

## **The Killing Festival at Depayin**

**Author's note - This is a record of events as testified by those eye witnesses who saw, heard, experienced the events, sustained injuries and were among those who were handcuffed, tied with ropes and transported in 4 DYNA trucks to Shwebo jail at dawn the next day.**

From the 6<sup>th</sup> May 2003, the people's leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and party toured the Kachin State and Sagaing Division. All along the way they were hassled by members of the Union Solidarity and Development Association (USDA), stooges of the State Peace and Development Council's (SPDC). A special branch of about 2000 designated 'Swan Are Shin (a special group formed within USDA and its name means the mighty and competent )' was armed with weapons such as wooden clubs and dahs (long knives) and given specialist training within the High School compound in Monywa. Some of them had shaven heads to enable a quick disguise as monks.

### **Events on the 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2003**

By midday (29-5-2003) these USDA people were waiting on the left side of the road near Ye-po-sa village (between Myinmu and Chaung-U ) for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and her party who were on their way to Monywa from Myinmu.

The pilot car which saw the big group of USDA attempted to reverse in order to warn the motorcade that would be soon arriving at this point. But under orders of an army colonel the car had to proceed. From this it can be presumed that the plot was to commit the murderous crimes at this village.

The pilot car arrived at Chaung U and informed the local people including 6000 students on 3000 motor cycles who were awaiting the arrival of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade. They immediately left for Ye-po-sa village and stationed their motor cycles in front of the people who were waiting by the side of the road thus preventing any disturbance that could have been created by the USDA members. This was how Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and party arrived safely at Monywa.

The market at Monywa was closed because people knew that plans were afoot for violent disturbances against Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, but they came out in a multitude to welcome her. The lights were cut off at night but that didn't stop the people. They each held a candle and showed great support.

### **30 May 2003**

The party left Monywa at 12 mid day on the 30<sup>th</sup> for Butalin. Students on motor cycles saw her off. On their return to Monywa, at Zeetaw village (close to the military NW Command HQ office) they were stopped by baton swinging police who beat and arrested them.

Concurrently, the Monywa –Butalin road was closed. Near Zeetaw, students from Monywa who had left on their motorcycles to go to Butalin were stopped and beaten up by police and military who even fired into them. It was vital for the authorities to prevent the students and people from reinforcing the trapped Daw Su's motorcade. One young novice monk and one student Min Zaw Oo from Technical College of Monywa died on the spot. These dead bodies were carried to the center of the town and placed at the foot of Bogyoke Aung San's bronze statue. But the military and police forcefully grabbed the corpses away. The anger of the people became uncontrollable and they tore down those big signboards displaying "Our Three Responsibilities" and "The People's Desire". Then the authorities invoked the provisions of Section 144 (Curfew).

When Daw Aung San Suu Kyi heard the news while she was in Butalin, she sent U Htun Myaing (NLD Sagaing Division Secretary) and U Aung Than (NLD Butalin township Chairman) to make

enquiries. They were placed under arrest on the way. After opening the office and placing the signboard and the Youth Wing branch of the NLD in Butalin, Daw Su and motorcade left at about 5 pm for Depayin.

To continue the tour and detect any arranged disturbances two pilots cars set out in two stages. U Saw Hlaing (Indaw township MP) and U Myint Kyi (Katha township MP) went in the first car and Ko Aung Aung (Mandalay) was in charge of the second.

They saw nothing untoward on the way from Butalin to Saing Pyin Gyi, so they made enquiries at that village and continued on their journey.

Despite orders prohibiting villagers from Kyi Ywa (Kyi village) (which is 4 miles from Depayin) from going outside the village, they were there waiting to welcome Daw Aung San Suu Kyi from about 7 p.m.

the Irrigation Department compound where a stream crosses and there is a bend in the road.

At about 200 feet after from Kyi Ywa, just before crossing a stream there is a bend in the road. The road was blocked there with barbed wire where about 100 armed military and police under orders of an army Lt. Col. stopped and arrested the persons in the two pilot cars and took them into the near-by compound of the Irrigation Department. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade arrived at Kyi village and was welcomed by the people.

She addressed the people for about 10 minutes and continued on the journey. On the road just before the stream they were stopped by two individuals wearing monk's robe and three others barred her passage and urged her to make a speech. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and two Youth Wing members Ko Htun Zaw Zaw and Ko Tin Htut Oo apologized because it was getting very late. But the individuals were adamant.

At about the same time, the 3000 strong "mighty and competent" stooges of the SPDC who were armed with clubs and swords and other weapons were gearing up for action in the vicinity of the Irrigation office. Orders could be heard through a loud speaker to wait for Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's motorcade and not to get on the road till her arrival. By prior arrangement fifteen monks were seated on benches under a rain tree facing the Irrigation office. The Lt.Col in charge of the proceedings was telling them that all they needed to do was to show their faces in case of a clash between the monks on Daw Suu's side and those opposing her.

At the same time, about 20 DYNA trucks drove in from Butalin side. Monks with white bands tied to the left arm and laymen rushed out of these cars and immediately attacked the Kyi Ywa villagers who were standing around welcoming Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. They chased them into the village and continued beating them up. They also attacked Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's supporters who accompanied her in the motorcade with their swords, spears and wooden clubs.

Students on about 150 motor cycles accompanying Daw Aung Suu Kyi surrounded her car and shouted to each other to defend their mother. Their linked hands and kept shouting "protect our mother". The armed USDA executioners began to drag the people out of the motorcade and beat them up fiercely deliberately aiming for their heads. One might blow sent them reeling to the ground.

At that spot, driver Ko San Myint (Mandalay North West region) died instantaneously.

Deputy Chairman U Tin Oo's car forced its way through the situation and Daw Su's car followed. Her protectors clung on to the side of the car and got away.

At the barbed wire barricade, U Tin Oo's car was stopped. The army Lt Col was not wearing his uniform at that time. U Sein Win (Depayin Police Station in charge) was the Police officer conducting the operations. U Tin Oo, when arrested said "Kill me till I die. If I do not die, the world will put you up for trial."

As Daw Su's car approached the stream crossing road a bright light appeared from a big tree by the side of the road which lit up the killing field. The 20 DYNA cars also had their head lights on. The executioners in hiding came out and were at the ready on the road.

Almost at the same time, an order to crash into her car was heard and 2 DYNA trucks, one following the other drove out at high speed from the Irrigation gate.

Because of the driver's skill, Daw Su's car was able to avoid head on collision with both the cars. Then the order to shoot was heard and about 20 shots were fired. Fortunately Daw Su's car was not hit and got away through the barbed wire barricade. A shot caught the tire of the car following immediately behind with Daw Win Mya Mya (Mandalay) in it. It lost control and hit a tree. The passengers were injured (may be killed) and Daw Win Mya Mya's both arms were broken.

When Daw Su's car got away, the wireless message that was heard is as follows:-  
"Dewa Tin Hla captured. Dewa San Sha got away. Close entrance to Tant Si. Close entrance to Ye U. Keep machine-guns ready. If necessary, shoot". From this message given by wireless, what doubt can there be about who the perpetrators were of this Depayin killing festival?

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi' did not stop at Depayin but went on to Ye U where she was arrested at the entrance.

The women and girls who were trapped and beaten up in Kyi Ywa were wearing NLD home spun jackets and sarongs. They were stripped of their clothing and embarrassed. The jewelry they wore was torn away and confiscated and money in the pockets of the men was looted. People were screaming because of the pain from the beatings. They were told to lie still and pretend to be dead because orders were to beat till dead. If they uttered any sound the blows were doubled and trebled.

It was 10 pm when the executioners retired from the willful slashing and thrashing of the remaining supporters of NLD. Those left to die in the killing field were rescued by villagers who came stealthily from Depayin, Kyi Ywa and Saing Pyin Gyi.

The corpses were taken away at about midnight in trucks (by authorities).

When morning came, the injured were handcuffed, tied with ropes and placed on 4 DYNA trucks and dispatched to Shwebo prison.

On eye witness claims that he saw about 30 in Army uniform, 100 in Police uniform and about 3000 others hiding and lying in wait inside and around the Irrigation Department compound where a stream crosses and there is a bend in the road.

Injuries sustained by those who are now in Shwebo jail are from bamboo spears, clubs resulting in broken legs and arms. Swords cut wounds on arms resulted from the victims shielding their bodies with their arms.

The above facts reveal SPDC's ultimate intention to exterminate anyone who has a desire for democracy. Systematically and with precision plans were laid to wipe out the NLD.

The army colonel who supervised the Depayin massacre is stout, about five feet tall, with dark eyebrows, snub nose and olive complexion.

Kyi Ywa villagers were so angered by the unjust and brutal attack that they resorted to violence against the authorities, the military, the USDA and the sham monks with whatever stick, swords and weapon they managed to get. In response, the military opened fire and many were killed. Most of the men have fled the village afraid of retaliation and arrest. Men are scarce in the village now.

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29-5-2003

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t z e t m ; t m ; a y ; o e f & u o n ?





