

LETTER FROM SINGAPORE (2)

Who is responsible?

Date: 1 October 2005

Dear Rebound 88,

As the holiday season approaches, I receive calls from my uncle. I await his annual visit to my home in Singapore, in trepidation. He will fly over to Singapore from California, before proceeding to Burma. During three or four days he spent with me I have a hard time explaining to him, why democracy is not achieved in Burma yet. My invariable answer to this question is that it will come in the near future. This time I would say during 2006 which the Rangoon government said will be an important milestone year. Though none of their promises previously were honored by them later on, that is the starting point of our discussion.

My uncle is 72 years old, makes at least a trip to monks in Mandalay and enjoys living in the

When he comes back, he too high commodity when are we going to have

Though I know my self anything to bring about trusts, the younger can do it. I can not tell my world today, technically can not find a way to drive out the have United Nations, an Organization, wipe out poverty from the world became power. It can do nothing to prevent the from suppressing its own people.



living exile for almost four decades. Almost each year, he Burma during his son's holiday. He is very close to one of the he stays at the monastery for a week or two meditating and company of monks.

would bring a litany of complaints, from too many mosquitoes, prices to ubiquitous corrupt officials. He will ask me questions, democracy in Burma?



very well that I can not do democracy in Burma, my uncle generation, me included, that we uncle that the interconnected advanced civilization of our own, dictatorial regime in Burma. We mandated to bring peace and a paper tiger, under China's veto corrupt government in Burma

The other day, I heard over a broadcast from RFA (Radio Free Asia) an interviewer asking the same questions. The broadcaster wondered who is responsible for these misfortunes. We have an unfortunate past, four decades of military rule, which made our country the poorest and outcast in the international community.

As the world watched, Burma is still under military dictatorship, since General Ne Win took over power from the elected civilian government of the Prime Minister U Nu. He created the iron fist rule which deprived the country much needed democratic society in a critically important moment when the others in the region took off thanks to the new technology. With the collapse of Soviet Russia, the whole world learnt that centralized system of the government was bad for the country and the way forward is the market economy and free society. Burmese military junta refused to face this reality and closed its doors, took their citizen hostages with their guns in hand.

There were people's power movement in Philippine which ousted Ferdinand Marcos from Power, Velvet revolution in Czech Republic which dismantled the communist regime and Orange revolution in Ukraine which installed democratic

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government in their country. So why there is no similar movements in Burma? A quick answer is because Burmese army is ruthless in quelling opposition; as a result people dare not show their dislike openly to the government.

Burma today is lacking second generation leaders, or mid level managers to run the economy and administrative machineries. There may be a few motivated individuals but the system does not allow them to operate effectively. Leaders are not created in short period of time; they are groomed in good environment and should be given authority to function. They should be given a proper corridor to maneuver to use their creativity.

Today, the army is in its strongest position in history, taking charge in all stages of civil administration. All important positions are filled with ex-army personnel or active duty army officers. They do not strive in their professions; instead they are carrying out their duties by following orders. A good manager has to see all instructions with a critical eye and there should be a system to question if the guidelines are not fit to the actual situation. Besides, their functionalities are not well defined and every thing out of ordinary has to be referred to above for decision.

Nevertheless, their attitude is to accumulate wealth when they are in service. They know that their positions are never permanent; they are given the chance because of their position in the army not for their academic or professional qualification. Therefore within the limited period, they rob the citizens who come to them for business deals, which they can not do without their help. But with many holes in their rules and regulations, the venture will fail one way or another. Regardless of the business making profit or loss, the men in position earn money upfront because of their position in the government apparatus.

So, when did this bad habit started? When did the situation deteriorated? Who was responsible for all this?

General Ne Win sent thousands of young people to prison from 1962 on wards. Uncountable number of boys and girls came out of their class rooms went into the streets to tell Ne Win that his army rules was unconstitutional. They were sent to prison from where only a few could come out survive, because of harsh and inhuman conditions there. When Captain Ohn Kyaw Myint stood up to challenge his rule, he was sent to gallows. Ko Tin Mg Oo, the student leader did the same and got the same punishment. These were the way he treated his young opponents.

He also purged all talented managers, starting from his immediate deputy General Aung Gyi. With the exception of a few, the careers of his deputies ended all in disgrace. They are purged; they are harassed and frightened so that they dared not go against him even after their removal. This effectively killed the next generation leaders.

As a result when he resigned from his position, the chaos ensued which triggered another army take over and today we are left with a mess.

The generation took over after 1988 in the army was a leftover breed, while the bright and able personalities became victims of Ne Win's egocentric rule. They wanted to stick to power no matter what. They had, like other army personnel, no proper educational training with their outlooks and vision severely limited

Now the time is come to think about the future. We have seen failures after failures in various sectors; bank crisis, drug problems, inflated currency, Depeyin massacre... to name a few. General Than Shwe continued to send young people to prison and he is attempting to follow the footsteps of Ne Win. That again means that our country will be missing another generation of qualified leaders.

Starting from General Ne Win, all subsequent army Generals considered Universities and higher learning Institutions as breeding grounds for dissents. That was a wrong perception. General Aung San was a student when he joined Japanese army to fight against British. Next generation leaders were getting their first lessons from the nation's education centers. The present Government has to stop disturbing these institutions from functioning. Bright and able scholars had to run away from these centers because of unfair situations there.

Regional colleges were opened in 1980s that was when the process started of government's interference in the education system. It was the government's one sided drive to undermine the voice of the younger generation by moving away education centers from the center of the capital to far away across the country. Then they set up their own army Technical & Medical institutes with already severely limited resources. Civilians are enemies they will hatch their own breeds.

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True, Rangoon Institute of Technology and Rangoon Arts and Science University disappeared from the scene, so did a generation of younger leaders as well. They can rule now, but what about the next generation? It is a capital mistake for the part of the government in their blind search at all cost for a survival of their military rule.

The leadership crisis will hit the NLD (National League for Democracy) too. Nobody has shown the capability to match that of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi who is courageous as well as selfless in her approach to the cause. All other Central Executive members are also at retirement ages with the exception of a few. In the near future we will see a leadership vacuum when these elders go out of the way. It is about time to seek and train the leaders to takeover the helm when Daw Aung San Suu Kyi decides to retire.

The military government is not expected to change their style unless they are forced to do so. If they keep sending the young and bright to the prison, we will see the repeats of the same cycle where the cheats would take over from the corrupts when they went out of the way.

I do not pretend that I have a solution to those problems but it is critical for the army Generals to realize how our society has been decayed. We need to act fast so that Burma can be back on the right track to integrate with the world community. If they refuse to correct their problems and hang on to power as nothing happens Burma will be the outcast for the foreseeable future.

Until a democratically elected government is installed in Rangoon, I will still be reluctant to receive the call from my uncle.

Ko Than Tin

We are dedicated to bring latest news and views concerning Burma to our readers once they occur. We invite your suggestions on how we improve our sites as well as how we can be more informative and timely in presenting data to you. Please write to newrebound@yahoo.com.