

Aung San Suu Kyi (1945 -)
Major Events in the Life of a Revolutionary Leader

All terms appearing in **bold** are included in the glossary.

1945 On June 19 in Rangoon (now called Yangon), the capital city of Burma (now called Myanmar), Aung San Suu Kyi was born the third child and only daughter to Aung San, national hero and leader of the **Burma Independence Army (BIA)** and the **Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL)**, and Daw Khin Kyi, a nurse at Rangoon General Hospital.

Aung San Suu Kyi was born into a country with a complex history of colonial domination that began late in the nineteenth century. After a series of wars between Burma and Great Britain, Burma was conquered by the British and annexed to British India in 1885. At first, the Burmese were afforded few rights and given no political autonomy under the British, but by 1923 Burmese nationals were permitted to hold select government offices. In 1935, the British separated Burma from India, giving the country its own constitution, an elected assembly of Burmese nationals, and some measure of self-governance. In 1941, expansionist ambitions led the Japanese to invade Burma, where they defeated the British and overthrew their colonial administration. While at first the Japanese were welcomed as liberators, under their rule more oppressive policies were instituted than under the British, precipitating resistance from Burmese nationalist groups like the **Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL)**. In 1945, Allied forces drove the Japanese out of Burma and Britain resumed control over the country.

1947 Aung San negotiated the full independence of Burma from British control. On July 19, Aung San was assassinated by political rivals. Soon after his assassination, his wife, Daw Khin Kyi became a major public figure.

1948 On January 4, the Independent Union of Burma was established with U Nu of the **AFPFL** as its first democratically elected Prime Minister.

1958 Internal power struggles within the **AFPFL** under U Nu threatened to throw the country into turmoil. U Nu called on the military led by General Ne Win to restore order.

1960 Aung San Suu Kyi's mother, Daw Khin Kyi was appointed Ambassador to India and traveled to New Delhi with her daughter.

1962 General Ne Win deposed U Nu and took control of the Burmese government, establishing the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP). Democratic processes were ended and a military council was established to govern the country. The new government imprisoned dissenting political leaders and established the Press Scrutiny Board to strictly censor the media.

- 1964** Aung San Suu Kyi graduated from high school in New Dehli and traveled to England to attend St. Hugh's College at Oxford University. There, she earned her B.A. in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics.
- 1969** Aung San Suu Kyi traveled to New York where she took a position at the United Nations as Assistant Secretary for the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions.
- 1972** Aung San Suu Kyi married Michael Aris, a British scholar of Tibet. She and Aris traveled to Bhutan where Aris took a position as a tutor and translator for the royal family. Aung San Suu Kyi took a research position with the Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bhutan.
- 1973** Aung San Suu Kyi and her husband returned to England. There, she gave birth to the couple's first son, Alexander.
- 1974** The Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) drafted a new constitution for Burma and Ne Win was declared president of the new one-party state under the BSPP.
- Suu Kyi's husband obtained a research position at Oxford in Tibetan and Himalayan Studies.
- 1977** At Oxford, Aung San Suu Kyi gave birth to the couple's second son, Kim. While raising the children, she began researching and writing a biography of her father.
- 1984** Aung San Suu Kyi published a biography of her father, Aung San.
- 1985** Aung San Suu Kyi traveled to Japan where she was a visiting scholar at Kyoto University's Center for Southeast Asian Studies.
- 1987** Aung San Suu Kyi joined her husband Michael at the Indian Institute of Advanced Studies in Simla where they had both obtained fellowship positions.
- 1988** Suu Kyi returned to Burma to care for her mother who had suffered a severe stroke.
- The Burma that Aung San Suu Kyi returned to was much different than the one she left as a small girl. During the year she returned, popular protests were held throughout Burma to demand the reinstatement of democracy and the end of the one-party system. The government responded with military force, killing or wounding thousands of protesters. Because of the protests, Ne Win was forced to resign as chairman of the BSPP, and Burma was thrown into political disorder. The military capitalized on the unrest, using it as the pretext to form the **State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)** and institute martial law.

Responding to the tense political climate of Burma, Aung San Suu Kyi began her political career. She toured the country, giving speeches in support of democracy and

nonviolent resistance to the military. She cooperated with other pro-democracy leaders to found the **National League for Democracy (NLD)** and was appointed the party's General Secretary. Due to her tenacity and resolve, Aung San Suu Kyi's reputation as a leader grew.

In December, Aung San Suu Kyi's mother Daw Khin Kyi died.

- 1989** The military government changed the country's official name to Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi continued her vocal support of democracy, human rights, and non-violent protest. For her opposition to the government, she was put under house arrest and declared ineligible for elected office.
- 1990** The **State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC)**, confident that politicians friendly to the military would soundly defeat opposition parties at the polls, held general elections. In a landslide victory, Aung San Suu Kyi's **National League for Democracy (NLD)** party won 392 out of 485 seats in the parliament. The SLORC refused to recognize the election results and imprisoned opposition party leaders.
- 1991** Aung San Suu Kyi received the Nobel Peace Prize for her nonviolent resistance to the military government of Myanmar. Held under house arrest by the military, she was unable to accept the award in person.
- 1995** Aung San Suu Kyi was released from house arrest, but her political activity and movement around the country continued to be severely restricted by the government.
- 1999** Michael Aris, Aung San Suu Kyi's husband, was diagnosed with prostate cancer. The Myanmar government denied Aris's request to enter the country to see his wife, but encouraged Aung San Suu Kyi to return to her family in England. Suu Kyi reluctantly remained in Myanmar, knowing that she would be forbidden to return to her country if she were to leave. Michael Aris died on March 27.
- 2000** Aung San Suu Kyi was put under house arrest again. She was briefly released in 2002 before being re-detained in 2003 due to her political activity.
- 2006** Aung San Suu Kyi remains in Burma to this day, speaking out against the military government. She continues to be under house detention and kept in isolation from her political supporters and the international press.

References and Further Reading

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