

IUS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
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Contribution to Point 1 of the Agenda
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All Burma Students' Union
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Mr. Chairman, members of the Executive Committee, dear friends,

On behalf of the All Burma Students' Union, I wish to convey our heartfelt thanks to the International Union of Students for inviting us to participate in this Executive Committee Meeting. Thanks again to the IUS, because it has not only invited us but has given all possible help to enable us to attend this meeting. Still, I have to thank the IUS yet once more, because the first point on this present agenda deals with our struggles - the student movement in colonial and dependent countries - and searches for ways and means to assist us on our road to freedom and peace and democratic education.

Especially, we are very much pleased and honoured to discuss our future in Peking, the capital of the Chinese peoples who have recently shattered the chains of colonialism and feudal oppression and have emerged triumphant and victorious as masters of their own fate commanders of their own future.

Since the moment we were invited to Peking, the Chinese friends have rendered us every co-operation, understanding, and showered the greatest hospitality to us, one and all; for this - I present my sincere thanks to students and youth, the sons and daughters of New China with this message:-

"Dear elder brothers, dear elder sisters of People's China! As you are showing us the way and setting examples for us, your younger brothers and younger sisters in fighting Burma salute you with fond admiration and never expiring love. We thank you with all our comradely hearts!"

Yesterday, I had the pleasure of hearing the report on the first agenda presented by our President, Mr. Grohman. I would like to discuss on this report from our Burmese point of view.

To discuss the report from the Burmese viewpoint, I consider that the Executive Committee need be informed a short background for Burma.

Our country, Burma, started to feel the yoke of colonialism since the 1st quarter of the last century. The whole of Burma fell into the hands of the British colonialists in 1885 and since then, Burma had writhed in agony in the clutches of the blood suckers. With the arrival of colonialism came oppression and misery, hunger and want, jails and bullets. Colonialism denied us even the right to live as human beings - hence it was nothing strange when the suppression of our national culture and science followed close behind.

Directly affecting us students, was that colonialism denied us the right to study, let alone a democratic education. When we protested and demanded our needs, we were attacked brutally by the police, shot down by the army or flung into jails. Yes, the IUS report was correct when it stated: "Repression and the absence of democratic rights and liberties are a permanent feature of colonialism."

Colonialist education for Burmese students means a few miserable schools lacking proper staff and modern educational equipments. Sons of workers and peasants have not been able to attend those few number of colleges which allowed only a very limited capacity. Even those few who are able to study there have to go through under very poor conditions. A few libraries - there, stocked mostly with poisonous literature; few laboratories and hospitals render but poor health service. Rich people usually fly thousands of miles away to Britain or USA to get medical treatment there.

Burma has a population of 17 millions but all the higher schools provide a capacity of only about 40,000. Other universities and colleges combined, provided 4,500 students.

Burma is an agricultural country: thus the population is mainly rural. However, there are very few schools in villages. One might travel sometimes through 20 villages and learn that not a single proper school (not even primary) does exist there. No wonder in our country 46% of the men and 80% of the women are illiterate. There is but one doctor for every 50,000 people, even then the distribution is such that in villages where 85% of the people live - medical attention is negligible.

Our country has a language, a literature and a culture of a brilliant level but as yet there is not one proper museum in the country which could present Burmese art, or history in form.

Acute shortage of educational facilities also contributes to the maldevelopment of agriculture and industry. Imperialism has reduced Burma to a disgracefully low intellectual social and economic level, in spite of the country's rich resources and a high record of art and culture.

So - if only we could, we would have laughed when the colonialists said that their rule was beneficial to the backward peoples. We could not laugh - we only gritted our teeth and hated colonialism with all our hearts.

The students of Burma waged a resolute battle against colonialism and slave education since 1920. In those earlier days, the students were in the forefront and up to 1937, they were more or less the leaders of the national movement against British imperialism.

In 1938 under the leadership of the late Ko Ba Hein, students allied themselves with the workers and other oppressed classes and waged a general strike and a strong movement against colonialism. Jails became the new hostels of the students. Bo Aung Gyaw, the 1st student martyr was clubbed to death in Rangoon. Other students and youth were shot down to death at Mandalay.

When war broke out in the east in 1941, the British abandoned the Burmese people to the mercy of the Japanese fascists. Those were the darkest days of our history. Blackness and death, torture and shame descended over the whole country and of course, the life of the student was wrecked entirely during those years.

The students, although a Union could not exist in those days, did not break up their revolutionary record, but joined the ranks of the Anti-Fascist Organisation and took part in the armed revolt of the people which smashed many battalions of the Fascist Army in the Burmese territory.

But defeat of the Japanese Fascism did not bring us freedom in the way it should. British imperialists returned and reconstituted their rule and a bitter struggle followed, in which again, the students played quite an active role. As the fight for freedom became sharp and more vigorous, the British colonialists changed their tactics. Agents of monopolist capital succeeded in splitting the united front of the people, they also employed bribery, blackmail and assassinations. Many patriots were imprisoned and tortured or hanged. After all these disorganisation and terror, plunder and chaos, the so-called independence to Burma was proclaimed in January 1948.

To an observer, but a careful one, of course, the facts that Burma now has a flag quite different from the Union Jack, that a new constitution was drawn, that a Burmese president with a new car occupied the government house - such pastes would not look the diamonds for which they pretended to be. After independence, Burma remains a semi-colonial and a semi-feudal country. Foreign monopolists still hold the economy of Burma in their death-like grip,

feudal landlords still exploit the peasants while to the last drop. In fact, the proclamation of the so-called independence only marked a stage when the national big business betrayed the people and allied themselves with the colonialists. Oh, yes! There was indeed a change! Side by side with British, the American capital infiltrated into the country. Apart from these - independence gave nothing to the people. The Burma Currency Board headed by R.V.N. Hopkins has to be in London. Mr. J.S. Furnival, a pre-war British Civil Servant, became the economic advisor to the Burmese Government.

Naturally a strong wave of dissatisfaction and protest followed. The puppet government employed Fascist measures and attacked all democratic organisations in the country. Thousands of people were flung into prison; in jails (like the one in Tharrawaddy) tortures equivalent to Nazi and Fascist levels were conducted. Students already in jail were lathi-charged, put in solitary confinement, whipped and kicked, insulted and attacked in many brutal manners.

The people took up arms and put up a brave resistance against this terror - thus started the period of People's Democratic Revolution in Burma.

Till then, the All Burma Students' Union was working legally. But in 1949, as described on page 21 of the IUS report, the Union was driven underground and so we had to shift our headquarters to the liberated areas and joined the People's Democratic Front in carrying on an armed struggle for peace, national liberation and people's democracy.

Here, I would like to make one point clear.

Although we are openly taking up arms against oppression, although in the liberated areas the students are taking part in all tasks of the People's democratic revolution, although in the non-liberated zones many students are waging legal struggles for freedom - there are many more questions to be settled. Dear members of the Executive Committee, I would like to report to you, our leaders, about the student situations and our A.B.S.U. policy and would appreciate very much, if you would express your opinions criticise, guide and advice us on the various lines which we are now taking.

The All Burma Students' Union does not consider that democratic education can be realised without actual national independence. Therefore policies such as "Learn industriously what is being taught you in classes - then serve the country" etc. are entirely wrong under colonial education. Such a policy will be practicable only where democratic education is achieved. That age-worn policy that "students should not take part in politics" is not practicable any where on earth.

We cannot accept slogans which say, "those, who are not with us, is against us." This concerns national organisation as well as international. We believe that still broader masses of students can be united.

We believe in unity. We denounce all disruptors of students' unity both within our ranks and without - both nationally and internationally.

To achieve national independence for our country we cannot fight alone. We students are but sons and daughters of the people. Which side will the people choose? That must be ours as well. Some students in Burma criticise and dislike our policy of accepting the working class as leader of the national liberation movement. They denounce all parties and claim that students can take the lead in the national liberation movement. But we are sure that we are absolutely correct. Either follow the working class or the capitalist. We see no other leaders apart from these two. It has been proved by victories in the Soviet Union, New China, other People's Democracies that such working class leadership and such leadership alone can give us victory, can give us democratic education and lasting peace.

Let alone Soviet Union and People's Democracies, the achievements we made after the All Burma Students' Union started to operate from the liberated areas will illustrate the fact that we are on the correct path.

Organisationally we achieved the membership target of 25,000, and are actively working to achieve freedom for our country. Students are found on duty in all ranks. They serve in the People's Army, Medical Service, Arsenal, Wireless and Communication Corps. In many branches of the People's Democratic Front and in different commissions students are being represented - for instance, in the Education Commission of the Liberated Areas, two student representatives are working as commission members. Not only in these but also on all levels of the People's Administrative Committees, and in many parts of the liberated zones, students and youths are being represented. Unlike students in the non-liberated zones where the Prime Minister himself preaches that "politics are dirty" (!) the students of the liberated are given a high level in political knowledge and are being educated to become the exemplary builders of a People's Democracy.

I told you just a while ago about education among the villages. We find a great deal of work to do there. The colonialists always said that it was impossible to build a school in every village. We accomplish that quite easily nowadays. Buildings of feudal oppressors are turned into schools: sometimes new buildings are actually built up by voluntary labour. Side by side with elementary schools, adult education courses are conducted in all corners of the liberated zones

with great success. Women, who were unable to read even the first alphabet before the resistance, are now able to write reports to their Women's Unions. In all schools, student unions and administrative boards are being set up and for the first time in Burma's history, joint boards of teachers and students function together for the interests of both.

Together with educational work, cultural and social activities are also carried out by the students. The organ of the ABSU, the "Student" is the one of the most popular weeklies in the liberated parts: one of the plays presented by ABSU called "MARTALI" has become widely appreciated by the people. Even under very difficult circumstances and constant pounding of government troops, education in the liberated areas has developed to a better level than those of the areas held by the puppet government.

This, dear friends, is proof. This is the answer to the query, whether we are on the right path or not. These achievements have strengthened our struggles all the more. We achieve these victories thanks to the leadership of the working class in Burma.

Again, I remind you dear friends, these achievements are being accomplished only in the liberated parts: there is a huge area in Burma as yet to be freed. We students fight and struggle side by side with our peoples not only because we want freedom and democratic education for us - but also because we want peace for you, for us and for them in the whole world.

As long as the puppet government exists in Burma, our country remains as an instrument for war. To this statement allow me to present some facts.

Bordering India, Pakistan, China, IndoChina and Siam, having a long coastline into the Indian Ocean, Burma has a very strategic position. During the last war, you will perhaps remember how important a position she held. Then, the Burma Road and the Ledo Raods were used to send supplies to China. Now the warmongers are planning to use these again to attack the Chinese people.

Under various treaties signed between the Labour Government of the United Kingdom and Thakin Nu clique in Burma, our country is obliged, when needed to afford assistance to British troops "bringing help and support to Burma" or "to any part of the Commonwealth". Burma would be obliged to open up her posts and airfields.

Not only that, but a British military Mission is stationed in Rangoon.

Then we have the USA agents, working under the guise of Economic and Technical Aid Commission and other I-don't-know-whats, carrying on subversive activities. planning how to launch an attack on People's China through our country.

Mr. Chairman, allow me to inform the youth and students, our brothers and sisters of China, that these are merely the plans of the warmongers and a handful of traitors. From this place I promise on behalf of the fighting youth and students of Burma that we shall allow no such criminal acts. They will be able to use Burma as an effective base to attack our Chinese brothers, only at the time when the last Burmese patriot has fallen, only when the last drop of our blood has been shed. We stand together with our Chinese brothers, hand in hand - forever.

So long as there is a government which represents colonialism, the desires of the Burmese youth and students for progress and peace will always be faced with obstacles.

If only we had been free, many youths of Burma would have followed the example of our Chinese brothers to defend Korea when the American invasion began. But instead, the puppet government nodded approval to MacArthur. There was a strong protest against this gross criminal action, and the Government was unable to send any material help to the aggressors. And we continued our struggle against this move militarily, politically as well as organisationally, that the traitors became thoroughly exposed, and even the government party split up into three parts. Completely thrown frantic, the traitors are now using demagogic tricks to gather their forces by pretending to change sides and again opposing the USA in the UNO. But the people of Burma understand their stunts too well to be tricked again.

Mr. Chairman, may I inform our Korean brothers that we pledge we shall not waste unnecessary moments in overthrowing the traitors of our country so that Burma can be transformed into a great force for peace standing side by side with them. We wish our Korean brothers to remember always while they are crushing the forces of foreign intervention in their country, we, their Burmese brothers are also doing our bit in SE Asia.

We are also facing foreign intervention in our country. As the peoples achieved success after success the agents of foreign capitalists have rushed to the aid of the government of Burma. First on the spot was the Government of the United Kingdom. Since the outbreak of the People's armed Revolt they had been giving aid to the puppet government. In 1949, 4 naval vessels, 15 Oxford planes, 25 pounder guns and many other arms and ammunitions were given by them to use against the people.

Not only Britain but also the governments of India, Pakistan and Ceylon are openly interfering in the internal affairs of our

country. After the British Dominion Prime Minister's Conference held in Colombo, Governments of the United Kingdom, India, Pakistan and Ceylon rendered 6,000,000 pounds worth of arms to the Burmese Government. By this act the governments of these countries show that they serve the cause of the monopolists and landowners. Not only this but according to reports issued from the liberated areas, as early as in 1949, the Nehru Government had given 3000 Gurkha and Lushai troops to Thakin Nu to use them in the fight against the people.

When such state of affairs exist in a certain land, Wall Street's presence could naturally be expected. It has been known for a time that the US Government was helping the Burmese government secretly: but last year, they came out boldly into the open and transported 11,000,000 dollars worth of arms and ammunitions to the country. Thus the people of Burma are now in the thick of a struggle not only against national reaction but also against foreign intervention.

Having reported some of the misdeeds of the governments of these countries, I would like to extend my hand of friendship to the students of USA, Great Britain (or, if you prefer, England, Scotland, Wales and North Ireland) India, Pakistan and Ceylon. I would like to caution them not to let their hands be stained by our Burmese students' blood -- but to raise the demand to their respective governments -- "Hands off Burma! Freedom to all colonies and Semi-Colonial countries!"

Yes, we need spirit of solidarity and love for unity at a time when war-mongers are planning to launch another war.

Take the rearmament of Japan--important to East Asia in particular and the world in general. My intervention, I am sorry, is going a bit longer, so I will not tell you how much we had suffered ...most of you know...I would like to recall just one instance.

You have heard about the death railway or the Burma-Thailand Line. This was constructed by the Fascists employing the labour of the Allied prisoners of war and native labour conscripts. People were dragged away by force, herded into trains and sent to the Thai border jungles infested with tigers and malaria. People died like flies there, malaria, of bullets, of hunger, of nameless diseases. Some collapsed on the march. They were thrown into ditches. Some were carried away by tigers. Some "disappeared".

Hundreds of war prisoners from Europe died. So did 50,000 (estimate: no actual figures were recorded) Burmese, Chinese, Siamese and Malays. Here the blood of the British, Australian and Dutch victims of Fascism dropped on the Burmese soil mixing with that of ours. Then shall we allow that Fascism to rise again? We declare "Never!" and I am sure, that the relations of those dead, from Britain, Australia, Holland, Siam and Malay agree with us, too.

Similarly we oppose the rearmament of Germany to assure the widow in France, the orphan in Italy and the mothers of Zoyas that Peace shall Vanquish War. We demand the meeting of the 5 great powers to conclude a Peace Pact.

We, in Burma, oppose the colonial wars in Viet-Nam and Malaya, demand that invaders withdraw their troops from Korea and Taiwan. We denounce the Fascist rule in Siam, we wish all brilliant successes to our brothers in Philippines and Indonesia.

I would like the non-Asian fellow participants in this meeting to tell their people at home that we in Asia are united in this great struggle for freedom and Peace, and that we desire friendship with all peoples of the world, (of course without Economic and Technical Aid agreements).

Dear Mr. President and members of the Executive Committee! I have, on behalf of my organisation, expressed our views regarding the student role in National Liberation Struggles, I would also like to add that the report presented by Mr. Grohman has given me added strength, stronger hopes and invincible confidence.

We are aware that certain persons are trying to disrupt the students' unity by introducing aid schemes and trying to set up a parallel International Union of Students. I am sorry I cannot speak beautiful language but I want to make things clear. We were once looked upon as slaves. Now at the present movement, aid schemes, which transforms us into beggars of another type, do not suit us at all.

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. But some people are adventurous enough to release the bird in hand and go for the other two in the bush. Even such an adventurous person will not leave the IUS and go for the new organisation some people are endeavouring to build up, because even in the way it is decorated, the bush does not have two birds in it -- No, not even one! The bush is just full of poisonous thorns. We believe in the IUS. We have faith in the International Student Relief. Because these are the organisations of which we are part. Because these are the organisations which help us without hurting our dignity.

In conclusion, Mr. President and friends, I would like to urge you to carry on untiringly the task of uniting broader masses of the students under the banner of the IUS and to continue your honourable active support to the students in colonial and dependent countries more than ever. I would like to place special stress on this suggestion that regional conferences of Students in Colonial and Dependent countries be convened by you -- especially for those of East Asia. This would give more contact and build stronger cooperations between one another; this could constitute a united force against the remilitarisation of Japan and work for World Peace as a whole. We have had rare opportunities to meet with one another and I hope, if we meet at this time when the situation in the East is becoming tense such a conference would constitute a great deal towards Students' Unity, National Independence and World Peace.

Long live the International Union of Students.