

Official Transcript of the Address
delivered by Brigadier General Aung Gyi
Vice Chief of Staff (Army), The Union of Burma Armed Forces
Mujahid Insurgents' Surrender Ceremony
Maung Daw Town, Rakahine, Burma
4 July 1961¹

The Burmese language Editorial Summary:

“In the morning of 4 July 1961, the Mujahideens led by Robi Ulla surrendered with their weapons in the presence of Vice Chief of Staff (Army) Brigadier General Aung Gyi, having thus returned to the legal fold. In the following speech, Brigadier Aung Gyi made an impassioned urging to the public in the region on various subjects including the need to adopt the Multi-ethnic Union spirit (of belonging to Burma), the need for the region’s administrators to combat poverty which arose from the unfavourable land-population ratio by livestock breeding and orchard growing and by focusing on the economic development for the people of the region, in light of the fact that a sufficient degree of security has been established in this Mayu District Frontier Region.

//Begin texts//

On this surrender occasion, I wish to say a few words to those of you, soldiers, who had taken up arms against the central government (of Burma) under the banner of revolution in Maung Daw region from the time of our country’s independence (in 1948) right up to this moment.

First and foremost, I wish to talk about some facts that are most directly relevant to all those who reside in this region. On its west, our Mayu District borders with East Pakistan. Because of the interconnected nature of borders, we have ethnic groups of Islamic faith that line the two countries’ (modern) borders. The ethnic group that reside on the west of Mayu District boundaries are Pakistani. And the people who reside on the east side of this border are called Rohingya.

Continuing on with this point, I want to state that it is not like one single racial or ethnic group saddles the two countries’ boundaries. Our country’s regions that border with China also have ethnic groups that interface with one another. To give an example, in (Burma’s) Kachin State, we have Lisu as an ethnic group. In Burmese region, we also have Lisu. On the Chinese side of the borders, they have Lisu. Likewise, we have Ei-kaw (ethnic group), on the other side of the Burmese-Chinese borders, they also have Ei-kaw. On our Burmese side, we have La-Wa ethnic group. On the Chinese side, they also have La-Wa ethnic group. Similarly,

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we have Shan ethnic people in Burma. On the Chinese side they are called Tai. They all share one language. They adhere to one religion. Again if you look at the Thai-Burmese border areas, they have “tai” ethnic people. We also have the same ethnic people. The same is true of Mon ethnic people: Thailand has the Mons and so does Burma. There are also Karen ethnic people in Thailand and Karen ethnic people in Burma. Likewise, on the (East) Pakistani side, there are Muslims who share the same faith with Rohingyas ethnic people who are on the Burmese side.

Therefore, I want to tell you all here openly and publicly that the people of this border region (of Mayu) have relatives and families on both sides (of Pakistani and Burmese borders). However, those of you who are on the Burmese side of the borders must be the people of the Union (of Burma). This is the Union spirit of belonging to Burma, which you as the border ethnic people must adopt unequivocally and irreversibly. For instance, if you look at the situation of Kachin people, they have relatives and families on each side of the Burmese-Chinese borders. But those Kachin who are on the Chinese side they are Chinese. And those who are on the Burmese side are Burmese. Some (Kachins) are in-laws like mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. And some are nephews or son-in-law. Despite these ties and belonging to the same ethnicity, their countries are different. That, we all must know clearly and categorically. When it comes to allegiance (among Kachins) to countries, the allegiance to countries must also be decisive.

By the same token, it is only natural that the ethnic Rohingyas living on the side of the Burmese-Pakistani borders pledge allegiance to Burma as a country and those on the Pakistani side of the borders, pledge their allegiance to Pakistan.

I want to tell you, the civic leaders, socialites and the (surrendered) soldiers (of Mujahideens), this emphatically: although you might have family ties, in-laws, and even children in West Pakistan, your family ties must not interfere or lessen your allegiance to the Union of Burma. For as you are all members of the Union of Burma your allegiance and loyalty must, with no equivocation, lie with our Union. Likewise, your relatives and families who may reside in West Pakistan or East Pakistan, their allegiance must also be to Pakistan as a country. Here I want to make a sincere request to you all present at this ceremony: please inform friends and families of the need for respective allegiances they must adopt.

Here I wish to share with you a historical tale. Previously, as you all know the Burmese public from the central Burma assume all the Rohingya people as Muslims and Mujahideens who want to join up with Pakistan. On their part, some of the Rohingya in this region feel that because they are Muslims they need to join with East Pakistan. Based on that view, they struggled to make this region to become part of Pakistan – like what happened with Sudestan in Germany. That’s not natural and that is not possible. In the case of Germany, it was because of the WWII. But after the end of the WWII the problem was no more. The position and view of Pakistan (regarding annexation of Muslim areas on the Burmese side bordering with East-Pakistan) was truly correct. For instance, Pakistan did NOT even demand the return of Kyee (Crow) Island. Considering that Pakistan did not even ask the Island to be returned to Pakistan, it is inconceivable that Pakistan would even consider annexing or incorporating Mayu District Frontier Region into East Pakistan. Pakistan dares not, and is not, entertaining that idea at all.

Similarly, those Kachin ethnic people who are on the Chinese side of the Sino-Burmese borders cannot demand that Kachin State (of Burma) be incorporated or annexed into Yunnan Province on the grounds that the Kachins of Burma and China are of the same ethnicity.

In this day and age, this kind of thinking is no more. Yes, this kind of view prevailed in the past. In central Burma, there are people who hold the view that (Rohingya) people in this region are not Tai-yin-tha or ethnic group native to the Union of Burma. There are also (Rohingya) people who make moves to separate from Burma and join with Pakistan. These are false views and deeds, held by some people in central Burma and held by some Rohingyas in this region. From today on – and from here – I want to openly and publicly tell you this: we consider (the Rohingya people) of Mayu District an ethnic minority integral to the Union of Burma. Let me be very precise about this. Those of you here (in this Mayu Region) ought to view yourselves as an ethnic minority of Burma. Only then will peace prevail in this region and in this country of ours.

I urge you to wipe your memory clean about the wrong-doings committed by us. To give a specific example, in previous military operations in this region, there may have been incidents where the government troops burned down entire villages. Some burning may have been necessary, militarily speaking. Other incidents of deliberate burning of villages may have been committed out of vengeance and vendetta. If our troops committed these acts I urge you to wipe your collective memory clean. Let's start with a clean slate. From now on those of you in the Mayu Frontier Region must see yourselves as the Burmese, as members of the Union, as an ethnic minority integral to the Union. You must adopt allegiance and loyalty to the Union of Burma. Only then will Mayu Frontier region have the prospects to become a peaceful region in the future. I hereby request to you – religious organizations, Malvi teachers, former members of the armed revolts, the surrendered Mujahideen, and other Rohingyas, village chiefs, and so on – to try to inform, educate and shape those who have not adopted these views and attitude (as Burma's ethnic minority group, the Union spirit and the loyalty to the Union of Burma). In the years to come, you as an ethnic minority of the Union of Burma work for peace, prosperity and economic development of this region, for the advancement of the wellbeing and health of the people here. We will work together for those objectives. This is the first main point I wished to tell you.

Now onto my second point, namely the general assumption and assessment of the region by our Ministry of Defence. As you all know, there is a total population of nearly 500,000 people in Mayu Frontier Region. Your livelihoods here depend mainly on creeks and streams, and agriculture. Because of the region's unfavourable land-population ratio the region will likely remain impoverished. Every year, the people here cannot afford to buy more than two or three longyis (male skirt). In short, you are generally poor. That's our (military's) general economic assessment. We (in the military) are empathetic to you for the pervasive poverty, because you are our ethnic minority and your region is an integral component of our Union of Burma. We now have plans and schemes for economic development of your region. The Administration of the Mayu District Frontier

Region will shoulder the responsibility. In this connection I urge you to lend your full cooperation with the Administrators. Treat them as your blood relations, family members, your own ethnic people and leaders, your own government. On our part we will treat you like you are our own members of the family, or clan.

Your people and our administrators may be of two different religions. Our cultures and customs may be different. In a big country, differences in terms of cultures, languages, dialects, and so on are of no significance at all. In the United States there is diversity along these lines. The same goes for England. The same can be said of Russia and China. The countries you know well India and Pakistan have similar diversities. Despite differences in mother tongues and faiths, cooperation is crucial. So, on your part, you need not blow some minor differences (in culture and language) out of proportions and behave as one family and one clan with us. On our part, we as the administration are prepared to strive for the development and welfare of your communities. Here I wish to call your attention to one important fact regarding economic development.

That is, security of this region. Without the security of the region, no matter how hard we work prosperity and development will not become realities. Therefore, security of this region is our utmost priority. The second most priority is tranquillity and safety of neighbourhoods, wards and quarters. Towards the goal of establishing the region's security, I urge Rohingya religious leaders, Rohingya men, Rohingya leaders, Rohingya politicians to keep the military and administration in the Mayu District region informed (about the remaining insurgencies). If possible please join our efforts to repel insurgents. If possible I urge you to join hands with the Burmese Armed Forces and fight the insurgents.

If you begin to engage in self-defence of your own wars, villages, and neighbourhoods the insurgencies will get weakened and peace will follow. Then only will be able to focus on economic development of the region. As peace and tranquillity returns we will strive for all-round development of the region. These words I uttered in front of you are ORDERS, insofar as Colonel Saw Myint and Colonel Ye Gaung, respectively in charge of Border Affairs Administration, (Ministry of Defence, Yangon) and of All Rakhine Troops Command, (Sittwe, Rakhine). In the military, these instructions (by a superior officer) are words of COMMAND. Giving a political on a stage before a civilian audience and the soldiers' talk are different. In our military, these words are commands that need to be executed by all ranks and files of the armed forces. That is why, I want to let you know that today – or even today – when I uttered these words, the military has embarked on certain initiatives for the region. Following my address, the Mayu District administration and the administrators will strive as hard as they can in executing the initiatives designed to develop the region economically, socially and communally.

With respect to your culture and religious practices in this region, we will support the respective faiths of our ethnic minorities. If there are suspicions about our policies towards religions, I want you to have complete confidence in the pledge that we will support, encourage, protect and defence all faiths practised by both the majority ethnic communities and ethnic minorities of this region.

On economic development, we will begin our scheme to introduce livestock breeding. We will encourage and support raising chickens, building fish ponds, breeding cows. On this Colonel Ya Gaung and other administrators (of Mayu District Frontier Region) will explain in details our planning as needed. The main rationale behind our animal breeding scheme is the following: because agricultural land is scarce compared to the population in this region, we need to combine livestock raising with agriculture. For instance, a farmer will likely to be better off if he also incorporate livestock breeding into his livelihood scheme. Because we are of the view that every farmer will need (to supplement their income) by adding livestock raising to his economic activities we are stressing the need for it and we will support it accordingly. On this I wish to make a second point: at the moment farmers do only one-crop per year. We need to double that. And we will encourage and support 2-crops per annum. We will introduce beans, peanuts, and pulses. So we are going to encourage and support strongly the double-crop agriculture and livestock breeding. In the hilly areas of Mayu District, we will emphatically support growing orchards – orange, tea, etc. These are just general ideas and schemes the frontier area administrators will be ordered to engage in. I sincerely request that you inform and educate the public of this region about the rationales behind the establishment of the Mayu District Frontier Region, namely to foster regional development, to facilitate neighbourhood peace and tranquillity, and to seek educational, religious and cultural development for the region’s people.

The 3rd point I wish to tell is about the surrender issue. Today at this surrender ceremony, you all bear witness to the acts of surrender by those from the Southern side of the Buthidaung and Maung Daw towns, who had been engaged in the armed revolution against the central government. I would like to think that their acts of surrender are meant as an act of gratitude, on their part, to those farmers and agriculturalists in this region. By their deeds, this region will become more peaceful. And that will in turn facilitate the growth of agriculture, livestock breeding, commerce and trade. I would like to invite you to think of the surrender as an act of gratitude by the surrendering revolutionaries towards local communities from whom they had extorted money and supplies. On behalf of those ex-revolutionaries who surrendered today I would like to plead forgiveness from you for their shortcomings (and wrongful behaviours) in the past. The express reasons that propelled them to take up arms against the central governments are to a certain degree true and valid, previously. They said the Mujahideen rebellion broke out because of religious persecution. They said there was economic persecution. They said there was racial persecution. Yes, they are correct as these rationales and explanations were true to a certain degree, before.

Various acts of armed revolt against the central state or government were justified, if only minimally in the bygone days. The public too supported these rebellions because the public in Mayu region felt these issues concerned the collective affairs of the Muslims as a whole in the region. But that was the past. We no longer have religious or economic persecution or subjugation in the Mayu Region. **On the contrary, we are finding ways to support the region’s development. There is no more racial persecution. For we have emphatically and categorically recognized Rohingyas as an ethnic minority (of the Union of Burma), making efforts for the progress and development of the Rohingya ethnic minority.**

Therefore, emphatically speaking there is no longer religious persecution in this region, nor is there racial or ethnic persecution. In light of this new development, there is no longer a valid rationale for uprisings or revolt against the central government. Yes, in 1948 - (at the time of independence) - the rationales for rebellion may have been valid and solid. But today in 1961, those rationales are no more valid. In terms of faith, we will be supporting Islam, the faith of the majority in this region. We will build mosques. We will make donations (for your religious activities). Buddhists here in this region are a minority. They too will receive support from the central government. We will support Buddhist monasteries. Therefore, there is no religious persecution in this region. Not only do we not persecute the region commercially and economically we are more than ready to assist your region for economic development. There is no long racial or ethnic persecution. Given that, there is absolutely no reason for anyone to take up arms against the central government. Those who continue with their armed rebellion against the state, whatever their slogans, they are now engaged in extortion, kidnap of young women, or kidnap community leaders and socialites. Their deeds have nothing whatsoever to do with the original rationales behind the armed revolt in this region. On the whole what they are doing is nothing more than the acts of robbery by a huge gang.

Therefore, these armed gangs of robber will meet the fate of robbers: death. They have now morphed into big robbers - because they have not had a change of heart and a change of perspective, they will remain 100% robbers. Nowhere in the world or no period in history no armed robbers can expect to be prosperous and grow big. Make no mistake. These armed gangs will only reap death, sooner rather than later. Let me make one offer and one prediction. They should come and give up their deeds. They should adopt the patriotism and enlightened political spirit, like the surrendering revolutionaries before us today. After their surrender they should work with all of us in the Armed Forces of Burma for the development and progress of their communities. This is our heart-felt, genuine appeal to them all. However, if they continue with their robberies we will have no choice but to plan and executive systematic military operations against them. Up until today, our Armed Forces (Ministry of Defence) has not placed any priority to this region where Mujahideen roamed. From now on, we are ready to pay serious attention to this region. We have adequate troop strength. We can send new deployment as needed. We can bring in reinforcements. If these remaining insurgents do not choose to surrender in the next several months, we will have massive troop deployments to this region and before year's end, we will wipe the insurgency out. This is my clearest message.

I now wish to make an appeal to religious/spiritual leaders, community leaders, political leaders. Those insurgents who have continued on with their insurgency, we do NOT view them as enemies. Please try to persuade them to lay down arms - like today's politically enlightened rebels (Mujahideen) in front of us. We view them all as members of the Union of Burma, we don't want us to launch attacks as fellow Union members. We desire no bloodshed and violence. Therefore, please persuade them through demonstrating Metta (loving kindness) or via the method of Metta. If you all the leaders here fail at this task we the military will have to crush them decisively. We are in a position to defeat them. Before we launch our attacks we

want to avoid bloodshed and violence. We would rather resolve the remaining rebellion peacefully. Please, I repeat my appeal to you all – spiritual leaders, political leaders, community leaders – to bring them back to the legal fold.

In conclusion, I would like to thank emphatically all of you who listened with great patience what I have to say – including the Mayu region’s political leaders, religious leaders, community leaders, as well as the leaders of the surrendering Mujahideen and their rank and file members.

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