

Turmoil thrusts 5 to the forefront

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THESE are sketches of five Burmese prominent in a national uprising seeking to replace 26 years of police-state rule with a multi-party democracy:

U NU, 82 — the first and last democratically elected premier, he was ousted by a 1962 coup that closed Burma's short turbulent experiment with democratic rule. Highly revered by the people, other politicians say he has been erratic and superstitious. Diplomats say he may be yesterday's man but could make an appealing figurehead or patron.

BO YA NAING, 77 — one of the "30 Comrades"

who led the independence struggle and founded the army, the main political institution in the country. All but two of those surviving legendary figures made a stunning repudiation of the socialist rule founded by Ne Win, with whom they swore a blood oath 46 years ago to always stay unite, whatever the cause.

AUNG GYL, 70 — formerly Ne Win's right-hand man, he helped stage the 1962 coup and was dumped by his mentor a year later. Rocketed to prominence in 1988 as the first to dare condemn economic fiascos and atrocities he said

threatened to turn Burma into an "animal kingdom".

TIN OO, 62 — a former defence minister still popular with troops, he was sacked by Ne Win in 1976. Seen by diplomats to be emerging as the possible general of the massive but so far amorphous opposition.

AUNG SAN SUU KYI, 43 — Oxford-educated daughter of the hero of Burma's independence, she left her country at the age of two. By chance she returned to see the beginnings of revolution and is regarded by students as an articulate and compelling champion of democracy. — Reuter

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AP PHOTO

PHOTO taken early this month of Aung Gyi, one of the key figures opposing the government. A former army brigadier who initially sided with strongman Ne Win, Aung Gyi in recent months criticized the government's failures and repressive tactics. At left is his wife.