Freedom From Fear Study Guide

Freedom From Fear by Aung San Suu Kyi

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

Aung San, like Martin Luther King, did not make it with his people to the promised land, an independent democratic Burma. On July 19, 1947,two years after the birth of his youngest child, Aung San Suu Kyi, he fell, along with most of his cabinet, to assassins' bullets. One of those remaining, U Nu, became the first democratically elected leader of an independent Burma on January 4, 1948. Aung San Suu Kyi grew up taught both by her mother's example and her father's legend. A voracious reader, she assimilated Gandhi's thinking. Her mother, Daw Khin Kyi, was the Burmese ambassador to India.

U Nu was unable to hold the country's diverse groups together—some were in armed revolt. In 1962, a coalition of military officers, led by General Ne Win, overthrew the enfeebled but legitimately elected government. Aung San Suu Kyi, who was 17 at the time of the coup, went to college, worked for the United Nations, married, had children, researched her father's life, and published several scholarly and popular articles.

In 1988, Daw Khin Kyi suffered a stroke and her daughter flew from London to Rangoon to be at her side (in the previous year, devaluation of the Burmese currency and brutally repressed student demonstrations had led to a succession of nationwide protests and strikes). Even in countries with state controlled media, truth seeps out: Aung San Suu Kyi could not have not noticed that the military government was abducting students "in broad daylight" and slaughtering them (far more had already died than were to die a year later in Tienanmen Square). Aung San Suu Kyi was in her country; she observed what was happening and thought it morally imperative to act (she was not pursuing political office for herself).

She did act. That she is the daughter of Aung San indisputably brought many to her first rallies. If election results—her party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) carried over 80% of the 1990 vote—count as evidence, people listened. She gave over a thousand speeches between August 1988 and July 1989—all in direct violation of the government's open meeting laws—when she was placed under house arrest. In 1991, immediately prior to this book's publication, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. She remains under house arrest, and Burma remains under a military dictatorship.

Part 1: Section 1

Part 1: Section 1 Summary

This essay first appeared in the 1982 Leaders of Asia series under the title "Aung San of Burma: A Biographical Portrait by his Daughter." As Aung San Suu Kyi notes, her father was assassinated two years after her birth. Unable to know him, she instead researched his life. Aung San was born in a small township on February 13, 1915, thirty years after the Anglo-Burmese War had ended the monarchy and brought all of Burma under British rule. One of his uncles, U Min Yaung, had led one of the first groups resisting the British (he was captured and beheaded). Aung San took pride in this uncle "who had refused to be a subject of the Kalahs ('foreigners from the West')." As a young child, Aung San's fantasies included using magic to dispel the British from Burma. He later attended both the Buddhist and National Schools (the latter were founded in 1920, in response to the Rangoon University Act, which the Burmese saw as restricting educational access to all but a privileged few and so rejected, financing the schools by subscription). He did well academically and began attending the university the same year that the British put down another uprising. Others thought Aung San "eccentric," because fear of being criticized never dissuaded him from doing anything. He recast the previously docile student union at his university into a political force of some might. It was the strike of 1936 that brought Aung San's name to prominence in the nationalism movement: In 1939 he founded the Freedom Bloc, a political party whose message was that the Burmese people should support the British war effort, provided independence at war's end was promised; the British response was mass arrests. Aung San was later to organize nationwide boycotts and protests that completely paralyzed the British administration: Aung San's goal was to achieve nationalism constitutionally—but he did not rule anything out. He founded the Burma Independence Army (BIA) in Bangkok in 1941. The BIA later marched beside the Japanese into Burma. Many Burmese met the Japanese as liberators, only to find them worse oppressors than the British: "The story of the Japanese occupation is one of uncertainty, disillusion, and suffering." Aung San himself was later to say that he had not encouraged the Japanese invasion because of "'pro-fascist leanings, but by our naive blunders and petit-bourgeois timidity.'"

He came under the care of senior nurse Ma Khin Kyi: the two married in 1942 ("It has been said," her daughter writes, that ... in marrying Aung San, [she] married not a man only but a destiny"). The BIA later mobilized against the Japanese, although the British had not agreed to postwar independence. Between 1945 and 1947, Aung San became known not just as a military commander-in-chief but as a skilled negotiator: He resigned his military position and devoted himself to uniting Burma's diverse ethnic groups. At an inaugural speech after a sweeping electoral victory in 1947, he cautioned people to not waste time blaming imperialism for their present ills but to move forward to practically solve them. On July 19, 1947, Aung San, then thirty-two years old, was assassinated (on the order of a former misguided prime minister, who was later tried and sentenced to death). One of Aung San's British adversaries was later to say that "His assassination deprived his country of the one man who might have been able to enforce discipline on

his followers in the lawless years that lay ahead." The independent Union of Burma was born on January 4, 1948.

Part 1: Section 1 Analysis

Aung San Suu Kyi's perspective on the details of her father's life are best summarized by her concluding sentence: "For the people of Burma, Aung San was the man who had come in their hour of need to restore their national pride and honor. As his life is a source of inspiration for them, his memory remains the guardian of their political conscience."

Part 1: Section 2

Part 1: Section 2 Summary

This section comes from a descriptive series intended for young readers (the series also included Bhutan and Nepal). Aung San Suu Kyi noted that the "main river of Burma is the Irrawaddy, which ... flows north over two thousand kilometers (more than one thousand miles) until it reaches the ocean. The eastern Himalayas form Burma's north boundary; to the east lies the Shan plateau (about 3,000 to 4,000 feet above sea level); to the west are the coastal plains of Arakan; to the east is the lush Irrawaddy Delta, the home of Burma's capital city, Rangoon (its name is a corruption of its Burmese name Yangon). Rice, grown primarily in the central plains, was then Burma's main export (and food staple). The first wave of people to enter the country were the Buddhist Mons (around 2000 B.C.); the second wave were the Tibeto-Burmans who came from the north around 900 A.D. (their descendants include the Chins, the Kachins, and the Karens); the third major ethnic group is the Shans, who arrived more recently, from the east and were joined in the 13th century by new waves of Thais fleeing the Moguls."

Burma's first contact with the west—Italian and Portuguese traders—occurred in the 15th century. During the next two centuries, the British and Dutch began arriving in increasing numbers along the Irrawaddy Delta. Although there had always been resistance, the first official Anglo-Burmese war did not break out until 1824. A third war began in 1885: it was decisive for the British. Under British rule—since some groups were easier to pacify than others—ethnic differences were emphasized. The 1920s saw the beginning of a new Burmese nationalism movement. Its roots were in keeping the Buddhist religion pure of "foreign influences," but it grew more political. Throughout the 1930s, the Burmese were given a larger—but insufficiently large—role in governing themselves; students at Rangoon University became the voice for nationalism.

The Burmese independence movement reached a turning point in 1939, the beginning of World War II. The nationalists wanted to support the British in exchange for postwar independence; the British arrested them (those arrested were later called the "Thirty Comrades"). The Burmese hoped the Japanese would help them gain their independence. Aung San organized the Burma Independence Army (BIA) with the "Thirty Comrades" as its core. In 1941, the BIA marched into Rangoon beside the Japanese and the British were driven out. Although Burma declared itself independent at this time, it had "simply exchanged one foreign ruler for another."

Aung San organized a resistance against the Japanese occupation. The British returned, this time fighting on the side of the BIA. In 1945, the Japanese were driven out. The British gradually ceded their authority and,when Aung San managed to "win the confidence of the Shans, Chins and Kachins," they formally granted Burma its independence, six months after Aung San was assassinated. U Nu, who formed a new government, was not over time able to hold together the diverse groups Aung San had brought together. In 1962, a coalition of military officials, led by Ne Win, overthrew the

elected government of U Nu. The generals' party was the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). The country has not flourished under military leadership. Aung San Suu Kyi concludes by describing the diversity of the Burmese people in greater detail.

Part 1: Section 2 Analysis

Although taken from descriptive narratives aimed at young people—like a travel guide—Aung San Suu Kyi's respect for her father is also evident. This and the previous explicitly biographical section outline his legacy, both on the country called "Burma" and the woman named "Aung San Suu Kyi." Since a biography or history is at least partially art, life can be said to have imitated art. After Aung San Suu Kyi researched and wrote about the facts of her father's life, her own life came to parallel his own in the pursuit of a free Burma.

Part 1: Section 3

Part 1: Section 3 Summary

This section was first published in 1990 by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study. Aung San Suu Kyi thinks India is the perfect country with which to compare Burma since it too had a colonial past. The two differ in that Burma is predominantly Buddhist and India is predominantly Hindu. They also differ in the way the British incorporated them. In Burma, colonization occurred in 3 clear-cut phases over 50 years and in India it occurred gradually over 200 years. Being primarily Buddhist, Burma had no major social problems. There was little social stratification,s no caste system, and women were equals. The populace was largely literate, because most had attended monastery schools. Aung San Suu Kyi quoted from several British sources to show the condescending stance they took towards their colonial subjects: one passage written in 1908 said that the modern Burmese "had adopted the luxuries but not the steadfastness of and high-souled integrity of the European, the lavish display of wealth but not the business instincts of the Indian, the love of sensuous ease but not the perseverance of the Chinaman." She discussed the complexities of the different Burmese language groups, still distinct despite some inevitable blending over time. In India, an impassioned quest for understanding the alien other produced a generation of major philosophers; in Burma, people were largely indifferent to the British, but influenced by the Indian philosophers. A bigger change for the Burmese than the British themselves was the many Chinese and Indians who immigrated to serve as administrative functionaries. While Indians like Gandhi managed to synthesize thought and action, east and west, the Burmese continued their village life, slow to realize it was no longer sustainable. Although leftist literature became widely available in the 1930s, the Burmese were not the ideal recipients since, in their society, there was little social exploitation, no extreme poverty and no elite. Consequently, in Burma, the nationalism movement began later and sprang more generally from the villages, from people like her father, whose own thinking, scarcely mature, was interrupted by World War II.

Part 1: Section 3 Analysis

Aung San Suu Kyi's knowledge of the intellectual traditions of the two nations is as extensive as her knowledge of the more than 100 languages spoken in Burma. This essay was published in 1990—after Aung San Suu Kyi had first been placed under house arrest. Nothing is said about when she wrote it (the latest date in the footnote section is 1983). Aung San Suu Kyi is clearly someone who has pored over the writings of her peers and their predecessors.

Part 1: Section 4

Part 1: Section 4 Summary

This section was first published by Tokyo University in 1987. Aung San Suu Kyi began by noting that western influence on Burmese language and literature was obvious by the beginning of the 20th century. As such, it developed with the same aspirations as the nationalism movement. The disintegrating effect of British rule was first felt in lower Burma (Rangoon, on the Irrawaddy Delta, being the center of British rule). Political thinking in the country became increasingly organized during the 1930s but was stopped short by World War II.

One way that a chaotic present influenced Burmese literature was the publication of numerous histories meticulously exploring the country's past. It is neither surprising that many novels were about the struggle for independence nor that some political writing was leftist in orientation. The biggest difference between Burmese and Indian literature is that, having been assimilated in the 19th century, the theme of Burmese nationalism emerged later.

Part 1: Section 4 Analysis

Aung San Suu Kyi is as steeped in the literature of her times as in its political thought. She observed that the nationalism theme in Indian literature predates that in Burmese literature by over a century, because India was colonized over a century earlier.

Part 2: Section 5

Part 2: Section 5 Summary

This section comes from an essay Aung San Suu Kyi started—but was unable to complete before she was placed under house arrest 20 July 1989—that was about democracy and human rights (she had hoped to dedicate it to her father, "Bogyoke Aung San"). She began by noting that the movement for democracy in Burma has been undermined in many places along the way. The Burmese are said to be unfit to govern themselves; the basic tenets of democracy are said to be an outside concept alien to Burmese culture. There is nothing new in justifying and perpetuating authoritarian rule by denouncing democracy as alien: Although conventional propaganda aimed at consolidating established power has been condemned throughout the modern world, "in Burma, distanced by several decades of isolationism from political and intellectual elopements in the outside world," people have had to realize this for themselves—and, as soon as they did, the movement for democracy began. For more than a quarter of a century, the Burmese people were fed a pap of shallow dogma, but it did not blunt their perceptiveness. They are eager to study theories of "modern politics and political institutions," as well as thoughtfully consider what is due to a civilized society. The popular response to such basic notions as "representative government, human rights and the rule of law" was spontaneous. "It was natural that a people who have suffered much from ... a bad government should be preoccupied with theories of good government." The Buddhist sangha have taken on their customary role as mentors, using traditional learning to illuminate timeless truths, but the conscious effort to make the timeless contemporary runs across all social strata, from urban intellectuals, to shopkeepers, to village grandmothers.

What went wrong in Burma? Why has it not achieved its potential? "The Buddha said the four causes of decay were: failure to recover that which had been lost, omission to repair that which had been damaged, disregard of the need for reasonable economy, and the elevation to leadership of men without morality or learning:" Thus, in Burma, when democratic rights were lost to dictatorship in 1962, not enough was done to regain them. Accordingly, moral values deteriorated, the economy was badly managed and the country ruled by men without integrity. "Under totalitarian socialism, official policies with little relevance to actual needs had placed Burma in an economic and administrative limbo where government bribery and evasion of regulations" were the lubricants needed to keep the machinery of state and commerce running. In 1988, the movement for democracy gave rise to hope of reversing the process of decline. Hope returns, because "fear is not the natural state of civilized man." Nor are the behaviors of the current regime natural. The Buddhist view of history teaches that the duties of kings include "liberality, morality, self-sacrifice, integrity; austerity, non-anger, non-violence, forbearance and submission (to the will of the people)." Few here do not realize that law and order have no intrinsic virtue unless 'law' is equated with justice and 'order' "with the discipline of a people satisfied that justice has been done." Law is an instrument of state oppression in totalitarian regimes. Without due process, "authorities can enforce as 'law'

arbitrary decrees that are flagrant negations of all acceptable norms of justice." She concludes that "It is part of the unceasing human endeavor to prove that the spirit of man can transcend the flaws of his own nature."

Part 2: Section 5 Analysis

This is an extraordinary essay as it stands—one can scarcely imagine how it could be improved. : She characterized, in a single sentence, the quintessential difference between the rule of law in a democracy and under totalitarian rule.

Part 2: Section 6

Part 2: Section 6 Summary

This section is the title essay. It was published in conjunction with the European Parliament awarding Aung San Suu Kyi the 1990 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought (whether she wrote this after being placed under house arrest and receiving the prize is not stated). She was obviously not present at the formal ceremony in 1991. Within a week, translations of her essay appeared in numerous regional and national publications in over a half-dozen different languages. It is not power, she began, that corrupts but fear: it corrupts both those wielding power and those subjugating themselves to it. She identified four kinds of corruption: people deviate from the right path, first, because of desire (sometimes by pursuing bribes or gratuitously awarding those one loves with public funds). In the second form, people deviate out of ill will towards others. In the third, out of ignorance, because they know no better. In the fourth, people deviate out of fear. Of all forms of corruption, fear is the worst, because it allows avarice to become deeply entrenched Economic shambles was not though sufficient to spark "a traditionally good-natured, quiescent people—it was also the humiliation of a way of life disfigured by corruption and fear." The students are protesting both the death of their comrades and a totalitarian regime's denial of their own right to life, condemning them to nothing but a meaningless present and a hopeless future. The student protests articulated a larger frustration, which grew and quickly self-organized into a nationwide movement. Note, too, that the student protests were also strongly supported by some businessmen who—although they had learned to survive and prosper under the current regime—knew that a corrupt capricious regime precluded their having genuine security and a sense of fulfillment.

Those who would free themselves from the grip of fear must make the effort themselves, individually. It is not obvious how hard it is to remain uncorrupted in an environment where fear prevails (in contrast to states where the rule of law prevails). She noted that "Where there are no such laws, the burden of upholding the principles of justice and common decency falls on the ordinary people." In a world where "the unprincipled" dominate those weak and helpless, there is obvious need for a closer relationship between politics and ethics." The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations states that everyone "should promote the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans regardless of race, nationality or religion are entitled." As long as there are governments whose authority is founded on force and/or coercion—"rather than on the mandate of the people,"-and as long as there are those who place short-term profits above long-term peace, the declaration of human rights can only be partially realized (victims of oppression have none but themselves to defend their inalienable rights "as members of the human family").

A real revolution is a spirit born of a conviction that change is required. A revolution with only material aims merely changes official policies and so has little chance of succeeding. Without a spiritual revolution, the forces which produced the iniquities will

remain. Consequently, it is insufficient to call for "freedom, democracy and human rights." People must be united in their determination to make sacrifices "in the name of enduring truths, to resist the corrupting influences of desire, ill will, ignorance and fear." As it has been said that saints are merely sinners who keep trying, so it can be said that "free men are the oppressed who go on trying."

Among the basic freedoms to which men aspire are freedom from fear—both as a means to an end and an end in itself. People must first liberate their own minds from apathy and fear: Jawaharlal Nehru once said that the essence of the teaching of Mahatma Gandhi was acting on the basis of fearlessness and truth. Fearlessness may itself be a gift, but it is the courage that can spring from it that is the more valuable, because courage does not allow fear to dictate behavior. Aung San Suu Kyi continued that it is the capacity for self-redemption that most distinguishes men from beasts: At the root of human responsibility is the urge to achieve perfection, the intelligence to act towards that end, and the will to follow its path. In a system which denies basic human rights, fear prevails in many forms. A particularly insidious form of fear masquerades as common sense and wisdom, "condemning as foolish, reckless, insignificant or futile the small, daily acts of courage which help to preserve man's self-respect and inherent human dignity." Such is the typical media portrayal of those not themselves. She concludes that concepts like truth, compassion, and justice are the only bulwark against "ruthless power."

Part 2: Section 6 Analysis

Here, in the title essay of this volume, Aung San Suu Kyi detailed what she means by fear, what she fears about fear, and how, only, it can be triumphed against. Although this essay was released when she was formally awarded the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought in 1991—and rapidly translated into different languages—she was not present for the ceremonies, remaining under house arrest in Rangoon

Part 2: Section 7

Part 2: Section 7 Summary

This section is reprinted from a draft published by the journal Asian Survey (it had had the manuscript for several years; Aung San Suu Kyi intended additional revisions and wanted it reprinted in a volume dedicated to and about her father to "honor all those who stand for political integrity in Burma"). In 1942, a fledgling Burma Independence Army formed was formed by her father, Aung San, who came to personify the hope of a country "poised to realize its dreams of freedom" and became the subject of even popular verse. Aung San's reply then was that he had not yet earned himself a place in the history of Burma (a modest man, he had already led the Burmese resistance against the Japanese and was then negotiating with the British).

She wrote that her father was raised in a Buddhist school and so would early have learned the concept of "creating an independent, self reliant nation out of a land devastated by war." Deceit and political guile would have been abhorrent to him, an insult both to his own code of integrity and other peoples. After having resigned his military position, his Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) swept the elections of April 1947. Aung San vowed to resign if he lost people's respect; people believed him and in him. He was not, as he put it, his daughter wrote, a "political stuntman" who would unnecessarily put his country in turmoil (she quotes from a speech he delivered exactly 11 months before Burma gained its independence on 4 January 1948: "You know that I have never broken my promises"). Aung San's integrity and good will made him vulnerable to those with appetites for power. He was assassinated before Burma became independent. His daughter concludes this essay noting that some have said that, had her father paid as much attention to his own safety as he did to his dream of a free Burma, he would not have fallen victim to assassins' bullets. But, were that so, he would not be Burma's Aung San, a leader embodying the strength of his nation.

Part 2: Section 7 Analysis

"Boh" is the Burmese word for an army lieutenant in particular and military officers or commanders in general ("'boh' is also the Pali word for strength"). The word "bogyoke" specifically indicates the rank of major-general, but it came to be used—in the context of Aung San—to signify the father of the army, a strong and selfless leader. Aung San Suu Kyi clearly set forth to honor her father: the only irony is that she had no need, the deeds of his short life speaking for themselves.

Part 2: Section 8

Part 2: Section 8 Summary

This section comes from an open letter titled "The Formation of a People's Committee"—signed jointly by Aung San Suu Kyi and several other leading political figures, dated August 15, 1988. Although the government refused to discuss the document, it did briefly form a commission "to ascertain the aspirations of the people." The initiative itself was written by Aung San Suu Kyi (who prepared the English translation herself). The format is a 13-point bulleted list: (1) People should act in accord with the laws of the country, and the government should respond to the people's lawful aspirations; (2) At an emergency meeting of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) on July 23, 1988, Party Chairman Ne Win said he believed the bloodshed and disturbances in March and June could be interpreted to mean that people lacked confidence in the government and the single party behind it. He proposed that a national referendum—a one-party or a multi-party system—be held; (3) Ne Win had earlier said that the good of the nation should come before the good of the party, an idea later rejected by the party congress; (4) This rejection makes many despair and feel apprehensive about country's future (and fearful of the shedding of more blood); (5) It is our goal to bring about peace and prosperity as well as to avoid further killing; (6) Based on the preceding five points, the following are offered as remedy: (7) The existing one-party system is not capable of reflecting the will of the people; (8) Chapter 4, Article 56 of the Constitution says that a special committees can be formed and empowered; (9) There is currently such a committee in China (and there had been one earlier in Burma); (10) It is requested that such a committee be formed, empowered, and allowed to freely disseminate information; (11) The preceding proposals are intended to bring government to reflect the will of the people in a peaceful manner "within the framework of the law;" (12) It is "earnestly requested" that the authorities stop using force and release all political prisoners; (13) "In the words of the song that roused the patriotism of our people ... so is this proposal submitted with the good of future generations in mind."

Part 2: Section 8 Analysis

Although signed jointly, this was Aung San Suu Kyi's letter, expressing the issues with her customary economy. The points are clear and the logic inexorable. The concept of the rule of law is central to her document: people must abide by laws and government must respond to people's lawful aspirations. Also of central importance is the attempt to avoid further bloodshed and the goal of making Burma a better place for future generations of Burmese.

Part 2: Section 9

Part 2: Section 9 Summary

This section is from the speech Aung San Suu Kyi delivered to a mass rally at the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon on 26 August 1988. This is the only one of the approximately one thousand speeches she delivered between August and July of the next year for which she formally prepared. The purpose of this rally is draw world attention to the collective will of the Burmese people. She complimented the nation's students for having spearheaded this effort, sometimes at the cost of their lives. She asked her listeners to observe a minute's silence in honor of their fallen, then noting that it is the "unshakable desire to strive for a multi-party democratic system" that has brought them together today—and that the ongoing "national crisis could be likened to the second struggle for national independence." She stressed that it must be their goal to make democracy the common goal of the armed forces and the people. Of democracy, she said "It is an ideology which is consistent with freedom. It is an ideology that promotes and strengthens peace. It the only ideology we should aim for." She continues that people should not be disunited but strive forward together using "disciplined and peaceful means:" She appealed to the students to continue their work and for people to work to avoid a party-line rift with the armed forces. She also urged her listeners to bridge the gap between their older and younger members. She then assured the students that she was herself not beholden to any politician and so none can ever force her to betray them. To the entire audience, she restated their common goal: multi-party democracy. She concluded by restating their common cause: our demands are to demolish the one-party system, establish a multi-party system, and hold free and fair elections.

Part 2: Section 9 Analysis

This speech places Aung San Suu Kyi in an historic perspective. She introduced herself to a rally resulting from a national strike begun largely by young students. She is married to a foreigner; she is the daughter of Aung San. She credites the students—and appealed for unity among the many peoples of Burma, as well as between them and the military. She concluded by emphasizing yet again that they must proceed in a non-violent and disciplined manner.

Part 2: Section 10

Part 2: Section 10 Summary

This section comes from an interview with Karan Thapar—under the title "People's Heroine Spells Out Objectives"—dated 29 August 1988. The format is question and answer. The interview began with a question about the current confusion about the status of human rights in Rangoon and Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi described the situation as "very tense." The reigning government is virtually at a standstill, and groups of Buddhist monks and students have been selforganizing into relief groupsto those in need. She said, "It is my aim to help the people attain democracy without further violence or loss of life." Her answer to a question about what she meant by Burma's need for a "second" struggle for independence is that the people demand multi-party democracy. When asked about an offer recently extended by President Maung to have a special party congress on September 12, 1988, she said "too little too late" and that the Burmese people have already conclusively demonstrated their desire for a "multi-party democracy." When asked whether she will be satisfied only when the demands of the Burmese people have toppled the current government, she responded that it is neither a question of toppling nor of what she wants. She answered the inevitable question about the anarchy falsely associated with spontaneous popular movements by stating that the Burmese people are becoming more self organized daily, making "arrangements for local security and planning more systematic demonstrations and strikes." When asked, Aung San Suu Kyi said that she does not see a particular role for herself in the future but that she will look for ways in which she can be most of service. She again reiterated that she sees no necessary division "between the army and the people" (and urges the army to maintain its integrity and not be used to serve the government's political ends). She stated her total agreement with what her father had said earlier, that the army should keep out of politics. She concluded by noting that all people should fight to preserve their heritage, being careful though not allow themselves to lapse into bigoted shallow thinking.

Part 2: Section 10 Analysis

Aung San Suu Kyi addressed the question about the fear of anarchy following a spontaneous popular uprising by contrasting how efficiently the Burmese people were working together with the ineptitude of the current regime. When the fist of an oppressive political and economic system is removed, many able people who thus far haven't had a chance to show their abilities will emerge.

Part 2: Section 11

Part 2: Section 11 Summary

This section first appeared under the headline "Belief in Burma's Future" in The Independent on September 12, 1988—between the outbreak of the nationwide demonstrations beginning on August 8th and the imposition of a new military rule on September 18th. Aung San Suu Kyi confessed her "horror, anger, and sheer disbelief," as well as her "conviction that a movement which has risen so spontaneously from the people's irresistible desire for the full enjoyment of human rights must surely prevail." She continued that the will of the Burmese people has been suppressed for 26 years but that now, since the police can no longer guarantee security, local "vigilante groups"—composed of Buddhist monks and students—have sprung up throughout the country. Such vigilante groups have resolved problems which included the distribution of medical supplies in relief efforts. In contrast, the media has given much publicity to vandalism like looting and arson (in actuality, instigated by the government). She commented that it is "strange and horrifying" to see the Burmese people trying to preserve order while the government is trying to promote anarchy, its goal seemingly being to create maximum suffering for the people who have rejected it. She continued that it is not the entire government but certain fringes within it that have orchestrated the "crude and often barbaric plots" directed against the Burmese people. She emphasized the crudeness of these plots by later referring to "inept hardliners" desperate to save their positions whatever the cost. The Burmese people are oppressed by the government's Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), along with its senseless economic policies.

That oppression has helped unify the people (she believes that the only BSPP adherents left are those fearing for their positions and perhaps safety). Her attention then turned to the role of the army (independent of the government). It was her father, General Aung San, who founded the Burmese army, and afterwards continually warned against its being used as an instrument of tyranny in the service of oppression. She believed, along with many, that "the army is being led and misused by a handful of corrupt fanatics whose powers and privileges are dependent on the survival of the present system." She knew that there are many within the military who similarly object to being so used. She feared that the army might split into irreconcilable factions and so desires an early peaceful transition to a political system acceptable to the people which allows the army a "graceful exit."

She noted that many have asked her about her own involvement with Burma's movement for democracy: She responded that, as her parents' daughter, it was inevitable. Her father Aung San was assassinated when she was two. The military government came to power in 1962, while she was in India, where her mother was the Burmese ambassador. She concluded these prepared remarks by noting "the inspiring role played by students in this national movement," and that with their efforts, the future of a democratic Burma will be secure.

Part 2: Section 11 Analysis

Aung San Suu Kyi, despite the violence growing around her, again spoke for peaceful resolution as the only goal, while noting that a democratic Burma is not negotiable. She seems almost awed by what she sees, namely the seemingly spontaneous self-organizing of people coming together throughout her country. Their ad hoc efficiency is once again contrasted with the ineptness of the generals in power. That she is her parents' daughter is about the only thing derivative that can be said about such a remarkable person as Aung San Suu Kyi.

Part 2: Section 12

Part 2: Section 12 Summary

This section comes from the two 1988 letters Aung San Suu Kyi wrote to Amnesty International, dated September 24th and October 24th. The letters were intercepted by the military regime and and the next year printed as evidence in an official publication under a title which began: "The Conspiracy of Treasonous Minions." In her first letter to Amnesty International, despite military oppression so extensive as to preclude Amnesty International entering the country, Aung San Suu Kyi proposes a practical solution, a way the organization can make itself useful. She said that in the forthcoming General Debate at the United Nations, the struggle for freedom and democracy in Burma would be advanced if many ambassadors mentioned their grave concerns about the wanton slaughter of unarmed demonstrators, children, and Buddhist monks occurring in Burma. She appealed to Amnesty International to bring the current situation —to international attention under Item 4 of the forthcoming meeting's Agenda by encouraging as many ministers as they can to raise substantive concerns in their speeches about the current situation in Burma. She concluded that should Amnesty International think of other avenues for expressing her message beyond those she mentioned, to pass it on.

She began her second letter explicitly stating that human rights in Burma are currently being assaulted. Among the facts she cited are: "On 15 October over six hundred men, mostly young students, were seized by the armed forces as they sat in teashops ... in Rangoon;" other young men who could not prove they were civil servants were drug from their buses into military trucks (she believes they were taken to the front lines to fight—or be used as mine detectors—in one of the generals' wars against insurgents). She concluded that the involuntary conscription of young men has been known for several years—but that this is the first time it has occurred in "broad daylight in the streets of Rangoon for all to see."

Part 2: Section 12 Analysis

The beginning of Aung San Suu Kyi's first letter is in a sense ironic—human rights violations have made it impossible—too dangerous—for Amnesty International to investigate those violations. The immediacy of the danger is underscored by the last sentence in her second letter: the generals are now so brazen as to round up the young men who don't work for them in broad daylight in the middle of the city "for all to see."

Part 2: Section 13

Part 2: Section 13 Summary

This section contains an open letter she wrote dated September 26, 1988. Aung San Suu Kyi began by asking that all ambassadors from countries recognized by the Burmese military press their foreign offices to address human rights issues in Burma under Item 4 of the General Debate during the forthcoming session of the United Nations Assembly (which was scheduled to begin the next day). She wrote that she has made similar appeals to Amnesty International and the National Commission of Jurists and concluded that she thought the previous weeks' wanton slaughter of unarmed demonstrators, school children, and Buddhist monks was a matter of "legitimate concern" for the international community.

Part 2: Section 13 Analysis

As with her other open letters, Aung San Suu Kyi wasted no words. Her prose style is the same to whomever she is addressing (she talks neither up to some nor down to others, but directly across to all). Her observation that the slaughter of innocents is a "legitimate" concern for the international community is acidic, intended to remain etched in the minds of those who read it.

Part 2: Section 14

Part 2: Section 14 Summary

This section consists of excerpts from a speech Aung San Suu Kyi gave on December 3, 1988. She begans by telling her audience that although she did not know what would happen, she believed that democracy in Burma is still possible. She also stressed the importance of maintaining a consistent presence, acknowledging the great work that remains to be doneand that people must continue doing what they believe to be right. She noted that life expectancy in Burma under the dictatorship was about sixty, but that, under democracy, living conditions would improve and life expectancy might increase to seventy.-That means that those youth in her audience had over fifty years of struggle before them: "Democracy is a gift one must nourish all one's life .... If each of you keeps in mind you have a responsibility for the welfare of your country, then we shall have no reason to worry that our country's health will deteriorate." Aung San Suu Kyi again emphasizes that everyone must work together for democracy, and that loyalties and allegiances should not be to particular individuals or groups or be short-term. The single long-term goal is multi-party democracy.

Part 2: Section 14 Analysis

This speech, in particular, underscored her message that citizens must commit to a lifelong struggle for democracy. This same theme—that democracy must be fought for to be obtained—occurs throughout her other writings but is nowhere else so clearly articulated. Like American Martin Luther King said, "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor. It must be demanded by the oppressed."

Part 2: Section 15

Part 2: Section 15 Summary

This section contains a letter to the editor she wrote on January 21, 1989. It described her trip to Bassein on the Irrawaddy Delta: she had begun her journey by boat and was "escorted" by a flotilla of troops. She arrived to a town whose streets had been blocked off and its residents told not to acknowledge her presence amongst them. Several members of her party were arrested. She concluded noting that Brigadier Myint Aung "will get a good run for his money."

Part 2: Section 15 Analysis

The backdrop of intimidation and the threat of physical violence against which she spoke are revealed here. It also underscores her determination: if the troops block the roads, the people will ride bicycles.

Part 2: Section 16

Part 2: Section 16 Summary

This section consists of a letter to the United Nations. Although undated, she wrote it while harassment against her and her party mounted but before July 20, 1989, when she was first placed under house arrest (the UN did commence a confidential investigation of human rights in Burma the next year). The format of her letter is a 10-item bulleted list: (1) She first described the nature and aims of Burma's National League for Democracy; (2) She next noted that "Those working for democracy in Burma would distinguish between 'the rule of law' which would mean the fair and impartial administration of administrative rules" and "law and order which merely involves the enforcement of arbitrary edicts decreed by a regime which does not enjoy the mandate of the people;" (3) Those who embrace the cause of human rights do not reject the rule of law and order but only the imposition of the will of a dominant faction; (4) If the law does not ensure that justice is done, the government "cannot be said to have either the moral force or the legal sanction necessary to elevate the status of mere edicts to the status of just laws;" (5) The policy of the NLD has always been to respect and uphold all just laws and to "resist measures which attack the very foundations of human dignity and truth;" (6) Many political prisoners are being held in Burma, charged with flimsy offenses, because they tried to uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 19, 20 and 2 I); the NLD are been subjected to treatment inconsistent with Articles 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, I I and 12; (7) The NLD does not seek confrontation—"which can only bring more suffering on a populace already troubled by much political and economic hardship"—but understanding through dialogue; (8) "The authorities" are not willing to engage in dialog and ignore the will of the majority of Burmese people; (9) She hoped that the UN can help create conditions that allow people to express their views without fear of reprisal; and (10) The people of Burma know they must pursue their own quest for democracy (but they look to the UN to recognize the justice of their cause).

Part 2: Section 16 Analysis

This letter contrasts the rule of law with the arbitrary enforcement of rules by capricious rulers. Aung San Suu Kyi underscored the respect her party, the NLD, holds for the laws of governments whose legitimacy resides in their people. She articulated those sections of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights that the Burmese government had already flagrantly violated. She concluded by noting that although she recognized that the fight for democracy must be undertaken by the Burmese people, she hoped that the UN will acknowledge the justice of their cause.

Part 2: Section 17

Part 2: Section 17 Summary

This section was taken from a letter to the editor Aung San Suu Kyi wrote dated "Rangoon, 14 April 1989." She referred to difficulties like facing the soldiers ordered to shoot her (a major countermanded the order at the last minute). She affirmed that she thinks what she is doing is worthwhile—and that the Burmese people deserve more than SLORC's "inefficiency, corruption, and misuse of power."

Part 2: Section 17 Analysis

Her letter is brief. Considering what you're doing worthwhile in the face of personal physical danger is one measure of courage, individual bravery. This contrasts with the generals' "inefficiency, corruption, and misuse of power" and one might as well add, cowardice (being unwilling to engage in dialogue).

Part 2: Section 18

Part 2: Section 18 Summary

This section comes from a speech Aung San Suu Kyi delivered at a pagoda in Myitkyina, Kachin State on April 27, 1989 (she later mentioned the enormous crowds attending this speech in a subsequent letter to the editor, noting that her greatest cross was not thinking herself worthy of the people's "trust and affection"). She began by thanking the crowd for supporting her and the Burmese National League for Democracy. She stressed that all the country's ethnic groups must work together to form a viable union (and that it is only after this that "peace and prosperity" can come). Problems that preclude creating a unified front must be overcome and people must work together to live in harmony. She continued that she hears often that people are afraid. However, in those areas where people are courageously joining the movement, there are more political rights than in those areas where fear prevails. Being fearful only invites more oppression; those wanting democracy must behave courageously. By "courage" she meant the courage to do what is one's right, even while afraid. Teaching by intimidation—in contrast to doing what is right—has become so commonplace that the government no longer even bothers trying to even superficially explain itself, instead using more threats to control. She stated that it is her listeners' responsibilities as parents to teach their children by explaining to them, teaching them both justice and compassion as opposed to things that will divide them along linguistic or ethnic lines. She exhorted her audience to, by their earliest age, teach their children to understand the ideas of "Union" and national unity. She cited the example of her own mother, who taught her both with words and by everyday example. It is not enough, she went on, to do nothing but vote on election day. The way ahead for free and democratic elections must be fought for to be won. She underscored the need for political involvement by pointing out that when she visited Myitkyina 30 years earlier as a child, there was no problem with electricity; though now there is not enough. She concluded her speech by telling her audience that to lead a full life, they must be willing to sacrifice for their country and realize that, despite ethnic and linguistic differences, they are "all comrades in the struggle for democratic rights."

Part 2: Section 18 Analysis

Aung San Suu Kyi argued that people must act in order to lead a full life—and that those who put prosperity before political rights are doomed: The 40 years since Burma's brief period of independence, between 1962 and 1989, have brought decline, not prosperity. Teaching by intimidation, in contrast to doing what is right, has become commonplace. She stressed the need for peoples of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds to work together towards democracy: It was partly for her work leading the diverse peoples of Burma together towards democracy that the Nobel Committee awarded her its Peace Prize in 1991.

Part 2: Section 19

Part 2: Section 19 Summary

This section comes from an interview with Dominic Falder on AsiaWeek in July 1989. The format is question and answer. The host asked her what she thought would happen after the elections, if there were elections. Her response was that "We don't know; this is the problem. Whoever is elected will first have to draw up a constitution that will have to be adopted before the transfer of power. They haven't said how the constitution will be adopted." She continued that SLORC—the State Law and Order Restoration Council—can't be trusted to set up a democratically elected government, citing its refusal to enter into dialog with any that disagree with it as one example: "any organization totally under the thumb of a dictator can be described as poor." She also insisted that economic development—SLORC's slogan—must be preceded by fundamental political changes, such as first and foremost respect for human rights.

She observed that the Burmese people have learned to be frightened, and that fright is a habit which can be unlearned. When asked whether she thinks "the authorities" will move against her, she responded that they already have. Once the people have finally thrown off their yoke of fear after over a quarter century of oppression, their questions will be numerous.

Part 2: Section 19 Analysis

Aung San Suu Kyi cited the example of SLORC refusing to talk with those that disagreed with it as an attempt to silence them (herself at the forefront). SLORC's first attacks on Aung San Suu Kyi were personal.. They said that she observed bizarre sexual practices, was a "Communist" (or worked for the CIA), and had "insulted the Lord Buddha." History was to prove her correct about not being able to trust SLORC with the elections (it ignored her party's overwhelming victory). Joseph Stalin once said that "Those who cast ballots decide nothing; those who count them decide everything." But, evidently, not even they have the final say.

Part 2: Section 20

Part 2: Section 20 Summary

This section consists of her written agreement to stand for election in May 1990 (she translated this agreement into the English version published in the book). Aung San Suu Kyi wrote that although she has been detained since July 20, 1989 for her political opinion, she was nevertheless submitting her papers to stand as a candidate in the forthcoming elections. Although the military regime later officially disallowed her candidacy, her party went on to conclusively win the election with over 80% of the vote. Her agreement concluded that she was submitting her application out of respect "to honour the courage and perseverance of the people who are striving for democracy; and from a desire to help fulfill the just aspirations of the people to the best of my ability."

Part 2: Section 20 Analysis

It was American Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote that "an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man." So, also, can a non-violent popular democratic movement be demonstrated through the lengthened shadow of one woman, Aung San Suu Kyi.

Part 2: Section 21

Part 2: Section 21 Summary

The Norwegian Committee formally awarded Aung San Suu Khi the Nobel Peace Prize in October 1991 for "her non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights." The committee observed that she was the daughter of Burma's Aung San, "showed an early interest in Gandhi's non-violent protest," and that her involvement with Burma's "second struggle for independence" began in 1988, when she became the voice of a non-violent democratic movement opposing a brutal military regime. The Committee also commended her for her work at reconciling Burma's sharply divided ethnic groups. It also noted that although the 1990 Burmese democratic election had resulted in a conclusive victory for her party, the military regime had ignored the election results. The committee concluded that Aung San Suu Kyi was one of the greatest examples of civic courage in Asia in decades.

Part 2: Section 21 Analysis

The Norwegian Committee awarded her that year's prize both in honor of her personal civic courage, her commitment to non-violent resistance, and her work unifying Burma's diverse ethnic and linguistic groups.

Part 3: Section 22

Part 3: Section 22 Summary

Ma Than E began this essay by stating that Aung San Suu Kyi's then 13-year-old son Kim accepted the 1990 Sakharov Prize in her honor. She reflected that, at least in part, Aung San Suu Kyi can be explained by her legendary father and being raised by her remarkable mother. She recalled nostalgically meals shared with Aung San and the "Thirty Comrades." Daw Khin Kyi reminded her children of their father's legacy, taught them by example, and raised them as Buddhists. Aung San Suu Kyi had accompanied her mother to New Delhi, where reading became her preoccupation; she also spent a year in Algiers and was far more interested in its struggle for independence than attending the parties to which she was invited. She later spent 3 years working for the UN (during the period when Burma's U Thant was Secretary-General), after which she married and had two sons. In 1988, Aung San Suu Kyi left London for Rangoon, to be at her mother's bedside. The military government had already slaughtered far more students than they did in Tienanmen Square a year later. Aung San Suu Kyi could not be silent in such circumstances. Others may not have responded but Aung San Suu Kyi, being who she is, did act.

Part 3: Section 22 Analysis

This essay provides the best description of how Daw Khin Kyi influenced Aung San Suu Kyi through a lifetime of example. It was, ironically, her illness that brought Aung San Suu Kyi back to Rangoon at a time of massive protests and arrests, not unlike those of her parents' youth.

Part 3: Section 23

Part 3: Section 23 Summary

Ann Pasternak Slater wrote that she first met Aung San Suu Kyi when they attended St. Hugh's College at Oxford (their friends were primarily Indian and African). Later, as adults, the two became neighbors: she described Aung San Suu Kyi as a talented, self-disciplined young woman who, like the rest of her species, had her frustrations and triumphs. She was additionally, her friend writes, an accomplished seamstress.

Part 3: Section 23 Analysis

These are the words of a school friend and later adult neighbor. Of her many qualities, this friend wrote, the one that stands out most is her egalitarianism. She concluded the essay with a line from Yeats: "'But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you.'"

Part 3: Section 24

Part 3: Section 24 Summary

Josef Silverstein asked how Aung San Suu Kyi—whom the New York Times had not heard of before August 26, 1988—could become the spokesperson for a popular democratic movement in a matter of weeks in a country that had been dominated, in all ways of life, by a military dictatorship for nearly 30 years. The answer, he wrote, is her name (the daughter of Aung San needed no introduction). Another part of the answer is that Burma has an egalitarian rather than sexist culture (there were no impediments to a woman's political aspirations—although, under the male military dictatorship, women's role in everything has diminished). Another part of the answer is her personal modesty: a shopkeeper who attended one of her rallies is quoted as saying "When we listen to the government leader, and then listen to her, I think every Burmese can agree about who is the better person." At first the government warned people away from her rallies; it then began attacking her personally, on occasion physically endangering her (as on October 5, 1988 when dozens of rifles were aimed on her alone). It also put her under house arrest, cutting off her contact with the outside world. Who has the moral authority to demand freedom from Burma's self-selected leaders? Obviously, Aung San Suu Kyi.

Part 3: Section 24 Analysis

This essay makes the point that the government's inability to do anything but put her under house arrest attests to their fear. It also notes that their plan may backfire, because Aung San Suu Kyi—shut off from the world—now exists as an idealized figure, one who can do no wrong (because she is given no opportunity to do anything).

Part 3: Section 25

Part 3: Section 25 Summary

Philip Kreager outlined her four core principles: (1) human rights for everyone comes first; (2) the only legitimate means are non-violent; (3) governments are based on principles not personalities; and (4) great personal and collective self-discipline is required by all. Although part of the Burmese nationalism movement, Aung San Suu Kyi was the first to insist on universal individual human rights (it was not a position inconsistent with her father's view—it just took that view a step further). All of her rallies between August 1988 and July 1989 explicitly violated the official government policy on open meetings. By October 1990, only four members of the NLD remained at liberty.

Part 3: Section 25 Analysis

This author reminds the reader that Aung San Suu Kyi's legacy on the future of Burma is based on over a thousand speeches and interviews between August 1988 and July 1989,and that Aung San Suu Kyi has a special relationship with Burma's military dictatorship. The generals overthrew U Nu; perhaps they fear she has returned to overthrow them.

Characters

Aung San Suu Kyi

Simply named, she is the daughter of Aung San and Ma Khin Kyi: Although the book is primarily a compendium of her writings—organized and edited by her husband—Aung San Suu Kyi is the major character, playing a vital role in the "second" struggle for an independent democratic Burma. She was born in Rangoon in June 1945; when she was two, her father was assassinated, and her mother became politically active, later becoming the Burmese ambassador to India. Aung San Suu Kyi accompanied her mother to New Delhi, where she first read Gandhi (she was a voracious reader). She was 17 when the generals staged their first coup in 1962. Between 1964 and 1967, she attended Oxford's St. Hugh's College, where she received a B.A. in philosophy, politics and economics. Between 1969 and 1971, she attended graduate school in New York, after which she worked at the United Nations (when Burma's U. Thant was Secretary-General). In 1977, she married Michael Aris and, after the birth of their second son, began researching a biography of her father and published a series of books about Burma and its neighboring countries. Between 1985 and 1986, she was a visiting scholar at the Center of Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University.

In 1988, she returned to Rangoon, to be at her mother's side after a severe stroke. Shortly after she returned to Burma, General Ne Win, military dictator since 1962, resigned in the wave of massive protests—triggered partly by a currency devaluation which wiped out most people's savings and the military's violent suppression of student protests. August 15th of that year is the date of Aung San Suu Kyi's first political act: she wrote an open letter to her government, asking that it establish an independent committee to prepare for democratic elections. On August 26th, she made her first public speech, outside the Shwedagon Pagoda. Between then and July 1989—when, the day before Martyr's Day, she was first placed under house arrest—she gave over a thousand public appearances. She was not seeking political office for herself but doing what she could to achieve the goal of a multi-party democratic Burma (whose most basic of rules is individual human rights).

Universal human rights was the core plank of her position, perhaps because of the government's mass violation of them (far more Burmese students were slaughtered in 1988 than in Tienanmen Square a year later). Although placed under house arrest in 1989, she stood for office and, in 1990, her party—the National League for Democracy (NLD)—won an overwhelming 80% of the parliamentary seats: The military dictatorship refused to recognize the election. In 1990, the European Parliament awarded her the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought. In 1991, just prior to publication of this book, Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Few today can speak with her moral authority: the source of that authority is perhaps best summarized by the anonymous Burmese "shopkeeper" quoted as having said that "When we listen to the government leader, and then listen to her, I think every Burmese can agree about who is

the better person." More than its petroleum reserves and poppy fields, Burma's greatest national resource is Aung San Suu Kyi.

Aung San

He is Aung San Suu Kyi's father. Born in 1915, thirty years after the Anglo-Burmese War had ended the monarchy and brought all of Burma under English rule, he, as a young child in a small village, imagined magic tricks to dispel the British (or so his daughter related in her biography of him. She also wrote that he particularly admired the uncle who had led one of the first groups resisting the British). Aung San did well academically—attending both the Buddhist and National Schools. In the 1930s, while attending the university, he changed its placid student union into a major political force. In 1939, he founded the "Freedom Bloc," a political party whose message was to support the British World War II effort, where Burmese independence at war's end was promised. The British responded with mass arrests (those detained were later called the "Thirty Comrades"). Aung San responded by organizing nationwide boycotts and protests that completely paralyzed the British administration and founded the Burma Independence Army (BIA) in Bangkok in 1941. The BIA later marched arm-in-arm with the Japanese into Rangoon. It was, Aung San later said, a mistake brought on not because of "'pro-fascist leanings" but because of "'our naive blunders and petit-bourgeois timidity.'" After the Japanese took Rangoon, Aung San told them he had disarmed his army (but in reality he had told them to cache their weapons). Aung San led the resistance that drove the Japanese out of Burma (by then he was a national hero); the British returned to fight with the BIA. After the war, the British wanted to try him for treason—his short alliance with the Japanese—but his national popularity precluded their doing so. There were also the facts of the matter. They had rejected his overtures—to work on their side in exchange for independence at war's end—by arresting him and the "Thirty Comrades." He had led the resistance against Japanese occupation; they had come back to Burma fighting on the side of the BIA, his army. After resigning his military position, Aung San formed the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) and stood for election; his party won an overwhelming majority. On July 19, 1947, Aung San, then thirty-two years old, along with most of his cabinet, was assassinated. The Burmese have since commemorated July 19th as "Martyr's Day."

Ma Khin Kyi

She is Aung San Suu Kyi's mother. In 1942, a senior nurse, Aung San became one of her patients. They married and had three children. She became active in the nationalism movement after her husband's assassination (after which she was called "Daw Khin Kyi:" Aung San Suu Kyi's name, since her husband's death, is sometimes preceded with "Daw"). She raised her children, like herself and her husband, as Buddhists; she raised them by example (house guests of diverse ethnicity were regulars in her home); she raised her children to remember their father's legacy. In one of her essays about her father, Aung San Suu Kyi writes that the army her father founded did not initially favor their commander-in-chief marrying (but that her mother rapidly

changed their minds). Aung San Suu Kyi was also at least partly raised by the "Thirty Comrades." Daw Khin Kyi was the Burmese ambassador to India at the time of the 1962 coup—she remained in the position some yeas after—and Aung San Suu Kyi was a teenager. It was the stroke Daw Khin Kyi suffered in early 1988 that brought Aung San Suu Khi and her family—two sons and a husband—to Rangoon, at a time of mass protests and military reprisals. In December of 1988, Daw Khin Kyi died at the age of seventy-six, about forty years after her husband, the legendary Aung San, was assassinated. I

The Military Generals

They are a cartel, a faction of military officers. These generals first came to power some 15 years after Aung San's death: In 1962, General Ne Win, head of a military junta that staged a coup, deposed the feeble but duly elected Burmese democratic government still headed by U Nu. This military dictatorship took the form of one-party rule, by the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). In 1988, Ne Win resigned in the face of nationwide protests and boycotts brought on by his inept totalitarian government's currency devaluation—which wiped out most peoples' savings—and brutal suppression of student protesters. It was at this time that Aung San Suu Kyi arrived in Rangoon to be with her mother. Ne Win's resignation led both to Aung San Suu Kyi's first political actAnother military coup was formed, this one led by General Saw Maung, who was head of a new single party called the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). One of his first acts was to urge Aung San Suu Kyi to observe the government law on public meetings; he was soon replaced by General Than Shwe. That—in a January 1989 interview Aung San Suu Kyi refers to a "Brigadier Myint Aung"—further suggests that a coterie or cartel, a group of not necessarily publicly named men were running the country. Aung San Suu Kyi emphasized that the military is not a monolithic "they," a universally tyrannical force. She knew that there are honorable men within the military—who, like other Burmese people, are silent under the yoke of fear.

Objects/Places

Burma

It is a country bordering China, India, and Thailand: The eastern Himalayas form its north boundary; to the east is the Shan plateau (averaging about 3,500 feet above sea level); to the west are coastal plains and to the east, the delta of the Irrawaddy, Burma's main river, which flows north to south, emptying into the Andaman Sea.

Irrawaddy Delta

It was the first part of Burma to feel European influence, which began in the 15th Century. It was also here that, in 1989, Aung San Suu Kyi faced down military rifles aimed at her (an order to not shoot was given at the last minute).

Rangoon

The capital of Burma. Its name was changed to Yangon when the generals changed the country's name to the Union of Myanmar.

Shwedagon Pagoda

Standing on a hilltop in Rangoon, it is the site of one of Aung San Suu Kyi's first political rallies. If a single building can serve as a country's symbol, this one is Burma's. Many popular legends surround the pagoda, including that it was built during the lifetime of the Buddha. Its name means "Golden Dragon."

Themes

Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law

Aung San Suu Kyi wrote that the lifeblood of democracy is the will of the people as observed in their deeds: becoming and maintaining a democratic government takes individual commitment, individual work and time. Universal human rights is where a democracy must begin, not end. Democracy is not holidays and parades, not even simply voting (although that, too, has meaning). What Aung San Suu Kyi articulated was a synthesis of her philosophical and political thinking: The first step any legitimate government takes is the universal observance of everyone's individual human rights. A true government is also one based on principles, the rule of law. The only legitimate means of achieving such a government are non-violent. To bring about such a government, great personal and collective self-discipline is required.

Do Aung San Suu Kyi's collective public writing and speaking outline a plan that would have served as a foundational document for her country? That is unfortunately an unknown since her ideas have never been applied. Are her writings then similar to the documents produced by other popular democratic movements around the world? Yes. What seems unique to her political and philosophical position is that observation of universal human rights is the first step towards democracy: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations states that "every individual and every organ of society should promote the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans regardless of race, nationality or religion are entitled:" her philosophical position is grounded in this statement. Aung San Suu Kyi was not the least bit vague about what she meant by human rights. In an open letter to the United Nations, she wrote that she and the NLD try to uphold the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Articles 19, 20 and 2 l)," that she and "the NLD are being subjected to treatment inconsistent with Articles 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, I I and 12," concluding that "Those working for democracy in Burma would distinguish between 'the rule of law' which would mean the fair and impartial administration of administrative rules" and "the process of law and order which merely involves the enforcement of arbitrary edicts decreed by a regime which does not enjoy the mandate of the people." In another open letter to "all ambassadors from countries recognized by the Burmese military," she asked that they press their foreign offices to raise questions about the status of human rights in Burma under "Item 4" of the next day's General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly.

Inclusiveness

Aung San Suu Kyi was awarded the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize in part for her efforts to bring the diverse ethnic and linguistic cultures that constituted the people of Burma together. She spoke of the example set by her mother, who regularly brought diverse individuals together as her house guests (their regular presence was part of Aung San Suu Kyi's childhood). Her father's views were not dissimilar: he saw Burma's many

groups moving together, equally forward toward the goal of independence and democratic government. Her inclusiveness is reflected by the examples she used in her speeches: more than one "successful" business is on the side of true democracy in Burma (they know that without it, they can have no real security, only an arbitrary enforcement of rule); additionally, a month before the imposition of martial law, Aung San Suu Kyi observed that it is too broad a generalization to call the entire government corrupt: it was only a particular radical fringe which had seized and was abusing its power. She also urged that people not take issue with the army per se: they include some honorable men who have been used as puppets by the current regime (like the people themselves, ruled by fear).

She though is a practical woman who more wants to see universal observation of everyone's human rights than to talk about them: She exhorted the military to not make war on the people in the current crisis (she even, a month before the imposition of martial law, urged a non-violent solution acceptable to the will of the people—that also allowed the military a "graceful exit"). This practicality is reflected in the form of her letters to the United Nations and Amnesty International: bulleted lists, intended for use as action documents.

The Changing of Names

In some instances names change as group composition changes (however superficially): 1988 saw the departure of Ne Win and the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), replaced by General Saw Maung and the new State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) party. In some instances name changes that apparently better reflect national identity sew only seeds for further dissolution: In 1989, when Aung San Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest, the generals renamed Burma to the Union of Union of Myanmar and changed Rangoon to Yangon. "Burma" was the name given the country by the British—but it was also Aung San's country ("Rangoon" was a British corruption of the city's newly restored Burmese name). In some instances, a generic word comes to be used in reference to a particular person. Aung San Suu Kyi discussed how "Boh"—the Burmese word for an army lieutenant in particular and military officers or commanders in general—came to be used by the Burmese to refer to her father ("boh" also being "the Pali word for strength"). The word "bogyoke," she continued, specifically indicates the rank of major-general, but came to be used—in the context of Aung San, her father—to signify the father of the army, a strong and selfless leader. In other instances, hurling false names is a political activity: as when the generals tried to silence Aung San Suu Kyi by slandering her personally (associating her name with bizarre sexual behaviors, being either a communist or working for the CIA, someone who insulted the Buddha). In this same vein, the state-controlled media was quick to dismiss her emphasis on human rights by dismissing it as a western concept. The changing of names takes on different meanings in different contexts. One common thread in these examples is the difference between government imposed name changes in the form of edicts and the organic way that the meaning of a word changes as public thinking changes and evolves.

The Burmese People

In the 1990 election, 80 percent of them voted for Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party. To the extent that democratic election results can be thought to reflect an abstract concept like the will of the people, one needs only read what Aung San Suu Kyi wrote and said to understand what they voted for. The generals ignored the democratically obtained results (by October of that year, only four members of her party remained free). Two years earlier, when Aung San Suu Kyi first returned to Rangoon to be with her mother, the military government was rounding up students in "broad daylight"—to become human mine sweepers on the front lines of the generals' wars. Far more Burmese students were slaughtered in 1988 than at Tienanmen Square a year later.

Aung San Suu Kyi spoke proudly, repeatedly, of the many individuals within her country working towards a common goal of multi-party democracy, mentioning, for example, monks and students distributing humanitarian aid. This was not the first time the Burmese had worked together: In 1920—in response to the British Rangoon University Act, which they interpreted as restricting access to education to all but a few—they formed the "National Schools." They were created through subscriptions and, although there were enough subscriptions to found numerous schools, most failed within a few years. Only a literate society would have a popular movement like that. It is difficult to make generalizations in the context of a country where over 100 languages are spoken—but it is expected that the Burmese people have not fared well under totalitarian rule (just as they did not benefit by being a colonized country before World War II and an occupied one during it).

Fear

Aung San Suu Kyi also crossed modern philosophical and political thinking in her many discussions of fear. She wrote that man is not naturally in a state of fear. Man comes to be crippled by fear in the context of corrupt and arbitrary, capricious governments who inconsistently apply—and thereby invalidate—the rule of law. The fear can take on many manifestations: loss of a loved one, personal death—and the powerful always fear a loss of power (their fear only functions to make them more corrupt). One of the most common manifestations of fear is silence (in one interview, where she reiterated that she sought no political role for herself, she stated that the only thing distinguishing her from the "average" Burmese—caught in the web of fear inevitably generated by living within the phenomenal world of a totalitarian society—was that she felt no fear). She continually extolled people that they must overcome their fear and act: In her letter to the UN, she stressed that the Burmese alone are responsible for their struggle, asking only that the UN recognize the justness of their cause. It is in the end not power,as Machiavelli said,that corrupts but fear. Fear corrupts both those wielding power and those subjugating themselves to it. It is only when people free themselves from it that the struggle for democracy can begin.

Economic Shambles

Aung San Suu Kyi observed that the inherently inefficient apparatus of a monolithic totalitarian state leads inevitably to corruption—through arbitrary enforcement of law—which leads to fear and more corruption, as well as shortages and economic hardship for most people. Totalitarian rule is inefficient because awarding contracts based on other than merit inevitably leads to poor work and inevitable-(but avoidable if thought out) disasters, like the devaluation of the country's currency. As she noted, the core problem is that "The relentless attempts of totalitarian regimes to prevent free thought and new ideas and persistent assertion of their own rightness bring on them an intellectual stasis which they project on to the nation at large." Of all the forms of corruption she discussed, this is the worst, because it allows avarice to become deeply entrenched in conjunction with the absence of a coherent economic plan. This leadis to economic shambles, increasing inflation and falling real income. She used the example of the city Myitkyina: when she visited it 30 years earlier as a child, there was no problem with electricity; now though there is not enough. She also noted that those who place short-term profits above long-term peace allow for only partial realization of the declaration of human rights (synthesizing two very different economic and philosophical models). Perhaps though the real problem with totalitarian ineptitude is that it denies able people opportunity, a future. She repeatedly contrasted what she saw happening around her—the efficiency of ad hoc seemingly spontaneous self-organizing clusters of people coming together throughout her country—with the bankruptcy of the inept generals' failed economic policies. She equated the generals' party, SLORC, with "inefficiency, corruption, and misuse of power." At another point she quantified the cost of inept totalitarian behemoths: life expectancy in Burma under the dictatorship is about sixty, but, under democracy, living conditions would improve and life expectancy might increase to perhaps seventy.

Style

Point of View

The first two parts of the book are in Aung San Suu Kyi's voice. The essays in the third part of the book are about her. The exception is Section 21 (the end of the second part), which contains the words of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, explaining its reasons for awarding her its Peace Prize in 1991.

Setting

This thwarted popular struggle for independence and multi-party democracy occurred in Burma during the late 1980s.

Language and Meaning

The book was first published in English and soon translated into other languages. Aung San Suu Kyi is bilingual: her essays about her father, Burma, and the Burmese people were written in English. Her political speeches, interviews, and essays were in Burmese (she translated a few into English herself). Burma is a country where over 100 languages are spoken, Burmese foremost. In a particularly scholarly essay, Aung San Suu Kyi examined how the Burmese language was influenced by British colonial rule. Her writing is peppered with acronyms: her father, Aung San, founded the Burma Independence Army (BIA) and, after leading the successful resistance against Japanese occupation, resigned his military position as commander-in-chief, and formed the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), which swept the 1947 elections. After a 1962 coup, the country was run by the generals' Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP); after a 1988 coup, the country was run by the generals' State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Aung San Suu Kyi's own political party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) swept the 1990 elections: SLORC ignored the results and changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC).

Structure

In the Introduction, Dr. Aris discussed his organization of Aung San Suu Kyi's writings (and writing about her) into the three major parts outlined below. These sections are preceded by a Foreword written by Vaclav Havel. Part one—titled "The Inheritance"—is divided into 4 sections: My Father, My Country and People, Intellectual Life in Burma and India under Colonialism, and Literature and Nationalism in Burma. Part two—titled "The Struggle"—is divided into 17 sections: In Quest of Democracy, Freedom from Fear, The True Meaning of Boh, The First Initiative, Speech to a Mass Rally at the Shwedagon Pagoda, The Objectives, In the Eye of the Revolution, Two Letters to Amnesty International, Letter to the Ambassadors, The Role of the Citizen in the

Struggle for Democracy, Battle Royal, Open Letter to the UN Commission on Human Rights, Dust and Sweat, The Need for Solidarity among Ethnic Groups, The People Want Freedom, The Agreement to Stand for Election, and The 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. Each of these sections is prefaced by Dr. Aris' brief introduction stating the date and context in which Aung San Suu Kyi wrote. Part three—titled "Appreciations"— is divided into 4 sections: A Flowering of the Spirit: Memories of Suu and Her Family (by Ma Than E), Suu Burmese (by Ann Pasternak Slater), Aung San Suu Kyi: Is She Burma's Woman of Destiny? (by Josef Silverstein), and Aung San Suu Kyi and the Peaceful Struggle for Human Rights in Burma (by Philip Kreager).

Quotes

"The Burmese language itself was beginning to change under the same influences which had led to the modern forms of many languages in India: the impact of western literature, the growth of printing, the dissemination of newspapers, the creation of a wider reading public. Classical Burmese had become heavily laden ... with loan words, stereotyped literary expressions and artificial flourishes. The early newspaper articles in Burmese retained many of the old conventions, frequently breaking into verse when reporting such dramatic events as a lovers' suicide pact. However, with the burgeoning of news dispatches the style became more factual and terse. Here it is difficult to decide how much change was due to the nature of journalistic writings and how much to the influence of English." Section 3, pp. 117-118

"The early years of British rule brought some material prosperity but the laissez-faire economic policy adopted by the government and the imposition of administrative and judicial institutions ... brought about ... unchecked immigration ... the opening up of large tracts of virgin land with its attendant need for capital, the financial activities of Indian money-lenders, land alienation, the monopolies exercised by European commercial firms, the import of foreign goods which diminished the market for indigenous products, the breakdown of the monastic school system ... all these circumstances combined to create forces which led to the disintegration of Burmese society." Section 4, pg. 141

"It was predictable that as soon as the issue of human rights became an integral part of the movement for democracy, the official media should start ridiculing and condemning the concept .... despotic governments do not recognize the precious human component ... seeing its citizens only as a mindless—and helpless—mass to be manipulated at will. It is as though people were incidental to a nation rather than its very life-blood ... official creed is required to be accepted with an unquestioning faith more in keeping with orthodox tenets of the biblical religions which have held sway in the West than with the more liberal Buddhist attitude: It is proper to doubt, to be uncertain ... Do not go upon what has been acquired by repeated hearing. Nor upon tradition, nor upon rumours ... When you know for yourself that certain things are unwholesome and wrong, abandon them ... When you know for yourself that certain things are wholesome and good, accept them .... The relentless attempts of totalitarian regimes to prevent free thought and new ideas and persistent assertion of their own rightness bring on them an intellectual stasis which they project on to the nation at large. Intimidation and propaganda work in a duet of oppression ... people ... learn to dissemble and keep silent .... There is no intrinsic virtue to law and order unless 'law' is equated with justice and 'order' with the discipline of a people satisfied that justice has been done. Law as an instrument of state oppression is a familiar feature of totalitarianism. Without a popularly elected government and an independent judiciary to ensure due process, authorities can enforce as 'law' arbitrary decrees that are flagrant negations of all acceptable norms of justice." Section 5, pp. 174-176

"Within a system which denies the existence of basic human rights, fear tends to be the order of the day. Fear of imprisonment ... torture ... death ... losing friends, family,

property or means of livelihood ... poverty ... isolation ... failure. A most insidious form of fear is that which masquerades as common sense or even wisdom, condemning as foolish, reckless, insignificant or futile the small, daily acts of courage which help to preserve man's self-respect and inherent human dignity. It is not easy for a people conditioned by fear under the iron rule of the principle that might is right to free themselves from the enervating miasma of fear. Yet even under the most crushing state machinery courage rises up again and again, for fear is not the natural state of civilized man." Section 5, pg. 184

"Democracy is a gift one must nourish all one's life, if it is to remain alive and strong. Like the health of a person: even if his parents have raised him to healthy adulthood, if he fails to take care of himself, his health will deteriorate. If each of you keeps in mind you have a responsibility for the welfare of your country, then we shall have no reason to worry that our country's health will deteriorate." Section 14, pg. 219

"Those working for democracy in Burma would distinguish between 'the rule of law' which would mean the fair and impartial administration of administrative rules and the process of law and order which merely involves the enforcement of arbitrary edicts decreed by a regime which does not enjoy the mandate of the people." Section 16, pg. 222

Topics for Discussion

The first section in the first part of the book—called "The Legacy"—chronicles the life of Aung San Suu Kyi's father, Burmese national hero Aung San. She wrote that, as a young child, he imagined magic ways to dispel the British and that he grew up to make mistakes—like having his Burma Independence Army walk arm-in-arm with the Japanese into Rangoon during World War II: He is quoted later as having attributed that mistake not to '"pro-fascist leanings, but ... our naive blunders and petit-bourgeois timidity.'" Why would Aung San Suu Kyi, who clearly admires and respects her father, chronicle his mistakes?

The six preceding quotations were authored by Aung San Suu Kyi. The first comes from a descriptive article she wrote about the legacy of colonialism on the Burmese language. Why does she conclude with the relatively weak statement that the changes she observed couldn't conclusively be tied to one thing or another? How could changes in language be related to a national past that included a period of colonial occupation?

In the second quotation, she speaks of a combination of factors—a long list—that contributed to the "disintegration of Burmese society" around the beginning of the 20th century. Why doesn't she just use slogans—blame British imperialism and laissez-faire capitalism—to make her point?

The third through sixth quotations come from the middle of the book, the part called "The Struggle:" These are from Aung San Suu Kyi's political rallies, open letters, and interviews. In the third quotation, Aung San Suu Kyi notes the predictability with which the government media dismissed human rights as unworthy of their concern as journalists. Their ridiculing her—as well as the government's several attempts at character assassination—were attempts to silence her. Why did they not succeed?

This third quotation concludes with her affirmation that while totalitarian regimes see people as masses to be manipulated at will, she sees them not as "incidental" but as the "very life-blood" of a nation. Is this—her view that the people of a nation are its citizens, not its masses—the source of her position that universal recognition of everyone's human rights is the first step to multi-party democracy?

In the fourth quotation above, she describes fear as, while not being the natural condition of humankind, something omnipresent under totalitarian rule. Is repeated occupation by self-selected leaders—the British, the Japanese, the generals—the source of her position that universal respect for everyone's human rights is the first step to multi-party democracy?

She also speaks of the most insidious form of fear, which reduces as "foolish, reckless, insignificant [and] futile the small, daily acts of courage which ... preserve man's self-respect and inherent human dignity." Is her sense of human dignity and worth related to her position that universal recognition of human rights is the first step toward multi-party democracy?

In the fifth quotation she—although having also repeatedly stated that governments are founded on principles—describes democracy as a gift that must be nurtured. How can democracy be a gift?

What does she mean by "nurtured"? Why does she ask everyone to take responsibility for the health of the country? Isn't that a job for politicians?

Does she emphasize human rights because people play an important role as citizens?

In the final quotation, she discusses "the rule of law." How does she discriminate between the rule of law and arbitrary enforcement of selective edicts? What does she suggest that good governance means?

It has been 15 years since publication of this book, 17 years since Aung San Suu Kyi was first put under house arrest. Why is Aung San Suu Kyi still under house arrest?