing Karen levies as the British intended to start invasion and recover Burma. He was sent to the Karen Hills. He and Saw Lu Thain went into the hills, and villagers helped them meet with Seagrim and others.

He confessed what the Japs would carry out if he failed to return and tell them about the whereabouts of Seagrim and British officer, dropped lately.

*Poh Hla.*

Seagrim, Nimon and McCrindles all agreed to let Pola to return to report their whereabouts in the Karen hills. The decision was made because they believed arms and Para-troops would be dropped for the Karen uprising and this was as promised in the British military plan. It was to be not (man proposal but God disposal). Back in India the Supreme Commander Lord Mountbatten cancelled the scheme much to the disappointment of U.S. Commander Stillwell who had already attacked the Jap in Myitkyinna.

But Pola, Lu Thin and Japanese troops came up to the hills to capture Seagrim and others. Nimon and McCrindle were killed, while Seagrim, in another hide-out escaped. Soon the Japs, rounded up village elders, pastors and teachers who were tortured day and night. The relentless ongoing tortures at last. Seagrim and his men were forced to surrender to the Japanese to stop further torturous treatment to innocent Karen in the Hills in March 1944.

In India the British Command had learned the sad news of the deaths of the three British officers. But it was determined the next special operation in the Karen country would be in closely connected with the regular military operation.

The Strategic Operation Executives (S.O. E) now in charge of this special operation in Karen Land, so named "Operation Character" in the memorial of Seagrim. It had an open cheque account and plenty of equipments, arms and their won flights of aircrafts. But still Indian office was sceptical, without Seagrim, the Karens would come up to the most a few thousands to take up arms. To their surprise, when Operation Character was launched over 12,000 Karen in the killing fields straddled along the Toungoo-Mawchi road, the only route through it, the Japanese 33rd Division could reach from Shan states to Toungoo and block the British 14th army operation down to Rangoon.

Operation Character exceeded all expectation in the Burma campaign the Karen levies, known as the spiders inflicted on the enemy in Karenni.

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3,000 Japanese killed for the loss 34 levies, and in Papun more than 5,000 Japanese killed for the loss 35 men. About half a dozen British officers and other ranks lost their lives.

At the end of war, the S.O. E sent a brass plaque in honour of the Karens who laid down their lives against tyranny and aggression in defence of king and country with this citation:

"As the going down of the sun, in the morning we'll remember them."

Note: Please refer brilliant opinion made by Peacock and Gurthie in the Grandfather long-leg by Ian Morrisson.(page 165/166)

The temperament and extreme sensitiveness are manifested in the Book "The Loyal Karen of Burma" as an opinion of a British Civil Service, Mr. Donald Smeaton, an officer who spent many years in Burma. What he said about Karen in a 100 years ago is true with a very few exceptions of the Karen today: "A Burman will quarrel and fly into a passion, and when he has cooled down he will be as good as a friend as ever again. The Karen will not show his passion, but will hold fire for, perhaps years. A cursory acquaintance leads one to fancy that the Karen are far more peaceful than the Burman. It is not so, however. Certainly they do not quarrel so openly or so often, but their hatred are more serious and irreconcilable, although you see less of them. In trying to reconcile two Karen who have been enemies, perhaps for years. It is often very difficult to get them even to state their grounds of complaint. In many cases a mere statement of the facts and a brief explanation are sufficient to put an end to the quarrel. The parties are found to be utterly ignorant of each other's grievances each had sulkily brooded over his wrongs and merely avoided the other."

"A Burman, when angry with you, shows at once by his noisy clamouring what the matter is. He cools down very soon after he had had his say. A Karen who is angry with you severely let you alone, and you have serious difficulty in finding out what is wrong. If he is grieved by an act of a government officer, he says nothing openly, but, quietly passes the word that the officer in question is "no friend of the Karen." The wrong done, or believed to be done, is never forgotten, and the officer concerned will never be able to get any help from the clansmen. The singular clannishness

leads them to adopt the prejudice of any of their member who has, or fancied he has, a grievance. Rightly or wrongly, they believe that the British government, although desirous to be just to all, does not care for them. They have a rooted conviction that they are looked down upon; that the British rulers are fond of the Burman, but despise the Karen. I fear there is a good deal of ground for this conviction. The government has hitherto looked with indifference on the Karen; has never made any serious effort to conciliate them or win their confidences. Everything has been done for the Burman, nothing, or nearly nothing for the Karen. They see and take note of it. They respect us and are loyal to us because they know that life, property, and the honor of their women are safe only under our rule. But we failed to secure the allegiance of their hearts. The government has neglected them, and they bear the neglect keenly. We have failed to obtain the real headship over them, because we never touched their hearts. The fealty to the English ruler, if he had only courted it, striven to understand them, and sympathize with their aspirations. The consequence of our neglect of them is that they have none to look to but their missionaries. Christians and heathen alike look to them as their protectors; and fortunate for us it is that the missionaries have always been the noble, unselfish, high-minded, loyal men they are.

"The ordinary Burman is cringing to his superiors and overbearing to his inferiors. The Karen loath this. His chief, whoever his is, is primus, but inter-pares (the first among equal) and it is a bitter thing to have to ape Burmese servility in the local courts presided over by Burmese judges. If you allow a Burman to dispense with the (Shiko) or obeisance, which by ancient custom he is bound to make to his superiors, he despises you. Treat a Karen firmly and kindly and he behaves like a gentleman. Important failures of justice have been known to occur in our own courts owing to the Karen distrust of us and his rooted aversion to Burmese way and Burmese authority.... He is secretly enraged at having to do obeisance (Shiko) and say "My Lord" to a Burmese officer, and to the Burman subordinate officials and underlings who throng the public offices and too often form a hedge around our courts, impenetrable to a Karen."

What Mr. Smeaton said about the British government did not try to win the hearts of the Karen is not totally correct, but the round-about is the Karen never realistically endeavored to touch the hearts of the British

rulers. It is because of their passiveness is aloof dignity believing the British government would discharge due justice on the merit of their sturdy loyalty to the British Crown.

The Burman, on the other hand, would cry out their demands in words, not only, but would go out to the streets, shout their slogans, in posters and billboards and added to it, failure to meet their demands, they would resort to revolt. Whereas, the Karen would simply send their letter of acquaintance of their aspirations through a selected representatives, hoping against hope, but with no public support of mass demonstration, When the memorial delegation of the Karen was in London had the Karen supported the Karen's demand for a separate state, with a mass demonstration on the streets, many hearts of the English people would have been reached out and touched in compassion.

During the war, Karen, Karenni, Shan and Kachin became politically conscientious of their future political destiny. The ultra-nationalism of the Brman made the first move, followed by Karen and other to strike for their rights.

Then, when the British White Papers was introduced and much against Burmese opposition on the proviso that Burma, only Proper Burma, will get independence while the Frontier Areas still to be under British trusteeship, met with Burmese disagreement on Burma to be dismembered. The White Paper was endorsed by the Governor, Sir Dorman Smith, and the Karen welcomed it. Political agitation was rallied on the Shwedagone Pagoda where the general congress was held by the Anti-Fascist Peoples' Freedom League (AFPFL). All Frontier leaders attended and welcomed the endorsement of a resolution that says.. As the frontier areas peoples are politically enlightened, their voluntary union with independent Burma with rights to self-determination to be ensured. Whether this was the sincerity of the hearts of the Burmese nationalists is not questionable since they never attempted to try to win over the trust of the non-Burman nationalities, least of all their hearts.

While the AFPFL staged, rallies and demonstrations slogans and poster and demanded complete independence within a year and not to be dismembered, with threat of country wide uprising, the governor, H.E.

Dorman Smith attempted to charge Aung San of a murder case involved during Japanese occupation of Burma to the fury of Lord Mountbatten, Far Eastern Commander of British Armed Forces and was against it. At Kandy Conference where Aung San was to attend, the latter towed along Saw Ba U Gyi, chairman of the Karen National Union, to give witness on the Karen- Burman relationship. Aung San told Lord Mountbatten that the racial position between Karen and Burman was threshed out, understanding regained and rights to be shared equally- The slogan was: Karen one Kyat, Burman one Kyat. Aung San was vindicated of the murder charge and Sir Dorman Smith was forced to resign. His good service was buried with his death of ill-health.

This slogan inspired the Karen National Union to pace up its organization to such a stage becoming a challenge to the Burmese nationalists. A month after Burma got independence, the KNU organized a spectacular mass rally to demonstrate their national political aspiration and position in the following four slogans:

- 1, We don't want communal clash,
- 2, We don't want civil war,
- 3, Give us Karen state at once, and
- 4, Karen one kyat, Burman one Kyat.

On February 11, 1948, a Karen multitude of 500,000 strong held mass meetings in all towns, where Karen population was prominent. Karen from the hills and the country-sides took earnest participation. The occasion of Karen mass rally, one singular event ever to be per formed by the Karen in their history.

By the end of 1946, the AFPFL threat of wide spread revolt was supported by roaming dacoiting bands rampant in the country and the British troops were hard pushed to chase them. It became a real concern for the British government in London. Aung San was summoned to lead a delegation for talk. Not one Karen or Shan was included in this delegation even though a Karen and Shan were members of the Council of interim Government of Burma.

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In London at Downing Street, Aung San twisted his words, saying, "what the union of Burma is meant when every nationality received real independence with equal rights and opportunity, there is prosperity and unity where socialist democracy is in practice." The sweet words won the hearts of socialist Labour Government of London. After a series of meetings, on Jan. 4, 1947- Aung San - Attlee Agreement was concluded with the terse wordings of complete independence within one year and the unification of Burma. The last one to become a stumbling block to the process toward Burma Independence Bill during the proceedings for the draft constitution of 1947.

One the term "unification" Her Majesty Government was responsible to send an enquiry- fact-finding commission to ascertain the opinion of the frontier peoples. But delay was deliberated to enhance Aung San first hand opportunity to win over the frontier leaders option of joining the Union. In Rangoon, Major Botomly (Lord Bottomly) concurred to go along with Aung San's proceedings with no obstacles raised, Aung San proceeded, to Panglong (Shan State) to confer with the frontier leaders, the Shan, Kachin, and Chin. No Karen or Karenni was invited. All persuasive undertone of coerciveness win over the hearts of the frontier leaders as he made large promises to the Shan chiefs who eventually succumbed to Aung San's will. The Panglong Agreement was signed on Feb, 16, 1947 with the option of joining the Union of Burma.

There followed in March 20, 1947. Rees Williams M.P. was designated to chair the Frontier Areas Commission of Enquiry (FACE), to assess real opinion of the frontier peoples toward joining the union or not. The meeting at Rangon lasted 10 days during which 9 Karen witnesses gave their individual opinions. They all in accord against joining the union of Burma. Thra Marshall Shwin, chairman of Toungoo-Shwe Kyin Karen hill tracks expressed his fear that the Karens would never get fair treatment under Burmese rule. They don't trust the Burman. The reports of the hearing was reviewed and signed by the chairman and endorsed A. Leydan director of Frontier Areas Administration and ledwidge, secretary to the governor. The Frontiers Areas Commission of Enquiry (FACE) was composed of 3 Burman who are anti-Karen, 3 Frontier leaders who are compromised as signatories of the Panglong Agreement, and one Karen who was then under intimidation.

The burmese members requested postponement of the next hearing to be held at Mye Mye April 12-16, 1947. Reason given was constitutional controversy. During this time lapsed, the AFPFL, through bribery and corruptive drafting produced Saw Lu Lu to give witness during the Mye Mye hearing with an option of joining the union. Saw Lu Lu stated that a mass meeting was held at Kyauk Taung ( Papun District) and he was selected to give testimony - that the mass meeting unanimously agreed to join the union of Burma.

Within two weeks from the release of the final reports of FACE by Chairman Rees-Williams, Ba U Gyi, President of KNU sent a telegram to Attlee, stating, the misrepresentation of Saw Lu Lu and that the mass meeting at Kyauk Taung as claimed was never held.

It was this telegraph which bears in upper right hand corner the curious notations, "Refused. Send to B.O", the B.O. was Burma Office which handled all reports from various sources in the course of March, April to September 1947, including the reports from Leydan that the FACE was a fraud. Leydan was the director of the Frontier Areas Administration.

In the critical three weeks from 3<sup>rd</sup> April to 24 April 1947 the final version of FACE was faced with two conflicting sets of Karen testimonies. It is Rees-Williams' duty as chairman and his integrity as HMG representative, and the honour of Member of Parliament, to find out the authenticity of them. He deliberately omitted the first version from Rangoon hearings that represented the majority Karen with option not to join union of Burma. He did not bother to check the credential of Saw Lu Lu. So Rees-Williams was the first rogue whose treacherous conduct in FACE reports ensued political/ constitutional miscarriage of justice by the House of Commons.

The prompt protest of the Karen within two weeks of the submission of the final FACE reports created consternation in London. But if the reports was not acceptable to The British Government all the negotiation up to the point would have been undone. Lord Listowell, to save face and cover up the British fraudulent actions in omitting Karen first version of testimony, circulated to the India and Burma Committee 16 May 1947 a memorandum along with FACE reports and relevant telegrams (not Ba U Gyi's telegram), not that "FACE had stepped outside their terms of

reference and recorded in the light, evidences they heard, observation regarding constitutional arrangements for the frontiers Areas" and "it was neither necessary nor appropriate for HMG to commend on them." HMG acted like the Roman Pilate washed its hands of the problem which then revert to the AFPFL leadership for execution.

The responsibility of this odorous diplomatic shuffle lay squarely on the shoulders of HMG and AFPFL's leadership and execution would have to be carried out by Thakin Nu who took over upon the assassination of Aung San, 19 July 1947. Thakin Nu (who hates Karenism) then was happy to act as the High Priest.

Indeed there exist a strong possibility that this diplomatic double cross was deliberately concocted. H.N.C. Stevenson noted in a letter to Pati Tony that "at the time he was in London presenting his position to the Burma Office, I was told to destroy all copies to my reports but I told him, Lord Laithwaite to his fury, that I decline to do so." What possible reason could exist for such a demand? If Stevenson's reports were put on official records, and the pre-conceived plans would have become difficult to be implemented. The reports were given a bureaucratic burial. A few months later J.L Leydan's report on "the Karenni problem in relation to F.A.A. would receive the same treatment as he had pointed out the gross abuse of the FACE.

Had Rees-Williams been scrupulously prudent in his FACE final reports, inclusive of both sets of Karen testimonies, and Saw Ba U Gyi's telegram to Attlee of protest, the Karenni circular of protest, the report of HNC Stevenson and Leydan's not swept under the carpet, but produced in the Parliament, the Burma Independence Bill would be suspended. There would be a second fact finding that would facilitate reconciliation and defuse the threat of countrywide uprising.

### **The Allegation British Betrayal of Trust**

**It is understandable that the allegation is not by the Karen sad disillusion but by British M.Ps.**

The position of Karenni was expressedly revealing on the invitation from Rees William chairman of FACE, they sent a delegation believing they would be question over incorporation to the Frontier Areas Federation. They did not realize that the Palong Agreement had reneged it. They were subjected to long interrogation. Answers to all questions asked were, they did not want to join the union but to continue their formal independence as feudatory to the British crown. In exasperation Karenni spokesman said tersely that no Karen trusts the Burman. Still on, Thakin Nu as a last attempt, questioned how must the Burman do, so that Karen will trust the Burman?. The answer was - to prove themselves faithful to their words and deeds and trustworthy of it. In these words- " Sir, you will have to show your good faith by work and only by judging your work can we decide whether we trust you or not.

**"Analysis: By Harold A. Klein (retired professor- USA).**

### **(The 1947 Constitution)**

Sometimes before the 16 September 1947 a decision had been made by persons unknown in either the colonial office, Rangoon or in the council of the AFPFL or both joining to find a way to reconcile the Karen and Karenni position about their adamant stand against being a part of the union of Burma. To do this solution was to include in the new constitution of 1947, beginning with article 180 the concept and provisions of the PangLong Agreement so that 10 years from the adopting date of the constitution a plebiscite would be held in the various frontiers regions as to whether they wished to remain in the union of Burma. Political manoeuvres have to be undertaken so that the Karen could be split apart. In the case of the KNU this was done by substituting the KYO for the KNU when Saw Ba U Gyi resigned from the Aung San cabinet and expunging from the FACE report, the majority KNU position in favour of the KYO which under testimony of Saw Lu Lu was willing to join the Union of Burma. This false effort is noted by the memo from W.B. T. Ledwidge, secretary to the governor of Burma, noting alterations in the

FACE report, April 3, 1947 and incorporation in the final FACE to Listowell this false position.

### **Why and how did this arise?**

As already as it can be determined the cause for the concern to have a united union of Burma was the objective of both HMG in London and the AFPFL. Thus when both the KNU and Karenni are adamant against joining the Union, seeing the transcript of the FACE hearing both of the political factions in the KNU and Karenni Council which took the position not to be part of the union of Burma had to be negated and eliminated.

Was Listowell aware of this? The answer is clearly yes! When he submitted the final FACE report to the India-Burma Committee of Parliament in London his accompanying memo contained information of the Leydan's report of the Frontier Areas which specifically called the FACE final report fraudulently arrived at.

Listowell subsequently goes to Burma to finalize the arrangement for the transfer of power to the new government about Sept 6-8, 1947 (All the procedures for transfer of power in Burma- item 520 of tanker's book, vol, page 754tt, herein copied.) while in Burma he made a last ditch to reconcile the KNU to transfer-This effort was made in a meeting KNU leaders September 5-6, 1947. Tinker omitted the record of the meeting, but Dr. Russel Adrus, and sec. of the US Embassy, Rangoon submitted a copy of that which he had been able somehow to acquire. I (Klein, USA) have a copy of that which I received from the national Archives, Washington D.C. There is no, I (Klein) repeat no indication that transcript the KNU at that time changed its position about not joining Union. Listowell went away from that meeting empty handed.

What happened to the Karenni is some what similar during this same period. According to British records U Bee Ta Ree and Saw Thein were removed from membership in the Constituent Assembly. (Rangoon Town Police Intelligence Summary, Sept. 17, 1947). Both U Bee Tu Ree and Saw Thein had earlier met with Listowell ( Sept-8, 1947. see Tinker Vc! 2, pp. 748-700) at which time the Karenni position was strongly held not joining the Union, these were the instructins of U Bee Tu Ree and Saw

Thein from Karenni Council, 26 June, 1947. (Karenni Circular, 26 June, 1947.... Karenni will not take part in the constituent Assembly... At Government House, Governor told them, the British Government could do nothing without the consent of the Karenni People. .... When Burma is independence Karenni is prepared to come into alliance with Burma or any political party that is in power by then.) Thus sometime between 8, Sept. 1947 there was decision to remove Saw U Bee Tu Ree and Saw Thein. By whom? The only clue is the "coming and going in the Karenni camp..." referred to telegram 1015 of Sept. 23, 1947. Certainly the striking of the names of U Bee Tu Ree and Saw Thein had to be done by the Constituent Assembly as they had to certify who would attend etc. Even process was legally done, which is questionable, there is also the question of whom authorized the formation of the new delegation reportedly made by the Karenni Council sending 9 new members to Constituent Assembly headed by U Sein and U Mya Lay. By the same token the new delegation met with the AFPFL leaders on 19 Sept, 1947. The authorization for instructions would have to be taken place between 17-19 Sept, 1947. It is hard accepting the fact that such new authority and instructions could have been given by the Karenni council and get the new members to Rangoon for meeting in 3 days..

The most likely explanation is that following the private meeting of Listowell and U Bee Tu Ree and Saw Thein it was clear that the obstacle to accepting the constitution which now included the PangLong Agreement extended to Karenni and Karen, had to be removed. Thus some new delegation with new instructions from Karenni had to be done pronto. That new delegations with new instructions had to be done between 16 Sept. 1947 (removal of U Bee Tu Ree and Saw Thein ) and new delegates meeting U Nu at el on 19 Sept, 1947. Not possible if Karenni is to act first. Who then and how was this accomplished? see Telegram 1016, 23 September, 1947. (item 4) "Two members of the Constituent Assembly have been elected and sworn in ( past tense). They are U Sein and U Saw Mya Lay" Thus from the time of the removal of U BeeTuRee and Saw Thein and the election of U Sein and U Saw May lay there is a lapse of 6 days, during which time the Karenni Council would have had to meet and new instruction be issued. According to Karenni record that was not possible. So the manouvres had to be conducted behind their (Karenni) back by either HMG or AFPFL who dominated the Constituent Assembly

or both. More likely both as the only way the new delegation would be legitimized and the constitution signed would have been to have a retroactive agreement by the Karenni Council approving the authority of U Sein and U Saw Mya lay after the fact.

Most complication and intrigue arrived at on the testimony endorsed by U Myint Thein, Chief Justice at that time to the fact that U Nu then prime minister called him to his office on December 27, 1947, where U Nu introduced him to Sao Wunna and U' Sein, U Nu told U Myint Thein the two Karenni claimed to be Karenni leaders and that they wanted to join the Union of Burma./ U Nu asked U Myint Thein to write the constitution for Karenni state hastily for the adoption on January 4, 1948 when Great Britain would hand over power of independence to Burma.

The testimony of U Myint Thein, Chief Justice, contradicted the content of telegrams 1015 and 1016 to be political swindle as manufactured event to indicate that Karenni sent representatives to attend the Constituent Assembly and endorse the 1947 constitution. That Sao Wunna and U Sein claimed to be the Karenni leaders and asked to join the union was contradiction to the telegram 1016 and the writing of constitution of Karenni states indicates the 1947 constitution was fraudulently concluded and sent to the Parliament in London for ratification.

Had the protests made by KNU and Karenni been produced during the dialogue made on the Burma Independence Bill in the House of Commons, questions on the authenticity of the FACE reports would have been raised for clarification and investigation, and the Burma Independence Bill would have to hold on as a political impasse, and a new commission of enquiry would have to be selected to conduct another round of enquiry.

The State Department for Burma took to task and smoothed the passage of the Burma Independence Bill and rolled it to victory with out any hitch or snag, committing complicity to Burma's fraud which they knew ethically abominable and legally unjustifiable.

The Frontier Areas Commission of Enquiry, which set out to ascertain the views of those states and peoples not represented in the 1947 Panglong Conference, reported that:

" ... all the witness before as expressed, without hesitation, the desire that representatives of their states .... should take part in the work of the Constituent Assembly.. we recommend accordingly that their wishes be met and that the following areas be given representation..."

The Karenni states were among those areas listed by the commission of enquiry, without the knowledge of the Karenni council and the consent of the Karenni people. (This is a political swindle.)

The position taken by His Majesty's Government at that time was according to what, Earl Listowell warned:

".... once the transfer of power takes place there can no longer be any question of any interference by His Majesty's Government in the affairs of what will then be a foreign state...."

The Pilate washed his hands and let U Nu to do the execution. This is a well calculated mechanism to camouflage a well prepared malfeasance adroitly executed behind the backs of Karen and Karenni.

#### The Karen View:

The main factor was control what may have lurked in the background in the minds of the Burman's was the fear that if the Karen gained control of the areas they were asking for, it would give the Karen several potential outlets to the sea and foreign trade, it would also allow foreign investments to build a prosperous state next to Burma. The economic potential therefore could have been developed by the Karen in cooperation with foreign powers or companies. The Burma's extreme form of nationalism and anti - colonialism could not have allowed them to accept this possibility.

If a Karen state was economically feasible, socially desirable, and politically viable, why not grant it? The Karen obviously view His Majesty's Governments position as abandoning them in spite of what they construe as a moral obligation for all of the sacrifices which the Karen went through on behalf of His Majesty's Government. The Karen's view of the Burman is more predictable as their mutual history is so antagonistic. Karen would interpret the AFPFL position as power grabbing to dominate everyone.

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This was easier to understand than that of His Majesty's Government which they felt could have done better by them but would not.

*To whom could the Karen appeal in 1947?*

Certainly not His Majesty's Government, whose very commission held by Rees Williams had just disenfranchised them, to the U. S. which apparently only learned about the duplicity in 1949, but for whom was not within its sphere of influence. The problem being one for the British government as Burma was their colonial headache. This seemed unlikely.

The only recourse left was to appeal to the Burman government, which shortly would become independent, January 4, 1948.

On February 3 1948, almost a year before U Nu attacked the Karens at Insein, Thamaing and Ahlone, the Karen National Union sent U Nu, then Prime Minister of the Union of Burma, an appeal for justice and equality entitled: "Why Separate Karen State Case for the Karen," signed by Saw Ba U Gyi, president of the KNU and Thra Tha Hto General Secretary of the KNU. It called for a conciliatory efforts from the Government of the Union of Burma to negotiate a settlement for a separate Karen entity. It asked for a spirit of compromise to address the Karen affairs. The AFPFL reply was published in the "New Light of Burma," February 10, 1948." AFPFL comments on Karen demand for a separate state." The reply attempted to associate Karen and Burman as both victims of British exploitation and called for complete unity of the two peoples. The statement notes "We will have to abandon this huge task, the moment they fall out with one another." This singularly unrealistic statement was pure unadulterated white wash as falling out had already occurred perpetrated by the false report of the FACE to London.

In one blow, the assassination of Aung San and his principal supporters in the cabinet accomplished what peaceful political agitation and rhetoric could not change the winds of the democratic action and values were only small wind not gales within Burma politics. The assassination ended even this.

The political position of Karenni in 1947 was the contention and mental stance manifested at that time stemmed on the conviction that British Government's agreements were legally binding as they have not been annulled neither in any instance did Karenni failed to pay tributes of rupees five thousands yearly, and that they never had violated the terms cited in the Sanads. During the pacification campaigns in the Shan states, Karenni surrendered 1,000 survivable muskets, paid indemnity of Rupees 500,000 and acknowledged suzerainty of British Crown but retained domestic sovereignty. The yearly tribute was Rupees 5,000 which Karenni never had defaulted.

With that firm conviction Karenni determined legitimate status should firmly be hold on and believe in the long haul, it will be reinstated. The AFPFL, knowing the Karenni tenacious attempt in driving out all Burmese incursions in the past history, feared that unless Karenni was liquidated for good, its clamor for independence and sovereignty would only exacerbate the spirit of nationalities with the opinion that if such a small nation would dare to stand aloof alone against the government, they would have much more chance to strive for the same. When the Karenni leaders under the leadership of U Bee Tu Ree did not cooperate with the government of the Union of Burma as a subordinate state, the AFPFL sent in subversive teams to undermine unity among the communities, it went half-cork when its leader was killed in a drunken brawl. Believing that when the head of a snake is chopped of, the body is dead, this time they sent in their UMP troops to raid the Headquarters of Karenni National Association captured the president U Bee Tu Ree and killed him by dragging him tied to a truck in the town and his twisted body was put in a gunny bag and thrown into the river. His body was never recovered due to high flood at that time. This is why and how Karen stood up against the AFPFL government and continued.

#### **Events culminating to Insein Battle**

In 1947, both AFPFL and HMJG were in a political impasse. Both wanted to get rid of each other. It was done through the proceedings of the 1947 constitution.

3 months after the independence, the Communists, the PVOs and the 3 battalions of the Burma Rifles were in active revolt. It was the loyal troops of Karen, Kachin and Chin who stood like shield and sustain the AFPFL government.

Meanwhile, the KNDO's built-up in strength and organization is in evident when it occupied the two towns, Monlmein and Thation, but eventually returned to the government on the intervention of Gen. Smith Dun.

The humiliation felt, and the fear lurked in the minds of the Burmese ultranationalist was that, as the built-up of KNDO was becoming a menace, the government would be in deep water had the communist won the KNDO to cooperate in the revolt. To prevent this, the AFPFL started a campaign for leftist unity, flaying the Karen with bad names, vandalism and villainy, assailed the Karen of receiving aids from the west, and building air-drops zone in the hills. What was the purpose of this kind of journalism? It was to incite hatred, distrust of Burmese community against the Karen, at the same time to build up national solidarity for themselves. This was easily done.

There is for example in Burmese values the long held and cherished myth of Burman as the superior race. This alleged truth was even accepted among the Burma Communists. Thakin Thein Pe Myint (Marxist ideologue) alludes to it in "Wartime Traveler" quoting prevalent slogans plastered over Burma in the peasants revolution of 1938, "yes we the Burman are Master Race." While the communist ideology did not deliberately stoop to adopting racism, it could not divorce itself from a Burman societal perception of racism. Had the communist rather than the socialist been successful in control of AFPFL, it is doubtful that they would have had any more than the socialist in convincing the Karen to cooperate within the union of Burma.

The AFPFL propaganda against the Karen gained communist distrust of Karen and clashes between the KNDO and communist (BCP) in the Delta was in evidence. The communist forces attacked government posts surrounding Rangoon. They seized control of the canal connecting Rangoon to the Delta and the Upper Burma through the Irrawaddy river valleys. Government troops pushed them out, but the moment the

administration of the town of Twante, the revering gateway to Rangoon, was turned over to civil control the communists took over again. After repeated occurrences of this, U Nu asked General Smith Dun (Karen) commander-in-chief of the army, to request Ba U Gyi to post the KNDO to clear and hold the area. These successfully released the communist hold in the area and restored service to Rangoon. The necessity to use the KNDO forces pointed out two serious problems. The first was that there were insufficient troops available to control the country. The second was that control by KNDO would be at best while U Nu was building up a para-military forces of 120 units, with the arms received from Britain, India and Parkistan. This was in accordance to the military treaty made, a year earlier between Britain and Burma, with the term, Britain would give aid if and when communist uprising taking place in the country. With this warm comfort of receiving aid from Britain, U Nu intensified its propaganda against the Karen.

The culminating direction of perpetrating racial tension was decided when U Nu had the two Karen UMP companies posted at Tavoy and Mergui (isolated Karen areas) withdrawn to Rangoon and disarmed. In their place, the para-military units were deployed to take over the two towns. This was done obviously placing the Karen in those areas vulnerable to malicious intent.

### By the end of 1948

On the eve of X'mas mid-night service, the Karen at Chaukche village, during the mid-night watch in the church were raided and mauled down under heavy gun-fire. It was a massacre. The Strait Settlements newspapers in Singapore cited that the toll of the death was 100 and more.

What was the purpose of this wanton, senseless killing of Karen? U Nu did not attempt any gesture shown how the callous incident was felt by the government, neither did he make a move to mitigate the tension felt and offer any rapprochement. Instead he built up entrenchments around the Karen villages in Insein. The Karen were alert and what they have been harboring a suspicion that the Burman would eventually kill them was confirmed.

the British Betrayal of trust. He insisted that the British government in passing the Burma Independence Bill, has betrayed the trust of Karens who as allied stood gallantly against the aggressive Japanese army in defense of King and country of England. They came to aid us in our need and deserve justice due to them.

### **Historical Journey of Karen-Burman smouldering Racial Conflicts**

Before the British rule of law and order, under the successive Burmese Kings, the Karen were the oppressed and subjugated people. This was the cause of Karen refusal of Burman association. Karen sense of cohesiveness within their community sustained national survival on their cultural identities of being clannish and the desire to be left alone. Isolation and separatism prevented the Karen from assimilation with their neighbors. Through ages, Karen took care of their society. The Karen believe and maintain their prospect of better welfare is assured where their villages are not mixed with other communities.

The inherent mutual hatred, prejudice and distrust between the two communities exploded communal blood-bath during World War II in 1942 when the Japanese invaded Burma and the British withdrew their protection as they evacuated to India.

The Burmese Independence Army (B.I.A) mobilized by the Japanese accused the Karen who were then the loyal subjects to the British Crown as being spies of the British, raided Karen villages and the Karen retaliated like wise. Both sides bent on killing one another. There followed daily raids. Only when Aung San and Sir. San C. Po intervened did both sides want no more bloodshed. Both would have been tired but licked their wounds in silence. The deep-seated fear and distrust, hate and prejudice lay buried smoldering under the ashes of their "burnt-alive- to- death" loved ones.

The British government knew too well the hostile irrational racism, so ingrained (under-restrain) between the two communities that only a spark of dissent would flare up racial conflicts what really had had happened in 1942, perpetuated to this day as the Karen went through the years in grief and pains.

In the last week of January, while the KNDO in Insein District were mustered to defend the Karen villages in Insein town, a detachment of the Para-militia, raided Wetnetchaung village in Mawbi township, killed villagers and took away some Karen women to their barracks. The fate of the women was never known.

On 31<sup>st</sup> January, General Smith Dun was sacked, enplaned the next morning to exile. It was the early morning of 31<sup>st</sup> January, 1948, that U Nu launched his Para-militia to attack the Karen in Insein, Thamaing and Ahlone. Before Smith Dun left, he, however, managed to instruct the Karen troops posted for his security and the field battery units to reinforce the Karen defense in Insein. It was this reinforcement that saved the day for the Karen... and the Insein battle continued to last 111 days.

In all respects, under the UNu's leftist Unity Call, all the Burmese factions, in actual revolt, turned their guns on the Karens, attacked the Karens at the flanks and from the rear. The Karens found themselves between two fires from the same people- the Burmans in general. It is indeed, a communal war. It continued to over three years. Only when the communists, after losing in men and arms in the fight against the Karen, did they find out approachment was a wise course to pursue. They made peace with the KNU. The armed conflict between Karen and the AFPFL government and the successive military regimes continued to this day- and on the border line of racial annihilation.

That the AFPFL could sustain in the early years was primarily due to the afford rendered by the British military mission whose indiscriminate coordination of arms shipments from India and Parkistan, where British war supplies were stored. Twice in February and March 1949, Captain Gammans M.P., raised the question of British military mission in the House of Commons and asked it be recalled and not to align it against the Karen.

This is why and how the Karen fought for their survival and against racist regime to this day. This all happen when the British government betrayed the trust of Karen.

In October 1947, when the House of Common passed the Burma Independence Bill, the powerless Winstson Churchill told the House on

Instead of facilitating reconciliation and addressing the grievances, the British Government should have dumped the two antagonists into the unification of Burma so that they would have fought it out among themselves. The Karen still hold on the belief that the British Government did them an injustice and many thoughtful Britons alleged that the British betrayal of trust is one of the causes of problems Burma is suffering today.

The key factor is control. This ability rested with the Karen, not the Burman and had the Karen maintained control over the areas they once controlled the Burman would in time have permitted the Karen to build a prosperous free enterprise system within Burma or in a separate state next to Burma.

What may have lurked in the background of the minds of the Burman was the fear that if the Karen gained control over the areas they were asking for it would give the Karen several potential outlets to the sea and foreign trades. The economic potential therefore could have been developed by the Karen within Kawthoolei in cooperation with foreign powers and companies. The Burman's (super-Burman) extreme nationalism and their national integrity could not have allowed them to accept the possibility.

If the Karen State was economically feasible, socially desirable and politically viable, why did not the British grant it? The Karen obviously viewed Her Majesty's Government's position as abandoning them in spite of what they construed as a moral obligation for all of the sacrifices the Karen went through on behalf of them.

The Karen peaceful approach for a compromised settlement indicated that the Karen were averse to violence and had Thakin Nu arranged some conciliatory concession to the Karen renovo efforts could have obliterated Karen's fear of Burman's ultimate domination.

The sad reminiscence of their past history and with that the minds of Karen were psychologically conditioned with the fear that one day the Burman would attempt to wipe them out. That fear was intensified as the (super-Burman) egoism did not allow Thakin Nu to meet half-way for Karen appeal. This is how and when the Karen began in earnest to organize the Karen National Defense Organization (K.N.D.O). The KNDO was formed basically for the protection of their homes and hearths, and particularly the chastity of their women-folks, never had a desire to overrun

the Burmese government for power, least of all to overlord over the Burmese community.

While Thakin Nu was playing muted, he, somehow, secretly mobilized an auxiliary police force under the Home Ministry some twenty units. When these units finished their military training, armed and ready for combat, Thakin Nu then announced in the BBC broadcast, challenging the Karen that if they wanted a separate Karen state they would have to fight for it.

At that time the whole country was under siege by the communist rebel, the PVO, and army deserters who occupied nearly the large portion of the hinterland, and the loyal troops from Karen, Kachin and Chin rifle battalions were hard-pressed to contain the rebels to their jungle sanctuaries. These ethnic soldiers served as shield to the government preventing it against the revolting Burmese elements from taking over power.

Nearly by the end of 1948 Thakin Nu started preponderantly words of war against the Karen. In the newspapers Karen were cited as being treacherous, recruiting foreign aids and villainous anti-government activities to topple the government. The purpose of this kind of journalism was an attempt to incite fear and hate against the Karen. At the same time called on the revolting Burmese rebels and the bad elements to unite under the banner of leftist unity and take joint action against the Karen.

Thakin Nu succeeded to consolidate all Burmese elements against the Karen, when Insein battle was started all the rebelling Burmese opposition turned their guns against the Karen. Thus the position of the Karen was to be fighting between two fronts, and altogether a racial war between Karen and Burman.

To camouflage his racist enmity toward the Karen Thakin Nu to the international media and community lashed out false accusation that the Karen and the Communists were in league with joint military offensive against the government.

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In the allegation of an association of Karen with the communist rebels, both the U.S and British particularly should have known better than to swallow the lies and come to aid the Burmans.

The fact that the Karen decision to fight as self-protection had no connection with the communist decision to fight for power was clearly evidenced by Colonel Joseph K. Baker, G.S.E of the U.S. Embassy, Rangoon, 20 January 1949. It is worth quoting from the report.

“The Karen Autonomy Movement has now developed to a situation bordering on Burmese - Karen racial struggle of annihilation .... Though the government has been outwardly tolerant and magnanimous in its official attitude... but in the mean time, a large militia force of the AFPFL government has assembled on the outskirts of Karen villages in Insein..... The Karen would be forced to stand up and fight ————— “

Ten days later, Thakin Nu Launched his militia force against Karen villages in Insein at dawn on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1949. There began a racial war between the Karen and Burman.

That Thakin Nu was a racist is documented in an exchange of words several months later, of June, 1949, between Karen elders and Thakin Nu at Thaton, reported by A.A Abidda, U.S. attaché, America Embassy, Rangoon. Thakin Nu was reported to have angrily told this gathering he would “personally see all Karen in Burma were killed.” (A.A Abidda. dispatch to State Department. U.S.A)

Appendix ( 1 )

417 Circular Issued By Karenni Minister. (Translation)

IOR M4/3025

Loikaw, 26 June 1947.

The Karenni States cannot take part in the Constituent Assembly discussions on the future constitution of Burma because Burma and the Shan States are not of the same status as the Karenni States. The White Karens, Chins, Kachins and Arakanese are now merely beginning to discuss the future constitution of Burma and any draft constitution they produce will have to be placed before the British Parliament, for the Constituent Assembly itself has no power to finalize the constitution except with the sanction of the British Parliament. It should be clear to all that the present Constituent Assembly has no power or authority of itself. The Constituent Assembly is drawing up the constitution with the sanction of the mass but that constitution can never become law until Parliament agrees. Only when that agreement is obtained will Burma become an independent country. At Government House at 3:30 pm on 20/6/47 the Governor informed the Karenni delegation that as Karenni was independent with full sovereign rights the British Government could do nothing about Karenni without the consent of the inhabitants themselves. Therefore it should be quite clear to anyone who knows about politics that an independent country like Karenni cannot take part in an Assembly which is now merely framing a proposed constitution for a country merely about to become independent.

When Burma has achieved independence, Karenni will be prepared to enter into a treaty of alliance with her, or with whatever party is in power at that time.

U Bee Tu Ree  
Saw Thcin.

Appendix ( 2 )

GAZETTEER OF UPPER BURMA AND THE SHAN  
STATE

Compiled From Official Papers  
by-J. George Scott

Treaty

AGREEMENT REGARDING THE INDEPENDENCE OF WESTERN  
KARENNI 1875

In according with the request of His Excellency the Viceroy of India that Western Karenni should be allowed to remain separate and independent. His Majesty the King of Burma, taking into consideration the great friendship existing between the two great countries and the desire that the friendship may be lasting and permanent, agrees that no sovereignty or governing authority of any description shall be exercised or claimed in Westen Karenni and His Excellency the King Kinwoon Mingyee, Minister of Foreign Affairs, on the part of His Mjesty the KING of Burma and the Honorable Sir Douglas Forsyth, C. B. K. C. S. I. envoy on the part of His Excellency the Viceroy and Governor General of India, execute the following agreement.

Agreement it is hereby agreed between the British and Burmese Government that the state of Western Karenni shall remain separate and independent and that no sovereignty or governing authority of any description shall claimed or exercised over that State.

Whereunto we have on this day, the 21<sup>st</sup> day on June 1875 corresponding with the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of the waning moon of Nauyoung 1237B. E., affixed our seals and signature.

Seal (Sd) T.D.Forsyth.

Seal (Sd) Kin-Won Mingyi

## Appendix (3 )

### Translation of U Myint Thein's Testimony Related to Karenni

From Page 9 to 14.

According to Karenni history:

In 1855 when the British annexed the Lower Burma it demarcated neighboring countries to China as buffer states. At this period, the British expanded from the west to the reaching Burma. The French from the east to the west reaching from Lao, Cambodia and Vietnam. The British Government intended to prevent the French further expansion by creating Kantarawaddy, Bawleke and Kyetpogyi - three Swabwa states and recognized them to be independent states. It received agreement from Mindon Min. Therefore, in 1946, 1947, when there was negotiation for independence, the three Karenni States which were not part of Burma and were not included in the negotiation. But in these years Tan Ba Han, a Karenni, received aids from AFPFL revolted against the Sawbwas. When he died one called U Bee led a fight against the government and fell in the fight. At this time though the British wanted to induct Karenni state into Burma, it could not because there were documents stated that Karenni States were independent. During this period, all the Sawbwas of the three Karenni States died, and only small children who were immature for negotiation. I came to know that the British would solve it in the future.

In the Luktaw (The State Council) the constitution of Burma must be adopted, affirmed, on two days ahead on 2-1-1948. Before Burma is independent on 4-1-1948.

On December 27, 1947, the Prime Minister U Nu, on important matter, called me on the phone to report to him at his office. When I arrived at the office. I saw U Chan Htun was already there. Besides, I saw Sao Wunna, son of Kantarawaddy Sawbwa (Sao Wunna was not Maha Devi's son), and one called U Sein in the office. Then U Nu came in the office and asked me: "U Myint Thein do you know them?" I answered: "I never see U Sein but I know Sao Wunna as the of Kantarawaddy Sawbwa." U Nu continued: "Sao Wunna and U Sein - they came and said they wanted

the three Karenni States to join Burma. On this matter, U Myint Thein and U Chan Htun, what are your opinions?"

I answered: "What I can say is that from these three Karenni States, there are no leaders, only young persons. For Kantarawaddy Sao Wunna to be the leader can be accepted."

As we talked, Sao Wunna interrupted vehemently and said: "If I am to be the leader of Kantarawaddy then, I and U Sein should be accepted as the leaders of the remaining two states."

Then on, Prime Minister U Nu, U Chan Htun and I, we three discussed.....

U Chan Htun said: "these states are small very much like villages. If we put them in Burma, even then, there will be no one to make any protest: to agree to it will be good."

I (U Myint Thein) seconded U Chan Htun, and said: "We the Burman do not, one sidedly, induct Karenni State into Burma, but it was their leaders who come and ask us and we agreed to it. There will be no one to accuse us. There is only one person who will make protest. The person is only the English. The English, himself, will not protest if these states are inducted into Burma." Immediately then, the Prime Minister U Nu decided and agreed, and wanted the constitution of Karenni States to be drawn up the same to that of the Shan State.

I (U Myint Thein) urged Sao Wunna to agree to the surrender of the right of secession as the Kachin did. Besides these states are very small. They cannot secede and stay alone.

But Sao Wunna added, "If Shan State has the right of secession, we, Karenni state which are independent states and voluntarily join Burma, should be entitled and have the right of secession; we come here on the spur of a moment to join and in the future, if there is any accusation, we can give an excuse that there is the right to secession. There will be no such situation."

On this, Prime Minister U Nu made this order. "Agree to what they say."

**Remark:**

**In the drafting of the constitution of 1947, Karen State is called Kawthoolay. Kayah State is known as Karenni State.**

**cvvvvvvv**

**Signed**

**Myint Thein**

**14-6-92**

**Agga Maha Thiri Sithu U Myint Thein  
Minister of Chief Justice of the  
Union of Burma (Retired)**



