

Dr. Hans-Bernd Zöllner
Riemenschneiderstieg 14
22607 Hamburg
Tel.: 040-8317961
Email: habezett@t-online.de
homepage: www.zoellner-online.org

Hamburg, December 9,2010

Dr. Hans-Bernd Zöllner, Riemenschneiderstieg 14, D 22607 Hamburg

Mr. Jerzy Buzek
President of the European Parliament
Rue Wiertz 60
1047 Brüssel
Belgium

Re.: European Parliament resolution of 25. November 2010 on Burma – conduct of elections and the release of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi

Dear Mr. Buzek,

as a European citizen, one of the few people doing research on Burma/Myanmar and its relations with the international community on the background of a 25year long personal acquaintance with the country, and a witness of the elections held on November 7, I would like to express my deep disappointment about the above mentioned resolution because

- its wording in the colonial tradition of self-righteous Western superiority vis à vis “Eastern despots”;
- its almost total lack of knowledge of Burmese history and the long traditions of the country’s political culture;
- its wrong and most probably counter-productive endorsement of your decision to “send a Parliamentary delegation to Burma to present Aung San Suu Kyi with her Sakharov Prize”.
- its failure to address the issue of how the “opportunity for change” (point 6 of the resolution) could be supported by the European Community.

Any support of the reasons of my disappointment by commenting on the single parts of the resolution would be too time consuming and would overstrain your and your staff’s reading capacity. Therefore, I offer a detailed explanation at your request and add just some short theses:

- The almost ritualistic usage of terms like “democracy” and “opposition” implies that the political models of Europe must be adopted in a country like Myanmar. Earlier attempts have failed in the colonial period but are still remembered by the Asian people. This is one reason why all ASEAN countries as well as Myanmar’s big neighbours China and India support the Myanmar government at a greater extent than they would do if the Western policies towards Myanmar would be different.
- One main problem of Myanmar’s political culture is the total lack in political institutions (parties, parliaments, courts etc.) going back to the loss of Burma’s independence. This lack is substituted by an unrealistic amount of trust invested in

certain persons like Aung San and his daughter. The fate of Aung San who was assassinated illustrates the fundamental weakness of this concept which is so much supported by the EU politics. When he was assassinated in 1947 all hopes pinned on him vanished. Independent Burma's tragedy begun.

- The proposed move like the many similar actions of the past will deepen the gap between the contenders for legitimate rule in Myanmar and is just a symbolic gesture which will raise the expectations of the Burmese public in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's powers and the hope that the country can be rescued by means of foreign intervention. Both sentiments were very often criticised by Aung San Suu Kyi herself.
- Myanmar is in need of development aid in terms of practical education of any kind that may strengthen people's participation from the grassroot level upwards. The elections as flawed as they were offer a lot of opportunities for such engagement and a uplifting of the impressive endeavors undertaken already by many NGOs in the country. I know a lot of people in Myanmar who would appreciate the European Parliament's support to promote such initiatives.

As indicated above, these arguments need further explanation. My research concentrates on the history of political ideas in Burma/Myanmar. Your forwarding of my offer to inform in more details about my insights and experiences to concerned parliamentarians and members of the Parliament's staff would be very much appreciated.

Yours sincerely

(signed: Hans-Bernd Zöllner)