

REITH LECTURES 2011: SECURING FREEDOM

AUNG SAN SUU KYI

LECTURE TWO: DISSENT

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<http://www.bbc.co.uk/reithlectures>

SUE LAWLEY: Hello and welcome to the Radio Theatre in Broadcasting House, London. For the past 23 years, Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese pro-democracy leader, has been fighting for freedom against the military dictatorship that rules her country. Today she is giving the second of her two BBC Reith Lectures entitled “Securing Freedom”, which have been recorded in secret at her home in Burma.

In her first lecture, Aung San Suu Kyi discussed what she called the “un-freedom” in which the people of Burma live, and described the passion with which she and her supporters, like those who’ve recently taken to the streets in the Middle East, seek the right to liberty and democracy.

In this second lecture, Aung San Suu Kyi describes how her party - the National League for Democracy, The NLD - has survived, despite being officially ignored by the regime since it won a landslide election victory in 1990. She draws parallels with dissidents throughout the world for whom, like her, struggle has been their life’s work. Ladies and gentlemen, the BBC’s first Reith Lecturer of 2011: Aung San Suu Kyi.

Audience applause

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: When I agreed, with great trepidation, to take on the Reith Lectures, it was based on the simple desire to discover what we are. By “we”, I mean the National League for Democracy, the NLD, as well as other groups and individuals who are engaged in the campaign for democracy in Burma.

We have been engaged in the struggle for democracy for more than 20 years, so, you might think, we should know what we are. Well yes, we *do* know what we are, but only up to a certain point. It is easy enough to say that we are members of a particular party like the NLD or organisation, but beyond that things start to get a bit fuzzy.

I was made acutely aware of this when I was released from my third stretch of house arrest last November. Perhaps I should explain. A lot happened while I was under house arrest, cut off from the world outside. Two of the most notable events - I was tempted to say mishaps - that happened in Burma were the referendum in 2008, followed by the general election last November. The referendum was supposed to show - or at least the Burmese military junta hoped it would show - that more than 90 per cent of voters were in favour of a new constitution; a constitution which would give the military the right to take over all powers of government whenever it was thought necessary for the good of the nation. The first general elections in nearly 20 years were meant to follow according to what the generals rather absurdly called their "*road map to disciplined democracy*".

This is when it starts to get complicated. To take part in these elections, new political parties had to register with the Elections Commission along with all those parties which had previously registered back in 1988. They also had to undertake to protect and defend the constitution, drawn up two years earlier, and to expel any of their members who were in prison, including those who were appealing against their sentences. This included me as I would have to be expelled if the NLD wanted to register. Instead it chose to carry on its right to remain as a political party in the law courts, although we were fully aware of the lack of an independent judiciary in Burma.

So when I was released from house arrest last year, only days after the elections, I was faced with a barrage of questions. Two of the most frequent ones were, first, whether or not the National League for Democracy had become an unlawful organisation.

The second was how I saw the role of the party now that there was an official opposition which didn't include us. It was instead the handful of parties whose representatives now occupy less than 15 per cent of the seats in the Burmese National Assembly.

The first question was easy enough to answer: we were not an unlawful organisation because we had not infringed any of the terms of the unlawful organisations law. The second, regarding the role of the party, was more difficult because the NLD's position has been ambiguous ever since the elections held in 1990 when we won more than four-fifths of the vote and shocked what was then known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council, the official name of the Burmese military regime. The years of military rule have produced a very rich collection of Orwellian terms.

There are countries where elections have been rigged or hijacked or where the results have been disputed or denied, but Burma is surely the only one where the results have been officially acknowledged in the state gazette, followed by nothing. Nothing was done to provide a real role for the winning party or elected representatives in spite of earlier promises by leaders of the Junta that the responsibility of the government would be handed over to the winners once the elections were over and the army would go back quietly to their barracks.

The most notable outcome of the elections in 1990 was the systematic repression of all parties and organisations, formal or informal, as well as individuals who persisted in demanding that the desire of the people of Burma for democratic governance be fulfilled.

We may have won, but the election in 1990 heralded the beginning of lean years for the NLD. The party made determined efforts to keep itself alive - alive but certainly not kicking. To casual observers, it began to look moribund. Only the year before the Chairman of the party, U Tin Oo, and other key members of the Movement for Democracy were imprisoned and I had been placed under house arrest.

When U Tin Oo and I were released 6 years later, we found that many of our most effective activists were still in prison, had gone into exile or had died - some of them while they were in custody. Others were in poor health as a result of harsh years spent in jails that did not even provide the bare minimum of medical care. Most of our offices had been forced to shut down. Our activities were severely curtailed by a slew of rules and regulations, and our every move watched closely by the ubiquitous military intelligence.

The M.I. or MI - as some refer to it with lugubrious familiarity - could drag any of us away at any time - they preferred the dead of night - on any charge that took their fancy. Yet in the midst of such unrelenting persecution, we had still remained an official political party, unlike today, and we began to be referred to as “the opposition”. So here we were in opposition, but not the official opposition. Should we accept that we were the opposition, after all, because we were in opposition to the government, whether or not that government is legitimate?

In 1997, the State Law and Order Restoration Council was renamed the State Peace and Development Council. Was it because astrologers had advised that such a move was necessary to ward off the possibility of regime change, or because the Junta was getting tired of jokes made at the expense of the acronym SLORC, which smacked uncomfortably of such artificial organisations as SMASH? We shall never know. The official explanation was that the new name indicated it was time for the Junta to move on to bigger and better things, as they had succeeded in their declared intention of establishing law and order. Considering that the Burmese expression for law and order translates literally as quiescent, cowering, crushed and flattened, perhaps we’re not far from the truth.

The regime’s version of law and order was a state of affairs to which we were thoroughly opposed: a nation of quiescent, cowering, crushed and flattened citizens was the very antithesis of what we were trying to achieve. The shape of the NLD began to take on a sharper contour as we faced up to the challenges of the struggle to survive as a political entity under military dictatorship.

We sought ideas and inspirations in our own culture and history, in the struggles for revolutionary change in other countries, in the thoughts of philosophers and the opinions of observers and academics, in the words of our critics, in the advice of our supporters and friends. We had to find ways and means of operating as effectively as possible within the parameters imposed on us by the Junta while striving at the same time to extend the frontiers of possibility. Certainly we could not carry out the functions that would normally be expected of an opposition party.

As repression intensified, those of us in the National League for Democracy felt our essential nature to be more and more distant from that of a conventional opposition. We were recognised as the political party with the strongest support, both at home and abroad, and we carried the burden of responsibility that goes with such recognition. But we had none of the privileges that would have been accorded to such a party in a working democracy and barely any of the basic rights of a legitimate political organisation. We were at once much more and much less than an opposition.

In one of the first public speeches I made in 1988, I suggested that we were launching out on our second struggle for independence. The first, in the middle of the last century, had brought us freedom from colonial rule. The second, we hope, would bring us freedom from military dictatorship.

The prominent role students played when they rose up in the demonstrations of 1988 evoked images of the students who had swept the country along with them in their demonstrations for independence in the 1930s. Some of these students of a past era had become prominent national figures and served as members of the post-independence government or as party leaders until they were forcefully removed from the political arena after the military coup of 1962. Many of these veteran independence fighters were quick to join the movement for democracy and thus linked the new struggle to the old one.

Yet there were many differences between the two, of which the most obvious was that while our parents had fought against a foreign power, we were engaged in combat with antagonists who were of the same nation, the same race, the same colour, the same religion. Another difference, pivotal though seldom recognised as such, was that while the colonial government was authoritarian, it was significantly less totalitarian than the Junta that came into power in 1988.

A well-known writer who had plunged into the Independence Movement as a young student, and who had engaged in clandestine work for the resistance during the Japanese occupation, told me in 1989 that she thought the challenges we had to face were far tougher than the ones with which she and her contemporaries had had to contend. Before and after the Second World War rule of law protected the independence movement from extreme measures by the British administration. When war and the Japanese Army came to the country, the presence of the newly created Burmese Army, commanded by my father, acted as a buffer between the resistance and the worst elements of the occupation forces. We could draw inspiration from the triumph of our forebears, but we could not confine ourselves to our own history in the quest for ideas and tactics that could aid our own struggle. We had to go beyond our own colonial experience.

The regime meanwhile preferred to remain shackled to the past, blaming colonialism for all the ills of the nation and branding the NLD and its supporters new colonialists. Scanning the world for ideas and inspiration, it was natural that we should have turned to our close neighbour India. We sifted through the tactics and strategies of the Indian Independence Movement and the thoughts and philosophies of its leaders, looking for what might be relevant or useful.

Gandhi's teachings on non-violent civil resistance and the way in which he had put his theories into practice have become part of the working manual of those who would change authoritarian administrations through peaceful means. I was attracted to the way of non-violence, but not on moral grounds, as some believe. Only on practical political grounds.

This is not quite the same as the ambiguous or pragmatic or mixed approaches to non-violence that have been attributed to Gandhi's satyagraha or Martin Luther King's civil rights. It is simply based on my conviction that we need to put an end to the tradition of regime change through violence, a tradition which has become the running sore of Burmese politics.

When the military crushed the uprisings of 1988 by shooting down unarmed demonstrators with a brutal lack of discrimination or restraint, hundreds of students and other activists fled across the border to Thailand. Many of them were convinced that those who lived by the gun could only be defeated by the gun, and decided to form student armies for democracy.

I have never condemned and shall never condemn the path they chose because there had been ample cause for them to conclude the only way out of repressive rule was that of armed resistance. However, I myself rejected that path because I do not believe that it would lead to where I would wish my nation to go.

Those who take up arms to free themselves from unjust domination are seen as freedom fighters. They may be fighting for a whole country or people in the name of patriotism or ideology, or for a particular racial or ethnic or religious group in the name of equality and human rights. They are all fighting for freedom.

When arms are not involved "activists" seem to have become the generic name for those who are fighting for a political cause: civil rights activists, anti-apartheid activists, human rights activists, democracy activists. So do we belong to the last two categories since we are constantly speaking out for human rights and democracy? To say that those of us in Burma who are involved in the movement for democracy are democracy activists would be accurate, but it is too narrow a description to reflect fully the essential nature of our struggle.

A scholar comparing Indonesia under President Suharto to Burma under army dictatorship wrote that in Burma's case the military had "*held a coup against civilian*

politics in general". In light of this insightful observation, it can be deduced that the mission of the NLD was not merely to engage in political activities but to restore the whole fabric of our society that civilians might be assured of their rightful space.

We were not in the business of merely replacing one government with another, which could be considered the job of an opposition party. Nor were we simply agitating for particular changes in the system as activists might be expected to do. We were working and living for a cause that was the sum of our aspirations for our people, which were not, after all, so very different from the aspirations of peoples elsewhere.

In spite of the stringent efforts of the military regime to isolate us from the rest of the world, we never felt alone in our struggle. We never felt alone because the struggle against authoritarianism and oppression spans the whole human world, crossing political and cultural frontiers.

During the years I spent under house arrest, the radio, which was my link to the great outside, took me as easily to the far reaches of the globe as to the top of my own street. It was from the radio that I heard about NLD activities in the immediate vicinity of my house, just as it was from the radio that I learned of the breaching of the Berlin wall, the collapse of the Soviet bloc, the moves towards constitutional change in Chile, the progress of democratisation in South Korea, the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa. The books I received intermittently from my family included the works of Vaclav Havel, the memoirs of Zakharov, biographies of Nelson and Winnie Mandela, the writings of Timothy Garton Ash. Europe, South Africa, South America, Asia - wherever there were peoples calling for justice and freedom, there were our friends and allies.

When I was released from house arrest, I took every opportunity to speak to our people about the courage and sufferings of black South Africans, about living in truth, about the power of the powerless, about the lessons we could learn from those for whom their struggle was their life, as our struggle is our life.

Perhaps because I spoke so often of the East European Movement for Democracy, I began to be described as a “dissident”. Originally Vaclav Havel did not seem to have been enthusiastic about the term “dissident” because it had been imposed by Western journalists on him and others in the human rights movement in Czechoslovakia. He then went on to explain in detail what meaning should be put on dissidents and the dissident movement in the context of what is happening in his country. He held that the basic job of a dissident movement was to serve the truth - that is to serve the real aims of life - and that this endeavour should develop into a defence of the individual and his or her right to a free and truthful life. That is a defence of human rights and a struggle to see the laws respected.

This seemed to describe very satisfactorily what the NLD had been doing over the years and I happily accepted that we were dissidents. The official status of our party as seen by the authorities matter little because our basic job as dissidents remains what it has been over the years, and the objectives of our dissent remains what it has been over the years.

Audience applause

SUE LAWLEY: Well now Aung San Suu Kyi recorded that lecture recently at her home in Burma. We now hope to have her on a telephone line from that same room. Daw Suu, are you there?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: Yes, I’m here.

SUE LAWLEY: Welcome. Just let me explain to you that with me here in Broadcasting House in London, I have Robert Gordon whom I know you came to know very well when he was British Ambassador to Burma in the late 90s, and who subsequently ran the South East Asia Department in the Foreign Office. I also have with me Xenia Dormandy who was Director for South Asia for the White House and is now a Senior Fellow at Chatham House. And we have an audience of politicians and experts and dissidents from China and the Middle East, as well as Burma itself.

I'm going to begin by asking Robert Gordon, who saw how your dissidence was treated by the regime when he was in Burma for four years: there was a moment, was there not Robert, when the NLD's dissent began to bear fruit, when the regime actually engaged with Aung San Suu Kyi?

ROBERT GORDON: Well yes there was a little bit of a mini Burmese Spring just before Daw Suu started her latest bout of house arrest in 2002/2003 when Daw Suu was able to visit more and more outlying parts of Burma and address people in increasing crowds until the dreadful moment came in May 2003 when the shutters came down, there was this attack on her convoy, 70 of her colleagues were killed, and she very nearly lost her life. But very recently - and this is perhaps something that Daw Suu could shed light on - there has been a report that in fact behind the scenes there was some progress between the NLD and the military government in the shape of the then Prime Minister, General Khin Nyunt. And, so the report says, an agreement of sorts was reached whereby the NLD would rejoin the National Convention. Perhaps, Daw Suu, you could enlighten as to whether this report is true or not?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: Yes, I had some talks with three representatives of the regime and I felt that these talks were genuine. I think we were trying to reach some kind of agreement. And, as far as I can make out, those who were talking to me also thought that we had reached some kind of agreement. But at the last moment, just a few days before the National Convention, this all changed.

SUE LAWLEY: But you're pushing hard at the moment - you've given these lectures to the BBC, you addressed the US Congress, you're talking about intending to tour Burma - to tour the provinces. The generals have been patient so far. How much do you fear that their patience may run out?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: I'm not sure that patience is a word that you should apply to *them*. After all, we have been patient for 23 years. And when you say that they are patient, what do you mean?

After all, it's my right as a citizen to travel around this country if I wish to and it's my right as a citizen of this country to say whatever I believe to those who ask me what I think.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to bring in Xenia Dormandy who's a Senior Fellow at Chatham House and an expert in your region. Xenia, what's your reaction to hearing the way Aung San Suu Kyi has described the narrative history of her struggle? Are there lessons there for *us* actually in how we should seek to influence what's going on in the Middle East, for example?

XENIA DORMANDY: I think that's an excellent question. I think that there is a message that could be picked up. There has been some success in some areas of the Middle East; there has been less success in others. I think we can all guess which ones fit in which camps. And the question is can we take some of the success of the use of technology, the difference between having an authoritarian regime that would shoot at their people versus those who don't? And I would ask Daw Suu are there lessons for the international community, that you would like to see action from the international community that we saw perhaps in the Middle East that we haven't seen in Burma?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: I don't think the world was as interested in what was going on in Burma as it is now in what is going on in the Middle East. It may be because we are much more aware of what is happening there. It may be because there are differences between the strategic position of Egypt and the strategic position of Burma. But I think that I would like the world to care for each and every bit of the world in the same way when it comes to basic human needs.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to bring in Malek al-Abda. You talked in that lecture about the methods of dissent employed and you talked about violence versus non-violence. Malek al-Abda is a Syrian dissident and a television journalist who's now in exile in London. Malek, your question please to Daw Suu?

MALEK AL-ABDA: In your first lecture, you talked about the possibility of a change in tactic given the brutal nature of the Junta in Burma. How seriously would you consider supporting violence to achieve goals?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: I wouldn't support armed action just because somebody else is calling for it. I place all my hopes in the young people of our country, but I wouldn't support armed action simply because they called for it. I think if I were to support violence, it would only be because I believed that a short burst of violence, if you like, would prevent worse things happening in the long-run. Only for that reason would I ever support violence if I were to support it.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to bring in Sue Lloyd-Roberts who's a foreign correspondent who's worked for many of the major UK TV news channels, Daw Suu. And she's most recently been undercover in Syria, so she's no stranger to the activities of a repressive regime. Sue, your question?

SUE LLOYD-ROBERTS: Yes, I've just come back from Damascus, Daw Suu, and you may or may not know that you are an icon on the streets of Damascus. I met a Syrian woman protestor, a very brave woman who led the women of her district out onto the streets despite the fact that army snipers were shooting from the rooftops and she said you were her inspiration. I have one question for you. You were quoted recently as saying that *"a charade of democracy can be much more dangerous than outright dictatorship."* I assume by that, you meant the Junta's recent elections. Do you think the international community and some people in Burma have been fooled by them?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: Rather than fooled, I think people want change so much that they are deceiving themselves. They want to see change. So they want to see change so much that they start saying that there *has* been change. So far as I can see, there have been no real changes yet. There have been lots of very beautiful words, but those are not enough.

SUE LAWLEY: (to Sue Lloyd-Roberts) Is it your view that the recent elections, albeit they were rigged, but then the release of Aung San Suu Kyi has damaged the cause of democracy in Burma? Is that what you're suggesting?

SUE LLOYD-ROBERTS: The release, no, because she has proved to be a huge inspiration and has done a huge work of advocacy since she has been released. But there's no doubt that I think the elections let a lot of people off the hook. You heard a lot of international politicians say well you know these generals are trying. And surely that can be a very dangerous thing to think, which is why Aung San Suu Kyi so rightly said that a charade of democracy can be so dangerous.

SUE LAWLEY: How far, Robert Gordon, are the people of Burma themselves fooled by it? After all they're surrounded by a lot of other autocratic nations, aren't they? Might the Burmese people actually think across the land that they're not doing too badly?

ROBERT GORDON: No it's true that they are members of ASEAN, the Association of South East Asian Nations, which embraces many different forms of rule and sorts of democracy - some of which are highly qualified. So by the ASEAN yardstick, it's possible that even this highly suspect election may not be so totally out of character. But I think that the Burmese people are very careful to listen - not least to the BBC and other radio stations broadcast into Burma - about themselves, and they will have certainly heard the many irregularities that have marked these elections and they will have seen for themselves how very different they were to the last real elections that happened in 1990.

SUE LAWLEY: Is that why you want to get out into the provinces, Daw Suu? You actually want to talk to people beyond Rangoon to find out *what* they're thinking?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: Yes, and I think it's very important to be in touch with the people. After all, if you're in politics it means you have to work with people. It's not just to go out and campaign.

People use the word 'campaign'; they say that I'm going out on a 'campaign' trip. It's not so much that. Let's say that I want to go on a contact trip.

SUE LAWLEY: But your problem is, is it not, is that your party's been splintered by these elections because you boycotted the elections for reasons you've explained to us; but other parties stood, other members of your party wanted to stand and other ethnic minorities stood in Burma. So in a way the opposition has got fragmented, which is exactly what the regime wanted, isn't it?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: I wouldn't say that the opposition has got fragmented because I think I can say, truthfully, that the NLD has the greatest support in Burma still, and, with the support of the people, that we are remaining as a political force.

SUE LAWLEY: Xenia Dormandy, let's talk about sanctions and trade. China spends four billion dollars. Well what does it spend? What does China spend in Burma?

XENIA DORMANDY: A significant amount of money. *(audience laughter)*

SUE LAWLEY: A huge amount.

XENIA DORMANDY: I think the issue with China, with India, with the United States, with Europe, the question is interests versus, maybe, moral obligation. There is perhaps a moral obligation to act. We heard President Obama talk about a moral obligation when he chose to put the US to be involved in Libya, but how do you measure that against a national interest, whether it's trade, whether it's energy, whether it's protecting one's borders? And I think if you look at the international community activities in Burma, or lack of activity, and you compare that to what's gone on in the Middle East, North Africa, a lot of it comes down to this question of where does the moral obligation, balanced with the national interest, demand that our actions take place?

SUE LAWLEY: Let me call in Simon Tisdall, a foreign affairs columnist and leader writer for the Guardian, of which he's also Assistant Editor. Simon Tisdall, your point please.

SIMON TISDALL: Well Daw Suu, you set your Burmese struggle in an international context, indeed a context of universal rights and obligations. I'm wondering are you dismayed, disappointed even, that countries coming out of post-colonial situations like South Africa - which you praised the struggle there - India, Brazil, as well as China, these leading developing powers around the world have not taken a stronger line on Burma, have not shown the support and solidarity that if we really are to have changes there, the international community needs to exert?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: I am disappointed, of course, but at the same time I'm afraid that we have got rather used to it - that when a democracy movement, a human rights movement are in opposition, then they take a different line; but once they get into government some of them are not as supportive of struggles in other places as we might have expected them to be. There are exceptions of course, such as Czechoslovakia - or rather the Czech Republic now. President Vaclav Havel was very, very supportive of our movement for democracy when he was in opposition; and when he was President he was every bit as supportive. And there are individuals like Desmond Tutu who are exactly the same. I would wish more countries and more leaders to be like them, to remain true to the values for which they fought; once they have succeeded in their struggle not to forget those who are still struggling.

SUE LAWLEY: I'm going to call in David Steele because I think this line is fading on us slightly and I do want to get your question in before the end. Lord Steele?

LORD STEELE: I want to ask a more personal question. I knew your husband Michael during his terminal illness and I know how distressed you both were when he was refused a visa to come and pay a last goodbye. And I've also been in Cairo recently talking to members of the Youth Coalition who saw some of their colleagues killed. And my question is, is there too high a price to pay for dissent?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: I don't think so because if you think of what many of my colleagues have had to give up, what they have had to go through, then I don't think you would even ask me the question - have I paid too high a price. There are many others who have paid much more, a much higher price for their beliefs.

SUE LAWLEY: Did you expect her to say anything else, David Steele? *(laughter)*

SUE LAWLEY: I've got one more point for you. Say who you are.

BRAD ADAMS: Hi, I'm Brad Adams. I'm the Asia Director at Human Rights Watch. One of the things you said at the last lecture that was most impressive was that you felt mentally free throughout all of your ordeal, and what we've seen from change in other countries is that change happens when something happens within a regime. Their mental state changes. And I'm wondering what you think could change the leadership of the regime, the rank and file in the army? What would make them change their world view so that they would accept the principles and the values that you espouse?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: I think it would help a great deal if they could be exposed to other people's thoughts much more. We do not get through enough to the regime - partly because they've cut themselves off deliberately from the people, and partly because there is not enough effort from all directions to make them see that things are not necessarily the way they think they are.

SUE LAWLEY: Xenia Dormandy, do you feel that there may well be a moment when you know the generals make another big mistake, which of course they did when the monks rose up in 2007 - suddenly they were putting up the price of food or reducing the value of savings? Do you feel that that is in the end how it will happen - the big "it"? That the generals will make a big mistake and there's going to be much more communication, as there is in the Middle East, and the whole thing could take off?

XENIA DORMANDY: I think that maybe I will revert to two things that President Obama has said in the last two months, or so. One of them is that these drives have to be internally led, not externally led. And the second is notwithstanding President Obama's insistence that US actions in Libya followed a moral obligation as much as anything else, I don't think that one should expect the United States, the European Community, other Western powers to choose the moral right over the national interest. And so I think that there has to be a question for those within Burma - is there a way to change the calculation so that national interests become more powerful, become more relevant? Is there a narrative that can be explained as to why democracy in Burma is so important that the international community should be taking actions that are otherwise not directly perceived to be in their national interest?

SUE LAWLEY: Daw Suu, music to your ears, hmm?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: Yes, but I think I would like to say that we would like more done on the basis not just of democracy in Burma but fairness and justice throughout the world. And we are part of the world, and it is not just that you're doing something for Burma when you help us in our democracy movement. I think you are helping the whole world to have greater access to fairness, to justice, to security, to freedom. I would like people to think of it like that - not just that we're helping this particular country or that particular country but as promoting more security, more freedom and more justice in this world.

Audience applause

SUE LAWLEY: A last thought from you, Robert Gordon, before we say goodbye. It would be very easy to say that very little had been achieved by the National League for Democracy over the past 23 years because there hasn't really been any continued engagement or any beginning - only one small beginning as we heard of engagement with the regime. No freedom has been won, there's no dialogue. Has anything been achieved that you felt when you were there - and you can put your

finger on now - by the heroic efforts of Aung San Suu Kyi?

ROBERT GORDON: Well I think internally she has kept the flame of hope alive in a long and very dark period of Burmese politics, and that's an enormous achievement in itself. And we heard from Sue Lloyd Roberts and others that in today's Syria and other countries there are many, many people who look from outside at what Daw Suu is trying to do in her country and are drawing inspiration for their own countries.

SUE LAWLEY: Daw Suu, are you happy with that as a summary of your achievements - that you've kept the flame alive?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: I don't like to think of it as *my* achievement talking about what the NLD has done or not done. But to put it all in a nutshell, we have done as much as I think any party could do under the circumstances.

SUE LAWLEY: And here's an easy question for you to end on. How much have you enjoyed being our Reith Lecturer 2011?

AUNG SAN SUU KYI: Oh I've enjoyed it tremendously. I was very nervous about it, but I've enjoyed it very much because it gave me a chance to do what I enjoy doing - reading and writing and communicating with people who are interested in the kind of things that I am interested in.

SUE LAWLEY: Well I think the *world* is interested in the kinds of things that you're interested in. Aung San Suu Kyi, thank you very much indeed. There we must end it. In September, 10 years on from 9/11, the former Director General of Britain's security service MI5, Eliza Manningham-Buller, will be delivering three Reith Lectures, also under the title of "Securing Freedom". She will talk about securing the freedom of those of us who already enjoy it against those who would take it away. But for now, our thanks to our audience here in London and a very special thank you to our first Reith Lecturer of 2011, Aung San Suu Kyi.

END

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