

VOICES OF THE  
REVOLUTION



*Saw Ba U Gyi*

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Karen History and Culture Preservation Society

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# Introduction

Saw B U Gyi remains paramount in signifying in most Karen people's minds the struggle for a Karen homeland. Turning his back on wealth and career in an attempt to free his people from the injustice of a prejudiced and repressive society, Saw B U Gyi was one of the first architects to envision Kawthoolei\* – a Karen homeland where Karens would be able to shape their own future.

With the support of likeminded people including Mahn Ba Zan, Saw Sankey and Saw Hunter Tha Mwe, Saw B U Gyi built the foundation on which the Karen struggle would rest. While his martyrdom would strike a major blow to the Karen revolution his legacy continues to live on in the hearts of those who share his vision:

## **Saw Ba U Gyi's Four Principles**

1. FOR US SURRENDER IS OUT OF THE QUESTION
2. THE RECOGNITION OF KAREN STATE MUST BE COMPLETE
3. WE SHALL RETAIN OUR ARMS
4. WE SHALL DECIDE OUR OWN POLITICAL DESTINY.'



\* The term Kawthoolei first saw widespread use after the June 1949 radio broadcast in which Saw B U Gyi announced the establishment of a free country of Kawthoolei. Prior to this calls had been made for recognition of a 'Kaw Lah' and 'Kanyaw Kaw' meaning Green Country and Karen Country respectively.



Saw Ba U Gyi, the guiding light of the post-independence Karen leadership, was a charismatic figure born in Bassein in 1905 to a wealthy land owning family. After completing his degree at Rangoon University in 1925 he went to London and became a lawyer where, two years later, he was called to the English Bar. After that he returned to Burma where, in 1937, he joined the Government of Ba Maw as Minister of Revenue. After the Japanese occupation and subsequent defeat he joined the pre-independence cabinet and became Information Minister and later Transport and Communications Minister from February to April 1947.

Prior to his appointment on to the Burmese cabinet, Saw Ba U Gyi had already begun to petition for Karen independence. In September 1945 he had been one of the main signatories, along with Saw Tha Din and other leaders of the Karen Central Organisation (KCO), behind the first memorial to the British Government. The KCO asked that, believing they would eventually be granted their own homeland, the British recognise what they termed their own United Frontier Karen States - which they stated should include all of Tenasserim, Nyaunglebin, a subdivision of Pegu, and parts of Thailand as far as Chiang Mai.

The British however were too eager to get rid of Burma as early an opportunity as possible; for London, Karen interests were already protected by representation on the Governor's executive council, and it was more than happy to ignore reports that the Karens were often out voiced at such meetings, even though at least one British Government representative commented that the Karen members who had attended the GEC, Saw Ba U Gyi and Mahn Ba Khaing, had said 'not a single word' while the other three members present

- Aung San, Thakin Mya, and Tin Tut were the only ones who spoke.

Undaunted by the lack of British support, Saw Tha Din, Saw Ba U Gyi, Sidney Loo Nee and Saw Po Chit, all bar at law, formed a goodwill delegation and arrived in London on the 25th August 1946 to put forward their representations - the British refused to consider the Karens demands. Saw Tha Din interviewed by Martin Smith in

1995 recollected that it was made absolutely clear by the under-secretary of state for India and Burma that there 'would not and could not' be any British support for an independent Karen State. On the 27th January 1947 the Aung San-Attlee agreement was finally inked giving Aung San and the AFPFL rule over Burma.

The Karens were shocked, not only had there been no Karen



U Ba Pe, ClementAttlee, General Aung San and U Tin Htut  
in London January 1947



Saw Ba U Gyi, Saw Po Chit and Sydney Loo Nee

representation at the meeting despite there being two Karen EC members in the AFPFL, to which the Karen Central Organisation was a constituent member, but also, the Aung San-Attlee agreement gave no provisions for Karen aspirations for their own land. To present their case between the 5th and 7th of February 1947, 700 hundred members of the KNA, Baptist KNA, BKNA, KCO and it's youth branch the KYO, which had been formed in October 1945, met at the Vinton Memorial Hall for an all Karen congress where they formed the Karen National Union. Resolutions were passed that there

must be a recognised Karen State, and part of that state must have a seaboard, in addition they called for exclusive Karen units in the armed forces and an increase to 25% of seats in the forthcoming constituent assembly, a deadline was given to the British Government to act on their grievances, but once again they were ignored.

On the advice of KYO leader San Po Thin, Saw Ba U Gyi was advised to show his dissatisfaction with the AFPFL by resigning his position in the AFPFL cabinet – a move in which he complied on 4th March, only to be replaced by

San Po Thin himself thus splitting the KNU into two factions – with the Karen Youth Organisation (KYO), led by San Po Thin and Mahn Ba Khaing allying itself to the AFPFL on the 10th March.

On July 19th Both Aung San and Mahn Ba Khaing were assassinated along with several other members of the post-independence cabinet. The new Prime Minister U Nu, (below) supported by San Po Thin, realised that he had inherited a country on the verge of rebellion and was prepared to meet the Karens half-way in offering limited autonomy



to a Karen State that included Karenni, Mong Pai sub-state, Salween district, Thaton, Taungoo and the Pinyinmma hills tracts

Howwever Saw Ba U Gyi and the KNU were insistent on securing those areas they believed they had traditionally occupied, and were only too aware that should they accept U Nu's proposals it was most likely that any future representation for the Karen people would be that provided by San Po Thin and the KYO, who, Saw Ba U Gyi believed, perhaps correctly so, did not have the Karens best interests at heart. To counter the KYO's influence the KNU held a further conference, the second KNU Congress, in Moulmein on the 3rd and 4th of October 1947, attended by 600, delegates that passed two further resolutions;

1. That this Karen conference does not accept the constitution of the Union of Burma Government hitherto made because the constitution does not include the granting of a state to the Karens to satisfy their aspirations.
2. To request an independent sovereign Karen State of the following areas:

- |    |                   |              |  |
|----|-------------------|--------------|--|
| a) | Tenasserim        | Division     | ‘Kawthulay’ and the setting up of a committee comprising of 4 Burmese and 4 Karens from the AFPFL Karen Affairs Committee to delineate borders. The secretary, it was proposed, was to be an ethnic Burman from the home ministry. |
|    | including Taungoo | District     |  |
| b) | Irrawaddy         | Division     |  |
| c) | Insein            | District     |  |
| d) | Hanthawaddy       | District     |  |
| e) | Nyaunglebin       | sub-district |  |

The request was sent to U Nu (pictured above) on the 3rd February 1948 with a response requested within one month, the KYO for the main part agreed with the AFPFL saying that the areas proposed by the U Nu government were sufficient and that KNU demands were unfair. San Po Thin immediately began to rally Karens to denounce the KNU’s territorial claims and support those of the KYO.

The KNU on the 11th February mobilized hundreds of thousands of Karen protesters to demonstrate against the government’s failure to accept Karen claims and also repeating earlier KNU requests demanding that:

‘Give the Karen State at once. For the Burmese one kyat and the Karens one kyat We do not want communal strife We do not want civil war’

On the 4th March the KYO met with U Nu and asked for recognition of

Adding to the confusion newspapers began to contrast the requests of the KYO and the U Nu government to those of the KNU and there were soon rumours spread that there would be communal clashes between the Burmans and the Karens as the latter struggled towards securing their own homeland based on KNU demands. Further tensions were raised and rumours fuelled, by the newspapers carrying conflicting Karen views, often confirming an anti-government (i.e. Burman) bias on the part of the KNU, including one story that the Karen M.P. for Amherst, Saw Ba Zan had said that the;

KNU’s demands were unreasonable and that those Karens who had attended the 2nd Congress had come back full of hatred and with the desire to have vengeance on the Burmese.

In response Saw Ba U Gyi clearly reaffirmed the Karens desire not to split Burma and also stated



the problems caused by San Po Thin and the contradictory stand taken by the KYO:

‘It is not our intention to disintegrate Burma as some people have reason to fear because we quite realise that anything which is detrimental to the Burmese will have the same effect on the Karens. In fact, it is our intention to strengthen both the Karens and the Burmese by asking for a State. We asked for it once from the British, and once when Bogyoke Aung San was still alive, and once more now. This time the areas asked for are more than before. We consider that the areas now asked for are a fair request, because historically they belong to us, whoever may say otherwise; it is our conviction that they belong to the Karens, hence our claim. What the KNU asked for the KYO do not agree and they say that they are quite contented with Salween district or Papun area. They claim to be the Karen representatives but what Karens are they, if they do not try to meet the desire of the majority of Karens? It is now up to you all to find out what is the aspiration of the majority of the Karens and give your support to which you think best. Regarding the Karen State, I, as

the President of the K.N.U., had been asked by the Government of the Union of Burma to meet and discuss with Saw San Po Thin who is now the Karen Affairs Minister. He is all by himself and has no followers. I do not even want to see his face, for the single reason that after advocating boycott of the constitution of the Union of Burma, which he said was unfair for the Karens, and for which reason I resigned from the Cabinet, and after acting as President in that very meeting convened for this purpose he went and accepted the office which I vacated. The Government erred in that, and instead of negotiating with the K.N.U. on this matter, they invited various people from the districts and dealt with them. Are these people Karen representatives? Not by any means. They have no followers whatsoever. It is now already one month and we received no reply. That means the Burmese Government is not going to give us a State.’

U Nu made several overtures to arrange a meeting with Saw Ba U Gyi with the hopes of getting the Karen leader to finally agree to the government’s proposal for a Karen state defined by those areas

included in the constitution. Aware of the great stakes involved Saw Ba U Gyi postponed his answer until after a third KNU Congress had been held in Rangoon on the 3rd March 1948 which was attended by over 500 delegates many of whom were in disagreement with U Nu's plan for Kawthulay. Despite the negative feelings expressed by the delegates Saw Ba U Gyi responded positively, while also ensuring the Karens position was made clear when he stated that 'If they use diplomacy, we must use diplomacy,' however, he continued, in a more emphatic tone, 'but this time we won't talk about requesting our state, but having it.'

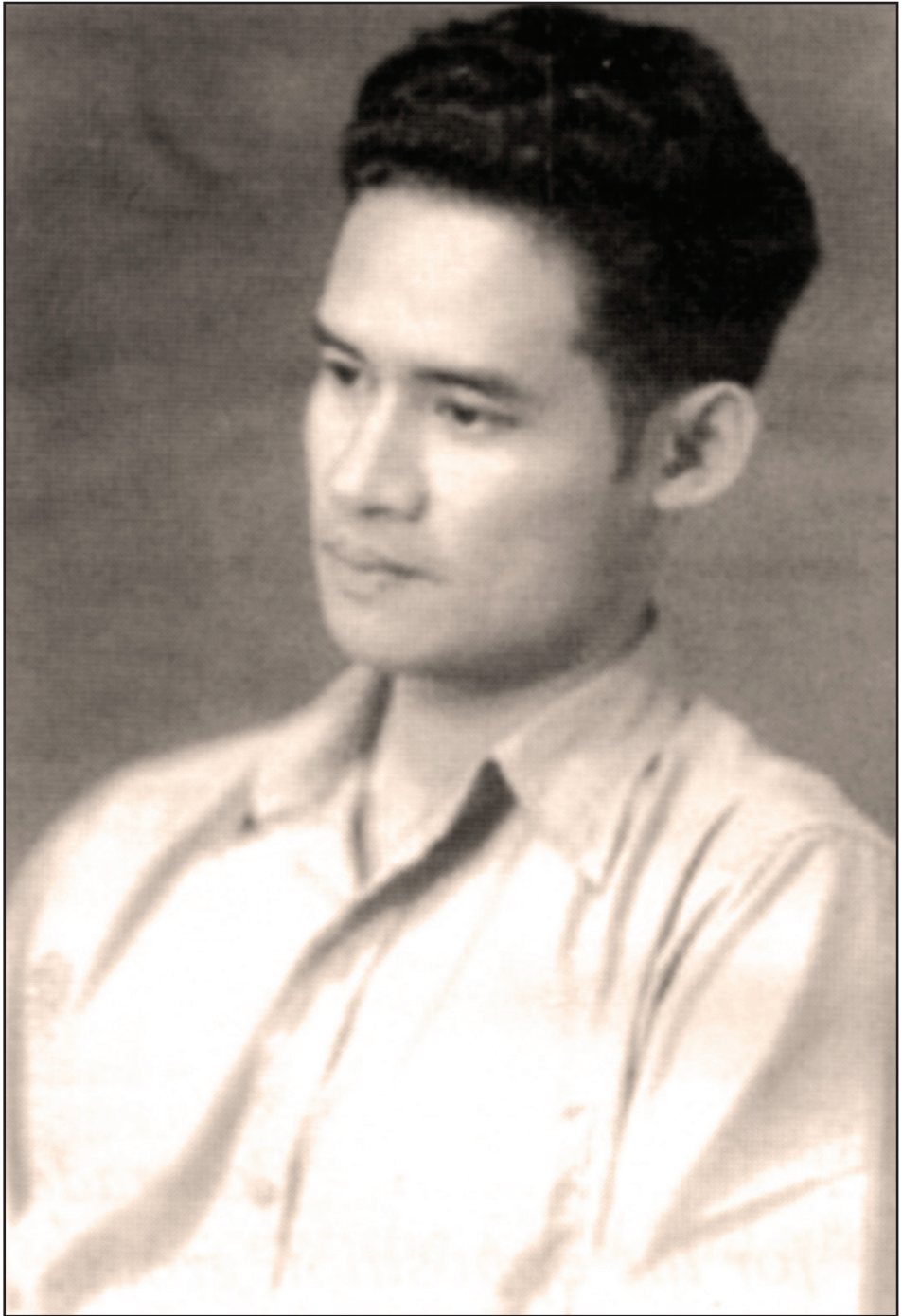
The KNU had already declared what it considered its obligation to the people when it stated after a conference in Bassein that '[the Karen leaders] are resolved that the KNU shall accept responsibility for safeguarding lives and property...in Karens areas.' To fulfil this responsibility the KNDO headquarters immediately began secretly supplying arms, supplied by sympathisers in the Karen rifles, to local KNDO units and organising them into guarding villages in Karen areas, with further additional KDNO units being

drafted into those areas where there were insufficient forces.

At this juncture the situation was to be further manipulated by San Po Thin and the KYO who still continued to support U Nu and the AFPFL line. San Po Thin and Mahn Win Maung arranged a further meeting with the prime minister where they presented him with information that the KNU had been attempting to purchase arms with a desire to use force to settle the Karen question and that it was the intention of the KNU to run a parallel Government.

Such identification with western inspired plots was hardly to help the Karen cause with many of the Burmese painting the Karen nationalist movement as an imperialist plot to begin with. Saw Ba U Gyi quickly moved to reiterate the KNU's position regarding foreign assistance at a dinner on October 9th at the Karen National Club, Alhone-Mission Road, Rangoon, attended by U Nu and a number of Burmese and ethnic leaders:

'A foreigner once told me that their desire was not to govern the country, but to trade. These



foreigners without exception are traders and more. All of them come and take away all. And so they should better be called exploiters than traders. If these people come again we will be left bare. We have been much misunderstood by our demand for a separate Karen State. Some people misunderstand it as a manifestation of our desire to return to servitude under the British... We are not so foolish. We know them better than others and that is the reason why we steer clear of them. We further assure you that in our aspirations for a separate State, we will never adopt any unfair means. We will use only what is legal.'

He also reaffirmed that it was not the KNU's intention to split the country and that it was committed to solving the ongoing communal tension:

'What we have to handle urgently is the matter of the people fleeing from one village to another because they have been alarmed by some rumours. There are those who flee because they fear the communists, there are some Karens who flee, because they fear the Burmese, and some Burmese flee, because they fear the Karens. The truth is, the alarm has been caused by some wicked elements.

Good people should join forces and work together to prevent this. We, the KNU, will take the responsibility to solve the problems within our reach. If there are Burmese who have fled from our areas, we the Karens together with the Burmese will jointly go and call them to come back with complete trust. In like manner, when the Karens are urged to return, Karens and Burmese should go together. We must give protection and make arrangement so that all will be able to live in trust and harmony. Words are not enough. This is a matter we must deal with immediately. At our congress held recently in Bassein, we adopted the resolution that the Karen, were to give help, if the Burmese people requested, for peace in the country. We are ready to give help if it is asked for. We are also laying down the guide-lines for this.'

Despite such assurances, the increasing strength and ability of the KNU and KNDO was of great concern to the U Nu government. The promised Regional Autonomy Enquiry was pushed ahead to October 1948 among the committee members included were Saw Ba U Gyi, Mahn James Tun Aung and Saw Tha Din all from

the KNU which still demanded an independent state where the Karens could ‘develop socially, politically, educationally and economically on their own lines and claim the right of self determination.’ Though it was also stated that ‘Attainment of this objective, will not, of course shut out the possibility of what will always be regarded as the ultimate goal, namely the Common Federation of all the peoples of Burma.’



the part of the police while Saw Ba U Gyi in an effort to calm the Karen community called for restraint and patience. It was to be too late.

Despite Saw Ba U Gyi’s assurances, on Christmas Eve, 1948, in Palaw, a small village between Mergui and Tavoy, Burmese police, with the unwitting help of a Karen elder, disarmed the villagers before leaving them to prepare for the night’s mass. The carol parties that had met in the church that night to begin worship suddenly found themselves victims of grenades thrown into the church by the Burmese police who had surrounded it – those who were not instantly killed were mown down by machine gun fire as they fled. The rest of the village - houses and schools, was razed by the police in an action that eventually cost the lives of over three hundred Karens.

UNu immediately flew down to the scene and on his return declared the whole incident to be a mistake on

A number of inflammatory disturbances soon occurred between local KNDO units and Sitwundun forces stationed in the main Karen area of Insein, north of Rangoon, where large numbers of KNDO troops had been relocated to avoid further conflict with the government and with the possibility of disbanding them and returning them to their villages. At that time in August 1948 it appeared that Insein, 9 miles north of Rangoon, was about to be captured by the communists and the Burmese government was more than happy to have the KNDO garrisoned in the area to release the pressure on Government forces. However by the end of the year reports began to be filed with the Insein police that the KNDO units were responsible for ‘High-handedness against the

Burmese community, and a few cases of dacoity and robbery.’ In addition the Sitwunduns themselves were also alleged to have abused the local Karens including at one point threatening to exterminate them.

Even prior to the Christmas massacre the severity of the ethnic tensions was becoming apparent with shots and mortar shells being fired into the Karen quarters in Insein on the 29th December, the then Eve of Karen New Year, while less than three weeks later on both the 22nd January and the morning after an armoured car had driven through Thamaing Karen quarters strafing the area with indiscriminate gunfire as mortar shells were also reported as randomly being fired into the area in one such incident seriously injuring a woman. Such episodes were not only confined to Insein but were widespread. One such incident was reported by ‘The Nation’ on the 16th January and described how 150 Karens had

lost their lives when a UMP unit, commanded by Bo Sein Hman, the former Cabinet minister and second in command of the PVO, attacked a village in Taikkyi township. The KNDO retaliated by raiding the treasury in Maubin only to then see the 4th Burma rifles raze an American Missionary School in a tit-for-tat action .

No longer able to tolerate such flagrant abuses against Karen communities Lt Colonel Min Maung the Taungoo born commander of the first Karen rifles and holder of the British Military Cross, purportedly at the behest of Saw Ba U Gyi, seized control of Taungoo and Tantabin on the 27th January 1949, the next day, the historically claimed city of the Pa-Oh, Pyu, was also taken. Bassein, 200 miles away was unsuccessfully attacked by another KNDO unit commanded by Saw Jack.

The attack on Thamaing was repelled by a number of KNDO support units who had been mobilized throughout Insein and surrounding areas including Taungthugon Karen quarters, where Mahn Ba Zan had his house which at the time was most probably serving as the KNU/



KNDO headquarters. The battle had begun and it was not long, the 1st February 1949, before the Burmese Government declared the KNDO illegal. The Sitwunduns reacted immediately – torching Karen areas including, once again, Alhone.

Saw Ba U Gyi, Mahn Ba Zan, Hunter Tham Hwe and Saw Sankey all in Insein at the time had very little option but to declare a full scale revolt. The Karen rifles and KNDO immediately started taking cities throughout the country, while in Insein itself a 112 day stand-off was to take place between the Karens and the Burma Army, under the command of Ne Win. The incident was to be known as the Battle of Insein and would last until the night of 20th May 1949 when large numbers of Karen troops and civilians were able to slip across the swollen Hlaing River to safety. The siege had lasted three months and 21 days with the possibility of, according to one source, a thousand Karen casualties with fatalities amounting up to as much as 350-400, half of which were most likely civilians killed in the shelling alone. Although Insein had been lost the Karens were still able to hold on to other areas of the country.

After abandoning Insein the Karen regrouped and Saw Ba U Gyi decided to hold a new congress, to be attended by everyone including those Karens who had remained back in the delta, on the 19th July 1950.



Saw Ba U Gyi stated in his address that the Karen revolution would be the first as well as the last in the history of the Karen people and that there would be no defeat for the revolution ‘...unless all the Karen revolutionaries went down to Rangoon and put their necks on the chopping block in front of the enemy.’

In outlining the way forward and warning of future hazards he stressed that:

A national state for the Karens can be gained in three different ways: -

**‘1. As a voluntary gift given, in good will, by the enemy. We can always be sure that the enemy will never give us a country, a state, so this possibility must be ruled out.**

**2. By right of military conquest. The Karen revolution, being a just revolution, shall eventually be victorious. However, the struggle will be long, difficult, arduous painful and distressing. Many lives will be lost.**

**3. By force of circumstances. After a long war, the enemy could get into a quagmire of unending crisis. However hard the enemy tried he would get deeper into the quagmire. That is the time when the force of circumstances will be most favourable for us. At that time, we must not fail to grasp the opportunities presented themselves and, by military and political means, force our will upon the enemy.**

**The strength of the revolution comes from the people. Therefore, to get the people’s support, we must win the people’s love, confidence and respect. In order to win the people’s love, we must first give our love, show our love, to them. In order to win the confidence of the people, we must build up and consolidate our force.**

**In order to win the respect of the people, we must be well disciplined and organised. We are bound to make mistakes in the performance of [our] work, in review of our revolution which is more than a year old now, I find that there have been the weaknesses and mistakes of self-conceitedness, putting self-interest in the forefront, indiscipline, anti-mass attitude, loose unity. We always need to review our past work and correct our weaknesses and errors boldly.**

**In history, we find that in spite of various difficulties and hardship, all the just revolutions when led with perseverance and courage eventually triumph without exception. I firmly believe that the just revolution of the Karen people shall be victorious, eventually, in spite of all the hardships and difficulties.**



**Saw Ba U Gyi also outlined what were to be the main principles and cornerstone of the Karen revolution:**

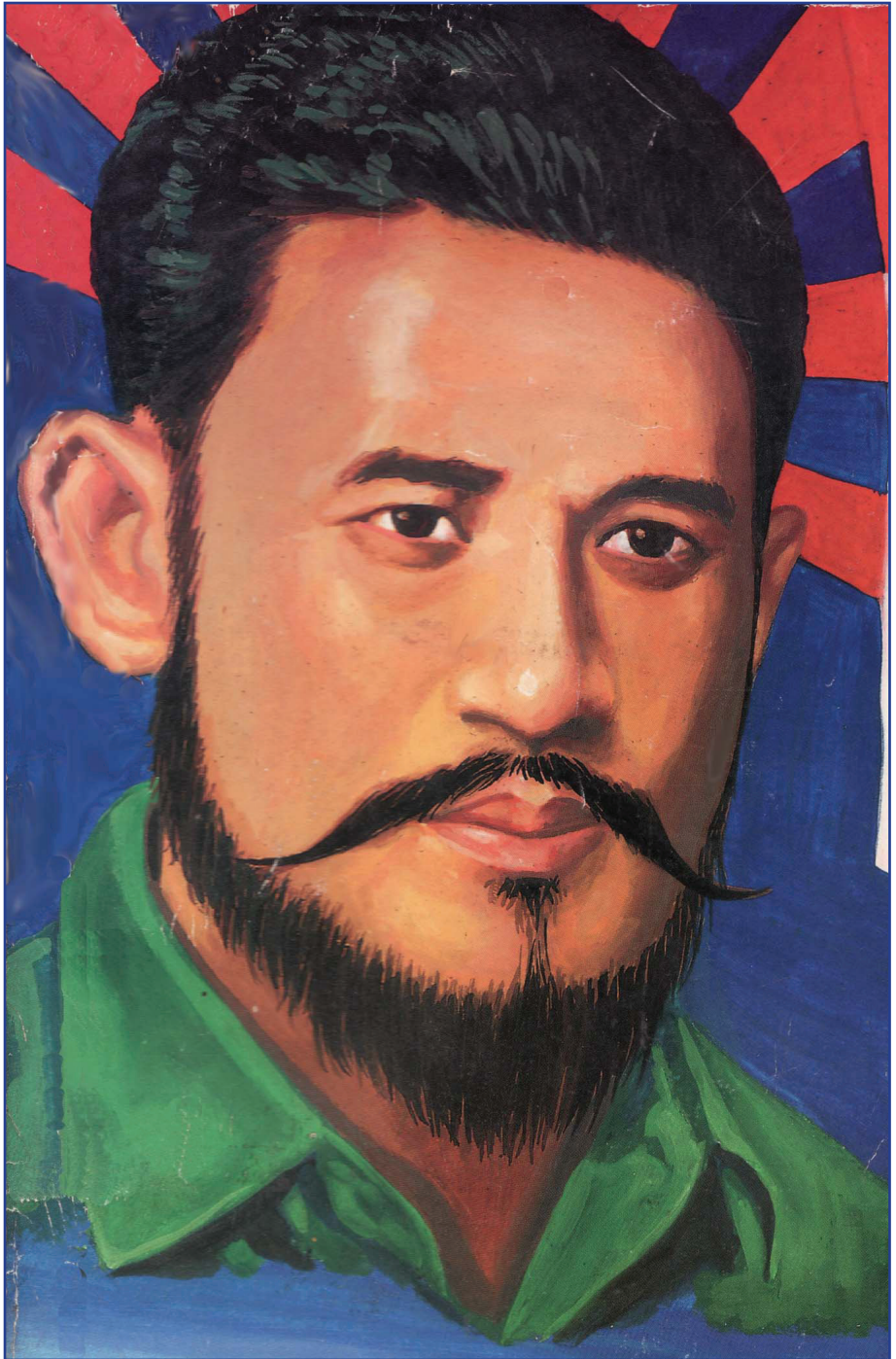
- 1. For us surrender is out of the question**
- 2. The recognition of Karen State must be complete**
- 3. We shall retain our arms**
- 4. We shall decide our own political destiny.'**

The results of the congress were broadcast on Free Karen Radio from the 31st July to the 2nd August.

It still remains unclear what Saw Ba U Gyi had a mind to do after the congress. After what are reported as being his last words in which he had said that 'He was now about to pull a political stunt.' he, Saw Sankey and a small party of followers set off to what was believed to be a meeting. They headed towards the Thai-Burma border, the destination is still not known, what is known however is that they were not to reach it.

'It was a rainy day even at noon it was already dark. I specifically remember the date, 14 August 1950. I will never forget that experience. At that time I was only a young reporter, aged 24, covering the

early part of Burma's civil war which had started two years earlier. On that morning, the director of Information invited us to a press conference at which he announced important news about a remarkable victory by the government forces. Saw Ba U Gyi, leader of the Karen National Union and commander of the Karen National Defence Organisation, was killed in a battle two days ago' he said. Saw Ba U Gyi was a prominent leader in the Burmese political field. In a political career started in 1944 when he joined the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) which was struggling for Burma's independence. He became a minister of the government Council during British rule. While undertaking the groundwork of building a new nation, free-born Burma, Saw Ba U Gyi disagreed with the AFPFL political line and resigned to lead the Karen National Union. Negotiation with the AFPFL government for the benefit of the Karen nationals was not successful and eventually he led an armed rebellion as commander of the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO). He was captured, dead, at a small village near Moulmein, 170 miles from Rangoon. A press pool was organized to go



and see the dead rebel leader. I was chosen to take pictures of the fallen renegade. We, ten journalists, four information officials and military officers, flew to Moulmein in a small plane. The military officers continued the press conference on the plane. Saw Ba U Gyi had been captured, dead, along with a high-ranking Karen rebel leader and an English major who was imprisoned for supplying arms, they claimed. The journalists succeeded in getting the true story after cross-examining them. The rebel chieftains were captured alive and killed even though they had surrendered. "They tried to run away when we arranged to take them to our nearest military camp. We couldn't help it. There was no way we could save them in such a situation," they said. We could not print the truth, but used the official version, "captured dead."\*

There is no concrete evidence to suggest that there was an informer in or around the area where Saw Ba U Gyi, Saw Sankey, a Caucasian – tentatively known as 'Mr Baker', and the small party of Karens found themselves staying that rainy night. Despite warnings from a village headman at Tahkreh village that they should remain with him

until the rains stopped, they had pushed on and arrived near To Kaw Koe Village, Kawkareik, not far from Myawaddy and the Thai border town of Mae Sot.

On their arrival at the small village they were given a small Bamboo hut to stay in until the rain slackened thus allowing them to more easily cross a nearby river which at that time was swollen and almost bursting its banks. While the party were staying there that night it is believed a villager on recognizing the Karen leader was able to slip away at inform the nearby army battalion at Nabusakan.

Early the next morning, August 12th 1950, Burmese army units commanded by a young lieutenant, Sein Lwin, surrounded the village and demanded the group surrender, although there is some disagreement as to what happened next it is believe that the group refused and as such were killed in the fire fight. According to U Thaug, a young journalist at the time, the request for surrender they did capitulate to, but, as the Karens tried to escape they were shot in the act, what is known however is that the party was killed and their bodies transported by cart to Moulmein. After a brief display of the body, Saw Ba U Gyi's corpse

\*U Thaug, 'A Journalist, a General and an Army in Burma.'

was apparently transported four miles out to sea where the body was thrown overboard thus ensuring there would be no martyr's grave for the Karen revolutionary leader.

Dorman-Smith the ex-British Governor of Burma and one of the supporters of the Karen uprising remembered the ex-lawyer fondly, when writing in 'The Times' on the 23rd August that year:

Saw Ba U Gyi was no terrorist... I, for one, cannot picture him enjoying the miseries and hardships of rebellion. There must have been some deep impelling reason for his continued resistance.

However there were others who disagreed Lord Listowell, a Labour minister, writing in the same newspaper two days later accused the late Karen leader of 'obstinacy' and gambling on the fighting qualities of the Karens' and accused him of being unable to compromise; a point of view that was quickly criticised by the prominent Lawyer and second Secretary at the Burmese Embassy in London, Maung Maung Ji, who in reply, on the 28th, in 'The Times' wrote;

'Sir, Lord Listowel's letter to 'The Times' of 25th August represents

the late Karen Leader, Saw Ba U Gyi, as a stupid man "Who could not see the other fellow's point of view". I am sure this statement is unwarranted. Lord Listowel's main argument is based on the fact he was personally present at the negotiation. Unfortunately his presence, the method adopted in tackling the problem, and the very fact that he went out to execute an Anglo-Burmese agreement to which the Karens then strongly objected were principally responsible for the failure in the Burmese-Karen negotiation. That is how Saw Ba U Gyi described the situation in a letter to me at the time. The trouble began from the Aung San/Attlee Agreement between the British and the Burmese, whereby the former handed over the entire administration of the country to the latter, while the Karens were excluded even from the negotiation conference. The Karens felt they had been betrayed by the British Government. Many of us Burmese, too, felt that the Karens, who had valiantly fought against the Japanese during the war, had been badly let down. I acted as a counsel to two delegates, the former Prime Minister U Saw and Thakin Ba Sein, then minister of transport and Communications,



at the Anglo-Burmese conference which culminated in the Aung San-Attlee Agreement. Because it was so unfair to the Karens that they were excluded from the conference, in spite of their repeated requests to participate in it, a memorandum was forwarded to the Prime Minister Mr. Attlee with the request that he should publish it. To our great surprise, this and other dissident memoranda were suppressed when the Aung San-Attlee Agreement was published. The Karens felt frustrated and are still bitter over the episode. To aggravate the situation, Lord Listowel, the Secretary of State for Burma, was sent to Rangoon in his own phrase "to induce them" to accept certain arrangements. Ostensibly it was a negotiation for agreement between the Karens and the Burmese, but final approval rested with the Burmese Govt. The Karens could not refer to outside authorities in a case of disagreement. Saw Ba U Gyi and his people, already suspicious of the British Govt's intentions, hesitated to enter into any agreement. Even so, if a statesman with a practical knowledge of Burmese politics had been sent out at that time, I'm sure agreement would have been possible, and a lot of the troubles

which my country is suffering, would have been avoided. The secretary of State for Burma admittedly had no previous experience of Burmese politics and its ramifications; naturally he was unaware of the complicated and special problems that lay beneath the surface. A complete breakdown of the negotiations was the result. This seems to me no reason for branding the late Karen leader and his friends as 'Stupid People', 'intellectually extremely limited' and 'incapable of reaching an agreement'



The deaths of Saw Ba U Gyi and Saw Sankey were a serious blow to the revolution; with two of their main leaders gone

it was left to those remaining in the Karen Governing Body to reorganize and to plan a new strategy for the Karen resistance to see them through the coming years. For those leaders the four principles that Saw Ba U Gyi laid out at the start of the struggle still remain the foundation of the revolution.

Study Questions

1. Where was Saw Ba U Gyi born?
2. When did he complete his degree at Rangoon University?
3. What position did he originally fill in the Ba Maw Government?
4. When was he Transport and Communications Minister?
5. What should the United Frontier Karen States include?
6. When did Saw Tha Din, Saw Ba U Gyi, Sidney Loo Nee and Saw Po Chit arrive in London?
7. When did Aung San and Clement Attlee sign the ‘Aung San – Attlee agreement’?
8. When was the KYO formed?
9. Who advised Saw Ba U Gyi to leave the AFPFL government?
10. Which Karen organization ‘allied’ itself with the AFPFL?
11. What areas did U Nu offer as a Karen State?
12. Which areas did the KNU request after the Second KNU congress?
13. What happened on Christmas Eve 1948
14. Where was Lt. Col. Min Maung Born?
15. When was the KNDO declared illegal?
16. How long was the siege of Insein?
17. When was Saw Ba U Gyi killed?
18. Who said Saw Ba U Gyi was ‘...no terrorist...’?

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| 18. | Dorman-Smith the ex-Governor of Burma.  |
| 17. | 12th August 1950.   |
| 16. | Three months and 21 Days  |
| 15. | 1st February 1949.  |
| 14. | Taungoo   |
| 13. | Karen Villagers in Palaw were attacked by Burmese Police.   |
| 12. | Nyaunglebin sub-district  |
| 11. | Tenesserim Division including Taungoo District, Irrawaddy Division, Insein District, Hanthawaddy District, and Karenni, Mong Pai sub-state, Salween district, Thaton, Taungoo and the Pyinmma hills tracts. |
| 10. | The KYO.  |
| 9.  | San Po Thin.  |
| 8.  | October 1945.   |
| 7.  | 27th January 1947.  |
| 6.  | 25th August 1946.   |
| 5.  | Tenesserim, Nyaunglebin, a sub-division of Pegu, and parts of Thailand as far as Chiang Mai.  |
| 4.  | From February to April 1947.  |
| 3.  | Minister of Revenue.  |
| 2.  | 1925.   |
| 1.  | Bassein.  |

Answers



**'In history, we find that in spite of various difficulties and hardship, all the just revolutions when led with perseverance and courage eventually triumph without exception. I firmly believe that the just revolution of the Karen people shall be victorious, eventually, in spite of all the hardships and difficulties.'**

**Saw Ba U Gyi**