



Photo by William J. Smith  
Taken in Rangoon, February 23, 1949

"To most Americans the events of World War II are becoming dim and are being obscured by later concerns, and to many of those who remember, the China-Burma-India theater has faded in comparison with the war in the Pacific, in North Africa, and in Europe. But even to those who can recall the campaign in Burma there will in the reading of this book be a certain sense of unreality and even disorientation. Familiar names are missing. . . . The slogans and notions of Allied and Axis propaganda are barely mentioned. . . . the categories of the Cold War opposition as we are accustomed to them now are absent, and the focus is steadily maintained on the struggle for an Asian solution to Asian problems. It is in this that the great value of the book lies.

"In times like these when American involvement in the affairs of peoples all over the globe is growing, it is of great importance that we learn to understand what it is that we are doing and what the reaction is on the part of the peoples we are trying to help. It is in this connection that this book is of the greatest interest. It is a clear and compelling statement of a deeply patriotic emotion and of a sense of history of a nation that goes back to the time of the Norman Conquest of Britain. Feelings like these are not confined to Burma. . . . We have a lot to learn from this book."

—From the Foreword by William S. Cornyn.

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Ba Maw: BREAKTHROUGH IN BURMA

YALE

# BREAK-THROUGH IN BURMA

## BA MAW

### MEMOIRS OF A REVOLUTION, 1939-1946

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## BREAKTHROUGH IN BURMA

Memoirs of a Revolution, 1939-1946

by *Ba Maw*

In the long struggle for Burmese independence from British rule, Dr. Ba Maw was the key figure, the man who developed the ideology, planned and implemented the campaign, and molded disparate groups into an effective political force. These memoirs not only give us an inside view of the revolution he led but provide the most complete account of Burma's role in World War II. No other Southeast Asian leader has published a comparable description of the events of that period.

As the author says in his Preface, it was during these years that "the seeds of the Burmese future were sown . . . [seeds] that have exploded into the harvest the country is reaping at present, for better or for worse." A knowledge of the wartime story is vital to an understanding of Burma today and, indeed, to a complete perception of today's events throughout Southeast Asia.

Tracing the rise of Burmese nationalism from British colonial days through the Japanese occupation of Burma and the final achievement of independence, Dr. Ba Maw presents a vast panorama of the men and the events that made up the drama of those years. Modern Burmese leaders, all at one time or another influenced by Dr. Ba Maw, began their careers during this era: Bo Aung San, who became a martyr and national hero; Bo Yan Naing, now one of the leaders of the National Liberation Council fighting the present military regime; Bo Ne Win, head of that regime; Thakin

Than Tun, head of the Burma Communist Party, also fighting the Ne Win regime; former Premier U Nu and many others.

The Emperor of Japan; Premier Tojo; General Iida, the conqueror of Burma; Bo Mogyo (Colonel Suzuki), creator of the Burma Independence Army; President Laurel of the Philippines; Netaji Bose, head of the Provisional Government of Free India—all are in these pages.

Perhaps most importantly, Dr. Ba Maw reveals the frustrations of a people under foreign rule, their intense nationalist longings, and their desperate acceptance of assistance from any ally who would deliver them from decades of exploitation and impotence.

An admirer of Western concepts of democracy and justice, Dr. Ba Maw is an outstanding example of the Asian revolutionary leader of those times, with a cosmopolitan intellectualism and style of living. Educated at Cambridge University and admitted to the British Bar, he was also the first Burmese to receive a doctorate abroad (Bordeaux University, 1924). He entered public life as chief defense counsel for Saya San and other leaders of the great peasant rebellion, becoming active in national politics shortly thereafter. He was the first Prime Minister of Burma (1937-1939), and the first Head of State of independent Burma.

He retired from active politics in 1956, but because of his own political prominence and influence and Bo Yan Naing's role in the National Liberation Council, Dr. Ba Maw and his daughter, Tinsa Maw Naing, were arrested in May 1966, and have been imprisoned ever since.

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