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COMING OF THE “FUTURE KING”: BURMESE MINLAUNG EXPECTATIONS BEFORE AND DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR
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Burma’s Student Leader
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During the democracy uprising in 1988, Paw Oo Htun, whose nom de guerre, Min Ko Naing, means Conqueror of Kings, emerged as one of the movement’s most prominent student leaders. Together with other student leaders, he revived the umbrella students’ organization, the All Burma Federation of Student Unions. Today, while serving out a twenty year prison sentence, Min Ko Naing remains a symbol of the Burmese student movement. In this essay, interviews with close friends and student colleagues help document his story.

Before, there were a lot of past chairmen of the ABFSU who sacrificed themselves. What this means is that Min Ko Naing is not the personal Min Ko Naing. He works on behalf of the ABFSU whose chairman was once General Aung San.

– Aung Saw Oo

Burma’s university students have long been at the heart of political movements in Burma. Since 1920, when they boycotted the Rangoon University Act, students have played a role in all major political events in Burma. In particular, Burmese student unions were instrumental in training student leaders. Aung San, Burma’s most famous leader and independence hero, began his career as a student leader.

1 Megan Clymer is a graduate student at the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies in Baltimore, MD where she studies international affairs and civil society. She lived with the Burmese community on the Thai-Burma border for two months in 2000. The author would like to acknowledge the contribution of the following: Bo Kyi, Moe Thee Zun, Thu Rein, Min Zin, Aung Din, Hlwan Moe, Aung Saw Oo, Kyaw Thura, Brian Joseph, Burton Levin, Kenton and Marlee Clymer, Wayne Clymer, Ruth Arrowsmith, Hans-Dieter Evers, Myint Zan, Rajshekhar, and Scott Haddock.

2 For a helpful account of the development of Burma’s educational system under the British; an overview of the university boycott of 1920; and the strikes of 1936 and 1938, see Aye Kyaw (1993).
leader; his expulsion from Rangoon University, along with fellow student, Ko Nu, provided the catalyst for the 1936 student strikes. Likewise, many of Burma’s other well-known leaders—U Nu, Aung San’s successor, U Thant, former secretary-general of the United Nations, and Ne Win, Burma’s dictator for twenty-six years—were once student leaders.3 Students took an active role in the nation’s politics until 1962, when Ne Win took power in a coup. When university students protested the coup, the government responded by abolishing student unions and dynamited the student union building at the Rangoon Arts and Sciences University (RASU).

Following the events of 1962, overt student political activity lessened considerably but continued underground—below government and public radar screens—on a limited scale. Some students, including Aung Saw Oo, worked over the years to revive the student union but were unsuccessful. In 1974, around the time of U Thant’s funeral, student activity resurfaced for a short time. By that time, U Thant had fallen out of favor with Ne Win’s government and was seen by students as a symbol of Burmese commitment to the world community, democracy, and human rights.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the socialist policies introduced by Ne Win and the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) had disastrous effects on Burma’s economy. In 1987, Ne Win demonitized 75% of the nation’s bank notes, rendering three-quarters of the country’s currency worthless, and driving millions into poverty. That same year, Burma sought for and obtained United Nations status of a Least Developed Country, a move that assured Burma of economic assistance. One year later, on 13 March 1988, students protested in direct response to a teashop brawl involving students from Rangoon Institute of Technology (RIT) and the son of the chairman of the local People’s Council (Lintner 1990). These protests spread, and soon university student groups around the country resurfaced again in protest of twenty-six years of dictatorial rule and economic stagnation. The most famous of these groups was the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU). ABFSU, which had changed its name in 1952 from the All Burma Student

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3 For a personal account of students’ historical roles, see Maung Maung (1999) and Aung San Suu Kyi (1995).
Union (ABSU), had been founded in the wake of the 1936 student strikes. Aung San served as the organization’s second president.

It was during the democracy uprising in 1988, that Paw Oo Htun, under the nom de guerre, Min Ko Naing, “Conqueror of Kings,” emerged as one of the most prominent student leaders of the effort to bring about democratic reform in Burma. On August 28, 1988, when he and other student leaders officially revived the ABFSU, Min Ko Naing was chosen as its interim chairman. Arrested in March 1989, Min Ko Naing today serves out a twenty year prison term for his activities. Much as Aung San Suu Kyi, Aung San’s daughter and current leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) has come to symbolize democratic reform in Burma, Min Ko Naing has become a symbol of the student movement. In the Burmese community outside Burma, Min Ko Naing is held in high regard. His name has taken on an almost legendary status. Whether the stories about him are embellished or true, they reflect the way in which he is remembered.

While two works well document Burma’s 1988 democracy movement, little research exists on the younger leaders behind the movement. This essay documents Min Ko Naing’s role in the democracy uprising in 1988, drawing on eight interviews with his close friends, student colleagues, his personal secretary, and two prominent American officials. Interviews were conducted in Thailand in 2000 and in Washington DC in 2003.

Early Years
Paw Oo Htun was born on October 17, 1963, the year after Ne Win came to power in a bloodless coup, ending Burma’s experiment with parliamentary democracy. Paw Oo Htun’s family lived and worked in Thingangyun, a town outside Rangoon. At Thingangyun State High School No. 2, he was popular among his peers. An old friend

4 Also known in Burmese as “Ba Ka Tha.”
5 Before 1960, the ABFSU hosted five student congresses and named 31 chairmen. For a complete explanation of the origins and structure of the ABSU, see Aye Kyaw (1993).
6 For the best accounts of the 1988 student leaders, see Christina Fink, Living Silence (2001) and Bertil Lintner, Outrage (1990).
7 Those interviewed are: Bo Kyi, Moe Thee Zun, Thu Rein, Min Zin, Aung Saw Oo, Hiwan Moe, Aung Din, Burton Levin, and Stephan Solarz.
and colleague, Thu Rein, remembers Paw Oo Htun for his great sense of humor. His father once asked him why he was so popular, and Paw Oo Htun responded, “Because, the only thing I can do is make them laugh.”

Writing and drawing were Paw Oo Htun’s creative outlets, especially satirical cartoons. Moe Thee Zun, his childhood friend and life-long political cohort, recalls the effort they put into their first joint publication at the age of thirteen. It was difficult to make multiple copies because photocopiers or printers were not available for public use and Ne Win’s regime did not permit independent magazines or newspapers. Instead, they compiled one hand-written copy of their poetry, cartoons, and stories and passed it among their classmates. Moe Thee Zun explains how this was one of the many ways he felt the government restricted his personal life: “They broke down our creativity.”

After completing high school in 1983, Paw Oo Htun entered the Botataung Regional College in Rangoon, studying zoology. Two years later he transferred to Rangoon Arts and Sciences University where he was an active member of the arts club. During this time he also became increasingly interested in politics. Nearly a quarter century of deteriorating economic conditions in Burma had made it increasingly difficult to pay university fees by the 1980s and without a student union or other ways to express their grievances, students’ frustrations built. As early as 1984, four years before the democracy movement, he and Moe Thee Zun talked about resurrecting the abolished student union in discussions in the back rooms of tea houses out of the watchful eye of the secret police.

Political Awareness
In the late 1980s, Paw Oo Htun and Moe Thee Zun decided that they would seek ways to express their opposition to the military regime, and hoped that one day they could organize a political movement. Their first public attempt to do so was in 1985 during the Thingyan Water Festival. One event which takes place during the festival is Than Gyat, during which groups compete performing satirical skits and comedy sketches. That year, Paw Oo Htun’s troupe, “Goat (Big)

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8 For an extensive analysis of Burma’s economic history, see David I. Steinberg *Burma* (2001).
Mouth and All-Seeing Eye,” brazenly mocked the BSPP authorities. The troupe proved highly popular, winning several awards during the competition and, not surprisingly, caught the attention of the military intelligence (MI) who followed Paw Oo Htun and his friends home that evening.

For three years, Paw Oo Htun, Moe Thee Zun and a small group of friends continued to meet in secret to discuss their political activities. Among those to join the student political activists were Thu Rein and Bo Kyi. Bo Kyi later became Paw Oo Htun’s personal secretary, regularly accompanying him to student rallies and keeping his appointments.

University Life

“At the beginning, mostly they were just talking about the issues,” says Thu Rein. The students had no experience translating their political ambitions into action. “We just started to speak up by writing a poem, essay, or something like that. Just shared amongst ourselves, and then started to distribute it to friends to let them know the meaning of that poem.”

On September 5, 1987, when Ne Win demonetized three-fourths of the nation’s bank notes, universities and high schools closed and students returned home because they could not afford to take their university examinations. For Paw Oo Htun and his friends, the demonitization presented an opportunity for political action, a time when the public would respond to them. Thu Rein explains, “We realized that something would happen, a movement or a demonstration would come soon.” His friends say that Paw Oo Htun was optimistic that the Burmese public was ready for a movement, and that he hoped he and his friends could inspire them by reviving the traditional student role in political leadership.

March Movement, 1988

Their chance came after a demonstration on March 13, 1988 at the Rangoon Institute of Technology (RIT). Students there were angered by the police response to a teashop brawl the previous night (Lintner 1990:1–2). The riot police or Lon Htein responded ruthlessly to a crowd of student protesters, killing three students. The first, who would come to be known widely, was Phone Maw. Aung Din, who would later work with Paw Oo Htun, was an RIT student during the
March event. He and others were outraged by the shootings; they held meetings in their dormitories to determine how to respond and sent representatives to neighboring universities to garner support.

Three days later on March 16, as news of the deaths spread, a crowd of RASU students gathered on campus in support of the students at RIT. “At that time, nobody knew Min Ko Naing, who’s name was still Paw Oo Hun. He was one of the students, a man of the streets,” remembers Thu Rein, who was one of the 4000–5000 students that marched on the campus encouraging students to leave their classrooms and join the protest. In the heart of campus, Paw Oo Hun sat on his friend’s shoulders and addressed the students. In his first public speech, he explained the students’ historically important role in Burmese politics, requested that they speak out against the government’s mistreatment of the students, and discussed the need for a student union. “He was applauded by all the students, even the corridor of the halls were full. They threw off their handkerchiefs and their hats to show support,” recalls Thu Rein.

More students then addressed the crowd and voiced complaints about the BSPP’s use of violence. The speeches inspired the students and “they felt like they had to show support for the RIT students,” says Thu Rein, “that’s why they wanted to march to the RIT campus.” In retrospect, Thu Rein agonizes over the decision he and Paw Oo Hun made that day. Strategically, the route they chose to march to RIT was the worst one possible. The route was the most direct, but it isolated the students, denying them contact with the public, media exposure, and sadly, an escape route.

“Min Ko Naing and other students, including me, were at the forefront of the marching holding flags,” remembers Thu Rein. On their way, the students found themselves blocked by two armored personnel carriers and three military trucks filled with soldiers aiming their guns at them. “When we saw the barricade we were shocked,” remembers Thu Rein, “We had never seen anything like this before.”

With no where to go, Paw Oo Hun led the students in singing the national anthem and saluting Burmese heroes and other student activists from the past. Paw Oo Hun encouraged the students to chant, “The people’s soldiers are our soldiers,” and then he approached an army officer and negotiated with him for forty minutes to let the students pass. He told the soldiers, “We are...
brothers. We understand your position, but we have no guns, not even a needle, only schoolbooks. We are not harmful to you. Please let us go.”9 It seemed to Thu Rein that the peaceful protest influenced the soldiers. “They don’t want to do it, they don’t want to shoot them,” he thought. The last words he heard from the commander were, “Please go back to your classrooms. If you do not go back I will have no control over what will happen.”

Then, Paw Oo Htun and Thu Rein looked back and saw Lon Htein rushing the students from behind and beginning to beat them. Trapped on the road between the military in front, the riot police behind, and the tall walls of homes to their right, many of the students tried to flee to Inya Lake on their left. Leading to the lake is a narrow bridge called White Bridge. The students tried to flee over the bridge, up the small hill and into the lake. Students climbing up the bank to the lake were “dragged down the bank to the street,” says Thu Rein, then beaten with riot sticks. Those who escaped being beaten to death drowned in the lake as soldiers held their heads under water. Some young women were raped (Lintner 1990:71). “It was like a combat zone on the front line, there was a lot of blood on the streets and on the bank of Inya Lake,” remembers Thu Rein.

Paw Oo Htun was one of fifty or so students who survived by jumping over the walls of the houses, but he rushed back several times to assist the injured. Thu Rein witnessed the entire scene through the cracks in the wall, “I cried a lot and hid behind the wall, crying, crying, and crying again,” said Thu Rein, fighting back tears as he recalled the incident. The dead and injured were loaded onto trucks where an additional forty-one students died of suffocation (Smith 1999:2). The survivors were arrested and taken to Insein Prison in Rangoon. An hour after the incident the fire department arrived and washed the blood from the streets. “Only the students who were beaten, who were eyewitnesses, and the riot police know what really happened that day,” laments Thu Rein. “The stories and the poems written about that event really happened; they are not

9 Daw Kyawt, the mother of Maung Oo Kyaw, a student fatally wounded by the police in 1938, used similar words at his funeral, “My son had not even a needle as a weapon. Yet the government has brutally beaten him to death. How can I ever forgive…?” Aye Kyaw (1993:84).
exaggerated.” Shortly thereafter, the BSPP closed universities and declared martial law.

**Events of June 1988**

In the months following the March movement, with universities closed, student groups around Rangoon were regrouping in response to the massacre. Paw Oo Htun and his friends were planning secretly not only to protest, but to try to catalyze a movement that would shake the country. “I don't know why the government dared to reopen the school in June,” wonders Thu Rein, “the government miscalculated the feelings of the students.” Anticipating the reopening, Paw Oo Htun’s group prepared leaflets, urging students to back the pro-democracy struggle. Lacking photocopiers, the students improvised by handwriting their statements on wax paper and pressing ink through a filter onto a single piece of paper. Each student had the responsibility of making one thousand copies to distribute. “We were very poor at that time,” Moe Thee Zun recalls, “We had only commitment.”

Early on the day the university reopened, Paw Oo Htun and Thu Rein went to distribute leaflets on campus. Thu Rein was dismayed to see that the few students there looked helpless and scared. He turned to Paw Oo Htun and said, “The situation looks very sad and very weak. It doesn't seem like we can do anything.” Paw Oo Htun responded encouragingly, “Oh, it's the very beginning. Wait and see. I feel like they are going to make a movement, so don't feel like that.” To catch the students’ attention, Min Ko Naing took his colleagues’ bags filled with pamphlets and climbed to the fourth floor balcony of a nearby building. There, he turned over the bags, raining pamphlets over the students in the courtyard, and shouted that they should not forget the students who had died for their cause.10

As the students returned to campus over the next few days, Paw Oo Htun and his colleagues put their plan into action. Paw Oo Htun drew two posters of a young female high school student,

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10 Lintner (1990:73) describes a similar event; the person involved is masked, “a lone agitator” who announced the protests and “vanished as quickly and mysteriously as he appeared.” Could this have been Min Ko Naing?
Min Ko Naing, “Conqueror Of Kings”

covered in blood from wounds inflicted by the soldiers who beat her. Next to the blood dripping from her head he wrote, “Don't forget March 16; if we are cowed into submission and fail to rise up in time, then the country will be ruled by even more repressive rulers.” They collected some rice from students eating lunch and used it as glue to hang the posters on the wall of the recreation center. The reaction was tremendous. People began to look at the poster and shout student slogans. Military intelligence (MI) agents and professors came to the scene and others began to give protest speeches from a table. “There were some tall shady trees, and Paw Oo Htun and I sat there watching [the response].” Thus Rein recalls.

The speeches continued, attracting more students and civilians to the university. The public outpouring of support Paw Oo Htun hoped for had begun. With the memories of the March movement still fresh in their minds, student leaders kept the movement in the campus, giving speeches in the day and peacefully returning home at night. News of the demonstrations spread, and soon university and high school students, monks, and professors from all over the country came to RASU. Paw Oo Htun spent much of his time during the protests doing what Aung Din was doing, going into classrooms trying to convince students to join them outside with words like, “Please don’t stay here in the classroom. We can’t continue with our education now. Please join with us.” Later, Paw Oo Htun tried to lock all the classroom doors to prevent teachers from holding classes.

During the week of speech making, the students realized they needed to focus the protest’s goals. Informal student groups had “coalesced sporadically in isolation” (Lintner 1990:74), since the March incident. Now faced with protesting collectively, they struggled for a unified voice. Some groups wanted to focus only on expanding students’ rights, but Paw Oo Htun wanted to talk, “not just about the students, but also about the people, the workers, the grassroots from all classes, and how they are exploited in their respective sectors,” says Thu Rein. In a public vote, metered by applause, the students decided that democracy, and the full achievement of human rights in Burma, would be their fighting cause. They issued four demands to the government: (1) the release of all arrested students; (2) permission for expelled students to return to classes; (3) disclosure of and punishment for those responsible for
the incidents on March 13 and 16; and (4) the complete abolition of the Ne Win government.

Political activity continued for over a week and on the June 20 the government closed the universities for a second time. Undeterred, the students continued their speeches in the streets, marching through the city, so that, as Thu Rein says, “everyone would know if something happens to them, so that they [would] send a message to the world.” They public supported them, “Thousands of people came out from their homes and wished them success,” says Thu Rein. The students say they felt invincible that day. But public support could not shield them from the government’s violence, and these demonstrations also ended in bloodshed.

Younger students particularly were excited to be active in the movement, and high school students, some only fourteen or fifteen years old, were often at the forefront of the marching. Thu Rein recalls one incident when the protesters encountered the riot police in June. Unlike the March 16 incident by Inya Lake, “this time they didn’t come down and beat them. The Lon Htein just came and hit [the high school students] with the truck.” Thu Rein witnessed three students crushed as the truck rammed the crowd. Approximately 120 people, both civilians and police, died on June 21 (Lintner 1990:74).

Following the protests, the government declared a ban on “gathering, making speeches, marching in procession, agitation, exhortation, demonstrations and causing disturbances,” and imposed a curfew from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. (Lintner 1990:78). Again, Paw Oo Htun’s group met to plan. The student activists attempted to solidify pro-democracy networks across the country by dispatching supporters throughout Burma to report to their local provinces details of events that were not reported in the national papers.

A Season of Protest
On July 7, the BSPP announced an emergency congress and the release of the imprisoned student activists. According to Thu Rein, Paw Oo Htun and the student activists were excited by this political activity and decided to issue a written statement in the name of the outlawed student group, the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU). “The name ABFSU was quite famous,” says Aung Din, “and was a very effective way to organize the people.” The name conjured up images of Aung San and the 1936 student strike, which
was the catalyst for the nationalist movement in Burma (Aye Kyaw, 1993). The statement was the first of five issued over the course of the next few weeks and described the students’ perspective on the country’s economic hardship, explained the history of student movements in Burma, and encouraged various professional groups to join the movement. The students hoped these statements would galvanize public support for a general strike planned for the auspicious date, August 8, 1988.

Paw Oo Htun wrote the statement, but did not want to sign his real name. He signed the statement “Min Ko Naing,” or “Conqueror of Kings,” to represent the group of student activists. The name caught the public’s attention. There was “no need to explain the name; they got the message,” says Thu Rein. Initially, many student leaders called themselves Min Ko Naing to confuse the authorities, but as the movement grew, it was soon only used for Paw Oo Htun. Today, it is how most people refer to him. With the help of a former student working at a United Nations office, students were able to make 120 copies of the statement. “The next morning we went to the bus station and put five copies or three copies in the buses as they were about to leave,” remembers Thu Rein. Travelers read the statements, wrote their own copies, and passed them on so that word rapidly spread through the country.

The students were shocked when, after twenty-six years in power, General Ne Win suddenly resigned on July 23 at an emergency conference, seemingly in response to their protests. Reactions were mixed. While Ne Win had called for a national referendum to choose between a single or multi-party system, he had also transferred power to U Sein Lwin, who had given the order to dynamite the student union building in 1962. The students felt that Ne Win was still controlling the country behind the scenes. Despite Ne Win’s concession to offer a national referendum, he warned the protesters, “I have to inform the people throughout the country that when the army shoots, it shoots to hit, it does not fire in the air to

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11 According to its constitution, written in 1936, the ABSU’s aims were to “nurture the spirit of cooperation among students within and without Burma, to foster the spirit of independence, to create a sense of duty and responsibility, and to work for students’ rights peacefully (Aye Kyaw 1993:75).”
scare” (British Broadcasting Corporation 1988). Paw Oo Htun quickly issued a statement the next day “to organize the army to join the movement.”

8-8-88
The night before the general strike of August 1988, Min Ko Naing and other student leaders debated whether or not it should be canceled. They were concerned about asking the students to again put their lives at risk. After deliberation, the student leaders agreed to move ahead. That evening, BBC correspondent Christopher Gunness interviewed four students from RASU, possibly including Min Ko Naing (Gunness, letter to author, June 2003). Thu Rein says that interview “was a call to all people” to take to the streets. “That interview made the people believe” that the strike would really happen, he says.

During the general strike, tens of thousands of demonstrators across the country took to the streets. Protesters in Rangoon marched to the center of the city where the crowd gathered to listen to speeches. Min Ko Naing addressed 10,000 protestors outside the U.S. Embassy. “America was the country we felt could help us,” says Thu Rein. The students felt that they needed to reach out to the international community for support, that “otherwise, we would fail,” says Thu Rein. Hoping that their message would be broadcast across the world, Min Ko Naing said:

We, the people of Burma, have had to live without human dignity for twenty-six years under oppressive rule. We must end the dictatorial rule in our country. Only “people power” can bring down the repressive rulers. In twenty-six years, Burma has become one of the poorest countries in the world. The worst thing is that our society is so corrupt that we have lost our self-esteem and values. If we want to enjoy the same rights as people in other countries, we have to be disciplined, united, and brave enough to stand up to dictators. Let's

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12 Several students used the name Min Ko Naing in July and August. Gunness says he interviewed him, but other students say it was another student using his name.
express our suffering and demands. Nothing is going to stop us from achieving peace and justice in our country.  

The next morning, student leaders moved around the city trying to recruit others to join the protest. While Moe Thee Zun went to a monastery and Aung Din brought protesters from his township of South Okklapa, Min Ko Naing went to the sea port to organize the workers. “He chose that place because it was filled with people from the lower classes, people who were very poor conducting heavy labor,” explains Bo Kyi. Approximately fifty workers joined Min Ko Naing that morning, but more joined after he gave a speech in front of the port. As the day progressed, Thu Rein remembers seeing sign boards removed from teashop and store windows, wiped clean, and rewritten with the letters of the student union—ABFSU. Students continued marching with their new banners, heading toward city hall, where they planned to meet at noon.

As the group made its way to the Shwedagon Pagoda, Burma’s most sacred monument, the army confronted them. The military had been ordered to shoot on sight and the demonstrators panicked. Over the next five days of protests, an estimated three thousand people were killed (Fink 2001:56). Following the protests, General Sein Lwin, known to the students as the “the Butcher,” stepped down on August 12. On August 19, the BSPP chose Dr Maung Maung as its new Chairman, the Pyithu Hluttaw (People’s Assembly) electing him President the following day. As Burmese society became increasingly chaotic, power began to slip from the government's control. BSPP members held card-burning ceremonies as they resigned en masse and joined the demonstrations. Citizens began to organize themselves, producing independent organizations, newspapers, and magazines across the country.

A Student Union
Aung San Suu Kyi initially played no role in the democracy movement. She had first returned to Burma to care for her ailing mother. However, after witnessing the 8-8-88 uprisings, and with her father’s memory in mind, she was unable to remain uninvolved.

13 Paraphrased from interviews.
Initially, she put out a statement calling for an independent committee to oversee multi-party elections. Encouraged by others, on August 26 she addressed more than half a million people in front of the Shwedagon Pagoda, characterizing the national crisis as “the second struggle for independence.” Suu Kyi won the public’s immediate acceptance and drew international attention. Her presence added momentum and hope to the democracy movement; she was a leader on whom the people could focus their hope for fundamental change (Lintner 1990:109, 115–116). Several former military leaders, including U Tin Oo, U Aung Gyi, and U Nu, came out in public support of Aung San Suu Kyi.

At her speech, Min Ko Naing invited leaders of the various student groups, including Minzayya of the All Myanmar Federation of Student Unions (AMFSU) and Maung Maung Kyaw from the Burma Youth Liberation Front (BYLF), to a meeting the following day to plan the first student congress in twenty six years. Aung Saw Oo, a student from the 1970s generation, says he was excited when he heard about it. His generation of students “were always trying to [revive] the ABFSU, but then it was not like it was in 1988. The people were not ready in the 1970s, the political situation was not mature then.” While many student groups existed in Burma, and were represented at the meeting, the ABFSU was considered the most dominant because it was well known and intended to “unite all the students within Burma under one banner (Aye Kyaw 1993:63).” The organization was originally pyramidal in structure, with students organized at the township, district, and national levels. At the meeting, the students decided Min Ko Naing should be the temporary chairman of the ABFSU until student elections could be held. He was chosen because of his charisma, “because he is very helpful and flexible, polite and not aggressive, and is respected by all the people,” says Aung Saw Oo. He was also chosen “because of his name,” says Aung Din, “he is really famous among the people, and most people were familiar with Min Ko Naing.”

14 Editor’s note: August 8, 1988 was the anniversary of the 1938 uprising which is said to have marked the beginning of the end of British Colonial rule.
On the following day, August 28, 1988, the ABFSU hosted the congress on the RASU campus. Thousands of people attended. As Chairman, Min Ko Naing gave the opening address, which according to Thu Rein, “everyone liked;” he received “the loudest applause from the audience.” Min Ko Naing described a metaphorical wall built by the BSPP in the 1962 coup. “In the beginning the wall was too thick—we could not destroy it,” he said. “But, from 1962 to 1988 our older brothers and sisters have been trying to destroy this wall. More and more cracks have appeared in the wall since that day in 1962. Now the wall is weak enough. If we unite, and push down the wall, it will totally crumble and fall down.”

Min Ko Naing closed with his poem entitled “Faith.” “He spoke excitedly,” remembers Thu Rein. As he read each line of the poem, the crowed repeated after him:

Figure 1. Paw Oo Htun in 1989
Min Ko Naing, “Conqueror Of Kings”

Faith

In memory of our comrades,
Who have sacrificed their lives for our national cause,
I make this pledge of faith.

In this unfinished revolution,
Should my blood be not red enough,
Splash your blood over me
As a potion to make me brave.

In this unfinished revolution,
Should my soul be gripped with fear,
Be hesitant and lack courage,
Let your souls enter into mine
And steer me along.

In this unfinished revolution,
Should I
Become traitor to our proud people
And act inconsiderately and recklessly
With your firm
Peacock hands
Crush and punish me.

In this unfinished revolution,
Should I have to sacrifice my life half-way
It is no sorrow to leave this world.
As a duty fulfilled, I will believe
My soul enhanced with joy,
And holding up our peacock flag flapping in the wind
I will come to where you are.
Welcome me with open arms.  

Min Ko Naing

15 Original translation by Kyaw Thura, with thanks to two anonymous reviewers for revisions.
“I still hear those words,” says Thu Rein. As they chanted his poem, Min Ko Naing made an oath to the memory of the students who had sacrificed their lives for democracy, and pledged to the people before him that he would never give up their fight until democracy and human rights were restored to the people. “The people loved that speech,” says Thu Rein, and it marked the time when “even the old politicians recognized him as a student leader.” The crowd left the meeting singing the union song and carrying the union flag. Supporters joined them outside, and the streets became full with the people of the city.

A Few Crucial Weeks
In the following weeks, Min Ko Naing and the student leaders pushed to create consensus in the movement. They had been able to revive the national student union, but, they realized, greater efforts would be required to reform the government. There were many discussions between the students and Aung San Suu Kyi, other members of her party, various opposition groups, and diplomatic representatives of other countries. “Min Ko Naing went to houses, demonstrations, and meetings every day,” remembers Hlwan Moe, who worked with Min Ko Naing for one month in August and September 1988 at the student headquarters.

Power appeared to be slipping from the military’s grasp. A chaotic, anarchical situation ensued when prison doors were opened, transportation halted, and communication made more difficult. The military’s actions were perhaps a message to the population that only the military could ensure the nation’s safety. Students and citizens formed groups to try to control the situation by providing assistance and building support networks among schools, hospitals, and rural communities. Government buildings, community centers, and universities became organization centers for pro-democracy groups, a presence that somewhat brought calm. “People would come to us to help them with their domestic problems,” says Hlwan Moe. “We were kind of like the government at the time.”

On September 11, 1988, the government announced that it would skip the national referendum and move straight into multi-party elections.¹⁶ Min Ko Naing and the students were divided

between those that thought they should participate in the elections and those that supported the formation of an interim government. Like most students, Min Ko Naing supported an interim government and believed that a constitution must be written and political prisoners released before elections could take place. This is what he told US Representative Stephen J. Solarz, then Chairman of the House Foreign Relations subcommittee for Asian and Pacific Affairs, when he met with him on September 4, 1988 (“Min Ko Naing: Conqueror of Kings” 1999). Solarz remembers he was impressed by the “overwhelming majority of the people” who wanted change in Burma (Solarz, interview with author, Washington DC, July 2003).

On September 12, a large gathering of people congregated in front of Rangoon’s city hall to support the formation of an interim government. Tension escalated when the military arrived, threatening to shoot if the crowd did not disperse. “U Tin Oo and U Aung Gyi and all figures came to try to persuade them [to remain peaceful],” says Thu Rein, “but only when Min Ko Naing arrived was a crisis averted. The people listened to him appeal to the them very coolly, and peacefully” to refrain from using violence. “Our noble desires must be brought forth through peaceful means. Try to restrain your anger and hatred.” His friends say that within fifteen minutes, the crowd was calm and in control.

“He was good at giving speeches, really good,” remembers Min Zin, who was a high school student who worked with Min Ko Naing. “He was very moving, touching. He would face the soldiers and speak to them, and sometimes walk down and talk to them. ‘Why do we all suffer? Why are you guys so manipulated?’ he would ask.” Min Zin says Min Ko Naing was daring, and able to reach out to the soldiers in a way that others could not. Some members of the army were even persuaded to leave their ranks and join the protesters after he spoke.

In September 1988, the army was cracking under the pressure and the country began to split at the seams. According to then U.S. Ambassador to Burma, Burton Levin and to Stephan Solarz, in a meeting with Dr. Maung Maung, then President of less than a month, the latter asked what they would do in his position (Levin, telephone interview with author, July 2003; Solarz, interview with author, Washington DC, July 2003). Levin said that he would step down,
and appoint a “respectable group of people known for their integrity,” to lead the country until elections were held.\textsuperscript{17}

The leaders of the democracy movement were also in the midst of heated debates. Some leaders felt pushing for an interim government would only lead to further reactionary violence by the military. Some, like former Prime Minister U Nu, thought that if they did not act quickly, the military would seize the opportunity to resume power. He had already declared a parallel government, but could not garner enough support from other leaders to reach a consensus.\textsuperscript{18} Thu Rein says that he still does not completely understand what transpired among the top five leaders. “If the leaders, these five leaders\textsuperscript{19} … everyone decided that if they could make an agreement, timely, the army would stand behind those leaders. History may have changed.” Many of the student leaders this author interviewed still feel that the failure to push for an interim government was a critical mistake. Whatever the outcome would have been, it is true that everything changed for the worse the next day.

On September 18, the military government restored itself to power in a bloody coup, establishing itself as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), and leaving hundreds dead (Fink 2001:62). Students insist that the true numbers are considerably higher. Hlwan Moe participated in a demonstration at the Minister’s Office in downtown Rangoon the day after the coup. “It was really bad. I remember seeing people diving into the ditch by the road to keep safe. Min Ko Naing wasn’t there, he was in hiding because it was a serious situation and the MI were looking for him.”

SLORC abolished all state institutions, including the judiciary. A curfew was imposed and meetings of more than five persons banned; the secret police began arresting anyone they suspected of

\textsuperscript{17} According to Levin (telephone interview with author, July 2003), Levin said to Solarz as they walked out of the meeting, “That’s the first time I’ve told a president to resign.” Solarz confirms the story.

\textsuperscript{18} According to Lintner (1990:125-126), leaders of the opposition had not agreed on an interim government, and were upset when he made the announcement. Burton Levin (telephone interview with author, 2003) says the U.S. would not have recognized U Nu’s parallel government.

\textsuperscript{19} The five leaders were Aung San Suu Kyi, U Nu, Bo Yan Naing, U Tin Oo, and Aung Gyi. Moe Thee Zun represented the students at the meeting.
undermining the government. Despite these restrictions, SLORC decided to follow through with elections, even offering incentives—telephone lines, petrol, and permission to open offices—to political parties to begin their campaigns (Fink 2001:64). The BSPP renamed and reconstituted itself as the National Unity Party (NUP). Why SLORC openly supported the formation of other political parties is unclear. Perhaps it hoped that under the restrictions, no viable opposition would appear, or that the hundreds of political parties would split the vote and allow the NUP to claim victory. Perhaps they believed that former members of Ne Win's party and military personnel would support them. However, their calculations were far from correct. Most political parties formed to support Aung San Suu Kyi’s party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) and never even fielded candidates. The NLD emerged at the forefront of the campaign.

The Campaign and Election, 1988-9

Fearing for his personal safety, Min Ko Naing went underground to organize and campaign for the NLD. Suspicious of SLORC’s promise for free and fair elections, the ABSFU student activists tried to push more effectively for an interim government. The students resolved to split into three groups to promote democracy in Burma. This three-pronged approach was as follows.

(1) The Democratic Party for a New Society (DPNS) chaired by Moe Thee Zun was the official student political party. The DPNS worked openly as a political party, but did not field a candidate. The students used the DPNS as a platform to spread the messages of the ABFSU and support the NLD.

(2) They would support the All Burma Students Democratic Front (ABSDF), which included approximately 10,000 students and activists that had fled during 1988–89 to the Thai-Burma border area, and with the help of the Karen National Union, formed an armed opposition to SLORC.

(3) Min Ko Naing remained in the country as chairperson of the third group, the ABSFU student union, and continued to lead the secret work of organizing the underground opposition. Using the
DPNS as a platform to present the positions of the ABSFU, Min Ko Naing and his colleagues worked within Rangoon to gain support for the NLD vote. His rare public appearances drew large crowds.

Min Zin would travel with Min Ko Naing as much as three hours after speeches, changing from brightly colored to less conspicuous clothing to avoid arrest. They never tired of the work, nor did they feel repetitive in their statements. “No, in Burma you could see the achievements, you could sense immediately what you had done. We would give a speech one day and the regime would react angrily in the paper the next. We didn't feel frustrat[ed].” In one speech, Min Ko Naing declared:

The only government we [the ABFSU] will recognize is a people’s government elected by the people and formed with the people’s participation. The armed forces should be made up of public servants that are responsible for defense. The state power and the destiny of the state should lie in the hands of the people. Avoiding the issue without seeking and solving the real cause of the mass uprising will not enable future generations to escape from this cycle (British Broadcasting Corporation, 1989).

In hiding and always on the move, Min Ko Naing and his supporters faced many obstacles in organizing and gaining support for the pro-democratic forces. “People came to the places where we were, especially to see and listen to Min Ko Naing. People openly encouraged us by daring to gather at these places, clapping their hands, chanting the slogans, and protecting us from the military,” says Aung Din, who worked with Min Ko Naing on at least twenty campaigns in Rangoon and Pegu. “We spoke during the days and went into hiding at nights. After the speaking events, thousands of people surrounded us so that we could disappear safely even in the presence of the military intelligence.” Aung Saw Oo and U Hla Shwe, the older generation of students, would sometimes run into Min Ko Naing while hiding in the night. “We would find ourselves hiding in the same place, but we would never stay there for the
whole night, only for a few minutes,” says Aung Saw Oo, “Then he would go one way, and I would go another.”

During the year, as hiding became more dangerous for Min Ko Naing, some students encouraged him to flee to the Thai-Burma border and take refuge with the student army. However, according to Aung Din he refused. “I want to stay in Burma,” he said, “I want to stay with the people, even if it is very risky.” During this period there were conflicts among the students and other student groups, ethnic groups, and rural groups about how to best continue with the movement under the government’s heavy restrictions. Min Zin recalls, “Min Ko Naing didn’t take part in one fight or another; he just tried to facilitate the discussion to get some acceptable results.” Min Zin adds that the students followed Min Ko Naing’s lead because “he was not that ideological—he was charming [and] charismatic.”

The funeral of Daw Khin Kyi’s, Aung San’s widow and Aung San Suu Kyi’s mother, marked one occasion that brought the various student groups together. Min Ko Naing and Aung Din were two students who formed the “People’s Funeral Committee” to coordinate the public’s homage of Daw Khin Kyi. The Committee demanded that the government permit the people to march in the funeral procession without restriction and lift the ban on gatherings of more than five people. During the funeral procession on January 2, 1989, Min Ko Naing carried the student’s flag with the peacock emblem as he walked among the approximately 50,000 people that followed Daw Khin Kyi’s coffin twenty miles through the streets. The military confronted the students on three occasions as they marched, “but they didn’t try too hard to stop us,” says Aung Din. Min Ko Naing appeared from the crowd and appealed to the troops to let the peaceful procession pass. He told them, “You will notice that we, the people, are much [greater] than you. So, we can do whatever we like, but we don't want to [cause you] any violence, we just want to pay our last respects to the mother of our country. The people [do not] want to see your green uniforms [here], so please withdraw.” Aung Din says “After speaking with Min Ko Naing and us, they let us go.” After the funeral, Min Ko Naing addressed the crowd. “We asked the people to continue to fight for democracy and human rights. We asked people to honor our friends who were killed brutally during the crackdown,” says Aung Din.
On March 13, 1989 on the anniversary of the death Phone Maw, the first student killed in the pro-democracy movement, Min Ko Naing made another public address to two thousand students. The ABFSU, which had designated this day as “Human Rights Day of Burma,” asked the people to “begin a civil disobedience campaign to protest the unfair laws and orders,” says Aung Din. “We intended to prove that we, the people of Burma were worthy of democracy.” Members of the ABFSU, NLD Youth, and the DPNS organized the memorial. Several prominent leaders, including U Nu, Aung San Suu Kyi, and representatives of international embassies attended the event at the RIT. Thu Rein says that Min Ko Naing called for change without asserting personal political ambition. “He didn’t see himself as a political leader, he didn’t see himself becoming prime minister or president or something like that. He saw himself as an activist to lead these changes, to lay the foundation for a democratic Burma.”

The next day, the students tried to hold another ceremony, but the army again confronted them. “The army demanded that we stop the ceremony, but Min Ko Naing could not accept that,” explains Bo Kyi. “Min Ko Naing, Moe Thee Zun, some other students and I all linked arms in front of the crowd, forming a barrier between the army and the students. Then Min Ko Naing looked at the commander and slapped his gun down, because they aimed their guns at us.” The military asked Min Ko Naing to tell the students to go home. He responded, “I can control this group and all these people. Now, we are conducting this ceremony very peacefully. Don’t disturb us. You have guns. We don’t have guns. If you disturb us, there will be violence.” Bo Kyi remembers, “I was shaking because I could see the guns right in front of us. But Min Ko Naing was very strong and calm. I couldn’t find any fear in his eyes. And the soldiers didn’t fire—and the commander told them to retreat. I think the soldiers didn’t fire because of Min Ko Naing’s face,” Bo Kyi speculates. The students were given half an hour to complete their ceremony. As the soldiers walked away, the students joyfully yelled, “The soldiers are the people’s soldiers! We love the soldiers!”

Two days later Min Ko Naing gave what was to be his last public address to thousands of people that gathered at Aung San Suu Kyi’s compound to commemorate Red Bridge Day and the students killed at Inya Lake. He criticized the Ne Win government and their
brutal response to the democratic uprising over the course of the year. He also described his experience a year earlier at the massacre by the lake. Bo Kyi says, “His description was really sad and we were all weeping as we heard it.” On March 23, Min Ko Naing chaired a meeting of the ABFSU at Aung San Suu Kyi’s compound and was in the process of planning a public rally for Armed Forces Day (27 March). The meeting ended at 3:00 p.m. By 4:00 p.m., two students returned to the compound, in tears. Aung Din recalls, “both of them were frustrated and frightened, their clothes were torn and dirty. Min Ko Naing was not with them. We all realized the fate of our leader. We were shocked and we wept.”

The March Arrest
Bo Kyi was with Min Ko Naing when he was arrested. “We knew that many intelligence people were following us and [they] knew what we were doing. We had no way to hide,” he says. The young men decided to head back to their homes. There were four or five MI in civilian clothing following them. Min Ko Naing looked at Bo Kyi, and told him to run if he had the opportunity. “If both of us were arrested, no one would know what happened,” Bo Kyi explains, “He chose me because I was a football player when I was in the university. He gave me some very important papers and evidence and I put them in my bag.” When the MI got close, “they seized all of us by the collars of our shirts.” Suddenly, about twenty-five more MI surrounded them; there were more near them than they had estimated. “Min Ko Naing stared the MI down, and they were shocked.” He told them, “I will follow you, just give me a chance to speak with the people for a while. Otherwise I cannot follow you.” The MI agreed to let him speak.

Min Ko Naing walked to an apartment building nearby and called out to the people watching, “I am Min Ko Naing and I am the chairperson of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions. Now, the military intelligence is arresting me. I am not sure how many years they will imprison me. They might kill us. But that is not important to me. If Min Ko Naing physically dies, another Min Ko Naing will appear to take his place. Whether or not I die is not important. What is important is that we achieve our goal.” As Min Ko Naing addressed the people Bo Kyi started running, returning to the NLD to inform them of Min Ko Naing’s arrest. Another student
also ran away. When he arrived at the NLD office, he reported that Min Ko Naing had refused to get into the police van, that the MI had been forced to drag him. Other eyewitnesses similarly reported that Min Ko Naing was treated roughly at the arrest, that the MI beat and stepped on him as they forced him to lie down on the van floor, and as they slapped him the MI taunted him with words like, “Are you the leader of the students now?”

“As soon as he, Min Ko Naing, was arrested, Aung San Suu Kyi issued a statement to denounce the government,” remembers Thu Rein. “All the parties and organizations demand(ed) that they release Min Ko Naing unconditionally.” In the first stage of his confinement, Min Ko Naing was detained without trial under Article 10(a) of the State Protection Act for over two and a half years. He was then charged by a military court under Section 5(j) of the 1950 Emergency Provisions Act for having delivered anti-government speeches and instigating unrest, and sentenced to twenty years imprisonment, including hard labor. To date, fourteen of those years have been served in solitary confinement. In 1993, SLORC issued Order No. 1/93 giving an amnesty to prisoners in the form of reduced sentences: all death sentences were reduced to life; life sentences to fifteen years; and sentences from fifteen or more years to ten years. While according to this amnesty, Min Ko Naing would have served his term, he remains in prison. While the military has offered to release Min Ko Naing on condition that he sign a contract saying he will no longer participate in political activities, Min Ko Naing has refused.

Prison “Life”

In 1995, Professor Yozo Yokota, Special Rapporteur to the United Nations, met and spoke with Min Ko Naing at Insein Prison (“Min Ko Naing: Conqueror of Kings,” March 1999). The conversation was short; Yokota reported that Min Ko Naing was nervous and thin

\[\text{\textsuperscript{20}}\text{1950 Emergency Provisions Act: March 9, 1950, 5(j): He who causes or intends to disrupt the morality or the behavior of a group of people or the general public, or to disrupt the security or the reconstruction of stability of the Union.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{21}}\text{According to Min Lwin Oo from the Burma Lawyers Council, Order No. 1/93 applied to both political and criminal prisoners.}\]
but otherwise in good health. Min Ko Naing reported that he was transferred to that cell for the meeting, that he was bored, and wished he was permitted to read religious books. The same year, U.S. Congressional representative Bill Richardson met with Min Ko Naing and Aung San Suu Kyi, who was under house arrest. In a deal worked out with the Burmese government, Richardson offered Min Ko Naing the opportunity to study in the United States, with protection as a refugee. Min Ko Naing would not agree. Thu Rein believes Min Ko Naing “will not break his commitment to the movement, and to his people, by gaining his individual freedom. He will sacrifice his life for the people.” Min Ko Naing feels that “if he goes out [of the country] the whole movement will fail.” Instead, Min Ko Naing requested Richardson to tell his supporters not to abandon their struggle.

The MI finally caught up with Bo Kyi, and in 1996 while imprisoned, he saw Min Ko Naing two times during family visits. Prisoners had to file through a series of checkpoints before they were allowed to meet with their families, and it was at one of these checkpoints that Bo Kyi saw his friend for the first time in seven years. On the way, his head was covered with a dark cloth (his head was always covered when he was outside), but he could see because he had two eye-holes cut out of the cloth. However, he was not allowed to say anything.

While we were waiting, we had only about two minutes to see each other. We couldn’t talk, but we could speak the international language of signing and gestures. He gave me a thumbs-up, I translated that to mean that his fighting spirit was still very good. So, I also gave him a thumbs-up. Then, he held his hands in front of his eyes, “Can you read?” I shook my head, “No.” He didn’t have to wait to see his family, but I did because there were many people in the room. So, I had a chance to run over to where he was sitting. I remained long enough to hear Min Ko Naing say, “Don’t give up your beliefs,” to which I responded, “I’ll try.”

Paraphrased from interviews.
Other information leaked out over the years reports that Min Ko Naing is subject to torture and beatings. In one account, he was forced to stand in water for two weeks until he eventually collapsed and as a result lost all feeling in his left foot. Many also believe he is suffering from a gastric ulcer and are concerned about his mental health after sustained periods of solitary confinement. However, Min Zin believes he will endure the brutality he faces each day, “With his courage, he can bear anything,” says Min Zin, “I think that he feels he can sacrifice himself for the people, his people, to do something for them.” Min Ko Naing was transferred from Insein Prison to Sittwe Prison in Arakan State, in the far western region of Burma, making it almost impossible for his family to travel to visit him more than two times a year. Aung Saw Oo says when his family visits they write down the poems he recites and display them in their home.

In a message to his supporters, Min Ko Naing told them to bring him news, not food, and encouraged them to continue their struggle, a request which has become the core of the present campaign for his release.\textsuperscript{23} “One of the reasons that the Daw Aung San Suu Kyi [initially] was released was because of international pressure. We need much more of that kind of support and sympathy and pressure from the international community for Min Ko Naing,” says Thu Rein. The Conqueror of Kings has indeed gained greater international attention. In 1999, he was awarded the John Humphrey Freedom Award by the International Center for Human Rights and Democratic Development in Canada. In 2000 he was awarded the Czech Homo Homini Award by the People in Need Foundation in the Czech Republic. In 2001, was granted the Norwegian Student Peace Prize.

Aung San Suu Kyi’s release from nineteen months of house arrest on May 6, 2002 gave many a reason to hope for freedom for the remaining political prisoners. On the day of her release, Aung San Suu Kyi told a news conference that the release of political prisoners was one of her priorities, “I and my party have been disappointed by the slow rate of the release of political prisoners. Their release is not only important in humanitarian terms but also political terms” (Mydans May 7, 2002). The following day, Burmese

government spokesman, Col. Hla Min released a statement saying that Burma’s leaders would “recommit ourselves to allowing all of our citizens to participate freely in the life of our political process” and that that day represented “a new page for the people of Myanmar” (Lovering May 7, 2002). When no substantive dialogue developed between the NLD and the government, however, any hope for Min Ko Naing’s freedom quickly diminished. The events of May 30, 2003, and the subsequent arrests of scores of NLD members, suggest that the government will continue to arrest anyone it fears will undermine its power.

Min Ko Naing’s prison sentence and continued detention drives home a message that the government, not the students, is the ultimate arbiter of power. The military’s use of violence, threats of imprisonment, and the closure of the universities for extended periods since 1988 has nearly silenced the student voice. Yet these actions also illustrate the fear the government has of its student leaders. Burma’s student unions once provided important lessons in leadership as evidenced by the number of political leaders that emerged from them. Denial of this leadership training is a primary political consequence of the government’s ban on student unions. Still, when the consistency with which Burma’s students have participated in its politics cannot be denied, and if new Min Ko Naings can always be relied on to appear, in the resolution of this unfinished revolution, it may be that ultimately both are right. It is not important who, strong and calm, looks down the gun, but who lays down the gun to arbitrate the unbroken cycle.

Terms:
Bo: military commander
Daw: an honorific used to address an adult female
Ko: Burmese form of address to a young male
Kyat: monetary unit in Burma
Lon Htein: Riot police
Ma: Burmese form of address to a young female
Pyithu Hluttaw: People’s Assembly
Tatmadaw: Burmese Army
U: an honorific used to address an adult male
**Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ABSDF: All Burma Students' Democratic Front  
ABFSU: All Burma Federation of Student Unions  
AMFSU: All Myanmar Federation of Student Unions  
BSPP: Burma Socialist Programme Party  
BYLF: Burma Youth Liberation Front  
DPNS: Democratic Party for a New Society  
SLORC: State Law and Order Restoration Council  
MI: Military Intelligence  
NLD: National League for Democracy  
RASU: Rangoon Arts and Sciences University  
RIT: Rangoon Institute of Technology  
SPDC: State Peace and Development Council

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