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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

Draft

6 February 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

SUBJECT: Possible Early Communist Action in Burma

CONCLUSIONS

1. We believe that the Chinese Communists are unlikely to exercise their capability for direct military action in Burma and Thailand in the immediate future. Such action against Thailand at least will probably not be taken until after Communist control is established over Indochina (with or without the aid of Chinese Communist forces), because the rugged mountain terrain of northern and ~~western~~ Burma makes access to Thailand much easier from Indochina. Moreover, with Indochina in Communist hands, direct Communist military action against Burma and Thailand might prove unnecessary. Present Chinese Communist involvement in Korea and fears of a possible invasion of South China from Taiwan are other factors which would tend to deter an early Chinese Communist military action against Burma and Thailand. Finally, the lack of strong and well-organized indigenous Communist parties in Burma and Thailand might cause the Peiping regime to hesitate until the sabotage and subversive potentials in these countries were increased.

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2. We believe that Communist propaganda, infiltration and subversion in Burma and Thailand will be considerably intensified in the immediate future and that indigenous Communist groups in these countries will be given increasing support.

DISCUSSION

3. There have been reports in recent weeks of increased Chinese Communist interest in Burma and Thailand. Many of these reports (which are generally of low reliability) state that intensified Communist activity in these countries will take place in February.

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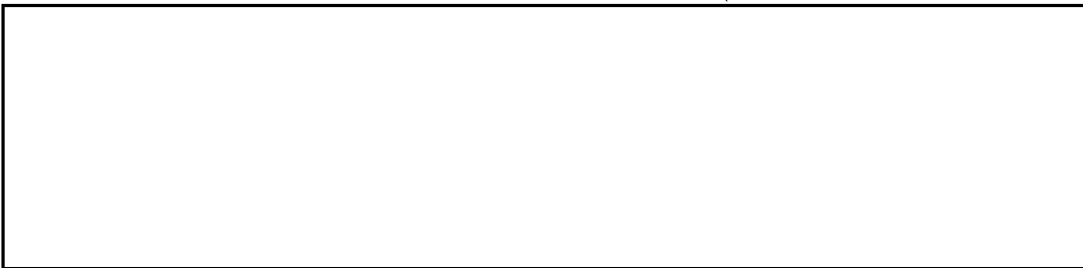
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4. Possible Communist action in Burma:

(a) Several recent reports point up the probability of increased Chinese Communist support to Communists in Burma. An aid agreement between Peiping and the Burmese Communist Party has reportedly been signed, and Chinese Communist military and political training for Burmese Communists has been reported as scheduled or already under way. An indication of increased aid from China to insurgent groups in Burma (or of direct military action against Burma) is the reported Chinese construction activity on the Burma Road. In addition, both Peiping and Moscow have been intensifying their propaganda attacks on the Government of Burma.



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(c) Despite the difficulties of mountainous and densely forested terrain, the Chinese Communists, who have an estimated 185,000 troops within 100 miles of the Indochina and Burma borders and approximately 5,000 troops at the Burma frontier, are probably capable, in the absence of foreign intervention, of reaching the Rangoon area within eight weeks after crossing the Burmese border.

(d) Because the rainy season (from May until October) in Burma seriously limits cross-country movement, the Chinese Communists will, if they intend to invade Burma during 1951, probably do so within the next few months or postpone such an operation until the end of the year.

(e) The Government of Burma has been threatened by various political and racial insurgent groups (including two Communist factions) for the past several years. During 1950 the Government has improved its position, however, and, unless these groups receive substantial outside support, the Government can probably eliminate the insurgents as a significant threat by the end of 1951. Recent reports, however, indicate a program of intensified Communist subversion which will materially increase the Government's difficulties in maintaining internal stability. Barring the outbreak of global hostilities, we estimate that the Chinese Communists will pursue a program of subversion and infiltration in Burma, at least during the next several months, rather than launch an invasion of that country.

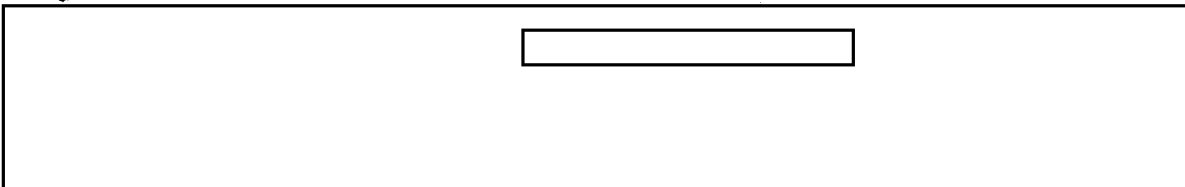
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5. Possible Communist action in Thailand:

(a) The principal Communist threat to Thailand at present is that of subversion and intimidation. The local Chinese Communist Party, though small, exercises considerable influence over the economically powerful Chinese community (numbering over 3,000,000). In addition, there are 60,000 Vietnamese in Thailand located largely near the Indochina border who are influenced and to some extent controlled by the Communist Viet Minh.



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(c) Thailand does not have a common border with China. To enter Thailand, Chinese troops would have to move through the rugged terrain of north Burma or northern Indochina. The Thais do not have the military capability to resist invasion and, until the armed forces have been greatly expanded, probably would seek a political accommodation in the face of strong Communist pressure on its borders. We believe that the Chinese will not undertake direct military action in Thailand in the immediate future, but will intensify their subversive activities and build up the strength of indigent Communists.

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