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INSIDE

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JAMES RUSSELL BROWNWOOD



Release the silenced voice of democracy

Emergence of the 1990 democracy is the duty of the dictatorial junta government of Myanmar Naing-Ngan.

To vote or NO vote

James Russell Brownwood

Since mid April 2008 more and more articles appear in the NLM about Than Shwe and wife (and junta fellows) visiting all kinds of institutions, offering (small) money and "praying" to Buddha. They obviously are attempting to become more popular in the eyes of the people.

Crooked talk

In the "New Light of Myanmar" of 21 April 2008 "a retired civil servant" tries to explain the justification of 25% of the seats in a new parliament for the military. The servant indicates that the 25% are for "handl[ing] the situation of the country through check and balance on behalf of the people if defects and loopholes occur in exercising legislative, executive and juridical powers". This boils down to some arbiter role with regard to flaws in the constitution and future governments, something I already interpreted in a previous (4th) alternative NLM (10 April 2008). Well, can't future governments be their own arbiters? Does that justify the presence and the influence of the military forever? I think that the servant is a very good servant of his military bosses.

On 23 April 2008 the NLM attempts another time to explain the 25%, this time by Maung De Doh. Maung says: "Whether the draft constitution meets the standard set by political science does not matter. What is more important is that the draft constitution is in conformity with our country's geographical features, culture, custom and political historical background.". So to him it does not matter what the political science thinks. On the other hand he says: "The more the draft constitution meets international standard, the better it is,", which is in contradiction with the first quote because now suddenly the political science's standard matters. He continues with: "...no constitution in the world meets the standard cent per cent. And no country can be boast of the fact that its people fully enjoy democracy..."; so he actually says it is not perfect, but who is perfect? And "...we are to choose the most appropriate constitution capable of serving the national interest". (It criticises the democratic, but indirect elections in the USA, without naming it.)

Maung circumvents the real issue and makes it indisputable. He seems to be glossing over the flaws in the constitution in order to accept them as these are. To me he provides rather insufficient justification and explanation for the constitution is as it is now. Besides, he actually admits the 25% situation to be a fault, but one that should be permitted! Maung does not account for the international critic on the implied immunity of the military for their conduct in accordance with orders. Very weak reasoning actually.

On 22 April 2008 "an observer" observed that the previous constitutions of 1947 and 1974 had disappeared because of "party politicians' misuse" in 1962 and "weak points of the one-party system" in 1988 respectively. He conceals the facts that in both cases coups d'etat made the existing constitutions defunct after demonstrations by Burmese civilians against the governments at those times. Well, I can only hope for a similar event in the future after the current constitution has "become effective". I don't hope for another coup d'etat by military powers, but rather for a revolution like in Romania in 1989. It is about time that the army points its guns in another direction. In such a case the 'eternal' constitution would become defunct too. I've read about an alternative constitution for Burma, made by Burmese in exile, that could replace the military enforced one.

Constitution flaws

One of the main flaws in the constitution is the issue of amending the constitution itself. In previous drafts just more than 50% of the voters would be needed to make changes effective (after approval of at least 75% of the parliament). In the final, distributed version this has been changed into "all the voters", making changes virtually impossible. Myanmar's Constitution Drafting Committee said in a letter of April 1st 2008 to the country's Foreign Correspondents Club that the change was an accident caused by "some dropped words in the new constitution." The letter said the clause would be corrected to read that the constitution "shall be amended with a majority vote of more

more than half of those who have the right to vote," instead of "all eligible voters who have the right to vote." Until now I have not seen such a correction (in the media on the internet, including the NLM). If it won't be "corrected" after all it would involve the death penalty for the country and its inhabitants. It would indicate utmost deception by the government, who can never be trusted anymore, who are eternally out of the people's favour.

Other important flaws are the representation of the -not selected- military in the parliament for 25%, already discussed above, and the, as I call it, global amnesty for the military for their misdeeds in the past, that I already touched above too.

Referendum flaws

It is not just the constitution that I have problems with. It also involves the referendum, the way it is going to be held (and already partially is being held) and the "all means allowed" mentality of the junta for approval and against disapproval by the people. The junta applies the following means to get what it wants:

- * far too less copies of the constitution on paper are available to be distributed among the people, they are not freely available and still contain the "amendment flaw" discussed above;
 - * Burmese citizens abroad are allowed to vote (at embassies, consulates) only if they would vote YES;
 - * elderly and sick people already are being forced to vote YES with the aid of their doctors and they have to sign ballots making it possible to trace votes down to names. They are also bribed by offering rice and mobile phones;
 - * many Burmese people are not literate or do not speak Burmese at all. Nevertheless these people are being manipulated to vote YES;
 - * civil servants, university lecturers and school teachers must vote a week ahead of the referendum date in the direct presence of senior military officers (not secret anymore);
 - * the last 10 voters at each polling station are entitled to monitor the counting of the
- (see page 3)*

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ballots at the station, according to an informant revealing what Lt. Gen. Myint Swe told at a meeting with senior government officials. By taking care that the last 10 would always be USDA members rigging is assured;
* people demonstrating to vote NO are being arrested.

To vote or NO vote

You may come into trouble if openly voting NO, there is no doubt about that. But you will certainly come into much more trouble if voting YES. If you vote in favour of the constitution you will sign the death warrant for your country, a constitution that never can be changed again while the military keep eternal power. Talking, negotiating about better alternatives would become impossible and inappropriate then and the only way out would be an utmost bloody revolution. So, in your own interest, vote NO! The higher the percentage of NO-voters is the weaker the junta's position becomes.

There is a war going on! Than Shwe and his clique are killing you softly! The procedures around the referendum all by all are unfair, undemocratic, illegal, intimidating, fraudulent and invalid in advance already. Because of that I herewith declare never to recognize the outcome of the referendum, whatever that will be, including the probably approved cripple constitution. This relieves me from having to take that "legal" document seriously into account in the future.

Arrest of Than Shwe

In a previous (2nd) alternative edition of the NLM (6 February 2008) I have put forward the option of arresting the military leaders and giving them a fair trial "under the [new] Burmese national law, possibly under international criminal law". This would be and still is the most desired option by me and many other people. At the same time it is a very unlikely option as the generals clearly won't give up their positions, let alone having themselves arrested voluntarily.

Actually I don't mind that much about the generals, their prosecution, condemnation and sentences. My efforts are not so much directed towards revenge on the military and the government, but the more towards justice for the Burmese people, the liberation of the citizens from the violent influence of the hijacking junta and to return the stolen democracy from 18 years ago. My goal is to save lives, to restore freedom and not to commit violence from/to either side. I have emphasized my preference for dialogues, discussions, talks, fighting with words as opposed to talking with guns.

However, it more and more becomes clear that there is no option of negotiating with the stubborn generals. They clearly don't want to talk, but they want to wield their power eternally and they do everything unjustified to reach that goal. There is a war going on! Than Shwe and his clique are *killing you softly!* The procedures around the referendum all by all are unfair, undemocratic, illegal, intimidating, fraudulent and invalid in advance already. Because of that I herewith declare never to recognize the outcome of the referendum, whatever that will be, including the probably approved cripple constitution. This relieves me from having to take that "legal" document seriously into account in the future.

To Than Shwe I would say: consider yourself arrested by way of a (paper) civilian arrest for repression of the citizens of your country, taking them hostage; the responsibility of the murdering of Burmese citizens; lying to and deceiving the Burmese people; keeping the overwhelming power and not obeying the 1990 election results; etc. etc.. The time will come that you will really be arrested and prosecuted. You will have to justify for your deeds and misdeeds in court in a (fair) trial. You, Than Shwe, who always is used to give orders, have yet to get used to receive orders; you may still have quite a lot to learn. Having said so, this means that anyone is authorized to stop you, including your military colleagues and subordinates.

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Whatever the results of the referendum on the constitution in May 2008 will be I need not and do not recognize the articles in the constitution. From my point of view it still remains possible, if desired by the Burmese people, to arrest the junta and to prosecute them. Again, whatever the outcome of the referendum will be, I will keep striving for liberty and real democracy for the Burmese. I expect the same from many other people, inside and outside Burma. Never give up! Those criminal elements (the whole junta) once will be stopped from wielding power in Burma, both politically and military. My warmest regards to you all, God bless.

The army should join hands with the people of Burma in order to combat the junta.

**Vote NO !
in the referendum**

Do not trust the generals; they have deceived you many times before.

People's Desire

- * Oppose internal governmental elements, acting as traitors, keeping up appearances;
- * Oppose those trying to jeopardize freedom, democracy and 1990 election results;
- * Oppose the military junta dictatorship destroying the life of the Burmese citizens;
- * Crush all internal politically and military destructive elements as the common enemy.

Four democratic objectives

- * People elect civil government
- * Freedom of speech and press
- * Recognition of human rights
- * Army has serving, protecting task

Four humanitarian objectives

- * Resist the junta regime, the repression, be strong, not afraid
- * Reorganize the citizens of Burma
- * Restore democracy, freedom, no political prisoners, deaths
- * Regain real peace and rest

Let us all

- * who are equipped with common sense and ideals,
- * who are tired of the violent repression by the junta,
- * who cherish liberation from the deceiving junta,
- * who aspire honesty and freedom (of speech),
- * who want a real democracy and no dictators,

vote "NO" in the referendum to chase the junta !

All this needs to be known

- * Do not be frightened whenever intimidated by the junta government
- * Do not be weakened whenever attacked by the violent army
- * Do not be softened whenever deceived, abused by the dictators

**Invalidate the referendum.
Invalidate the constitution.**

Vote NO in the referendum !

Regard Than Shwe as arrested !

**We want a democracy without the junta government.
We want to draft our constitution ourselves.**

- ☆ RFA, VOA and BBC airing indispensable truth;
- ☆ RFA, VOA and BBC represent the free voice;
- ☆ Beware of killers in the media, e.g. regular NLM.