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THE NEGRO IN THE PROHIBITION PARTY

**A Case Study of the
Tennessee Prohibition Party**

Hanes Walton, Jr.

THE NEGRO IN THE PROHIBITION PARTY

A Case Study of the Tennessee Prohibition Party*

The Temperance Movement began early in America—but at first in a more or less sporadic fashion. In the 1820's, however, with the breakdown of the colonial social order, temperance doctrines and organizations began to emerge into a major reform movement and as time passed this reformist movement was aided by several fellow travelers. For example, in Maine where the first really vigorous Temperance Movement got under way with Neal Dow as its leader, the party received its strongest support from the Anti-Slavery Movement.¹ In fact, the Temperance and Anti-Slavery Movements were united in Massachusetts.² And since some ideological similarities did exist between Abolition and Temperance, because they were both moralistic and perfectionistic in nature, it wasn't long before the Temperance Movement merged with other like-minded political reform groups in the country.

Reformist Third Parties, like the Liberty Party, the Know-Nothing Party, and the Free Soilers all over the North joined in and aided the Temperance Movement.³ And as for the Free Negro, the movement didn't overlook his support.

Prior to the Civil War, Temperance groups established societies among Free Negroes in Georgia as early as 1831, and in Charlottesville, Richmond, and Petersburg, Virginia in 1842.⁴

Moreover, the vigorous support of the Temperance Movement by the Anti-Slavery Parties—which had within their ranks numerous Free Negroes⁵—lends credence to the idea that the Movement before the War had some Free Negro support. However, at the World Temperance Convention in London, 1846, Frederick Douglass attacked the Movement in the United States because it failed to make better provisions for the Negro in its ranks and to concern itself with his bondage.⁶ In other words, many southern slave holders were also supporters of the Temperance Movement and were viewed by it as good men.⁷ This fact caused William Lloyd Garrison, later that year, as it did

*This paper was prepared in a revised form for presentation at the 53rd Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History.

¹John Allen Krout, *The Origin of Prohibition* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), pp. 289-290.

²Joseph R. Gusfield, *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1963), p. 58.

³*Ibid.*, pp. 53-55.

⁴Krout, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-190.

⁵Charles H. Wesley (ed.), *Neglected History: Essays in Negro American History* (Ohio: Central State College Press, 1965), pp. 56-77. See Chapter IV on the Participation of Negro in the Anti-Slavery Political Parties. See also Walton, *op. cit.*, Chapter II.

⁶Krout, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 217-218.

Douglass to denounce the Temperance Movement as being pro-slavery in nature and working hand-in-glove with sympathetic slave holders in the South.

But the southern slavocracy viewed the matter differently. They felt that the continual union of the Temperance Movement in the North with the anti-slavery forces was inimical to their interest. And when intersectional strife rose in intensity over the slavery issue during the 1830's, the identification of the Temperance Movement with the anti-slavery crusade was strong enough to stifle completely the organization of the Temperance Movement in the South. Although Temperance agitation had developed in the southern states during the 1820's, by the late 1830's the Movement was unable to gain any further strength in the South.⁸ After the Civil War the movement revitalized itself especially in the South with great intensity. On the national level the movement became a Third Party in 1872. A major problem, however, existed.

National third parties have abounded throughout American party history,⁹ but the difficulties of discerning their supporters, especially ethnic supporters and the degree of each supporting group is somewhat difficult—unless the third or minor party is ethnically oriented.¹⁰ Basically, third parties are composites of sundry organizations, political groupings, individuals, and ideas. And consequently, it is exceedingly difficult to ascertain with any degree of precision the role and participation of each in the political nomenclature of the minor party movement. Here the National Prohibition Party is no exception.

For example, the national organization has had such diverse grouping in its organizational structure as the: Washingtonian Movement for the Reforming of Drunkards, the Society of Good Templars, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (hereafter the W.C.T.U.) and the Anti-Dramshop Party of New York to name a few.¹¹ In terms of individuals there have been such names as John Gough, Neal Dow, Mrs. Carrie Nation, Rev. John A. Russell, and James A. Black. The gamut also runs from politicians to ministers, from glamorous women to old spinsters as well as numerous ethnic and religious organizations which would cover the entire spectrum from whites to Negroes and atheists to fundamentalists.

⁸Gusfield, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

⁹W. B. Hesseltine, *The Rise and Fall of Third Parties* (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs, 1948); see his recent work, *Third Party Movements in U. S.* (New Jersey: D. Van Nostrand, 1962). H. P. Nash, *Third Parties in America* (Wash., D. C.: Public Affairs, 1959), and H. Walton, Jr., *The Negro in Third Party Politics* (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Co., 1969).

¹⁰See any of the above works especially Walton.

¹¹Fred E. Haynes, *Social Politics in the U. S.* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1924), pp. 383-386.

But despite its diverse and diffuse backing, the Prohibition Party,¹² like numerous other third parties, met with little or no electoral success at the National level.¹³ This party, however, similar to others, discovered in some places ample sectional or regional support to such an extent that it influenced state and municipal politics. And this was definitely the case in Tennessee.¹⁴ Moreover, a microanalysis of any minor party sectional achievements would immediately reveal much more than a macro-analysis of that party as well as the role and participation that a particular ethnic group had within the party's movements.

In the case where the Negro is the ethnic group under consideration then the micro-analytical approach is all the more meaningful, because when a research reflects upon the Negro's political position in this country, it is easy to dismiss his role or participation in any political movement as limited or insignificant due to the certain misleading myths derived from a poor historical insight into the Negro's past.

Generally, these ideas allude to such myths as: Negroes couldn't vote during slavery; but after the passage of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments, he became the political step-child of the Republican Party until 1932, and a ward of the Democratic Party thereafter. Or that since he was illiterate and politically unsophisticated, his vote which could be bought, sold, or machine controlled or manipulated, was unworthy of genuine consideration.¹⁵ Thus, such broad and sweeping generalizations have obscured the true realities of Negro political life in America.¹⁶ Specifically, in the case of the Prohibition Movement many have alluded to the fact that the drive in the South to repress the sale of liquor was only a pretense with the underlying cause being one to suppress the Negro in actuality. Thus the Negro couldn't participate in a scheme to suppress himself. But it is hoped that this paper will later shed some meaningful light on this assumption.

Moreover, it is further possible to dismiss the Negro in the political life of this country when the researcher conceives of the Negro as always being a major political problem without trying to remove the myopic in his political vision to see what, how, and when the Negro has used the normal political processes in this country to solve some of his problems.

¹²Andrew Sinclair, *Prohibition: The Era of Excess* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1962), pp. 23-29.

¹³Hesseltine, *Third Party Movement in U. S.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁴Paul Issac, *Prohibition and Politics: Turbulent Decades in Tennessee 1885-1920* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1965); A. E. Jewell, "The Prohibition Movement in Tennessee," (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Virginia, 1930); L. F. Rabyler, "The Road to State-Wide Prohibition in Tennessee, 1899-1909," (Unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1949).

¹⁵For information on this point see Charles H. Thompson, "The Negro Voter in the South," *Journal of Negro Education*, 1957, pp. 213-215.

¹⁶See rest of the articles in *Journal of Education*, 1952 on the *Negro Voter*.

Therefore, in view of these difficulties, a macro-political view of any national political third party movement, the Prohibition Movement as no exception, will not, depending upon the nature of the crusade, reveal very much about the Negro's role and participation in the movement.¹⁷ But a micro-concentration upon local, state, and sectional political movements can prove fruitful because it will weaken old myths and enhance proper conceptualization. And this is the reason for a micro-analysis of the Prohibition Movement in Tennessee.

This paper seeks to explore the Negro's role and participation in the special statewide prohibition election of 1877 and discern, if possible, the effects of Negro electoral behavior upon the attitudes of party members toward their political rights and privileges in the state. In addition, the paper hopes to dispel some myths about the southern Prohibition Movement and provide some further insight to overall Negro participation in the National Prohibition Movement.¹⁸

The Temperance Movement began in Tennessee in the 1820's and a party was organized in 1883. It was fostered by the Quakers and the Congregationalists, who urged upon everyone the total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. At first the movement was moral in nature and character, but it soon took on political overtures and moved into the political arena. But long before the movement acquired a political character it defined a place for the Negro in relationship to alcoholic beverages. In fact, the drive to prohibit the "devil rum" got its first law enacted in 1779.¹⁹ This law made it possible to revoke the license of innkeepers who sold wine, rum, brandy, ale, beer, cider, or other spirits, if they "entertained" slaves without the oral or written permission of their masters. In short, slaves had the right to consume, buy, or sell intoxicants with the permission of their masters. But this right was curtailed by the passage of two laws in 1813 and 1830 after the major temperance movement was initiated. These laws made it illegal for slaves to buy spirits or for any one to sell it to them. The state legislature in 1832 made this a condition of licensing, when it required saloonkeepers to take an oath before acquiring their licenses that they wouldn't sell liquor to slaves without the written consent of the masters.²⁰

In the case of the Free Negro in Tennessee, it became illegal in 1836 for him to sell liquor and the sale of an intoxicant to a free Negro to be consumed on the spot became a misdemeanor in 1842. Ten years later the sale of an intoxicant to free Negroes or

¹⁷Any work on the National Movement will be very sketchy on the Negro's role. See Walton, *op. cit.*, Chapter 4.

¹⁸Issac, *op. cit.*, pp. 182-183.

¹⁹Edward Scott (comp.) *Laws of the State of Tennessee* (Knoxville: 1821), pp. 245-248.

²⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 182-183.

slaves was prohibited. Although the movement gained in momentum throughout the state in the 1840's and 1850's very little was accomplished and the movement drowned in the intensity of inter-sectional rivalry.²¹

After the Civil War two things happened. First the Prohibition Movement revitalized itself and was successful in achieving the outlawry of intoxicants near certain businesses (like the steel and forge industry) and institutions (like colleges, churches, hospitals). At first these measures were piece-meal, but a general comprehensive law was enacted in 1877. It was known as the Four Mile Law which prohibited the "retail sale of all intoxicating beverages within four miles of any chartered institution of learning outside an incorporated town."²² Although this law didn't enrage the liquor interest, it did become a spark for the prohibitionists to dry up the entire state.

The move to accomplish this feat came when the Tennessee Legislature set a special amendment election for September 29, 1887.²³ On this day the electorate of the state would decide on a referendum which would determine whether or not the state should have an across the board prohibition law. And it was in the preparation for this election that the second factor, the newly enfranchised Negro voter, became important.

The Negro voters in the state by 1887 were estimated at about 60,000 and could very well, if they voted in a block, decide the election. Thus, in a "balance of power situation" the Negro voter became the target for both anti-prohibitionists and prohibitionists propaganda. Tremendous appeals were made by both sides and in fact, the campaigns of both groups focused upon winning over the Negro's vote.

The prohibitionists sought to make more efficacious their appeals to the Negro voter and created separate Negro W.C.T.U. organizations in Negro churches, schools, and colleges.²⁴ They even permitted a Negro W.C.T.U. member to speak at the State Temperance Convention, they held mixed rallies throughout the state that were addressed by members of both races and a Negro was placed on the Davidson County prohibition committee. Moreover, the white prohibitionists, to increase their appeal to the Negro voters, used their national affiliates to get out-of-state friends—both white and Negro, like General Clinton Fisk and Frederick Douglass—to write appeals to the Negroes in Tennessee urging them to vote for the prohibition amendment. And furthermore, the state temperance organization had the National

²¹Issac, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-11.

²²*Ibid.*, p. 11.

²³*Ibid.*, p. 33.

²⁴*National Temperance Advocate* (May, 1887), pp. 73-74 (Nashville Union, February 19, 1887). See also Issac, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

Temperance Society to send in special campaigners to encourage and organize Negro supporters.

A counter-campaign by the state-wide anti-prohibition committee under the auspices of Joseph C. Acklen, conducted mass meetings, numerous rallies and established county and district committees all over the state. But it didn't have the outside resources like its opponents. Despite this obstacle, however, the "wets" did find several Negro spokesmen for their cause and all the Negro anti-prohibitionist rallies were addressed by members of their own race, who asked that their vote be against the amendment. This appeal of the "wets" to Negroes, however, never reached the intensity and forcefulness of the prohibitionists because of their lack of funds and a national organization.

Thus, in this morass of charges and counter-charges, claims and counter-claims the Negro voter had to make a choice for himself and these two campaigns to influence his thinking were not without some degree of success. Negroes of the prohibitionist sentiments did much to aid their white counterparts. They performed additional promotional and organizational work on their own, especially in the three Negro colleges of Fisk, Roger Williams University, and Tennessee Central College which became the centers of Negro Temperance activity.²⁵ In terms of the Negro churches they performed the same task through importing ministers, like J. C. Price from North Carolina who appealed to 4,000 Negroes from the courthouse steps in Nashville. He told them that Negroes should fight liquor because it interfered with their new freedoms, privileges, and responsibilities as citizens.

There were some Blacks including ministers who held anti-prohibitionist sentiments. These Negroes also held mass meetings and formed their own separate organization to foster ideas against the amendment. And they weren't without some effect. For instance, one Negro newspaper in Memphis, the *Watchman*, declared "prohibition is a slave law, as it puts some in bondage and leaves others to do as they please." A Negro farmer in the same city voiced his dislike for the proposed law by stating that: "I am going to vote for whiskey. I am a member of the church. I goes for a Christian. I don't preach and don't want to; it might change my mind. I love whiskey and drinks it regular." In the same vein a Negro Baptist minister of the same locale commented that: More whiskey, cheaper whiskey, more barrels and bigger barrels.²⁶ And it was from comments like these that an observer has concluded that "there was not much chance that a majority of the Negro voters could be attracted to the reform camp."²⁷ In essence, most Negroes in his opinion could be easily influenced by intoxicants. But the election results seemed to cast some doubt upon the validity of his conclusion.

²⁵Issac, *op. cit.*, p. 36. See also, *Nashville American*, September 25, 1887.

²⁶*National Temperance Advocate* (October, 1887), p. 163.

²⁷Issac, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-57.

Although the Amendment was defeated by 145,000 against it to 118,000 for it, the distribution of the vote shows that East Tennessee and six counties in the northeastern part of West Tennessee were strongly for the Amendment or prohibition. On the other hand, West Tennessee and part of middle Tennessee voted strongly against the Amendment or anti-prohibitionist.

Now attaching the vote distribution to a political analysis (i.e., party affiliation of each county), one would gain further insights because twenty-three out of the thirty-two East Tennessee counties had Republican voting histories and a grand total of forty Republican counties in the state voted to dry it up. Fifty-six of the usually Democratic counties voted to keep the state "wet", with a majority coming from forty-eight of them against the Amendment. In short, then, Republicanism in the state was closely allied with Prohibitionism while anti-prohibitionism was associated with the Democrats.

Now taking this information as a backdrop with the generally accepted information that Negro voting behavior after the Civil War was mainly Republican in nature or at least coerced that way, then we can get a better perspective on how he voted. Assuming then that the average Negro voter in Tennessee was a Republican, then he voted for Prohibition (dry). But the location of the black belt counties was not in Eastern Tennessee and in terms of their white voting behavior, they voted Democratic. Therefore, if the majority of Negro voters resided in this area (Black belt counties) where the Bourbons had redeemed the state earlier, then it is possible that the redeemers once again used coercion, legal and illegal, to sway the Negro vote to accomplish their own ends (i. e., permitting liquor to be sold in the state because it brought additional revenues to the State Treasury).²⁸

Thus, this analysis using hindsight and some of the new techniques in Social Science, would indicate that the majority of Negroes voted in two ways. One, if they voted freely they voted for or against the issue depending upon the degree of persuasion, or secondly, if they voted under coercion, they voted Democratic and against prohibition. But probably the more logical of the two assumptions is the idea that they voted both ways, because in the absence of meaningful historical data it is hard to discern which side received a majority.

However, without the modern analytical tools of today and in the depth of despair and disillusionment, the prohibitionist in reality saw the Negro voter's role in the election in quite a different manner. Since they made a vigorous effort to win Negro support and their cause was righteous and just, victory had to

²⁸The black belt whites were mainly aristocrats and the power elite in state government. They always sought to strengthen their power and benefits. See V. O. Key's *Southern Politics: In States and Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1949), pp. 75-81.

have escaped them because of some Judas. Immediately the credit for their defeat was given to the Negro voter. All of the major prohibitionist organs, as well as those favorable to their cause claimed that the majority of Negroes voted against the amendment.²⁹ One pro-prohibitionist paper, the *Nashville American*, made the claim that 90,000 of the 145,000 votes cast against the amendment were those of Negroes.³⁰ In fact, the paper implied that what whites had voted for was defeated by Negroes under the influence of money, liquor, and the appeal to prejudice.³¹ Hence, the idea was born that Negro voting was a hinderance to progressive movements. If progressive movements were to succeed, then Negroes had to be excluded from political life.³² This corollary vigorously and vividly expressed itself in later state and southern politics.³³

In terms of state politics, the psychology of the prohibitionists changed after this idea gained in ascendancy. Where the group had been paternalistic toward Negroes because they felt that prohibition would "liberate the spirit of progress in the community—elevate the lower classes, especially the Negro and improve his lot,"³⁴ the party now became vindictive and opposed to Negro suffrage rights. And even Negro leaders like B. T. Washington and H. Council as far away as Alabama upheld this position.³⁵

For instance, this new attitude change expressed itself well in the 1908 Gubernatorial campaign between two Democrats—Edward Carmack and Governor Patterson.³⁶ Carmack, an old time prohibitionist, who had crusaded hard for the 1877 law and courted the Negro voters is mindful of Tom Watson of the Populist in Georgia, because in the 1908 campaign he decried Negro voting. During this Gubernatorial campaign he and his allies (fellow prohibitionists) "attempted to make the saloon responsible for sex crimes committed by Negroes against white

²⁹Issac, *op. cit.*, p. 57. See also *Nashville American* (September 30, 1887), *Chattanooga Times* (September 30, 1887), *Christian-Advocate Nashville XLVII* (October 8, 1887), p. 9 *National Temperance Advocate* (November, 1887), p. 180.

³⁰*Ibid.*, See also *Nashville American* (October 17, 1887).

³¹*Ibid.*

³²For further elucidation of this point see James H. Timberlake, *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement 1900-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 119-122.

³³See John Corrison, "The Prohibition Wave in the South," *The American Monthly Review of Review* (September, 1907), p. 330; William Brown, "The South and the Saloon," *The Century Magazine* Vol. 76, pp. 462-463. See C. Vann Woodward, *Origin of the New South*.

³⁴Issac, *op. cit.*, p. 40. See also Timberlake, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120 and Sinclair, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-31.

³⁵See B. T. Washington, "Prohibition and the Negro," *Outlook* (March 14, 1908).

³⁶Issac, *op. cit.*, pp. 142-152.

women.”³⁷ Several examples were given in numerous prohibitionist newspapers of how drunken Negroes had raped white women. In other words, the papers suggested that Negro morals were inherently low, but when the Negro is under the influence of alcohol, his morals degenerate even lower until he becomes harmful to the entire community. This thinking was further enhanced when Will Irwin’s articles appeared in the nationwide *Collier Magazine* of May 16th about the relationship between southern liquor companies and their labels which pictured partially clad white women—which easily excited or provoked Negroes to rape.³⁸ “This gin,” he said, “with its label, has made more blacks rape fiends and procured the outrage of more white women in the South than all other agencies combined. It is sold with the promise that it will bring white virtue into the black brute’s power.”³⁹

This caused one of Pro-Carmack’s newspapers to editorialize in Tennessee that Tennesseans should “set aside all other reasons for the crusade against the saloon and consider this one—the Negro problem.” Then the paper implied that it could never be solved without prohibition. “The effect of the saloon upon the Negro is disastrous to his industry and good citizenship. And more, the Negro fairly docile and industrious, becomes, when filled with liquor, turbulent and dangerous and a menace to life, property and the repose of the community.”⁴⁰

Although the anti-prohibition forces behind Patterson in this campaign tried to play down the threat of the gin-label to Southern Womanhood, by declaring that a majority of Negro lynchings in 1907 had occurred in the dry states of Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. It didn’t succeed. They were charged with attacking “Southern men for striking a blow in defense of the safety of womanhood,” while “they had tacitly defended the fiends and monsters who incite and arouse the Negro to commit the worst of all crimes.”⁴¹

And on election day, when Carmack lost to Patterson, it was felt that Negro voters under the influence of numerous liquor dealers had been instrumental in his defeat.⁴² Then, the subsequent killing of Carmack by an anti-prohibitionist in a street gun duel created enough ferment for such a martyr death that it led to complete prohibition for the state and the cry by the

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 147.

³⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 147-148. See also W. I. Irwin, “More About Nigger Gin,” *Collier’s* August 15, 1908.

³⁹*Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁴⁰*Nashville Tennessean* (June 16, 1908), p. 17.

⁴¹Issac, *op. cit.*, p. 150. See also *Nashville Tennessean* (June 20, 1908).

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 157. See also W. D. Smith, “The Carmack-Patterson Campaign and its Aftermath in Tennessee Politics,” (Unpublished M. A. Thesis, Vanderbilt University, 1939).

prohibitionist on September 4, 1909 for total Negro disenfranchisement.⁴³ It came in 1909.

In retrospect, then, the prohibition party in Tennessee had Negro supporters as well as opponents. And the prejudices of party members which were somewhat mute at first, during the drive to secure Negro votes, came into full blossom when it felt that they had been defeated by the very people they were seeking to help. In other words, they felt that the abolition of liquor in the state would elevate the Negro's lot and when this help was seemingly rejected, they sought total disenfranchisement of the Negro voters in the State.

Now whether the prohibitionist stance and attitudes in Tennessee toward the Negro are true throughout the South it would depend upon the intensity of the party in each state and the power of the Negro voters, as well as his voting behavior. But, there is some material which suggests that this is true, especially for the period, after Irwin's articles on "Nigger Gin" in *Collier Magazine*. However, I would suggest that the matter needs further study.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 182.

**AN INQUIRY INTO BURMA'S POLICY OF
NEUTRALISM**

by Hanes Walton, Jr.

AN INQUIRY INTO BURMA'S POLICY OF NEUTRALISM

Non-aligned countries abound today; most of the new states belong to this category. Some of them pursue a policy of neutralism, a militant anti-alliance policy that reflects the peculiar conditions of a world in which Communist power is rising and Western colonial empires are declining. Non-alignment and its neutralist variety pose some of the most arduous problems foreign policy makers have had to face since its inception.

This study is focused on the particular concepts or principles of Burma's foreign policy since independence which, taken together, have been described as neutralism.¹ Therefore, in the following discussion I shall look at neutralism chiefly from the perspective of Burma as a non-aligned country and seek to identify and explain the motivations, reasons, and rationalization that somewhat account, as accurately as possible, for its non-alignment and neutralism.

This study is not a comprehensive review of Burma's foreign relations with its neighbors and the major nations in the two power blocs. Only a limited number of issues and situations which the leaders of Burma considered to be of major importance were selected for examination in terms of the application of basic concepts of their foreign policy.

In order to provide a basis for final evaluation, some judgment as to the consequences for Burma of its neutralist policy and to indicate a possible general theory of neutralism, the next topic will deal with and trace some historical factors which influenced the leaders choice in 1948. In regard to a general theory, Burma can be considered, in a great many respects, the prototype of a small, neutralist country. Burma's government early determined to follow a course of non-alignment in world affairs and has consistently maintained this policy over a seventeen-year period. During this period the Burma government has confronted many of the same kinds of problems which now concern the newer neutralist nations.

Therefore, my first task is one of identification and explanation of motivations, reasons, and rationalizations behind Burma's foreign policy. The second task of this inquiry is one of indication of a general theory of neutralism by using Burma as a prototype. As I have stated previously, the bases of each one of these tasks are formed by looking at some limited number of issues and situations which the leaders of Burma have considered to be of major importance.

¹James Barrington, "The Concept of Neutralism: What Lies Behind Burma's Foreign Policy," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 201 (February, 1958), 126-128.

The Roots of Burma's Neutralism

The area known as "Burma" today has been said to lie within the most distinctive physical environment in the Orient, because it has but one core area placed within a framework of mountains.² Throughout the early history of Burma, the bulk of the migration has come from the north, while the major cultural penetration has come from and through India from the west. The extent of these migrations from the north, the racial and linguistic characteristics of the migrants are imperfectly known, particularly for the earlier periods.³ The flow of migrants from the north took place over a period of centuries. The easiest access to Burma is by the Bay of Bengal. Consequently, there have been few attempts by foreign conquerors to control Burma. Control or even political influence by outside nations was brief and transitory in the pre-British period. Unlike other territories in Asia, Burma never became a real bone of contention between rival imperialisms.

The population of Burma has been a mixture of ethnic-linguistic and geographically separate groups throughout its history. The continuing underpopulation of the country has permitted the Burmese majority and the substantial number of the minorities to maintain their separate identities and culture. There has been space and land enough for all. This underpopulation, when coupled with the fact that internal communication between the Burmese-population lowlands and the surrounding non-Burmese highlands and even the coastal areas has never been adequate, produced an environment in which diversity and separatism could flourish unchecked. Today, the Burmese majority of approximately 15,000,000, lives predominantly in the lowlands, surrounded by some 4,000,000 hill people—the Shans, Kachine, Nagas, Chins, Karreni and many smaller ethnic-linguistic groups.⁴ One large minority, the Karens, are filtered throughout the Burmese population of the lower Irrawaddy delta and the Tenasserin Coast.

Authoritarian regimes have long been customary in the region. Whether the old era of Asian potentates is considered, or the interval of Western colonial rule, or even to a considerable degree the period of independence after the Second World War, there is no mistaking the influence of authoritarianism. In the annals of Burma, there is a continuous authoritarian tradition through the kings, later the British governors, and then the administrations of General Ne Win.⁵ Hence, attempts at a Western

²J. E. Spencer, *Asia East by South—A Cultural Geography* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1954), p. 208.

³John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958).

⁴Spencer, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

⁵Russell Fifield, *Southeast Asia in United States Policy* (New York: Praeger, 1963), p. 285.

type of constitutional democracy have met with disillusionment. However, the forms of Western democracy were generally adopted: written constitutions, widespread suffrage and elections, political parties and national parliaments, and cabinet or presidential governments. But attempts by the new governments, as we shall see later on, to make constitutional democracy work in Burma coincided with great domestic and international tension.

Therefore, the creation of political stability in Burma has been associated with charismatic leaders of the army. These types of authoritarian regimes have provided a stable political base by the abolition or suspension of "democratic institutions."⁶ These various authoritarian leaders gained, maintained, or lost their political authority by the help of religious movements like the Buddhist Young Men's Association of Burma,⁷ who helped inspire the nationalist movements; by political parties, like the Burma's Antifascist Peoples' Freedom League,⁸ which was all-encompassing but non-totalitarian; the press,⁹ that functioned as a guardian of governmental morality and efficiency. Indeed, it played the role of a "loyal opposition" in Burma's one party state. This loyal opposition included interest groups, such as students, urban workers, the Buddhist monks, and the peasants, largely under the leadership of their traditional village officials and of the monks.¹⁰ However, it is still clear that Burma suffers from both racial and regional problems. The desperate struggle to keep Burma together as a political entity are far from being solved.

This can be seen in the historical evolution of Burma. For as colonial rulers, the British gave no serious thought to the development of anything like a "national" culture, or a "national" society or economy that would transcend in any way the group loyalties of the Burmese and of the minority groups in the country.¹¹ Such a policy would have been contrary to British economic and political interests. The new British rulers took Burma as they found it—a country of diverse population.

During the first thirty years of British rule in the twentieth century, the non-Burmese groups were encouraged to retain their group characteristics and their group identity. The highland areas were separately administered from Burma proper, where the Burmese majority lived, and the Burmese were not permitted

⁶Robert C. Bone, *Contemporary Southeast Asia* (New York: Random House, 1962), p. 101.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁸Fifield, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

⁹Bone, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

¹⁰Bone, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

¹¹Oliver Clubb, *Historical Factors in Burma's Foreign Policy* (California: Rand Corporation, 1958).

to extend their cultural domination over the non-Burmese inhabitants in any way that might have resulted in developing common ties and interests among all the people of the country. They were governed in ways that served to perpetuate their differences rather than diminish them.¹²

Although some attempts were made to redress this imbalance before World War II, the Burmese majority and many of the members of minority groups had developed no feeling of loyalty toward their British overlords nor any significant belief that they had a chance to eventually possess and govern a country of their own. British concessions toward self-government were grudging and gradual, lagging behind the aspirations and even demands of the small, politically conscious group of Burmans who sought independence for their country.

In Burma since the 1930's it has been difficult to place politicians and officeholders in precise categories.¹³ What can be said is that Burma politics has been, and still is, characterized by personal ambition for power and an individual's political power depends much more on personal relations, family connections, and personal influence than on any set of ideas or doctrines he may publicly espouse.¹⁴ To date, ideologies have had relatively little significance in Burma politics, a fact that must be kept in mind in evaluating the policies and the actions of the Burma government since independence. An early example of this important factor is found in the career and actions of Burma's hero, General Aung San. Although nurtured on Marxism as a leading member of the Thakin group just before the war, Aung San showed himself much more the practical politician than the doctrinaire idealist and in the immediate postwar years before his death, held fast to his single aim of independence for Burma, thus becoming the principal stumbling block to the Burman Communists in their postwar bid for power.¹⁵

The effects of the Japanese occupation on the development of the independence movement and more particularly on the attitudes of its leaders cannot be stated in precise terms but it was during this time that most of the present Burman political leaders gained their first significant experience in government operations.

When war broke out in Europe in September 1939, leaders of the independence movement in Burma were attempting to bring together political groups of various persuasions to form a kind of

¹²Cady, *op. cit.*

¹³Cady, *op. cit.*

¹⁴George M. Kahin, *Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), pp. 100-102.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 85-87.

united front against the British.¹⁶ As in other colonial territories, such efforts could not be tolerated in wartime. By the first of the year 1940, the newly enacted Defense of Burma regulations, giving the Governor autocratic emergency powers, enabled the British administration to label the independence leaders subversive and traitorous to the state. Under these circumstances and with their connections with Indian organizations effectively broken, many Burman leaders of the independence movement began to look to Japan for succor, lured by the new spectacles of an Asian nation effectively championing the cause of colonial peoples.

The generally favorable attitude toward the Japanese in Burma was reflected by most of the population at the start, a large proportion showing no desire to resist Japan's occupation and, unless they feared being charged as British agents, they did as they were told.¹⁷ One major reason why many Burmans welcomed the Japanese and why many of the Burma independence leaders of diverse views initially believed the Japanese had come as liberators was the obvious unpreparedness of Britain to defend Burma adequately.¹⁸ The swiftness of the Japanese invasion in January, 1942 was as much of a shock to the Burmans as to the British, but to the Burmans the shock had a double effect.¹⁹ They had given little thought to a possible Japanese invasion or to any need for the defense of their territory. They looked upon the war only as an event that caused the British colonial government to hamper their moves for independence. They assumed, as did the British themselves, that adequate provision would be made for defending Burma.²⁰ The unexpected rapidity with which the Japanese routed the small British forces and cleared them from Burma led many Burmans first, to applaud the success of their Asian "brothers" and second, to feel that they had, in fact, been liberated from British rule.

During the Japanese occupation on January 28, 1943, Premier Tojo declared that an independent Burma state would be created within a year.²¹ In March, Ba Maw was sent to Tokyo for consultations, and on his return to Rangoon an Independence Preparatory Commission was established, composed of twenty-two members, of which he became Chairman.²² On August 1,

¹⁶John Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), pp. 35-39.

¹⁷Willard Elsbee, *Japan's Role in Southeast Asian Nationalist Movements* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 16.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁹Elsbee, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

²⁰Kahin, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

²¹William Johnstone, *Burma's Foreign Policy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 17.

²²*Ibid.*

1943, a Burmese "Declaration of Independence" was issued and a new "Burmese" government was formed with Ba Maw taking the title of Head of State. However, much of the administrative apparatus was under the watchful eyes of the Japanese. The new government declared war on the United States and Great Britain. Although this government had no real effects outside the urban areas, its operation provided invaluable experience to the people and gave them confidence in their ability to govern themselves.²³

By 1944, many Burmans had become considerably disillusioned with the disparity between Japanese promises and Japanese actions in their country. Resistance was developing under the direction of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL),²⁴ and the private talks that were to lead to open-Japanese activity later on had begun. The Japanese were driven out of the country by the spring of 1945.

In Burma, following the Japanese withdrawal, the circumstances under which political decisions were made between April 1945 and the end of 1947, as well as the nature of the decisions themselves, were to play a large part in shaping the course of independent Burma after 1948 and the adoption of a neutralist foreign policy. Two parallel political contests dominated the Burmese scene during this period. The first was carried on between the chief protagonists of Burma's independence led by General Aung San, and representatives of the British Government. The second centered on the struggle between the Socialists and the Communists for the control of the AFPFL.²⁵ These two contests were separate and parallel, yet their outcome was interrelated and strongly conditioned the postindependence attitudes and policies of the leaders of the new Burma Government. For the purpose of clarity, they will be dealt with briefly.

Hence, when the war ended, British attempts to set up a government under the leadership of Dorman-Smith failed.²⁶ The second attempt under Governor Rance succeeded after he formed a coalition government with the top nationalist leader and members of the AFPFL.²⁷ On November 8, 1946, Aung San's Executive Council (a top nationalist leader) requested the British Government to make the necessary arrangements for transfer of power to a fully independent Burma. Shortly, the Aung San-Attles Agreement was signed. This agreement stated that it was designed to provide means whereby "the people of Burma achieve their independence. . . as soon as possible." Elections were to be held for a Constituent Assembly, and the Governor's Executive

²³Kahin, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

²⁴Johnstone, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

²⁵Fifield, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

²⁶Fifield, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

²⁷Kahin, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

Council was to act as the provisional government until a constitution was adopted and the date of independence fixed. The agreement also provided that Britain would sponsor Burma's admission to the U. N., would negotiate with the new government for a loan, and left membership in the British Commonwealth open for Burman decision.²⁸

A most important question was whether Burma would become a member of the British Commonwealth or not. The full story of this decision has not been revealed, but there are known factors that heavily influenced the complete separation of Burma from the Commonwealth.²⁹ Among these was the fact that Britain's immediate post war policies had caused considerable ill-will among many political segments of the AFPFL, and there was an emotional desire to sever all ties with their former colonial ruler.³⁰ These factors were decisive, and the Assembly resolved that Burma should be independent outside the Commonwealth.

The Constituent Assembly's work was interrupted on July 19 when Aung San, and six other political leaders were assassinated. However, on the same day Governor Rance called upon Thakin Nu to form a new cabinet. Thakin Nu carried Aung San's work to completion, and with the adoption of the new Constitution, the British Government agreed to transfer power to a fully sovereign Burma in January, 1948. So it was that the first important political contest of the immediate postwar period in Burma—that between the AFPFL and the British Government—was resolved by peaceful agreement and without bloodshed.

While this political contest was running its course toward peaceful agreement, the other internal political contest—the struggle between the Socialists and the Communists for control of the AFPFL—was continuing to mount in intensity and it eventually led, not to peaceful agreement, but to civil war.³¹ This contest as much as the first had a profound effect upon the post-independence policies and actions of the new Burma government, both internally and externally.

The parallel struggles between the AFPFL leaders and the British government to attain independence and between the moderate AFPFL leaders and the extremists—the Communists and their supporters provide an important clue to the development of Burma's neutralist foreign policy after independence. The contest with the British was won peacefully and led the Burman leaders to believe that postwar cooperation with Britain and

²⁸J. S. Furnivall, *The Governmenance of Modern Burma* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1960), p. 21.

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰Kahin, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

³¹Kahin, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

the Western democracies was desirable, but their basic anticolonialism and old suspicions of Western capitalist nations were by no means expelled.

On the other hand, the intransigence of their domestic communists, their resort to insurgency under Moscow's orders,³² served only to instill a fear that the Soviet Union's coolness toward Burma might be translated into active support for the Burma Communists in their struggle against the new government. These various circumstances induced the Burman leaders to believe that they could ill-afford to take any action which might antagonize any powerful nations. Their experience with their own Communists, Moscow's cool reception to their newly gained independence and their own pride made them refrain from any direct approach to the Soviet Union for economic aid. Wisely or not, the AFPFL leadership decided at the start that since their first tasks were to establish the authority of their government in the face of rebellion and to get on with the task of economic reconstruction of their country, they should make every attempt to remain uninvolved in cold war politics—that they should do their best to remain on terms of "friendship with all nations." Thus, they established the corner stone of a foreign policy later labeled neutralism.

The Formation of a Neutralist Foreign Policy

The AFPFL leaders, after independence, plunged immediately into the multifold tasks of organizing their administration and deciding how and in ways they should proceed to turn Burma into a socialist state.³³ In doing this they also were forced to give much of their time to internal politics, to the grave problem of holding the AFPFL coalition together. In this task they failed to prevent the White Flag Communists (domestic) from going underground to join their Red Flag Comrades (Moscow).³⁴

However, the AFPFL leaders felt that they were least prepared to carry on the one major function of an independent government to conduct its foreign relations. These Burman leaders were not at home in the highly competitive world of cold war politics. They were neither students nor practitioners of international diplomacy. As practical politicians, however, when facing an uncharted course, they were predisposed to play it safe until they could learn by experience in foreign relations. Inexperience, then, was also a factor in shaping Burma's policy of nonalignment and neutralism.³⁵

³²Johnstone, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

³³Frank Trager, *Building A Welfare State in Burma* (New York: Institute of Pacific Affairs, 1958).

³⁴Bone, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

³⁵Johnstone, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

Friendly relations with all nations and refusal to any kind of foreign aid that might compromise Burma's political, economic or strategic independence thus became the first two basic principles officially and publicly announced by the Prime Minister (U Nu) as a guide to his government's relations with other nations.³⁶ Burma's need for assistance in reconstruction and economic development and the internal political pressures on U Nu at the time dictated the formulation of these principles and particularly his justification and explanation of them.

U Nu has emphasized "friendly relations with all countries" and "no economic aid with strings attached" as the two principles his government would follow in its foreign policy. To these two concepts was added an obvious corollary—that of avoiding alignments or entanglements with any power blocs.

These three themes, therefore—friendly relations with all countries, no alignments with power blocs and no economic aid that would infringe Burma's sovereignty—became the cornerstones of Burma's foreign policy.³⁷ The AFPFL leaders established the basic concepts for their government's foreign policy as practical politicians taking account of the weakness of Burma and its needs for the future as they saw them, but equally considering the exigencies of Burma politics and the problem of political survival for themselves as the officials in power. The AFPFL leaders were soon to recognize the value of their very general and rather vague principles. For in any specific action in foreign affairs, they found that they could interpret their basic policy to fit the circumstances of the moment.

Between the beginning of 1950 and the end of 1953, the AFPFL leaders continued to emphasize the basic elements of their foreign policy. Western officials, journalists and publicists, however, increasingly expressed the idea that the new nations in the world had but two choices—to align themselves with the anti-Communist western coalition or align themselves with the Communist bloc.³⁸ In the minds of many Americans and other Westerners, pursuit of an "independent" foreign policy was a sign of weakness and the words, "neutral," neutralist, and "neutralism," were increasingly applied to the uncommitted nations, always with the implication that those who were "neutralist" were, in effect, pro-Communist.

The AFPFL leaders, even more than their Indian and Indonesian counterparts, resisted efforts to put their country's position in foreign affairs in such a category. While being virtually forced to accept the labels of "neutralist" and "neutral"

³⁶Oliver Clubb, *The U. S. and the Sino-Soviet Bloc in Southeast Asia* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution, 1962), pp. 24-27.

³⁷Tiber Mende, *Southeast Asia Between Two Worlds* (London: Turnstile Press, 1955), pp. 170-179.

³⁸Fifield, *op. cit.*, pp. 239-245.

they nevertheless attempted to so define their neutralism as to give themselves as much freedom of action in conduct of their foreign relations as possible.³⁹

By the end of 1953, the AFPFL leaders had accepted the label of "neutralism" for their country but only with reluctance and qualifications. Burma's "neutralism" did not connote aloofness or withdrawal from world affairs. Nor did it connote a refusal to take a positive stand on international issues. To the Burman leaders their foreign policy first of all was "independent" of ties with either of the power blocs and they arrogated to themselves the right to judge each international issue on its merits and take their stand on what they believed to be "right" at any given time.

The basic foreign policy which the AFPFL government gradually evolved between 1948 and 1953 was one that in their own minds allowed them considerable freedom of action.⁴⁰ The foregoing considerations point to a tentative appraisal of Burma's neutralism as a policy which provides for maximum freedom of action by its government.

The Scope of Burma's Foreign Relations

A big power in the international world is almost obligated to carry on relations with all other nations, large or small, for its recognition is always sought by new states and there are always many reasons for establishing relations quite apart from immediate and tangible self-interest. A small nation has a certain freedom to choose those states with which it will have diplomatic and other relations. Here, specific factors affect the scope of the foreign relations of a small nation. These may be budgetary, trade possibilities, the need for economic and technical assistance or geographic location, cultural and historical ties. Again a new small nation, when recognized by a big power or a lesser state, traditionally is under an obligation to reciprocate and establish at least minimum diplomatic relationship.

Initially, the government of Burma established relations with the United Kingdom, the U. S., India, Nationalist China, and Pakistan.⁴¹ Two years later in 1950, Burma-Soviet diplomatic relations were established. Also in 1950, Burma's hasty recognition of the People's Republic of China in December, automatically severed its previous relations with the Republic of China.⁴²

³⁹Frank Trager, "Burma's Foreign Policy, 1942-56: Neutralism Third Force and Rice" *Journal of Asian Studies* XVI (November, 1956), 89-102.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹Russell Fifield, *The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia* (New York: Harper and Co., 1958), pp. 167-229.

⁴²*Ibid.*

Once official relations had been established with the nations most important to Burma's interests, the Burma government was freer to decide on the scope and character of its relations with other nations. In expanding its foreign relations the AFPFL leaders seem to have been guided by three considerations.⁴³ First, any economic development in the country depended upon sale abroad of Burma's surplus rice crop. Second, the Burma government could fulfill its ambitious assistance only in the shape of loans, grants, trade agreements, credits, and technical assistance. Third, the AFPFL leaders had determined that Burma's foreign policy should be based on the principle of "friendship with all countries." Therefore, it was necessary for Burma to open up relations with countries which might not be customers for Burma rice or might not be able to supply some form of economic assistance, but with which Burma needed to have official relations for geographic, historical, or other reasons.

In 1942-49, therefore, Burma opened relations with Indonesia, a primary rice customer, with Israel, a potential supplier of technical assistance, and with Japan, through trade missions, a prime supplier of economic aid in the form of reparation and a rice customer as well.⁴⁴ Official relations with Thailand were natural since the two countries were neighbors even though competitors in the world rice market. Relations with Ceylon were natural because of the common heritage of Buddhism and also because Ceylon is a rice customer. Expansion of Burma's foreign relations followed in subsequent years an orderly pattern influenced by the three factors mentioned above.

Official relations between Burma and Egypt, Yugoslavia, France, and Italy were established between 1950 and 1954. Following these countries were the United Arab Republic, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. In 1955, official relations were established with Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania.

Burma was one of the UN members which failed to carry out the intent of the UN General Assembly resolution of 1949 by recognizing the Republic of Korea as the government of Korea. In this instance, the Burma government took the position that, to recognize the government of one part of Korea and not of the other or even to recognize both Korean regimes, would be to perpetuate a divided country, a condition the Burma leaders regarded as not conducive to international peace.⁴⁵ The Burma government took the same position with regard to divided Vietnam. In the case of divided Germany, the Burma government did not apply its principles of nonrecognition of a divided country. The

⁴³Johnstone, *op. cit.*, p. 249.

⁴⁴Trager, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

⁴⁵U Thant, "Burmese View of World Tensions," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences* Vol. 318 (1958), pp. 34-42.

Federal Republic of Germany was a recognized source of economic assistance and formal diplomatic relations were established in 1956. Also in 1958 the government accepted a small permanent trade mission from East Germany. As we can see, in the case of these divided territories, the Burman leaders have found themselves in a dilemma of conflicting interests.

Implicit in the adoption of "friendly relations with all countries" as a basic concept of Burman foreign policy was the corollary principle of peaceful settlement of disputes. In the year 1951-1954, the Burma government faced a potentially dangerous dispute arising from the presence of refugee Kuomintang troops in upper Burma.⁴⁶ The Burma government sought a peaceful solution to this problem, first by obtaining assurance from Communist China of noninterference and next by submitting this problem to the UN. Although the Burma government was less than satisfied at the final solution, the problem was alleviated as a result of its efforts at peaceful solution. Again the problem of border demarcation which threatened to develop into a crisis in Sino-Burman relations was finally settled by negotiations and agreement.⁴⁷

The record of Burma's action in the two disputes mentioned and its record in its relations with other states show that the Burman leadership took the initiative in translating its precept of "friendly relations with all countries" into action.

By the end of January 1962, the same political malaise of 1952 had set in and with the same result.⁴⁸ Political disintegration was forestalled by the military coup d'état of March 2.⁴⁹ As in 1958, the military, through their Revolutionary Council, acted swiftly and arbitrarily in both internal and external affairs. In regard to the external affairs, General Ne Win's second regime in 1962 has taken more drastic steps than any other predecessor of Burma government to reduce Western influence in Burma.⁵⁰ Elimination of the activities of the private American Foundations and Asian Foundations' activities in the country, as well as cancellation of English-language teaching programs under the auspices of Americans and British at a time when there is an increase of Communist missions, technicians, and cultural troupes coming to Burma,⁵¹ is indicative of growing anti-American feeling.

Thus it is hard to escape the conclusion that under changing circumstances, Burma's pursuit of a neutralist foreign policy has led the Burmese government perilously close to alignment with

⁴⁶Clubb, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-88.

⁴⁷Hugh Tinker, "Burma's Northeast Borderland Problems," *Pacific Affairs* XXIX (1956), 324-346.

⁴⁸Bone, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

⁴⁹Bone, *op. cit.*, pp. 67-68.

⁵⁰Johnstone, *op. cit.*, p. 293.

⁵¹Johnstone, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

Communist China. Even though the actions and events seem to demonstrate clearly that their government and country have come within the sphere of influence of Communist China, it is not yet quite clear whether or not the Chinese Communists can exercise a virtual veto on Burmese policy, thus making it no more than a verbal declaration, and giving positive assistance to the Communists of Peking and Moscow. If and when this happens then Burma's existence as a "neutral and independent" small nation will cease.

Neutrality as a Policy: An Evaluation

The conclusion stated in the preceding chapter, indicates that at least in the author's opinion, neutrality has not been a viable policy for Burma under the conditions of 1962, but instead has led Burma close to being trapped into a status of dependency on Communist China. It may be that fortune and circumstances will favor Burma in the future, as in the past, and that by one means or another the Burma government may be able to escape such close alignment with its big northern neighbor so as to maintain its integrity. The case of Burma, however, may be unique for obvious reasons and it cannot be inferred that because neutrality may have turned out to be unviable for one country it is equally so for other small nations elsewhere whose situation may be quite different. It is pertinent, therefore, to summarize briefly the risks of a neutralist policy for a small nation as they have been revealed by their specific study of Burma's policy.

The varying attitudes and circumstances noted in previous chapters are examples of the manner in which the evolution of Burma's neutrality has been influenced in practical terms. In the 17 years since independence, it seems as if any one set of circumstances or events which might have influenced the AFPFL leaders seriously to modify their government's neutrality policy, has always been balanced by another set of circumstances or by certain attitudes which tended to convince these leaders of the validity of neutrality. Theoretically, the Burma government could have chosen a different course but it has not because of the varying circumstances.

Therefore, it is significant that neither India nor Burma used the label neutralist or neutrality to characterize their respective foreign policies; nor was it a choice of Prime Minister Nehru or of Prime Minister U Nu in the first years after independence. Both leaders seem to have realized from the beginning that the kind of foreign policy they wished their governments to pursue—"non-alignment with power blocs antagonistic to each other," "friendly relations with all nations," and "acceptance of economic aid from any nation as long as it did not infringe on their sovereignty,"—could not be described as "neutrality" in the historic context of that term in international relations. Hence, both Nehru and U Nu, seeking for succinct descriptions of their

basic foreign policy concepts, most often used the word *independent*.⁵²

Beginning with the Korean war, (as was stated in chapter 2) however, and increasingly thereafter, Western journalists and officials began to describe the nonalignment policies of Burma, India, and other nations as *neutralist*. Explanations by Nehru and by U Nu of the essential elements of their nonalignment policies were to no avail. Protests from writers and scholars that this new usage of *neutralist*, *neutralism*, *neutral* and *neutrality* was improper and debased rather precise terminology by making the older definitions of these words meaningless, were to no avail. U Nu expressed his unhappiness over this semantic development most precisely in his speech at the National Press Club in Washington in 1955.

Before this imposition, the term *neutral* and *neutrality* as describing the status or policy of a state in international relations had become endowed before 1939 with precise meanings. All students of international law are familiar with the so-called "Laws of Neutrality" and both in national and international courts as well as in national legislation and international agreements, the status of a neutral state and the policy of neutrality were accepted in international practice along with a set of criteria by which the policies and actions of a neutral nation might be judged. Neutrality was generally held to require a state to refrain from taking part either directly or indirectly in a war between two nations. Neutrality was considered to be more than nonbelligerency, but nevertheless was more of a negative than a positive posture. The neutral state in time of war was restrained if it followed international custom, from a wide range of activities which might be construed as participation on one side and thus give rise to a declaration of war or other acts by the opposing side which would end such a neutral status.

Throughout a century before World War II, the status of a neutral state and a policy of neutrality implied as strict impartiality as possible. This did not mean complete stoppage of relations with the belligerents in a war, or a wholly negative policy. On the contrary, it was regarded as proper for a neutral to engage in nonmilitary relations with the belligerents so long as such activities were conducted without favoritism—with impartiality. With the passing of adherence to the old customs and rules of international law when even after World War I undeclared wars became more frequent, it was obvious that in proportion to the extent and scope of a war between great powers, each side would make the most strenuous efforts to prevent nations from following a neutral policy and attempt to enlist them on their side against their opponents.

⁵²Barrington, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

Hence, today, nonalignment significantly affects the basic structure of the contemporary international system. While this system remains bipolar in a military sense, it is becoming increasingly tripartite from the standpoint of policy and political influence, in part as a result of the East-West military stalemate. In a tripartite situation any two parties principally involved in a dispute are deeply concerned over the effects of their respective policies on any interested third party. The third party is interested as it stands to benefit or to suffer from the dispute. The third party par excellence in the cold war is the non-aligned country or group of countries. A growing number of non-aligned countries actively seek to manipulate the two alliance blocs in order to redress past grievances and to satisfy present aspirations.

Therefore, my general theory of neutralism would be that neutralism is an independent foreign policy formulated in light of the self-interest of the country. As we have seen previously, neutralism was forced upon these small nations by American journalists and writers because they would not follow or join one of the two military blocs. Our scholars, men like Morgenthau, Liska, and others, have accepted this imposition and have in their various writings on the subject of neutralism divided it into many categories, but by doing so they have fallen victims of a semantic trap. This trap was contrived as we have seen in this paper by writers and authors, who equated the refusal of a new nation to join either of the two major blocs in this bipolar system, with the old and precise meaning of neutrality. This is also why nations like the U. S. have said that in the Goa incident that India stabbed neutralism in the back, or that this neutral country is closely allied with the Communist bloc, or that neutral country is pro-Western. Quite the contrary, what has happened is that we have fallen victims to our own imprecise terminology. No such thing as a neutralist foreign policy existed from the start. The research in this paper shows that Burma attempted at its very conception of a foreign policy to formulate one in which its thought was most in line with its self-interest. Its leaders, as I have stated in this chapter, came to Washington and rejected this semantic label because of its impreciseness. The leaders of Burma have bitterly opposed and rejected this broad label of neutralism. They have never in any sense thought of or attempted to instill in themselves and their diplomacy such a thing as neutralism. I think that this paper briefly proves that to be a fact. They have enunciated their policy in line with what they thought to be their self-interest at the present time. Hence, the term "neutralism" is a creature of American policy makers, journalists, writers, and scholars. Now they have trouble in handling their own creation.

To illustrate my point further, American policy makers could not conceive of such a thing as an independent foreign policy by a small nation at its birth because this was inconsistent with the

American overall moral policy of *Containment*. Therefore, it became necessary to create this fictitious entity—"neutralism".

In concluding, therefore, Burma's policy has been one from its inception to the present that more or less was independently conceived. It has reflected the changes in the international scene, as the major powers changed, as well as reflected the changes in the domestic scene. Burma's foreign policy has been one that has originated from its domestic scene and self-interest.

Neutralism was a term imposed upon Burma's foreign relations by American policy makers when it refused to follow either bloc in a black or white scheme as set up by our moral foreign policy. Therefore, the question to be asked is not what type of neutralist country is Burma? or what type of neutralist foreign policy has Burma? but how long can a small new nation pursue an independent foreign policy before it has to align itself in a bipolar world?

Hence, my suggestion is to remember that neutralism was created, originated, and maintained by our policy makers and scholars and it is they who have to be attacked in their pretensions, and their impasse destroyed or removed by them. Therefore, what has been an honest attempt at an independent foreign policy has been labeled neutralism by one of the two major blocs. Neutralism, in my opinion, is an attempt at an independent foreign policy. . . .an inquiry into Burma's policy of neutralism, by using it as a prototype has helped to demonstrate this. . . .

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