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INTRODUCTION

The Chief of General Staff of the Ministry of Defence, Union of Myanmar addressed a letter No. 163/25/G.S.I dated 5th May 1989 to the Government of Union of Myanmar regarding the compilation of Myanmar history based on authentic facts. In paragraph (8) of the said letter the General commented as follows:

" I believe that there is a continuity in history because history means a relation between cause and effect. History ought to be written on a long term and a short term basis. To acquaint the Myanmar with authentic facts of current historical events , a concise and compact history based upon authentic facts should be written. In writing the history of the period from the time of the attainment of independence to the present day, there are material sources such as documents and records and unrecorded facts which only those personally involved in the national movement can provide. I think that it is time that we should immediately collect data from those still living politicians of the British colonial period , and from the survivors of the Thirty Comrades who formed the nucleus of Myanmar Army."

Then, the General went on to say that the events of 1988 arose out of the emergence of the Revolutionary Council in 1962 and the subsequent developments. The emergence of the Revolutionary Council in 1962 was due to the weakness of the 1947 Constitution and due to the flaw in

Chapter 10 of the Constitution which provided the right of secession. In 1974 a constitution was drafted to transfer the state power to the people. It was approved by a plebiscite and adopted by the first Pyithu Hluttaw. Among the many peculiar characteristics of Myanmar, the presence of ethnic group is a special one. It is hoped that in the near future the elected representatives of the people will draw up a new constitution. In the light of the lessons from past mistakes, care should be taken not to repeat them. No system is permanent as it is subject to change. Changes must be made where necessary and likewise reforms where needed. He requested Myanmar historians to fulfil the need to draw lessons from the past. For a short term historical research, data should be collected by interviewing the participants in the struggle for independence and framers of the 1947 Constitution. In the compilation of authentic facts of Myanmar history the Ministry of Defence would give its utmost help and the Government of Union of Myanmar would also co-operate in this matter.

On Thursday the 25th May 1989 the General as Chairman of the State Law and Order Restoration Council invited the following historians for discussion on matters relating to the writing of an authentic history of Myanmar:

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|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| (1) U Tin Ohn | (6) Dr. Ohn Gaing |
| (2) U Htin Fatt | (7) Daw Khin Su |
| (3) U Htin Gyi | (8) U Tun Aung Chain |
| (4) U Than Htut | (9) Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt |
| (5) U Maung Maung Tin | |

The discussion took place at 10.a.m. in the meeting room of the office of the State Law and Order Restoration Council.

On 31st May 1989 the State Law and Order Restoration Council issued order No. 25/89 forming the eleven-member Committee for the Compilation of Authentic Facts of Myanmar History. The following is the list of committee members:

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|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1. Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt | Chairman |
| 2. U Tin Ohn | Member |
| 3. U Htin Fatt | Member |
| 4. U Htin Gyi | Member |
| 5. U Than Htut | Member |
| 6. U Maung Maung Tin | Member |
| 7. Dr. Ohn Gaing | Member |
| 8. Daw Khin Su | Member |
| 9. Daw Tint Sein | Member |
| 10. U Hla Shein | Member |
| 11. U Tun Aung Chain | Secretary |

Since early times Myanmar history had been written on its various periods. There are chronicles, historical accounts, books and papers. The period from the end of World War II to the present (1945-1990) covers forty-five years- a period of nearly half a century. Events which had taken place during this contemporary period are current history which should be put on record lest they should be forgotten or lost. Only when current history is written the future of a nation can be built upon the lessons of the past.

When World War II was over, the British tried to restore the *status quo ante bellum* in Myanmar by bringing in the White Paper of 1945 drawn up during the war to be implemented in the post-war Myanmar. It was a scheme to re-introduce their colonial regime and was in no way any nearer to national independence. But when they realized that Myanmar nationalities were politically awakened and that the clock of history could not be turned back, the British had to accept the inevitability of granting independence. Bogyoke Aung San, the leader of the National Front comprising several political parties and groups, made known to the world the political awakening of Myanmar nationalities and their demand for complete independence by holding mass rallies, London talks, Panglong Conference and signing the Panglong Agreement. Later in 1947 a Constitution was drafted and

promulgated to form independent Myanmar into a Union. Such great historical events were preliminaries to Myanmar's contemporary history. But with the passage of time the present generation of Myanmar nationalities have gradually become oblivious of them. It is therefore imperative to put them on record first.

Accordingly two volumes of Myanmar contemporary history under the title *Myanmar Nationalities and the 1947 Constitution* have been published. They cover the period from the British colonial administration to the promulgation of the 1947 Constitution. There are ten chapters, dealing with such subjects as the failings of the British colonial administration, the political awakening of the Myanmar nationalities, the future of the Frontier Areas in the post-war period, the London Talks, the Panglong Conferences and Panglong Agreement, the Frontier Areas Committee of Enquiry, the political movement of the Kayin nationalities, and the drafting and adoption of the 1947 Constitution.

The Committee has been able to accomplish the assignment within the time schedule by dividing the task into five sections.

- Collection of historical data
- Compilation and writing
- Supervising
- Editing
- Publishing

(a) Collection of historical data was carried out by the Research Officers and their assistants, Department of History (Research) and teaching staff of the Departments of History and International Relations, Yangon University, (b) Compilation and writing by Senior Research Officers and Lecturers (c) Supervising by the Committee for the Compilation of Authentic Facts of Myanmar History (d) Editing by the Department of Myanmar Language Commission and (e) Publishing by the Committee and the Universities Press.

In the two volumes are some excerpts and quotations from historical sources which are considered important. No attempt has been made to change their spelling; they are quoted verbatim. As the title of the book denotes, the emphasis is on the constitutional history of the period.

The following are the sources from which data, documents, and photographs have been obtained:

- The Office of the State Law and Order Restoration Council
- The Library of the Office of the Pyithu Hluttaw
- Defence Services Historical Research Institute
- The National Archives Department
- The National Library
- The Central Institute of Public Services Library
- The Department of Information and Broadcasting
- The Library and Archives, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- The Universities' Central Library
- The Yangon University Library
- The Institute of Economics Library
- The Department of History (Research) Library, Yangon University
- The Department of History Library, Yangon University
- The British Library, London
- The India Office Library and Records, London
- The Public Records Office, London

The following have been interviewed:

- U Nu
- U Vam Ko Hau
- U Tin E

- U Htun Myint (Taunggyi)
- U Khun Saw
- U Khun Hti
- U Labang Grong
- U Saw Weregayaw
- U Saw Tun Sein
- Widuya Thakin Chit Maung
- U Sein (Kayah)
- Bohmu Aung
- U Pe Kin (Ambassador retired)
- Thakin Chit
- U Htin Fatt
- Bo Htun Lin
- Daw Khin Kyi Kyi
- U Sein Win (The Guardian)

The Committee expresses its debt of gratitude to the Chairman and members of the State Law and Order Restoration Council for their support , to the Minister of Education and staff of the Ministry of Education for their help, to those interviewed for their co-operation , to the material source centers for their kind permission to use their collections, to the compilers, researchers, editors and the Universities' Press for their team work.

This is an English version of the Myanmar work first published in 1990.

Dr. Khin Maung Nyunt
Chairman

Committee for the Compilation of
Authentic Facts of Myanmar History