

# Honoring Professor Hla Myint

by

## Professor Ronald Findlay

(Ragnar Nurske Professor Emeritus of Economics, Columbia University)



Hla Myint as he is known and will always be remembered in the literature, was a truly great economist. His first and still best-known book, “Theories of Welfare Economics, based on his PhD thesis at LSE, was published in 1948 and reprinted as early as 1965 in the Augustus M. Kelley series of “Reprints of Economic Classics”. I cannot think of any other book in any subject that attained “Classic” status less than twenty years from date of publication.

Even more remarkably, it was not just the development of some clever ideas but a work of deep and wide scholarship in history of doctrine. It revolutionized the conception of what classical economics was all about, seeing Smith, Ricardo and Mill not as less sophisticated precursors of the price theories of Marshall and Walras but as the pioneers of the theory of growth and development that had disappeared from the field of Economics by the middle of the twentieth century but was soon to be very actively revived. I have never ceased to wonder how such a young man still only in his twenties from the paddy fields of the Irrawaddy Delta could so confidently and convincingly tell the entire profession of economics in the western world something so profound that it had itself failed to realize.

He then went on to make his own original contributions to economic development and international trade, still drawing on the ideas of his beloved Adam Smith.

Alone among the other pioneers of development economics he never lost sight of the fact that engagement with the rest of the world on the basis of evolving comparative advantage was the true key to success. I am sure that this is the message that he would want all of us and his own beloved country never to forget.