

# U Nu of Burma *speaks*

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As a leader in the Burmese independence movement and her first Prime Minister, a champion of colonial peoples and a spokesman for Asia, a leading figure in the revival of Buddhism, and a philosopher and playwright, U Nu stands out as one of the top men of our times.

Born in 1907 in Wakema and educated in the local school and the Myoma National High School, he took his B.A. degree at the University of Rangoon. After a few years he returned to the University to study law.

His fight for freedom and independence in Burma began as a university student and continued in various ways until the granting of independence by the British in 1948. He was imprisoned in 1940 and 1941 by them for his political activities, but released just before the Japanese invasion of Burma. Under them he held the post of Foreign Minister, meanwhile carrying on underground work for Burma's freedom from foreign rule.

After the assassination of General Aung San in 1947, U Nu became the foremost political leader of his country and after the winning of independence on January 4, 1948, its first Prime Minister. In the ensuing years he has had to concern himself with internal strife and rebellions, but he has vigorously promoted an ambitious program of land reform, agricultural improvement, industrialization, educational progress and social welfare.

In the pages that follow this remarkable modern political leader speaks:

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## ON WAR AND PEACE . . .

"We have already come to learn from the first two world wars that war solves none of the world's problems; that the problems which they leave in their wake are usually worse than those which they were intended to solve. The first world war got rid of the Kaiser, but it gave rise to Hitler; the second world war got rid of Hitler, but it brought on the cold war. And so it goes on. We have begun to realize that in modern war there is no such thing as victor or vanquished; that there is only a loser and that loser is mankind."

" . . . war as a means of settling international disputes is now completely outdated. It has been rendered obsolete by its own destructiveness. President Eisenhower put this in a nutshell when he said recently, 'There is no longer any alternative to peace.' This . . . is the most important message which the opening years of the second half of the twentieth century bring to mankind. From now on mankind's very survival depends upon his ability to absorb this lesson. It is the greatest challenge facing man today. It is more than a challenge; it is a desperate necessity."

## ON ARMAMENTS . . .

"Peace will never come so long as the world is divided into blocs and nations vying with one another in armaments. Peace-loving peoples of the world will continue to live a life of fear and uncertainty. Besides, competitive armaments will only be at the sacrifice of constructive activities in economic and social spheres. If only expenditures connected with armament can be diverted to constructive channels . . . the world will be a much better place in which to live."

## ON THE UNITED NATIONS . . .

"A war-weary world yearning for peace and a return to normality seems to have dreamed up a vision of the United Nations as a panacea for all the world's ills. It was not sufficiently realized that the United Nations could only be as good or as bad as its members made it; that it was not something apart from its collective membership."

"But the United Nations has survived the first ten years of its existence. I venture to suggest that these formative years are the most precarious, and that we may expect from now onward that this youngster will rapidly grow in stature and strength and begin to assume for itself the kind of role which was intended for it in the first place. That remains our hope and our prayer."

"Despite its failures to come up to our expectations, our faith in the United Nations remains undiminished. It remains the main hope for mankind in this atomic era."

## ON BURMA'S FOREIGN POLICY . . .

" . . . in consideration of our internal and surrounding external situation:

1. We must use our own discretion to either support or object to any matter on its own merits.

2. We must establish the most cordial relations with other nations wherever possible.

3. We must accept from any country any assistance for the creation of a Welfare State, provided such assistance is given freely and does not violate our sovereignty.

4. We must render our utmost assistance to any country which needs it. I can assure you that no foreign policy can be better than ours which has embodied these four principles."

## **ON COLONIALISM . . .**

"So long as colonialism, direct or indirect, exists, world peace will be a mere mirage. Therefore it is up to all peace-loving people of the world to fight this evil system . . ."

## **ON CATCHING UP WITH THE 20TH CENTURY . . .**

"For the first time in over a century, the peoples of Asia and Africa have begun once again to live, not merely to exist. Having shaken off the shackles of alien domination, they are endeavoring to redeem themselves from the moral and intellectual abyss into which they have been pushed by the dead weight of colonial imperialism."

"They who live in the 20th century but yet are not of the 20th century are in a hurry to make the transition. To accomplish this they need peace more than anything else. Another war might very well make their redemption impossible, even if they should be spared total annihilation."

"Then there is the problem of economic inequilibrium among countries. This also constitutes a great impediment to world peace. In the same way as sharp economic discrepancies among individuals create strifes and struggles, sharp economic discrepancies among nations also create strifes and struggles. Therefore the present system of developed and under-developed countries is undesirable. So long as under-developed countries exist, they will be the targets of exploitation by developed countries. The day will come when the under-developed countries will rise up against their exploiters when they can no longer put up with their exploitation."

"Thus, we have been in a hurry and we are in a hurry. We have waited for a long time and we feel we must accomplish a great deal in a short time."

## **ON FREEDOM IN AMERICAN COLONIAL DAYS . . .**

"The ideas and ideals, the ringing words and slogans of the American Revolution have a tremendous importance to all men who struggle for liberty. In all parts of the world where men live under tyranny, or under foreign domination, or in feudal bondage, those who dream and plot and fight for freedom do so in the name of the eternal principles for which your revolution was fought. In those parts of the world the ideas of the American Revolution are today the most explosive of all forces, more explosive in their capacity to change the world than B-52's or even atomic bombs."

## **ON FREEDOM TODAY . . .**

"Independence is as easy to lose as it is difficult to achieve."

"In a democratic country you have the freedom to speak, to write, and to form any association or party that you like. But all these freedoms are limited by one fundamental principle—you must not interfere with other people's freedom."

"Freedom and discipline go hand in hand. . . . However, people tend to forget the implication of self-discipline, and claiming the rights of liberty performing its duties, they soon introduce 'mob-rule', or to use an ugly word 'mobocracy', which inevitably leads to dictatorship."

"The power of the press is enormous and unlimited. But it must be used wisely and responsibly. On the press lies the heavy and arduous responsibility of shaping not only public opinion and the people's outlook, but also the very character and caliber of the entire nation."

## **ON THE BURMESE WAY OF LIFE . . .**

"We had a great and flourishing civilization in Burma based on one of the great religions of the world, Buddhism, at the time when William the Conqueror was crossing the English Channel. This civilization, passed on to us by our forebears, has become our national heritage. It is our way of life. We prefer it to any other way of life on this earth. We do not say that it cannot be improved or that it cannot be adapted to suit modern conditions, but we do not wish to change its basis. We are not prepared to exchange it for any other way of life. This is not a matter of conceit. We do not claim that our way of life is better than that of other people, we merely say that it is different, that it suits us better, and that we cannot therefore be induced to give it up for some other way of life, be that the Communist way, the West European way, the American way, or any other way."

## **ON BUILDING BURMESE SOLIDARITY . . .**

"As for national solidarity, it is not a matter which can be instantly achieved like using some magical powers to plant a tree and make it grow fruit at a moment's notice. A glance at world history will reveal some countries where national solidarity is not yet achieved even after the passing of centuries. As for our Union, its people have undergone nearly a century of a divide-and-rule policy whose traces still linger. You cannot expect this century-old wound to be magically healed in the twinkling of an eye. It is impossible. We must expect to see dissatisfactions in some places, suspicions in others, grievances here and there for a good many years after the creation of our Union. The whole picture is like that of a water urn which seems cloudy before the sediments settle down. We cannot help noticing such a state of affairs when we stand on the threshold of a new country about to be built."

## ON EDUCATION AND CHARACTER . . .

"At the present time in most schools and universities greater emphasis is laid on intellectual than on moral development. It is now time that greater attention be paid to the development of character. . . . Intellectual and healthy persons are necessary for the progress of the world, but we are doomed if we have such persons without character."

## ON RELIGION . . .

"Not only is our outlook on religion broad enough to encourage freedom of worship and conscientious practice of all religions, but we do not like to see mere lip service."

"It is not right for any person to have no religion. Neither is it right for anyone to be lax or slipshod in the observance of his or her own religion. There is no need for me to stress that absence of religion is prejudicial to human life."

"We are striving to glorify religion to the extent that even though there may be unbelievers, they will not dare to adopt an insolent attitude toward all things we regard as holy."

"What is it that distinguished Buddhism from other religions and from other codes of moral and ethical conduct? The answer lies in the practice of Buddhist doctrine which involves an exercise of a rigid discipline so as to attain a serenity of mind which in turn will lead to a way of escape from suffering and stress."

"Karl Marx had very limited knowledge which is not equivalent to one-tenth of a particle of dust beneath the feet of Lord Buddha."

## ON HIS PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE . . .

"The beautiful edifice of a successful, useful, and happy life is built on the five supporting pillars of strength, namely, the strength of body, the strength of knowledge, the strength of morality, the strength of wealth, and the strength of friendship."

"More than ever, (man) needs to exercise courage, patience, tolerance, and imagination. Fear, which for so long has been the counsellor of man, is today man's mortal enemy. Suspicion and mistrust are likewise greater enemies of the human race than ever before."

"Remember that harmony and cooperation mean unity and without that unity a group of people, or a community of people, or a nation, or an international society itself cannot thrive for long."

## ON NEW IDEAS . . .

"We are in a world in which many of man's institutions have become obsolete. We are in desperate need of new ideas, new approaches, new ways of looking at things. Perhaps out of this ferment, out of this kind of contact between peoples of varied backgrounds, out of this kind of diversity can come the new ideas and the new way of looking at things that are so badly needed in our world."

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