

GM 59-3

**CONFIDENTIAL**

18 Oct 1979

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Chief, Liaison and Collection Division, OCA

**ATTENTION :** [REDACTED] 25X1A

**SUBJECT :** Request by Department of State for Release of CIA/RR GM 59-3, The China-India Border Dispute, 29 November 1959. (Secret). [REDACTED]

25X1C

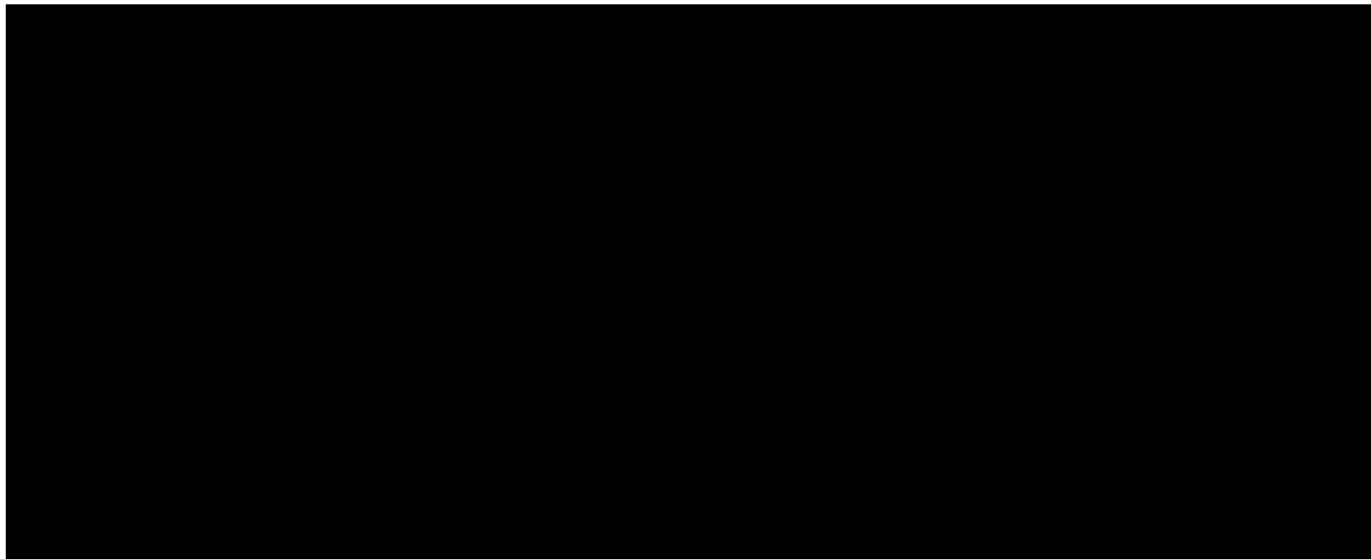
25X1C

1. The Office of Research and Reports has no objection to the release of subject memorandum [REDACTED] as requested by the Department of State, providing the following deletions and revisions are made:

25X1C

Deletions are indicated and discussed by the major headings of the report.

a. There are no suggested deletions in the General section.



25X6

DOCUMENT NO. 3  
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.   
DECLASSIFIED  
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C  
NEXT REVIEW DATE: 1989  
AUTH: HR 70-2  
DATE: 22/1/79 REVIEWER: DS5377

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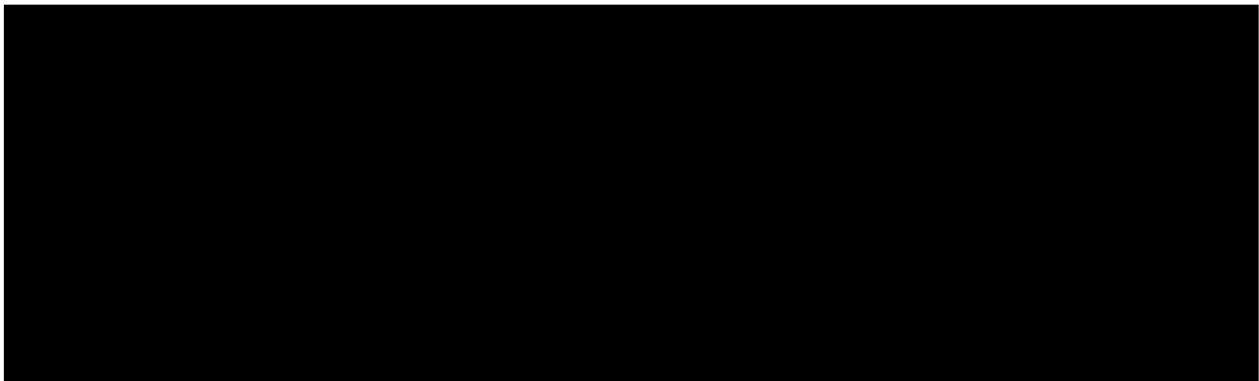
Approved For Release 2000/05/11 : CIA-RDP79-01006A000100140001-1

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k. There is no objection to release of the map. Individual copies of the map (apart from the text) are available at the CIA Map Library under the map call number 28417.

25X6



n. The classification of the sanitized text will be **CONFIDENTIAL**.

o. The classification of the map to be forwarded separately is to remain **CONFIDENTIAL**.

2. A "sanitized" version of GM 59-3 is attached.

**FOR THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, RESEARCH AND REPORTS:**



25X1A

**Chief, Publications Staff  
Office of Research and Reports**

**Attachment**

**Distribution:**

- & 1 - Addressee (w/attachment)
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DRAFT

14 January 1960

TO:

25X1C

SUBJECT: Sanitization of GM-59-3

1. In response to the request from the Department of State, the paper on the China-India Border Dispute, CIA/RR-GM-59-3, has been reviewed, and several deletions are suggested before the report is released. Deletions are indicated and discussed by the major headings of the report.

2. There are no suggested deletions in the General section.

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Approved For Release 2000/05/11 : CIA-RDP79-01006A000100140001-1

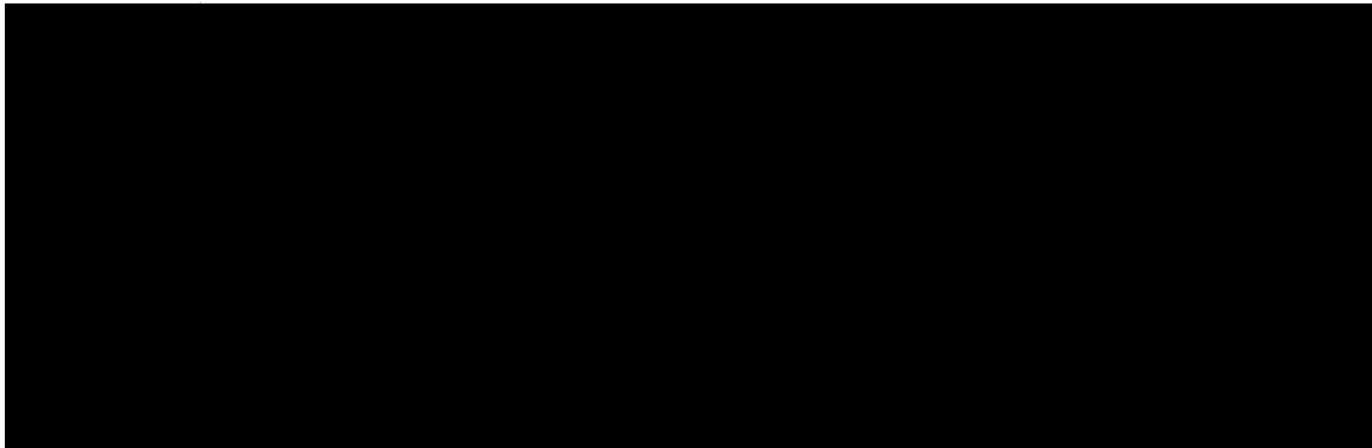
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12. There is no objection to release of the map. Individual copies of the map (apart from the text) are available at the CIA Map Library under the map call number 28417.

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15. The classification of the sanitized text will be CONFIDENTIAL.

16. The classification of the map to be forwarded separately is to remain CONFIDENTIAL.

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2 December 1959

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief, Analysis Branch, DD/CR

ATTENTION :  DD/AB/SS 25X1A

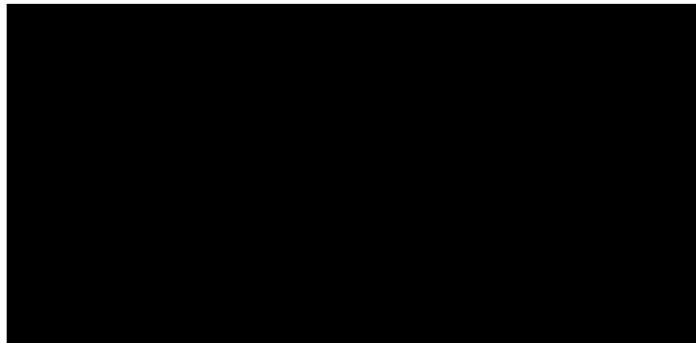
FROM : Chief, Publications Staff, ORR

SUBJECT : Release of CIA/RR-GM 59-3, The China-India Border Dispute, 20 November 1959, Secret, to Foreign Governments

1. It is requested that the attached copies of subject report be forwarded as follows:

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- #57 - 60
- #61
- #62 - 64
- #65
- #66 - 67
- #68
- #69
- #70



2. All ORR responsibilities as defined in the DDI memorandum of 13 August 1952, "Procedures for Dissemination of Finished Intelligence to Foreign Governments," as applicable to this report, have been fulfilled.

DOCUMENT NO. 2  
 NO CHANGE IN CLASS.   
 DECLASSIFIED  
 CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S @  
 NEXT REVIEW DATE: 1989  
 AUTH: HR 70-2  
 DATE: 23/8/79 REVIEWER: 036377



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Attachments

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Copy No. — 233

GEOGRAPHIC  
INTELLIGENCE  
MEMORANDUM

CIA/RR GM 59-3  
20 November 1959

*THE CHINA-INDIA BORDER DISPUTE*



DOCUMENT NO. \_\_\_\_\_  
NO CHANGE IN CLASS.   
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CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C  
NEXT REVIEW DATE: \_\_\_\_\_  
AUTH: HR 70-2  
DATE: 22/6/79 REVIEWER: 035377

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND REPORTS

WARNING

This material contains information affecting the National Defense of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, Title 18, USC, Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

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The current border dispute between China and India is the outgrowth of a long period of growing tension along China's 2,400-mile frontier from Afghanistan to Burma. Only one small section (the 110-mile Sikkim-Tibet border) has been demarcated on the ground. For the remainder of the border the basis for the alignment is "historical tradition" in the west and the McMahon Line in the east. The former is subject to varying interpretations, and the legality of the latter is in question. The dispute is further complicated by a potpourri of ancient treaties and maps, national pride, and assumed past grievances. The setting of the dispute is an area of generally uninhabited high mountains and desolate plateaus that are little known and poorly mapped. Access to the frontier is difficult, particularly from the low plains of the Indian subcontinent; long, difficult ascents must be made to the high mountainous frontier where even the passes are at elevations of more than 13,000 feet. In contrast the Chinese side of the frontier is backed by plateaus and mountains, generally 14,000 to 16,000 feet high; and access to the border is less arduous. Except for the Sinkiang-Tibet road which traverses the disputed Aksai Chin area, no motorable roads currently cross the Indian-claimed border. On the Tibetan side, however, only a few miles remain to be finished in order to complete a road connecting northern India with southern Tibet.

Minor border disputes have punctuated the history of sections of the frontier -- particularly the Tibet border west of Nepal -- but, heretofore, conflicting territorial claims have been important only locally. The political vacuum that prevailed along the frontier prior to 1949 ended with the Chinese Communist occupation of Sinkiang and Tibet in 1950-51. China established military garrisons near the frontier, constructed roads, and initiated surveillance procedures for traders and pilgrims entering Tibet. India reacted by establishing a limited network of frontier posts, beginning the construction of roads into the mountainous frontier lands, and extending the territory delimited by the Inner Line, within which non-Indian nationals must obtain special permission to approach the frontier region. Trade relationships based on tradition became more formalized as China signed trade agreements first with India (1954) and then with Nepal (1956) by which traders and pilgrims were required to enter western Tibet only by certain designated passes and routes and to trade at specified Tibetan markets.

Chinese interference with the activities of Indian officials and traders began prior to the March 1959 Tibetan revolt but increased after the revolt. Eventually the influx of refugees into northern India and the border states and the mutual extension of the area covered by armed patrols along many sections of the ill-defined and poorly mapped frontier culminated in armed clashes. In late August 1959, Nehru admitted that border clashes had occurred along the McMahon Line. In early September the Government of India published the texts of Sino-Indian notes on the border and related issues since 1954, and thereby focused attention upon the undefined nature of the frontier, the conflicting cartographic representations of the border, and the various sectors and areas in dispute.

#### Kashmir-Sinkiang-Tibet Sector (See Map Inset A)

The China-Kashmir frontier in the north consists of an extensive northwest-southeast-aligned region that extends from Afghanistan to Tibet, a distance of more than 300 miles, and is bordered on north and south by the massive Kunlun and Karakoram Ranges, respectively. Between these great mountain barriers lies a belt of nearly inaccessible high plateau and mountain lands that varies in width from about 50 miles in the west to about 150 miles at the Tibet border. The entire frontier region is high, cold, and barren, with no permanent settlements; only in a few favored valleys is forage sufficient to attract nomads.

Maps of the China-Kashmir border differ widely in their portrayal of the boundary. Both Nationalist and Communist Chinese maps show a border generally following the crest of the Karakoram Mountains; in contrast, some British maps dating back at least to the 1920's show the boundary as following the crest of the Kunluns, far to the north.\* At a still earlier date (1899), the Government of India proposed to the Chinese Government a border that, with minor exceptions, ran along the Mustagh (the eastern Hunza border) and Karakoram Ranges. The Chinese did not reply to this proposal. British explorations and expeditions to prevent raiders in the upper Yarkand area north of the Karakoram from interfering with India-China trade caravans apparently provided the basis for the British version of the border along the Kunluns. On the latest official Indian and

\* Medium- and large-scale (British) Survey of India maps of this area were consistent in showing no border. United States cartographers have used as an authority for the Kashmir-Sinkiang border such small-scale British maps as the 1:4,000,000 map of Northern India (GSGS 2957), first published in 1927. US Government-produced maps, however, normally carry a caveat to the effect that the US Government may not recognize the boundaries shown.

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Pakistani maps the border from Afghanistan to the Karakoram Pass agrees in general with the Chinese version. East of the Karakoram Pass, however, the boundary alignments differ markedly. Indian, British, and United States maps show a boundary following, in part, the crest of the Kunluns to about 80°20'E; from here the line trends southwestward across the Aksai Chin area and joins the Chinese version of the border near the Indus. For the location of the border segment east of the Karakoram Pass, Indian officials apparently have advanced the watershed principle as the chief criterion. The Aksai Chin area, however, consists of a series of basins with interior drainage; their watersheds are circular and, consequently, nearly meaningless for boundary marking. Soviet maps and the 1953 Survey of Pakistan Political Map show a boundary between the Chinese and Indian versions, but somewhat closer to the Chinese.

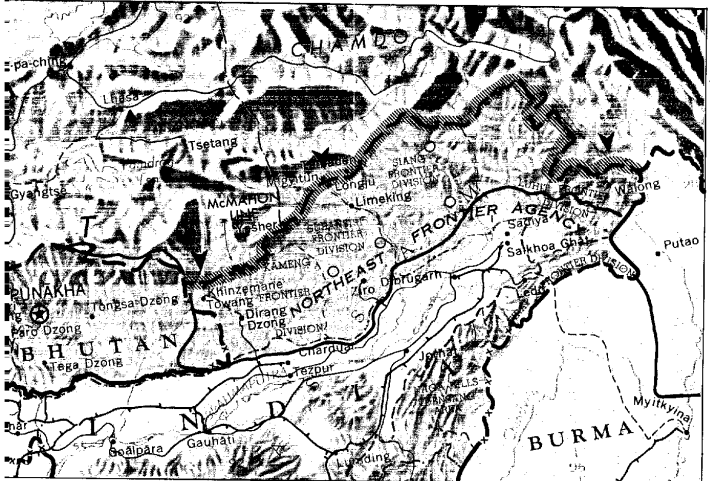
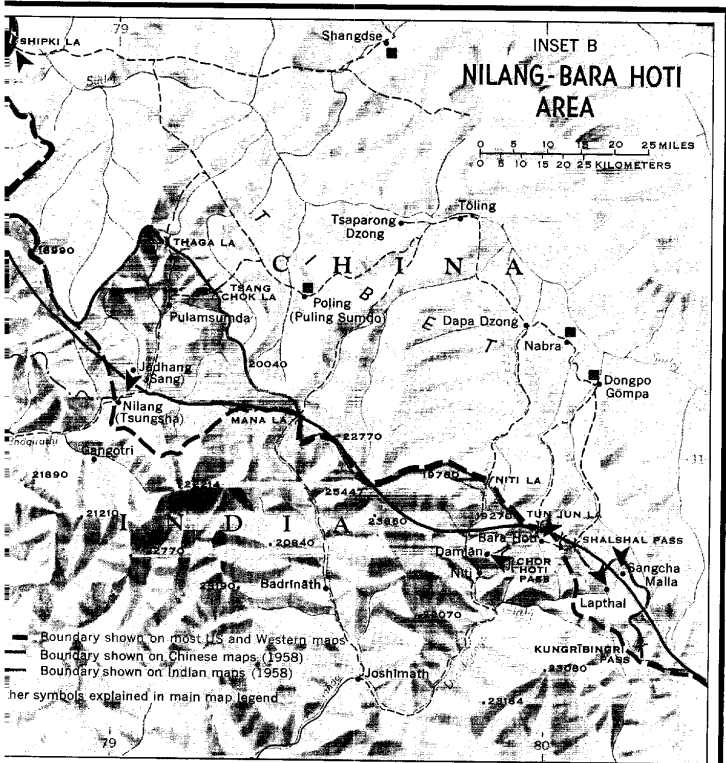
**Aksai Chin Area:** The dispute over the desolate Aksai Chin area involves about 10,000 square miles of uninhabited high plateau with minimum elevations generally above 16,000 feet and several brackish lakes surrounded by extensive saline deposits. The area is so inhospitable that even fuel, fodder, and potable water are difficult to find. In 1958, an Indian patrol sent to investigate the

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NOTES ON DISPUTED AREAS



**Hunza**, 675 square miles. High mountains, deep valleys. Seasonally occupied by nomadic herdsmen. Occasional reports of Chinese patrols at border passes.

**Upper Yarkand**, 1,800 square miles. Includes Shaksgam Valley (tributary to Upper Yarkand) from Hunza to Karakoram Pass. Believed uninhabited. No known incidents.

**Aksai Chin**, 10,000 square miles. High, barren plateaus and mountains. Normally uninhabited. Border incidents near Tibet-Sinkiang road and in south near Chinese-claimed border.

**Pangong-Spanggur**, 750 square miles. Within interior drainage system of Tibetan plateau. Population probably limited to seasonal grazers. Clashes between Indian and Chinese patrols at Spanggur Camping Grounds and Khurnak Fort.

**Demchhog**, 550 square miles. Includes 20-mile stretch of Indus Valley, small village of Demchhog, and pasture areas. No active dispute at present.

**Nilang**, 450 square miles. Rugged headwaters area of Ganges tributary stream. Small summer villages and pastures. Chinese soldiers nearby in 1956.

**Bari Hoti**, 1-1/2 square miles. Mountain pasture and camping grounds. Seasonally used. Occupied and reoccupied since 1954 by Chinese and Indian forces.

**Northeastern Bhutan**, area indefinite. High; includes 22,000- to 24,000-foot peaks, gorge of Kuru Chu (Brahmaputra tributary). Probably uninhabited. No active dispute. Variations between Chinese and Indian maps probably due to lack of survey.

**Southeastern Bhutan**, 1,300 square miles. Rugged hills and mountains; deep, narrow valleys. Sparsely populated. A few small villages. No clashes because area is separated from Tibet by Indian-administered territory.

**North-East Frontier Agency**, 26,000 square miles. Rugged hills and mountains, inaccessible valleys. Inhabited by hill tribes; sedentary agriculture in south, combined with herding in north. Several border incidents in vicinity of the McMahon Line; primarily at Longju and Kinzeman.

1957-built Sinkiang-Tibet road was discovered and detained by the Chinese; in July 1959, another Indian patrol was detained; and in October, patrol clashes occurred to the south, with resulting casualties.

Although the China-Kashmir boundary in this area has never been formally delimited, the Indians hold the position that the 1842 treaty between Kashmir and Tibet (Following Kashmiri annexation of Ladakh) established the fact that the border was "well-known," the treaty stating in part that "the boundaries of Ladakh and its surroundings [have been] fixed from ancient time," implying that demarcation of the border was not necessary. Since a Tibetan with Chinese rank signed the treaty and the Emperor of China was nominally included as one of the negotiating parties, the Indians argue that by the provisions of this treaty China accepted the "old established frontier." Chou En-lai has denied that China was a party to the 1842 treaty. He agrees, however, that there is a "customary line derived from historical tradition" separating Ladakh from China but insists that the border shown on Chinese maps -- past and present -- correctly reflects this tradition. Since both countries insist that their maps follow the traditional frontier, a question arises as to whether the 1842 treaty was actually

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was done thereafter to extend administrative control into the hills; and, until shortly before World War II, most British maps continued to show either a boundary drawn at the line separating hill tribes from the plains dwellers (which is in accord with most Chinese maps) or no boundary at all. Not until 1943-44 did the British begin a serious effort to "make good" their McMahon Line. Outposts were established and administration extended to some areas, but sizable areas in the north and northwest remained unadministered. After 1947 the Government of India slowly extended its control; airstrips were built to supply outlying valleys; and more recently, roads have been constructed linking the plains with the administrative headquarters of the Kameng and Subansiri Divisions. In 1954, India was able to install a pro-India abbot at the important Towang Monastery, thus reducing Lhasa's religious ties with the area. Concurrently the Chinese occupation of Tibet resulted in improved communications within Tibet and in an extension of Chinese military and civil control to areas adjacent to the McMahon Line. After the March 1959 uprising in Tibet, several Indian posts were moved to the border vicinity (Longju outpost was occupied in April). The following August, Chinese patrols engaged Indian patrols at Longju and Khinzemane.

#### Related Border Problems

The undefined status of almost all of the China-India frontier and the wording of recent Chinese pronouncements suggest the possibility that other areas may eventually be disputed. Nepal also is currently concerned, since its 550-mile border with Tibet is undefined and since some minor differences in the boundary alignment may appear on Chinese- and Indian-produced maps. Furthermore, Chinese maps have shown parts of Bhutan -- primarily in the southeast -- as belonging to Tibet. Recent interference with Bhutanese couriers and officials in charge of tiny Bhutanese exclaves in western Tibet suggests the possibility of future problems.

At the western end of the China-India frontier, disputes have arisen between Pakistan and China over their boundary in the tiny mountain state of Hunza. Chinese claims to Hunza are of long standing, dating at least to the early nineteenth century; Hunza, on the other hand, maintained counterclaims in Sinkiang and the Upper Yarkand area. Traditionally, gifts were exchanged between the Mir (ruler) of Hunza and the principal Chinese official in Kashgar. In 1935, following more active Chinese interest in Hunza, British officials persuaded the Mir to abandon most of his claims and end the exchange of gifts. Although at one time both Nationalist- and Communist-produced Chinese maps showed all of Hunza as part of China, recent Chinese maps indicate claims to "only" parts of eastern Hunza. The area is small (about 675 square miles according to the Survey of Pakistan Political Map) but includes the potentially strategic Khunjerab and Parpiik Passes leading east to Sinkiang. Particularly troublesome is the grazing area east of the Shimshal Pass, near Darband (Darwaza), which the Mir still claims. This interpretation is supported by Pakistani maps. Despite recently increased Chinese activity here, the Hunzakuts still continue to use the pastures near Darband.

#### Prospects for Future Settlement

Maps of various dates and by different authorities have been used by both China and India to support their versions of the border alignment. These maps, however, merely reflect the lack of border surveys and the absence of boundary markers, and reveal the poorly mapped nature of some frontier sections, which leaves in doubt the exact location of water divides and mountain crestlines. As indicated by the exchanges between Prime Minister Nehru and Chou En-lai, Indian and British maps could be used to support both Indian and Chinese claims; and, conversely, some Chinese maps could be cited to support either position. To further confuse the issue from the point of view of the United States interest in the problem, maps produced by the US Government have not in all cases been consistent in their treatment of the border; at present the border delineation on official US maps differs in places from that on both Indian and Chinese maps.

Neither India nor China can make an entirely open-and-shut case for its position on all disputed areas. Aside from the onerous task of evaluating the relative validity of Chinese and Indian claims, negotiations over many of the disputed areas will be hampered and confused by the lack of basic surveys and accurate maps. The complexity of these problems coupled with the lack of basic information suggests that any final settlement of the border will neither be soon nor easily accomplished.

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intended to refer to the northern Ladakh border in the Aksai Chin area, which is with Sinkiang rather than with Tibet. The dearth of knowledge concerning the Aksai Chin, its lack of population and administration, and discrepancies in both old and current maps of the area suggest that the 1842 treaty may have applied only to the eastern Ladakh border with Tibet.

Although Prime Minister Nehru has pressed Indian ownership of the Aksai Chin area with vigor, his remarks to the Indian Parliament indicate that the area is in a different category from other Indian-Chinese border disputes. On 12 September, Nehru stated, "It is a matter for argument as to what part of it belongs to us and what part of it belongs to somebody else . . . . This particular area stands by itself. It has been in challenge all the time."

Pangong Tso and Spanggur Tso Area: Several Ladakh-Tibet border areas just south of the Aksai Chin also are disputed, the major problems being the interpretation of the "customary line" cited in the 1842 treaty and the determination of major watersheds. In the past, disputes in this area (usually over seasonal grazing rights) have been caused by the indefinite nature of the frontier.

In the Pangong-Spanggur Tso (lake) area, about 750 square miles are in dispute. The area is probably inhabited only seasonally by nomads and their flocks. North of Pangong Tso, Chinese maps -- and most other maps except those of Indian and Pakistani origin -- show a boundary generally following the watershed between the upper Shyok tributaries and the interior drainage basins of the Tibetan plateau; Indian maps show a border some 10 to 15 miles to the east. At Khurnak Fort (ancient ruins) and Spanggur Camping Grounds at the western end of the lake, border incidents have occurred recently. Chinese troops west of Spanggur reportedly are but 8 miles from an Indian landing strip at Chusul. From the standpoint of terrain, the Chinese version of the border -- particularly north of Pangong Tso -- appears sound. There is, however, some merit in having the boundary at Pangong Tso cross the small bit of land separating the two arms of the lake in accordance with the Indian view, thus placing Khurnak Fort within India. The Indians state that in a 1924 conference between British and Tibetan officials over disputed pasture areas, Indian jurisdiction over Khurnak Fort was not disputed. In the case of Spanggur Tso, however, the inclusion of the lake within Tibet -- as shown on Chinese maps -- appears logical from the standpoint of physical geography since the lake is within the interior drainage system of the Tibetan plateau.

Demchhog Area: For a few miles south of Spanggur Tso, the Indian and Chinese borders coincide. In southeastern Ladakh, however, the maps vary in showing where the border crosses the Indus, with Indian maps placing the border about 20 miles upstream from where the Chinese and most other maps show the crossing. Explorers' notes (1908) indicate a Ladakh-Tibet boundary near Demchhog, roughly in line with the Indian claims. Thus far, no clashes in this area have been reported, but the divergence noted on the maps suggests that the Demchhog area is a likely trouble spot -- particularly since the caravan trail following the Indus Valley is one of the routes of entry specified in the 1954 Sino-Indian Trade Convention.

#### Southwestern Tibet-India Sector

From Ladakh to Nepal, the India-Tibet border is also "traditional," in general following the water-parting range between the two countries, although most of the 22,000- to 25,000-foot peaks of the Great Himalaya Range are south of the divide. The border disputes here have had their origin in ancient Tibetan claims (since parts of the frontier area apparently belonged to Tibet prior to the seventeenth century) and in uncertainty as to which passes are on the water divide. The Government of India cites as support for its claims (based on tradition and the water-divide criterion) the acceptance by China of the six passes specified in the 1954 Sino-Indian Trade Agreement as the only ones to be used by Indian traders and pilgrims. There appears to be no disagreement between the Chinese and Indians as to the border alignment in the vicinity of these passes. The border alignment in other parts of the frontier, however, is subject to differing interpretations. The Chinese hold the position that the delimitation of the border is subject to negotiation since frontier disputes have occurred in the past and the border has never been formally demarcated. Although Chinese and Indian maps differ significantly only in the Nilang area, Chinese incursions and recent disputes have arisen in several other places -- notably at Shipki Pass, Laphthal, and in the Spiti area.

The immediate frontier area is inhabited only during summer and fall, when alpine pastures can be grazed and the high passes are open. The Bhotias, Tibetan-related groups who inhabit the Indian side of the mountains, cross the area from July through October on trading missions to and from Tibet. Traditionally, Tibetan officials levied taxes on Bhotia traders and the Bhotias on Tibetans who ventured south of the passes -- a practice continued even during the period of

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British administration. Disputes occasionally arose over these practices and Tibetan occupation of grazing areas, principally in the Nilang area. Protests and counter-protests were filed but without a final determination.

Nilang Area (See Map Inset B): The largest area in dispute is north of Nilang, a small semipermanently inhabited village located about 20 miles south of the water-divide passes. In 1956, a Chinese patrol advanced within a short distance of the village, causing an Indian protest to be lodged. Between Nilang and the passes are two small summer settlements and high pastures suitable for seasonal grazing. Indian maps mark the border along the passes on the line of water parting, whereas Chinese maps show a line running northwest-southeast just north of Nilang village. The uncertain status of the area is reflected on older maps of India (and the recent 1957 London Times Atlas) produced by the British and on US-produced maps, which show a border approximately in agreement with Chinese maps. The Indians maintain that a meeting between British and Tibetan officials in 1926 produced considerable evidence of past Indian ownership of this area.

Bara Hoti Area (See Map Inset B): The Bara Hoti area (called Wu-je by the Chinese) is a small upland pasture a few miles southeast of the Niti Pass. Despite its small size and apparent insignificance, numerous notes have been exchanged between India and China since 1954 over its ownership; since then, both Chinese and Indian patrols have alternately occupied the Bara Hoti area. Initially the Chinese actions may have been of a probing nature designed to ascertain the extent of Indian surveillance of the frontier and to test Indian reaction to Chinese advances. The Indians hold the position that the border follows the major water divide, thus placing the Niti, Tunjun, and Shalshal Passes on the border; the Chinese view presumably is that the border runs south from the Niti Pass through the Chor Hoti Pass, which is located several miles south and west of the Indian line. Curiously, however, their maps showing the boundary delineation agree with the Indian maps. Part of the trouble arises from the nature of the water divide, which is relatively inconspicuous, with no high peaks or difficult passes marking its crest. Such features do exist along the Chinese-claimed border.

#### Assam-Tibet Sector

The dispute over India's North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) in Assam involves an area of about 26,000 square miles inhabited by roughly 500,000 to 800,000 primitive hill tribesmen. Physically, the area consists of a belt of steep hill and mountain terrain 50 to 100 miles wide rising sharply from the Brahmaputra plains to the crest of the Great Himalaya and associated ranges, which coincide with the McMahon Line. The Chinese-claimed border generally runs along the southern margin of the hills. This is by far the most difficult of the Himalayan areas to penetrate from the plains. Heavy rains continue from June through October; dense, tangled forests choke the valleys and cover much of the hill country; landslides are common and earthquakes are not infrequent. Several tribal groups at various cultural levels inhabit the area; most of them are isolated and have little outside contact beyond petty trade with one another or with Tibet and Assam. Although a few of the more northerly groups -- particularly in the northwestern part of the Kameng Division -- have close ethnic and cultural ties with Tibet, most of the hill tribes appear to have little kinship with either the Assamese plains dwellers or the Tibetans.

The crux of the Sino-Indian dispute over the NEFA area concerns the validity of the tripartite 1914 Simla Convention -- which was signed by Great Britain and Tibet but not by China -- and the appended convention map upon which the Tibet-India border (McMahon Line) was drawn. The primary purpose of the convention was to clarify Tibet's relationships with India (Great Britain) and China. India points out that subsequent Chinese protests over the Simla agreement were concerned with these relationships -- particularly the delimitation of Inner and Outer Tibet -- not with the McMahon Line. Chou En-lai, however, claims the McMahon Line to be "illegal" since China did not sign or ratify the Simla Convention. He maintains that Tibet was then and is still part of China and cites old maps to support the Chinese claims.

With the possible exception of the Towang area, the greater part of the NEFA territory appears to have had no administration in times past from India, Tibet, or China. Before 1900 the British had made pacts with the various hill tribes designed to keep them from raiding the plains dwellers; but civil administration of the area was left largely unattended. Later, because of Tibetan and Chinese activity along the frontier, several survey and military expeditions were sent into the hills (1911-1913). These expeditions led to the recommendation that the Great Himalaya crest be proposed as a border between Tibet and India (the McMahon Line). The Great Himalaya Range, however, is not in all cases the line of water parting. Despite the drawing of the McMahon Line, almost nothing

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