



FINAL REPORT
OF THE
Riot Inquiry Committee

RANGOON

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loyalty and their duty have received more leniency than they deserve or than the safety of the country can afford. We think that, until these disturbances are over and until a sense of responsibility revives, those of the newspapers of Burma which cannot, or will not, observe the law ought to be told that they can print no more. It is not for us to say what should or should not be proscribed. But we feel entitled to say that if a Press does not observe its responsibility, it becomes dangerous and the safety of society demands the strongest measures to control it. In this respect, we think, the civil power of Burma has exercised too much restraint.

4. RUMOURS.

One of the principal immediate causes of the spread of rioting and trouble both locally and over Burma as a whole, and one of the greatest enemies of the restoration of tranquillity, was "rumours". We have already noticed how, almost in concentric circles radiating from Rangoon, the rioting broke out as soon as the newspapers—and the rumours—arrived. And in individual towns themselves we have been struck with the prevalence of, and the credulity accorded to, rumour and gossip of every kind. We have seen in many places how the mischievous rumours of actual or impending attacks upon the Sule, and the Shwedagon Pagodas were responsible for trouble almost everywhere. Both were quite untrue. Stories of attacks on *pongyis*, though in Rangoon several did take place, were grossly exaggerated and spread throughout the country. Tales of deliberate police assaults on *pongyis*, which had no truth, were given currency. In Wakema⁽¹⁾ stories were believed of bands of Indians assembled outside the town for the purpose of attacking its Pagodas. Stories of imaginary insults to Buddhism were common. Most fantastic rumours of the poisoning of food by Indian shopkeepers became quite fashionable. All these and many more were flying round the towns and villages of the country and, for the most part, were readily absorbed. It has been a very striking feature of the inquiry to what an extent this menace of rumour, not always, we think, spontaneous, fought on the side of those who did not want to see order speedily restored. It is hard to believe, unless one comes in contact with it, as we have done, to what an extent human credulity will go.

We think that, out of the experience of these riots, this lesson should be learnt, and that some efficient scheme should be devised to do whatever can be done to counteract it. It is to some extent bound up with the whole question of how to set about trying to discount the propaganda with which we have observed the country has been lately threatened. A most responsible Burmese gentleman who gave evidence to us in Rangoon himself deplored, with truth, that there exists in Burma no vernacular newspaper, standing outside and above party politics and prejudice and with no interest to serve but those of Burma itself. And that is true. One of the greatest and most useful steps that could be taken would be the establishment by Burmans themselves in Burma of a national Burmese Buddhist newspaper which by its sincerity and sense of responsibility could attract the confidence of all the many sincere and decent men and women in the country who know

(¹) See page 45.

quite well that in this respect they are ill served at present. But that is perhaps too much to be hoped for. We do, however, think that more might have been done, and, if the experience had existed, would have been done, to counteract at once the dangerous flood of rumour which was spread about. We understand that use was made of wireless broadcasts and we are told that daily reports were issued from Rangoon for distribution in the Districts. This was all to the good. But we feel it might be taken further. We think that some standing scheme might always be kept ready and prepared, should the necessity arise, for circulating from Rangoon the truth of what is taking place. We think that every Deputy Commissioner should, in his District, be prepared to meet rumour when it arises and to make known the truth by means which at a moment's notice he can call upon. And so in subdivisions, towns and villages we think that some instruction should be given to those in charge—even down to Headmen—of the vital importance of, and the best means for, making known the truth whatever it may be. We think that village headmen should be encouraged, wherever possible, to keep small wireless sets. We think that, not only civil officers, but police officers as well, should constantly be supplied with information which they can use to spread the truth. We have not the knowledge to make specific suggestions how all this can best be done. We must be content to point out the danger of "rumour" in a time like this and to say that it has struck us that the steps taken to meet it during the riots and after have not been as effective as they ought to be.

5. THE PART PLAYED BY CERTAIN PONGYIS. (1)

A distressing feature of our enquiry.

It is distressing to us to be compelled to write this and the succeeding paragraphs of this report. But we cannot discharge our duty without drawing attention to the part played in the disturbances in which we are charged to enquire by a considerable number of *pongys* who unquestionably took an active part in them in many, if not in most, of the towns and villages in which they broke out. This matter is bound up with the question also of the use, or rather misuse, to which many *Kyaungdaiks* throughout the country were, and are being, put.

A minority of evil *pongys*.

Before we embark upon this, we desire to make it clear that even those of our Committee who are not Buddhists yield to no one in respect for those Burman Buddhists who sincerely profess Buddhism, for their *Sangha* as a whole and for the sacred places and religious establishments belonging to their faith. And we are determined that it shall not be supposed from anything we say that those *pongys* who by their presence in the *Sangha* have brought discredit upon it are anything but a minority. Nor, serious though it is, is that minority, in our opinion, as large as some would have us suppose. We believe that the majority—the great majority—of the *pongys* and certainly of the *Sayadaws*, of the country are righteous and earnest men to whom the activities of the disreputable element are as detestable as they are to us. But the misfortune and the danger lies in the fact that the younger and

(1) We have throughout the ensuing paragraphs used the word '*pongyi*', although we recognise that there may be cases in which the persons concerned and wearing the yellow robes either never were *pongys* or by virtue of their conduct may have ceased to be *pongys*.

disorderly members of the Order are necessarily those whose influence in disturbances such as these is most widely spread among the people and in the circumstance that the older and sincere *Sayadaws* and *pongys* are, by their very sincerity, unable to control them.

A number of causes have, in our opinion, contributed to the deplorable corruption of the *Sangha* of which we have evidence. Whatever may have been the case in the days of the Burmese Kings, there is now no supreme sanction in matters of ecclesiastical discipline behind the authority of the *Sayadaws* of Burma. They have, so to speak, been "left in the air," without the "Ah-nah-set" or sanction of the Sovereign to support them and it is not surprising that they should, notwithstanding their "Dhamma-set" or sanction of their Noble Dhamma or doctrine, have proved unable to resist outside influences. The result has been a progressive decline in the influence for good of the real ecclesiastical authorities. To this must be added the inability of genuine and good professing Buddhists—whether *rahans* or laymen—to check the degeneration which has set in. Buddhism itself, by its very principles, unfits those who earnestly profess it from organising and enforcing a standard of monastic discipline capable of resisting the external influences which operate in the altered conditions of today. And, in consequence, the *Sangha* and the *kyaungdaiks* of Burma have been unable to prevent their own exploitation in the general confusion of nationalist, economic and political ideas which have by politicians been exploited to the utmost and have overwhelmed the country in recent years. It will be of real benefit to Burma and to Buddhism when the State plays its part in supporting—not replacing—the authority of the *Sangha*.

The reason for the corruption that has set in.

In our evidence we have a mournful record of these so-called *pongys*, *ufazins* and *koyins* up and down the country promoting meetings in their *kyaungs* for political or subversive ends, participating in rioting and, arms in their hands, leading or accompanying crowds of hooligans, committing assaults, looting and even murder and in general breaking the civil laws of the country and the laws of their own order (1). This, too, is a serious menace to the life and progress of the country and it must, by the encouragement it has given to the forces of disorder, be classed as one of the causes of the riots and of the general atmosphere of disturbances which has followed them. The influence of the yellow robe, whoever may wear it, is great in Burma and is on that account the more dangerous when it is misused. Its influence may be gauged by the indignation—some of it genuine—which the people have expressed to us in almost every case in which a *pongyi* has been injured, or even arrested, in these riots, no matter how

Our evidence a mournful record of behaviour of many so-called *pongys*.

(1) Foot-note by U Kin Maung Dwe.—

A *pongyi* or a *rahan* is a person who has cut himself off completely from earthly ties and has taken a vow to lead the life of purity and poverty. The obligations of the religious life place upon him serious limitations in possessing properties, for a *pongyi* can normally possess only the following namely, food, raiment, shelter and medicine and his eight priestly requisites known as (ဝိတုဒ္ဓါဝါဒ). No tangible cases have been brought to our notice, nor am I aware of any in which a *rahan* has committed an act of violence for his personal gain or profit. Such an act calculated to enrich one at the expense of others is still looked upon by them with abhorrence in spite of the degeneration of the *Thathana* under conditions now prevailing in Burma. K.M.D.

dreadful his conduct may have been. We do not wish to pursue this matter, for the facts speak for themselves. We have in the course of our investigation taken specific evidence in which we have been told that in nearly fifty cases armed *pongyis* were among the crowds, in an equal number of such cases *pongyis* themselves were seen to commit assault, in nearly twenty cases *pongyis* were found looting, in eight cases they were found committing arson, and in four committed murder. We must not be taken to mean that all these cases have been judicially proved before us. On the other hand they are only those of which we have received specific evidence or to which there is a reference in official records. They are, we think, only a few of the cases that actually occurred. They are enough to show the danger in which society, and the reputation of Buddhism itself, stands at this moment at the hands of a minority of *pseudo-pongyis* whose influence the Sangha itself is no longer strong enough to withstand.

6. SEARCHES OF KYAUNGDAIKS.

The danger to the community and to the religion itself from the misuse of *kyaungdaiks*.

We have already said that we do not desire to be understood, in the observations we have made upon that minority of *pongyis* who disgrace the Order founded by Buddha, to suppose that they represent the *Sangha* as a whole. In the same way, in what we now say about the *kyaungdaiks* and *kyaungs* in which they live we are not to be taken as suggesting that the majority of these institutions in the country as a whole are not entitled to the reverence with which they are treated by good Buddhists as places of spiritual retreat and of learning. But, if our report is to be complete and frank, we cannot shirk the unpleasant task of pointing to the danger to the community and, indeed, to Buddhism itself, in Burma which, in our view, exists to day by reason of the abuse to which many of these establishments are being put. The danger to the community lies in the common notion held by many, if not by most, unthinking Burmans that such places, no matter how misused, are in some way beyond the reach of the ordinary law of the land. The danger to the religion itself is more subtle, but no less real, because all history proves that once a religious Order begins to lose the respect of those who rely upon it, it must necessarily decline and, finally, succumb. If history has proved that to be true of other religions, as unquestionably it has, it should be a warning to the *Sangha* in Burma.

This misuse is an insult to Buddhism.

It has been one of our most painful experiences to discover in the course of our inquiry to what an extent the *kyaungdaiks* and *kyaungs* of the country are being misused. This is, of course, inseparable from the question we have already dealt with of the corruption of the *Sangha* itself by the penetration into it of young and disreputable men whose very presence in the Order is an insult to the Religion and its Founder. We have already pointed out more than once that the affront offered to Buddhists by the silly book of Maung Shwe Hpi was as nothing to the standing and daily insult that is being offered to Buddhism by so-called *upazins*, *koyins* and *pongyis* who, dressed in yellow robes, have committed the crimes against both the civil law and the *Vinaya* of which there is abundant and incontrovertible evidence almost throughout Burma.

What we are concerned with here is to observe the use to which, in instance after instance, the *kyaungdaiks* of the Order have been put and in particular their relation to the civil law of search. It is no good shutting our eyes to facts. For the evidence is far too strong to enable us, in honesty, to come to any other conclusion than that a great number of *kyaungdaiks*, and of *kyaungs* within *kyaungdaiks*, were, and are still being, misused. The outstanding example in Rangoon is the Thayettaw *kyaungdaik*. Not only is this place a centre of political intrigue, but it is far worse. On the 26th of July, the day when the riots began, it was used as a stronghold of hooligans in yellow robes and of hooligan laymen. And it has, we understand, become no better since. Although the Commissioner of Police has disclaimed any certain knowledge of the fact, we ourselves feel that the evidence supports the view that those engaged in looting in the town made use of the Thayettaw *Kyaungdaik* to some extent as a repository for their loot. Nor was this the only *kyaungdaik* in Rangoon so to be used. There are at least four other large ones scarcely more reputable⁽¹⁾. As far as we have been made aware, these *kyaungdaiks* were not searched during the riots nor after.

Kyaungdaik in relation to the right of search.

The Thayet law and other *kyaungdaiks*.

In the Districts, we have met with no less striking evidence of the same phenomena in place after place we have been to. In Wakema⁽²⁾ the Payagyi was the centre of the disturbance. In Yandoon⁽³⁾ and Paungde the *pongyi kyaungs* were misused in the same way. In Pakokku⁽⁴⁾, where a search was actually made, there was in fact grave suspicion of tattooing in a *pongyi kyaung*, in Toungoo⁽⁵⁾ the *Paya* was the stronghold of the rioters and also in Pegu Town⁽⁶⁾ the Thunpayagyi *Kyaungdaik*. In Mandalay there is abundant evidence that it is in the *pongyi kyaungs* that a great deal of the mischief originated and that it is emanating from them still. The story is the same in place after place.

In the Districts.

The question that has to be faced is whether, in this condition of misuse of these places, the State as a whole can afford to permit an idea to gain currency—and undoubtedly it exists—that *pongyi kyaungs* enjoy a privilege of immunity from search or even that the search of *pongyi kyaungs* is a step hostile to the interests of Buddhists. If the *pongyi kyaungs* of the country were uniformly respected by those they shelter and had they not been allowed to be put to the purposes we mention, this question would never have arisen. But, as it is, it is a serious question. In our considered opinion, until there arises in Burma a general Buddhist public opinion which will no longer tolerate the desecration from within of the *pongyi kyaungs* which the people support, so long will it be necessary, when occasion arises, for the police for the security of the country to exercise in respect of them those ordinary functions, such as the right of search, which the law provides. And no right thinking Buddhist will resent it. Indeed, we feel that many *Sayadaws* might well welcome the assistance of the State. We think that too long has there been hesitation to face the

This question must be faced.

⁽¹⁾ See the evidence of Rangoon witness No. 7.

⁽²⁾ See page 45 *et. seq.*

⁽³⁾ See page 79 *et. seq.*

⁽⁴⁾ See page 132.

⁽⁵⁾ See page 210.

⁽⁶⁾ See page 211 *et. seq.*

facts to which we have drawn attention, which have been known to everyone since these disturbances began. There has been allowed to grow a popular conception of the disabilities of the police in relation to the entry and search of *pongyi kyaungs* which has become dangerous and ought to be corrected.

The proper position of *pongyi kyaungs* should be recognised.

Though we hold the view strongly that a *pongyi kyaung* cannot occupy in law any exceptional position, we should be the last to countenance or encourage any threatment of *pongyis* or their *kyaung-daiks* which did not recognise in full their proper place in the life of the country and the esteem of its people. And we should be the first to allow that a *pongyi kyaung* should not, in the matter of entry and search, be treated in quite the same way as a house or an ordinary building. This is due to that majority of *pongyis* who are a credit to their order and a source of strength to the State. But the present position goes, in our view, far beyond that. For, it is the truth that the *pongyi kyaung* is, in practice, almost immune from search. We think that, without difficulty, regulations in this respect could be devised under which could be easily reconciled the claims of the State to exercise its undoubted rights on the one hand and the susceptibilities of all honest Buddhists on the other hand. But it has to be appreciated that sometimes a search to be effective has to be sudden and secret. Though it is, possibly, not within the ambit of our inquiry, we could ourselves suggest the outline of such regulations. In cases in which secrecy or suddenness are not of primary importance, a search should be made only after notice to the presiding *Sayadaw*. In cases where secrecy is essential, then we would suggest that, before any such search is conducted, a memorandum in writing should be delivered, to the senior civil officer on the spot, by the senior police officer requiring the search to be made, containing a statement of the reasons for which he has decided to make the search and the information (if any) upon which his decision is based. But it should not be necessary for the senior police officer, having delivered such memorandum, to delay his execution of the search. The object of the memorandum would be to ensure that the police officer had genuine grounds for searching. And a search once made should be reported at once to the Deputy Commissioner of the district. The actual search should, as far as is reasonably possible, be conducted by Buddhist officers, who, if the senior police officer present approves, should be permitted to remove their shoes upon entering *any religious building* itself, as was done at Pakokku. We do not pretend that these suggestions are necessarily exhaustive of the matter but they serve to indicate the sort of thing we have in mind which might well be conceded to the susceptibilities of Buddhists without loss of efficiency to the police.

To sum this up we are convinced that the present virtual immunity of *pongyi kyaungs* from search is a source of danger in view of the known facts of the recent riots and disturbances. This state of affairs, in existing conditions cannot be reconciled with the rule of law. We can see nothing in a properly conducted search of a *pongyi kyaung* which is inconsistent with the respect due to Buddhism as the national religion of Burma. Indeed, we feel that, until public opinion in Burma itself protects its own religion, the real interests of honest Buddhists lie, not in discouraging, but in assisting the forces of the State.

CHAPTER XXI.

Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations.

1. GENERAL CAUSES.

(A) *Conclusions as to Causes.*

(1) The discovery of Maung Shwe Hpi's book was not, in our opinion, the "cause" in any real sense of the riots which began in Rangoon on the 26th of July 1938, spread to the Districts in July and August, continued here and there well into September and finally degenerated into the wave of unrest and contempt of law, order and social discipline which has been apparent since and still endures. While the passages from the book did give offence to those sincere Buddhists who chanced to see or hear of them, they would not, we think, alone have provoked disorder on a serious and extended scale and, still less, would they have provoked the prolonged and fierce attacks throughout the country which Muslims and Zerbadis, and in particular the traders among them, have suffered, in which to some extent other Indians and Indian traders too have shared.

The "book" was not the real cause. Interim Report, page 48.

(2) But, though the discovery of Maung Shwe Hpi's book was not the real cause, it was, viewed in its true perspective, an "immediate cause" or the "occasion" of the outbreak of the rioting in Rangoon itself. It was the "occasion" in the sense that it attracted a fierce and irresponsible publicity in the Burmese Press, designed, less as a vindication of the Religion (which needed none), than as political propaganda to embarrass the subsisting Ministry and to further a political campaign against Indians and other foreigners in Burma. It was an "immediate cause" only in the sense that it formed the motive of the meeting of the 26th of July on the platform of the Shwe Dagon Pagoda in Rangoon, out of which the procession to the bazaar and the subsequent rioting developed. In the Districts, too, it served only as the "occasion", and often the "excuse", for anti-Indian rioting. We are convinced that the real causes lay deeper than the book.

The book was only the occasion and the excuse for rioting. Interim Report, page 48.

(3) An attempt has been made to represent the riots to us as religious riots. But, just as the book was not, in our opinion, the real cause, so the riots were not, we think, religious riots. At the highest, the book gave to them in the beginning a religious odour and an anti-Muslim bias. The real nature of the riots has, we think, tended to be obscured because the "occasion" of the beginning of them in Rangoon had a religious flavour and because *pongyis* were generally prominent in them and Indian-Muslims and Zerbadis became the particular objects of attack. But to none of these phenomena can, in our opinion, the real "causes" of the riots be traced. To whatever extent real indignation over Maung Shwe Hpi's book played its part in individual places, it was we think a very minor "cause" in the real sense. And, if further proof of this were needed than the events of July and September themselves afford, we think that the serious unrest in Burma which has prevailed since then, and still continues, affords proof, in ample measure, that the real origin of the disturbances and the real cause of their protraction was, and is, political.

The riots were not religious riots. They were political.

A piece of political opportunism.

(4) The riots at bottom were political and communal. Their immediate cause was, we think, a complex piece of irresponsible political opportunism which saw in Maung Shwe Hpi's book and in the indignation it was capable of provoking a pretext both deliberately to embarrass the subsisting Ministry which had enjoyed eighteen months of office and to exploit for political ends the social and economic phenomena presented by Burma's large, industrious and useful population of Indian British Subjects.

The Materials employed.

Religious sentiment.

Chapter VII, page 7.

(5) Maung Shwe Hpi's book and the pride of Burman Buddhists in their Religion and their race made possible an emotional appeal to their strong religious sentiment. The intemperate and undignified invective of the Burmese Press from the 19th of July onwards shows to what extent this was exploited. Neither the Religion of Buddha nor the Burmese race stood in any jeopardy at all from Maung Shwe Hpi's book and no intelligent and honest person could for a moment have supposed they did. Yet, throughout the country, an hysterical appeal was deliberately made to Burman Buddhists to protect their religion and their race. This abuse to which the book and the deep spiritual instincts of a devout people were put was undoubtedly one of the causes of the first outbreak of rioting in Rangoon and other places and it gave to the riots the anti-Muslim trend they took. But it was not the book that caused the riots, but those who used it.

The new Nationalism of Burma.

Interim Report, Chapter IV, page 23.

Interim Report, Chapter VI, page 34.

(6) There were other materials at hand to work upon of which the foremost was the wave of Burman "nationalism" to which the constitutional and political changes of the pre-separation period, culminating in separation itself, had given birth and the Burman's natural pride of race had fostered. This, too, while natural in itself and healthy, but dangerous in abuse, has been exploited to the utmost. Separation of Burma from India in 1922 was made a political issue and since then there has been created not merely an issue of separation between India and Burma, but a dangerous and irrelevant issue of the place of Indians in Burma itself. This was assisted by the Burmese Press and politicians by emotional and ill-advised appeals over a number of years to Burmese "nationalism". And the culmination came when, after separation itself, the Burmese politicians and the Burmese Press found themselves free to pursue the dangerous and intemperate courses of anti-Indian propaganda on which they had embarked already. When the time came the ground had been well prepared in which to plant the seeds of anti-Indian rioting.

The exploitation of the "Indian Question." Interim Report, Chapter IV, page 14.

(7) Other phenomena to work upon were obvious but it was easy to ignore their origins and history. Burma became part of British India only for reasons of administrative convenience. But it remained geographically remote and its people different in almost every way from the people of India. By a process, essential and highly beneficial at the time to the quick development of Burma, a large and prosperous Indian population has grown up. This population grew out of a process of necessary labour immigration, commercial enterprise and financial outlay over a period of many years and has now attained in Burma an indefeasible footing as British Subjects within the Empire. This large Indian population, and the problems it presents, have, under the stress-

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of natural processes and artificial stimulants, lent themselves to political misunderstanding and misrepresentation as a menace to Burma's new found nationalism, to the economic life of Burmans and even to their Religion. And out of this there is the gravest danger of there arising, if it has not already arisen, a communal or racial question within Burma which is dangerous to Indians in the country and may be a danger to Burma's own future. For, it is no ordinary "communal" question of caste or religion, but it is one of race and lies between Burma and India itself.

The scale of Indian immigration into Burma in the past and the comparative experience, ability, industry and thrift, and the relative success, of the Indian financier and immigrant have, under present political influences, tended to obscure in the mind of the Burman the benefits his country has received, and will yet receive, from the Indians in the country and to create a real apprehension lest it may be continued so as to interfere with the prospects of the Burman himself in his own country. These apprehensions have been assisted to some extent by the complete breakdown in Burma, if not the complete abandonment, in the past of the policy of creating a self-supporting population of peasant proprietors of land, helped by legislation and free from the unsettling influences of artificial and fluctuating economic conditions. To these phenomena have been added the unpopularity of the Indian Chettyar, the benefit of whose presence in the country in the past has been forgotten in the financial disasters and misunderstandings of the depression and in the ensuing process which has placed him temporarily in possession of a large part of the agricultural land of Burma. And at least one social problem has emerged, upon which Burmans feel strongly, in the conditions of marriage between their women and Indians and other foreigners in the country⁽¹⁾.

Indian immigration.

The breakdown of the land policy. Interim Report, Chapter III, page 11.

The "Marriage Question." Interim Report, Chapter V, page 28.

Labour agitation. Interim Report, Chapter VI, page 44.

(8) In the beginning of 1938 Burma embarked upon a course of political labour agitation and unrest which itself was a first cousin to the riots which followed. The strikes in the oilfields and at Syriam were we think wholly political and, in common with the riots, sprang from the same subversive political sources and dangerous economic propaganda. They too were politically designed to embarrass a Ministry because it was in power.

Trade depression.

(9) To these materials must be added the trade depression which set in during 1929 and its continuance throughout this decade, accompanied by world-wide unrest.

(10) These were, in brief, the materials that were worked upon and were finally exploded by the exploitation of Maung Shwe Hpi's book. There has, we think, been created a real and dangerous racial problem. We think this problem is far more dangerous than the communal problems of India because it is one involving races of widely differing

A real and dangerous racial problem which must be cured before it is too late.

⁽¹⁾ In our interim report we stated in error that a non-Christian could not apply for a divorce under the Divorce Act. That was the law under the Indian Divorce Act (1869), *vide* section 2. By Act XXX of 1927 this section was amended and now the condition for the Courts jurisdiction to grant relief under the Act extends to a case where the petitioner or respondents profess the Christian faith. To this extent our interim report at page 32 must be amended.

characteristics and is not one of religion or community alone. We desire to make it clear that we think this danger to be a very real and pressing one to remove which, *before it is too late*, no stone should be left unturned. We cannot see in the immediate future of Burma a stability of thought and of conditions, which, if it is left alone, will allow this problem to cure itself. We find a tendency to treat it lightly. But we have satisfied ourselves that, in the minds of most Burmans, there has been created a conviction that their vital interests clash with those of the Indian and other non-Burman races in the country and that there is, not room for both. We think, ourselves, that there will always be room in Burma for the Indian and that, if there were not, Burma herself probably would be the loser. But we emphasize the danger which exists, for it lies at the root of the passions which made these riots, of which Indians were the object, possible and, so long as it, and politics, subsist, will make them possible again. We are convinced that most of the present feeling lies in ignorance and misapprehension of which an unscrupulous advantage has been taken. If the evil is to be cured, then it must first be understood. Indians and Burmans must understand each others problems. The phenomenon of the presence of a great Indian community as British Subjects in Burma must necessarily present racial problems to be understood, difficulties to be removed and adjustments to be made, if, and where, they clash. But before these problems can be understood and goodwill restored, the facts will have to be examined and made known. Then only will misunderstanding be removed and then only can policies be framed under which, without injustice to either race, they can live in peace in Burma. We are not sure that at present the facts are known.

The root of the trouble is ignorance and misapprehension.

The Means employed.

Burma's history of toleration.

(11) We have said that the riots were political in character. But they were not spontaneous. We believe that, if not subjected to subversive influences, the Burman well deserves his reputation of generous tolerance, both racial and religious. It is on that account all the more tragic that riots such as those we have inquired into should have occurred. Those who are responsible for creating them and the passions which have made them possible have done a great injustice to Burma's reputation.

The four agencies. Interim Report, Chapter VI, page 33 and Chapter XIX, page 276.
(a) The Burmese Press. Interim Report Chapter VI, page 34.

(12) We think that the four agencies which share between them the burden of having created the underlying or general causes which led to the riots were the Burmese Press, the individual politician, the *Thakin* and its associated and allied groups and that element of *pongyis* which has engaged itself in politics :—

(a) The Burmese Press has we think pursued, both in the pre-separation and the post-separation period, a course of dangerous and intemperate political and economic prejudice against the Indian, and in particular against the Indian trading, communities of Burma. It arose out of the political campaigns preceding the separation decision and it has been perpetuated since and has, unhappily, become part of the domestic politics of Burma. That portion of the Burmese Press which opposed the Coalition Ministry in office in July 1938 took, we think, deliberate political advantage of the book of Maung Shwe Hpi to

embarrass that Ministry and to arouse the passions of Burmans still more against Muslims in particular and against Indians at large. When the riots broke out, this Press in its attacks upon the police and by the prejudice it displayed, not only withheld its help in moderating the disturbances, but actively encouraged their duration and intensity. And, by every device of irresponsible journalism, this Press has since fought against the authority of the established Government, the civil and police authorities and the re-establishment of peace and orderly conditions.

Chapter VII, page 7, and Chapter X, page 34.

(b) Side by side with the Press, the politicians who were its creatures have made their contributions in the same way to the same ends. We have been struck in our inquiry how both, in the time of rioting itself and in the aftermath it left behind, the influence of the elected representatives of the people to the legislature has in far too many cases been on the side of lawlessness and disorder. It will be difficult to create in Burma that public opinion and sense of civic duty which is essential to her welfare, unless the elected leaders of the people courageously and honestly lead them and unless the people themselves, when opportunity offers, learn to take care to elect only those who will and can direct them wisely.

(b) Their irresponsible politician.

(c) The hand of the *Thakin* Association as such is not to be found in any direct form in the actual instigation of the riots which broke out in Rangoon in July. But, in our opinion, its influence assuredly was strong in creating those conditions which led to them. And its members in most places were in the forefront of the rioters. It has assiduously spread among the people, and particularly among the youth, of Burma a poisonous and anti-social creed of domestic and industrial unrest and individual indiscipline. It has used the workmen, and even the children of the country for this purpose and it has already done infinite harm to both. But this is as nothing to the harm which has been done to the future of Burma by the corruption of its youth. We think that the *Thakin* and its allied Associations have played as great a part as any other influence in the promotion of the causes which led to these riots. And in the period since, the corruption at their hands still goes on.

(c) 'The *Thakin* and allied Associations. Interim Report, Chapter VI, page 43.

(d) We have dealt, not at great length and we hope justly, with the part played by numbers of *pongys* in the disturbances in Chapter XIX of this Report. They played their part, with others, as "causes" in the sense that the influence of many was used to preach social and economic discontent and political unrest. Those who live in Burma know that reverence for the *Sangha* is part of the Religion itself and is still the strongest influence in a Burman Buddhist's life, whether he be devout or not. Those who do not know Burma may find it difficult to understand the tremendous force of this influence in every aspect and at every stage of a Burman Buddhist's life. For Buddhism itself is less a religion in the Western sense than a rule of life. When the *Sangha* confined its activities and influence to spiritual teaching and to religious and temporal education, it was a profound influence for good. But, in recent years, a great change has spread through Burma and many of the young generation of *pongys* have turned to politics. And the same traditional reverence which they enjoyed as the teachers of religious doctrine and the temporal rules of Buddhist life has made them also in the new régime the greatest political force in Burma. The

(d) The influence of *pongys* as a "cause." Chapter XIX, page 276.

danger is obvious both to Burma and to the Religion itself in Burma. We think the former is widely realized but the latter certainly is not. It is a commonplace of politics in Burma to find every politician supported by "his own" local or particular *pongyis* or Associations of *pongyis*. We find some of them acting as election agents, in substance if not in form. Many *kyaungdaiks* and many *kyaungs* have become centres of political intrigue and even Pagodas ⁽¹⁾ themselves are used as platforms for political meetings and political propaganda. In Chapter XIX we have touched upon the reasons for this degeneration within the *Sangha* and we have pointed out the threat it offers to democracy in Burma. Our narratives of what happened in Rangoon and in the Districts contained in Parts I and II of this Report show clearly the extent to which in almost every place ⁽²⁾ the influence of that element among the *pongyis* which puts political intrigue before religious duty was cast upon the side of unrest and disorder and was used by unscrupulous politicians to foster both. In the aftermath of unrest and indiscipline which the riots have left behind, their influence is just as marked. They cannot be excluded from the "means employed" or from the category of agents of disorder. We cannot too strongly say, as friends of Burma and of her Religion, that the danger to both from the degeneration of the *Sangha* which has set in is great.

Summary.

(13) We sum this up in the ultimate conclusion that the riots were made possible by political and racial passions wantonly created. Maung Shwe Hpi's book was not their real cause. But, by a piece of unscrupulous political opportunism, it was used for political and economic ends to embarrass a particular Ministry and that use led to the release of the passions so created.

Interim Report, Chapter VI, page 38.

(14) (a) We deal with alleged delay in proscribing the book under the head of Civil Action at page 1125. The book wrongly escaped the provisions of the Press and Registration of Books Act, 1867 in 1931 and again in 1936.

The part played by M. H. Patail and Maung Ba Ba, Chapter VII, pages 1-4.

(b) The second edition of the book was financed by Mahomed Hashim Patail, son of Hashim Cassim Patail. The firm of Hashim Cassim Patail of Block C of the Soortee Bara Bazaar and of Merchant Street, Rangoon, had nothing whatever to do with its printing, publication or distribution. The second edition of the book was printed, at Mahomed Hashim Patail's request, by Maung Ba Ba of Taikkyi in the Insein District and distributed by the former. We do not believe that, at the time of the publication of the second edition, Mahomed Hashim Patail was ignorant of its contents and we greatly blame him for what he did. We blame Maung Ba Ba to a lesser extent.

The part played by Maung Htin Baw, Chapter VII, page 4.

(c) We greatly blame Maung Htin Baw for his share in the disclosure of the offensive extracts from the book by publishing them as an Appendix to his novel. But we cannot find that he had any motive other than to make use of them as a sensational item to "advertise" his novel.

(1) The Shwe Dagon Pagoda itself is the outstanding example. But it is only one of the innumerable cases that could be found up and down the country.

(2) The notable and remarkable exception is the Tharrawaddy District.

(15) (a) There is no evidence of the truth of the suggestion widely made that the Premier or any of the Ministers of the late Coalition Ministry either instigated, or were privy to, the convening of the meeting on the platform of the Shwe Dagon Pagoda of the 26th of July 1938. It is true that that meeting was convened on the 21st of July by the General Council of the Thathana Mamaka Young *Sanghas*' Association. We have described that body in Part I of the Report. The suggestion made to us has been that the Premier, having instigated the meeting, intended to suppress the book at the "instance" of "his own" *pongyis* rather than at the instance of a hostile press. We can find no evidence to support this suggestion and, indeed, we cannot understand what motive the Premier could have had for any such manœuvre.

Suggested
privity of the
Premier and
Ministers to
the meeting.
Chapter X,
page 33
et seq.
Page 33.

(b) Although serious disturbances in fact followed the meeting on the Pagoda platform after the procession from it had gone down Pagoda Road to the Soortee Bara Bazaar, we are satisfied that neither the promoters of the meeting, nor those who attended it, contemplated disorder when it was convened or when the meeting began. The actual procession and disturbance were "spontaneous" in the sense that they arose *impromptu* out of the individual speeches (1) made and did not form part of the programme of the meeting. What happened at the Pagoda, and the Procession and the affair at the Soortee Bara Bazaar, from which rioting developed, were merely the initial incidents of the rioting in Rangoon and were not themselves in any way causes of the riots as a whole.

No distur-
bance was
intended by
the actual
conveners
of the meet-
ing. Chapter
VIII,
pages 12, 17.

(16) We have had presented to us—

(a) the baton charge by the European Sergeants and the police at the Soortee Bara Bazaar and the injuries received by *pongyis* in it and
(b) the reprisals of the Indians in the centre of the City in which two *pongyis* were injured on the morning of the 28th July as, in themselves, "causes" of the rioting in Rangoon. They were not. They were mere incidents of the riots and we have dealt with them as such fully in their appropriate places (2). Both provided propaganda for the Burmese Press of which every advantage was taken. The latter provided the occasion for the "flare up" on the morning of the 28th. But they were not, in themselves, "causes." Nor is it true, as we have been told, that in Rangoon the riots of the 26th July had ended and that fresh riots broke out on the 28th for different causes. The riots throughout were one series of riots for which the country had been made ripe, in which these and other matters were mere incidents.

Neither the
baton charge
nor the
injuries to
pongyis were
in themselves
causes.

(17) The operation of the underlying general causes and the general agencies through which they worked spread throughout the country wherever riots took place, though in particular Districts and places their individual effect varied. In our narratives in Parts I and II of this Report we have, where possible, tried to indicate to what

Other sub-
sidiary
general
"causes."

(1) An account of the speeches will be found on page 13.

(2) The Baton Charge, Chapter IX, page 23. The reprisals of Indians on the 28th, Chapter X, page 35.

extent they operated in each. In what we have said or may say of any particular or local "causes" we do not intend to be understood as meaning that these operated, any more than Maung Shwe Hpi's book operated, *in lieu* of the general influences and causes we have found. They constituted the background against which the whole drama took place. But there were other incidents and influences, some general and some local, which while too vague or too small to be constituted "causes" in themselves, must be noticed to make this picture a complete one :—

Absence of public opinion.

(a) Foremost we put the complete absence as yet of any form of healthy public opinion and civic sense in Burma. This phenomenon is to no little extent accounted for we think by the complete and unquestioning surrender in the past of the Buddhist mind to the influence of the *Sangha*, which, so long as the influence worked unselfishly and uniformly for good, made an independent public opinion impossible. But, as we have shown, the time has come when that influence, to some extent, has failed and may fail further yet. And Burma has now become a democracy in which superstition is no substitute for thought and ideals must be enforced by reason. Had there been in Burma a public opinion which had learnt that without law and order no progress can be made and that without a sense of discipline and duty the future of both the nation and the Religion is in danger, there would have been no riots.

Newspapers.

(b) In the Districts we found—

(1) that the almost uniform effect of the arrival of the news and newspapers from Rangoon was to precipitate disorder in those places where rioting occurred. It needed only that encouragement, which the intemperate accounts and photographs of *pongyis* killed and injured and of "deliberate" and "indiscriminate" attacks by police provided, to set in motion the unrest which was already there. The startling uniformity of the process is proof positive of the evil influence of the Press ;

Rumour.

(2) and the other great enemy of tranquillity was "rumour" both that which is always the ugly offspring of popular excitement and that which was deliberately contrived (1) :

Maung Shwe Hpi's Book.

(3) just as we do not wish to underestimate the importance of Maung Shwe Hpi's book in its proper place and in its true perspective as an offence to Buddhists and as the incident and occasion from which the riots began, so we do not want to imply that there were not in places demonstrations leading to rioting which, as in the case of the meeting on the platform of the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, had a genuine protest against the book as their object. That was so in many places and of that there is little to complain. And we must concede that many respectable men and women thought, and still think, that it was the book alone that caused the riots. For the reasons we have explained we do not ;

(1) See Chapter XIX, page 275 *et seq* on the need for an impartial newspaper in Burma.

(4) and finally we should not wish to underrate the part that sheer hooliganism played. That, in almost every place, the criminal hooligan saw and seized the opportunity to loot which he could not resist, is obvious. His guiding principle was plunder. But, in a sense, everyone who took part in the crimes of violence during the riots, became a hooligan and in seeking for the causes of the riots, it matters little whether they were professional hooligans or not. The truth is that, in common with all others who took part in them, they were the instruments of those influences and agents who, and whose devices, prepared the way for the riots.

(B) *Recommendations as to Causes* (1).

(1) No recommendations of ours will remove ill-will or prejudice where they exist. Time, experience and the natural growth of an intelligent and well-instructed public opinion, the absence of which we have so deplored in Burma, alone will accomplish that. The general "causes" to which we have drawn attention in our Report as having formed the basis of the riots, do not lend themselves to precise remedies for their removal. But we feel that there are some things that can be done and which, in general language, we can usefully suggest.

(2) We think that a vigorous attempt ought to be made, if necessary and possibly with the co-operation of the Imperial and the Indian Governments, by men of high and undoubted qualifications, and by methods more thorough and more scientific than can possibly have been within our reach, to ascertain whether the economic problems do exist to which the presence in Burma of a great and active population of Indian British Subjects are supposed to have given rise; and, if so, what they are. It should be made known, upon authority that cannot be impeached, whether and to what extent the legitimate claims and interests of the two races in Burma do, in fact, conflict; and, if it should be that a conflict does exist, by what policies and means the causes of that conflict may best be removed or lessened without injustice to each community and recognizing the rights of both. We are aware that, within a measurable period, it will be within the power of Burma to direct a policy of her own of immigration from India and elsewhere. But we cannot conceive that any such policy can, with safety or with justice, be framed until the whole field of the economic relations between India and Burma and of Indians and Burmans within Burma and of the vital needs of each has been more adequately studied than, as we believe, it has at present been (2). We think that both Indians and Burmans need urgent public re-assurance—Indians, that their status as British Subjects in Burma will be upheld and that the position which the benefits they have conferred on Burma entitle them to will not be lost, and Burmans, that the economic growth and interests of the

A re-examination of the whole Indian question is due.

(1) There are many trifling matters of detail in which we make suggestions and recommendations in the course of Parts I and II which we do not think worth while reproducing here.

(2) We understand that some such inquiry was made in 1934. But, this notwithstanding, we think that, for the reassurance of Burmans and Indians alike, the whole field is ripe for study in the post-separation and democratic atmosphere of to-day.

Burmese races will not be unnecessarily stifled and overlooked. We can conceive no better way to make a start on that than that there should be at once set up machinery to find out where the conflict, if any, lies and, if none exists, to expose once and for all that there is none.

Restrictions on undesirable immigrants. Interim Report, Chapter IV, page 27.

(3) In the meantime, we think it desirable and right that, as a domestic concern of Burma alone, reasonable legislative provision should be made to enable even natural born British Subjects to be denied entrance to Burma if they are shown, by some criminal or other personal record, to be dangerous or undesirable immigrants and we should recommend such amendments of the law to that end as may make that possible.

(4) We feel entitled to draw attention to section 153A of the Penal Code, which was added by section 5 of the Indian Penal Code Amendment Act, 1898 and is designed to make it a criminal offence maliciously to prosecute enmity between classes. This is a section to which resort might well have been had in more than one case⁽¹⁾. It is a section of which we think a vigilant and more extensive use might henceforth be made.

Need for land legislation. Interim Report, Chapter III.

(5) As we have said in our Interim Report, we think that the recommendations of the Land and Agriculture Committee ought to be taken into the urgent consideration of the Government of Burma and such legislation as is necessary to re-establish, as quickly, and as far as is possible with justice to all interests concerned, a progressive and self-supporting Burman peasantry on conditions of agricultural ownership, tenancy or occupation which offer a prospect of contented and sustained livelihood, ought to be passed without delay⁽²⁾. This will remove one at least, of the legitimate causes of political and domestic discontent.

The Marriage Question. Interim Report, Chapter V, page 28.

(6) We recommend the serious attention of the Government of Burma to the "Marriage Question" which we have put forward as a Burman-Indian source of friction in the country. But it requires serious and expert consideration, and legislation, if it is necessary, should not be lightly undertaken.

The need to establish and define once and for all the relations of the *pongyis* and the State in Burma. Chapter XIX, page 276.

(7) We feel the vital need in the interests of Burma and of the Religion which is her pride, that the mutual relations of the *Sangha* and the State should at the earliest possible moment be established and declared for the good of each and that their respective spheres should be publicly defined. We can conceive no step than this more pregnant of the national and religious health of Burma. We have in our Report given the reasons why, in our opinion, the *Sangha* has been unable to resist the influences, subversive of its own authority and prestige, which have found their way into the Order. We think that this is a question which at some time must be faced and the earlier it is faced the better. It would again be impossible and improper for us to make detailed proposals. But, as it seems to us, there are two obvious stages. First,

⁽¹⁾ - e.g. The speech of U Kumara on the Pagoda Platform on the 26th July.

⁽²⁾ It would be wrong of us to make positive recommendations in these respects, for we have not the knowledge or the qualification to do so.

the constitutional and legal truth must be established and declared that in both its civil and its criminal spheres the Rule of Law is supreme in the State and that the *pongyis* and the *kyaungdaiks* of Burma are, in their civil and criminal relations, as much subordinate to the law as any other subjects of His Majesty. And, secondly, the crying need of Burma and, as we venture to think, of the *Thalhana* itself, is that the *Sangha* of Burma should be led, and where possible assisted, to establish and enforce again within itself its own discipline and the rule of its own *Vinaya* and religious doctrine. The lessons of these riots show that it is not possible for the *Sayadaws* of Burma to do this unassisted. The concentrated force of the public opinion of the millions of Buddhists in Burma to whom Buddhism is still the greatest motive force in their lives would accomplish it with ease. We most earnestly recommend to the people of Burma, to the Government to which we are reporting and, with our humble duty, to His Excellency the Governor of Burma himself that the consideration of this question, vital to Burma's future, should be undertaken without loss of time. We hesitate, in a matter such as this, ourselves to go further.

2. THE POLICE (1).

(A) *Conclusions as to Police.*

(18) Upon a fair consideration of the deficiency of the civil police in strength and training, the deficiency of the military police in strength and the manifold difficulties with which both had to contend, it is right that we should place on record that, as a whole, both behaved loyally and well.

Police as a whole did well. Chapter XVIII, page 254.

(19) If one thing more than another has struck us with reference to the civil police of Burma in the discontent which preceded and engendered these riots, in their handling, and in the attitude of the public towards law and order as disclosed to us during our inquiry, it is the traditional and thorough distrust of the police by the people. This has its poisonous effect in almost every aspect of the domestic life of Burma. It brings the Rule of Law into distrust and contempt, it encourages crime, it breeds social discontent, it wastes public funds and it paralyzes the police themselves. What truth there is in this persistent belief in the corruption of the police we neither know nor, if we did, would it be our duty to discuss it. But it is at present an evil thing in Burma and a blot on its administration. It has had its effect in these riots on the self-confidence of the police themselves, on the support they have received and on their handling of the riots by reason of the difficulties and distrust with which they have been faced. If there is one thing more than another which would make for tranquillity and social progress in the country, it would be that, as a result of a searching inquiry by competent persons, confidence in the police should be established and maintained.

Mistrust of police—*ibid*—page 226.

(20) We regard the safety in life and property of its citizens as the primary obligation of good government in the State. We can see no immediate prospect of such stable conditions of thought and political

Obligation to maintain security—*ibid*—page 225.

(1) We have in these conclusions not dealt with our conclusions as to particular incidents or individual successes or failures of police officers, which will be found fully dealt with in Parts I and II in relation to the places where they occurred.