



The Chin Option

By: Dr. Vumson Suantak Ph.D

When the union of Burma celebrated its independence on the 4th January 1948, the Chin people were optimistic; they were fully committed to the union of Burma, a union that they joined at the Panglong conference in 1947. They trust the leaders of Burman to lead them to prosperity because they believed the promises and the rhetoric of the Burma leaders at the Panglong conference.

However, soon after independence they realized that they had been cheated badly by their Burman political partners. The promise of equality was not discouraged; they believed that the Burman could make Burma prosperous. When other ethnic groups such as the Karen, Mon, Karenni, Arakan, Shan, Kachin resorted to arms to free themselves from the joke of the Burman power holders, the Chin fought at the side of Burman power holders and stuck to their commitment made at Panglong. Without the Chin soldiers Rangoon and Burma would have fallen into the hands of the Karens in 1949.

Burma was not doing badly with its economy during the early years after independence although there was not much improvement in the Chin Hills. Dirt roads were built and some schools were opened. The Chins believed that progress in other parts of Burma would spill over to them, and so long as there was progress in Burma they supported the union as soldiers of the Burma Army, fighting and dying for the country, and they worked as civil servants. But their patience was often tested.

Abruptly on March 2, 1962, the young nation of Burmans dream was replaced by a nightmare when General Newin took over the political power that reigned in Burma for over thirty years. All citizens of Burma were affected by the mismanagement, degeneration, chaos and plunder in Burma. Chin hopes and aspirations of almost half a century dashed away. The dreams of a prosperous future faded to distant away. The dreams of a prosperous future faded to distant memories. The Chin witness Burma's slide into social, political, moral, and economic anarchy increasing every minute the ever widening gap between Burma and it's neighbors and other parts of the world. This state existed not because Burma was a colony. All Burma's problems were self-inflicted. Burma's politics was the combination of arrogance and stupidity, greed and brutality, pride and incompetence, xenophobia and envy, promise and deceit, and suspicion and dishonesty. Because of the greed, corruption, and half century of incompetent military leadership, Burma risks losing generations forever. It is tragic to even try to fathom the consequences of such losses.

How badly the BSPP and SLORC mismanaged the economy could be seen by Burma's

GNP (per capital income) is around \$140 according to Asia week, September 1995 where as Singapore's was \$ 21000(calculating on the back market rate U\$\$). On the other hand the Burma Army Became the 6th strongest army in the world with 400,000 men under arms. Burma was the poorest country in the world and the poorest in South East Asia. This is how badly Bo. Newin and his generals had mismanaged.

What is then left for the Chin to do in these miserable conditions? Can they blame the Burma? Should the blame go to Bo. Newin and the Burma Army? But it was not alone Bo. Newin and his generals who were destroying the country. Numerous people were involved mostly Burman but also the non-Burma nationalities. There were collaborators in plundering the wealth of the country. The power invested in them by the dictator made them very powerful and they will go down in the history of the chin as who out sold the affairs of the Chin for their own pockets. They were the pillars of support for the power of the terrible regime, which brought so much suffering to Chin people. They sold out the aspirations of the CHIN. The dream of the Chin to have a roof over their heads and food every day was denied.

Now the Chin must decided whether to let this kind of situation to continue or to take the matters in their own hands. They can not wait for ever for the Burman have certified themselves as incapable of handling the affairs of the country. Burma political leaders and the generals of the military had fragmented the union by their betrayal of the Panglong spirit, where their leader Bo. Aungsan had promised equality, self-determination, and progress. There was suspicious, distrust, and hatred among the people of Burma.

Under the parliamentary democracy and military dictatorship the Chin saw no improvement in their living conditions. It is time have to stop believing that somebody would come to their aid. They cry for federalism and some resorted to arms. How can the Burman help the Chin if the Burman cannot help them? The cry for help will never come and armed resurrection will bring only sweat, tears, and blood and nothing else. The Chin should take the experiences of the Karen, Kachin, and others.

What option do we Chin have? The Chin has to help them, by building their own roads, school, and hospitals. Progress can come only from hard work and the Chin should not except the Burman to give them, what the Burma themselves do not have.

The Chin state has potential for improvement. There are vast tracts of land that need attention. The Chin should produce cash crops such as orange, tung, tee, mangoes, coffee, bananas, to came a few. There are many streams in the Chin state. These should serve as the source of energy. They must regard the Burman as non-existent when it comes to progress and development. Only by working themselves for the improvement of their living condition, they could improve their lives. Nobody is going give them. They have to earn it as many people have done. Stop Crying and Start Working.