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April 1966

GR 66-1 Assessment of 1965 Dissidence
Levels in Five Provinces of
Southern China



ASSESSMENT OF 1965 DISSIDENCE LEVELS IN FIVE PROVINCES OF SOUTHERN CHINA

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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This report, produced by the Office of Basic Intelligence, is designed to provide evaluated information pertinent to the assessment of local dissidence in Communist China. Comments should be directed to the Geography Division, Office of Basic Intelligence.

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ASSESSMENT OF 1965 DISSIDENCE LEVELS
IN FIVE PROVINCES OF SOUTHERN CHINA

Summary

Though dissidence in southern China -- Szechwan, Kweichow, Yunnan, Kwangsi, and Kwangtung -- is not declining, it is increasingly translated into apathy and resignation. No significant indigenous resistance is known to exist.

An examination of selected examples of dissident activity in 1965, ranging from overt acts of an operational nature to simple evasion of militia responsibilities, shows that the regime is everywhere in full control of the country. The disproportionate amount of resources being poured into the control effort through consecutive campaigns of the interminable Socialist Education Movement, however, may be an unfavorable augury for the regime.

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Popular dissidence has less chance of significant flowering than has intraparty dissidence, which can feed on provocative contradictions [redacted] The logic of the situation points to eventual loosening of the tight control system, as intraparty dissidence increases, until some kind of semiovert political action becomes possible [redacted]

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I. The Situation in Southern China

This study assesses present dissidence levels in five southern provinces of Communist China and attempts to identify manifestations of internal political weakness. The five provinces under examination -- Szechwan, Kweichow, Yunnan, Kwangsi, and Kwangtung -- are not an established regional grouping, and for this reason, the indefinite appellation "southern China" is used. All five provinces, however, have large non-Mandarin-speaking or non-Chinese minority population groups and, except for Kweichow, are contiguous to areas that were either dissident in the recent past (Tibet) or are under foreign control (Burma, Laos, and North Vietnam). The most conspicuous geographical features they share are (a) remoteness from seats of central control; (b) poor overland communications with the rest of China and with each other; and (c) provincial economies which could sustain themselves in absence of assistance from the rest of China or from the outside.

During 1965 southern China continued to labor under longstanding problems of economic weakness and popular weariness. Both problems were rendered more burdensome by the regime's dogged determination to achieve at almost any cost the reconditioning of the people and of the cadres to draw them away from individualistic economic and political incentives. This reconditioning effort had originated in the decisions of the 10th Plenum of the Eighth Central Committee in September 1962. It took form in the Socialist Education Movement (SEM) which began to unfold in 1963. Since then, no area of southern China has entirely escaped a seemingly interminable series of SEM campaigns to screen both leadership and populace through rectification of abuses and errors and cleansing of motives and records. (Some reports forecast a duration of 7 years for these plagues.) Large task forces of students and cadres have descended on communes and other production units to carry out the necessary exhaustive checks.

During 1965 the SEM thrust remained directed toward revitalization of the ongoing "class struggle," which is still the most important ideological objective. This was to be accomplished by organization of Poor and Lower Middle Peasant Associations (PLMPA); by investigative and punitive pressure on hidebound, weakly motivated, or corrupt cadres through the Four Clearances campaign (concentrating on the past performances of people whose backgrounds had survived earlier scrutiny); and by a new Three-Anti campaign in the eastern cities to strengthen internal security and job performance.

These campaigns were supported by a variety of economic and social measures, some apparently experimental, which were designed to improve management practices. Commune accounting practices, agricultural credit facilities, and arrangements for marketing consumer goods received much attention. There were also efforts to begin to improve the morale of

urban workers assigned to the countryside through a new system of rotational work assignments to rural villages, a system that offered a chance of ultimate return to the city. A vast new program to improve rural literacy and education through new part-time schools was carried forward. Meanwhile, resettlement policies were kept in motion to distribute unneeded city dwellers, including unemployed youth, to state farms and to home-village communes. The prevailing response was sluggish and perfunctory. Though the SEM cut deeply, the people of China have tolerated it so far because they are habituated to such procedures and also because daily necessities were distributed with reasonable fairness and in greater quantity than in other years of greater distress.

As before, militia and People's Liberation Army (PLA) recruitment was carried out late in the year but against a backdrop of war drums. In 1965 there was a much heavier emphasis on militia recruitment and on improvement of militia training and military effectiveness. However attractive the conditions of military service were for the majority of peasant young folk in many areas, enlistment in 1965 was unattractive to city young folk, especially to those of "questionable" family backgrounds who would encounter discrimination in the service.

Adequate information on movements of people as labor levies is lacking, but this only means that they went unreported. There was probably new and unsettling urgency in the mobilization of labor for distant construction projects, because strategic needs of overriding importance moved to the fore. In transportation, at long last and more in embarrassment than in triumph because of the years of previous delay, the Kweichow - Szechwan railroad was finished and work continued on the still unfinished Kweichow - Yunnan link, a route requiring much tunneling.

Economic stringency continued unabated in 1965, and support for North Vietnam may have become more of an economic depressant than a stimulant. Industrial managers carried on from minor crisis to minor crisis, and their working forces were subject to transfer and dismissal despite spot shortages of labor. The telltale national propaganda emphasis on economy at all cost continued, implying that costly diseconomies in the industries concerned still continued.

In sum, except for more use of frightening war talk by the authorities to prod the people, 1965 in southern China was not unlike the two preceding years. The economic upturn continued, but the rate of recovery remained slow. The people were dispirited, and factory dismissals and dispersion of the population to the countryside were a continuing threat to worker morale. There were not even enough jobs for the graduates of colleges and middle schools, let alone jobs for the more poorly trained academic weedouts. Political campaigns followed one another in steady sequence, sifting local leadership down to an awesome depth without introducing any new interest through fresh and vivid symbols. Incessant propaganda for

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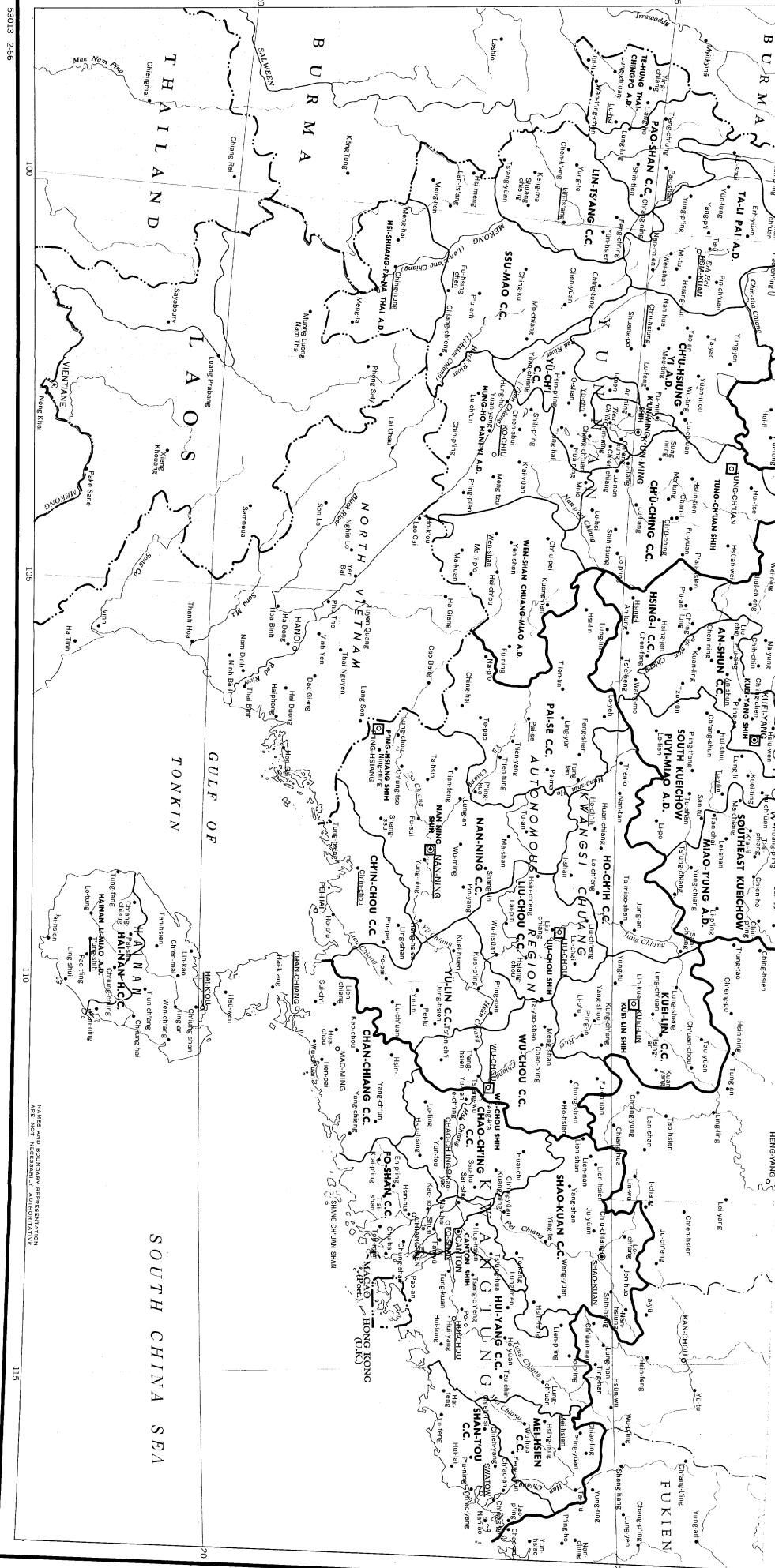
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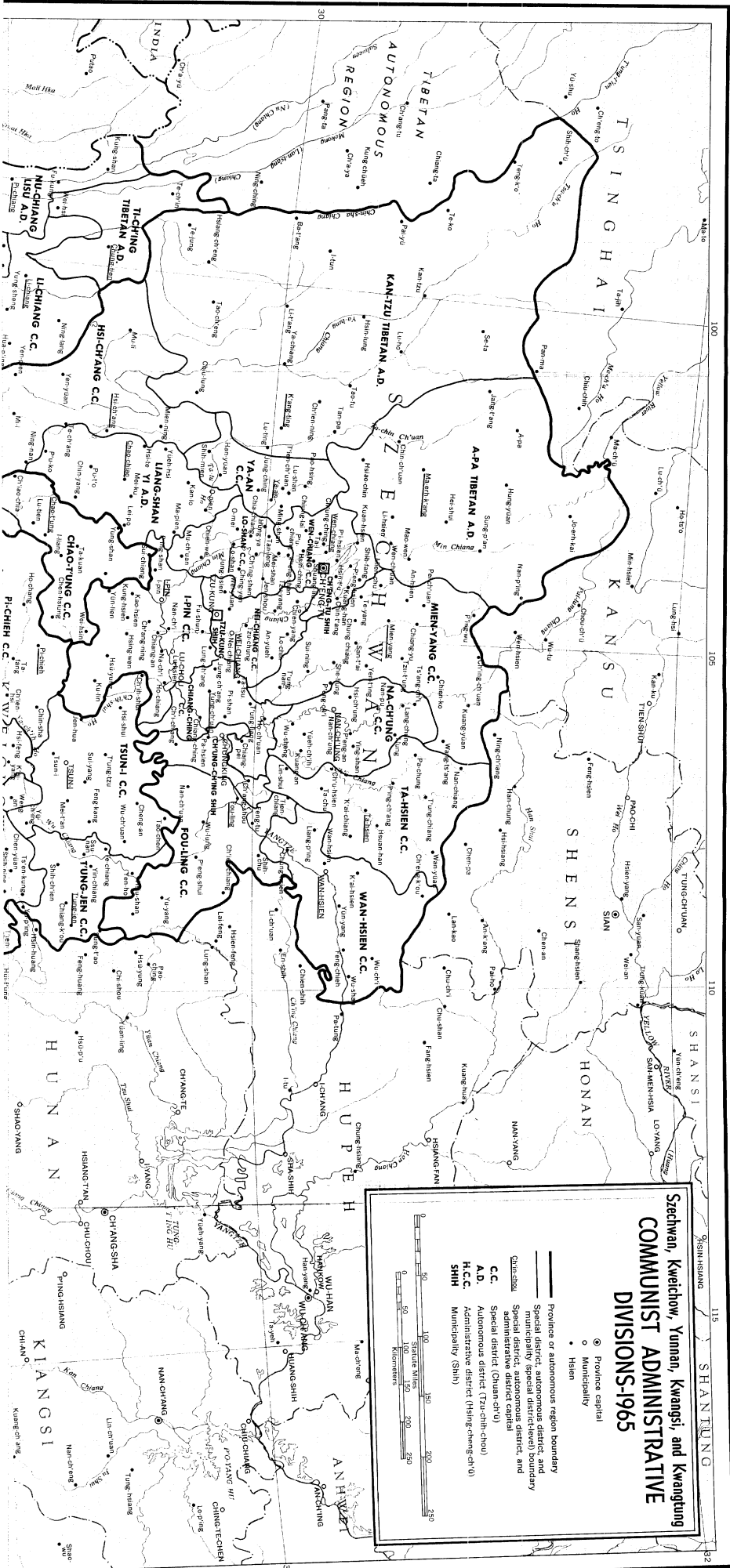
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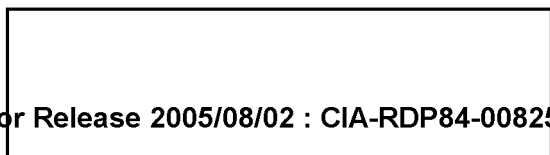
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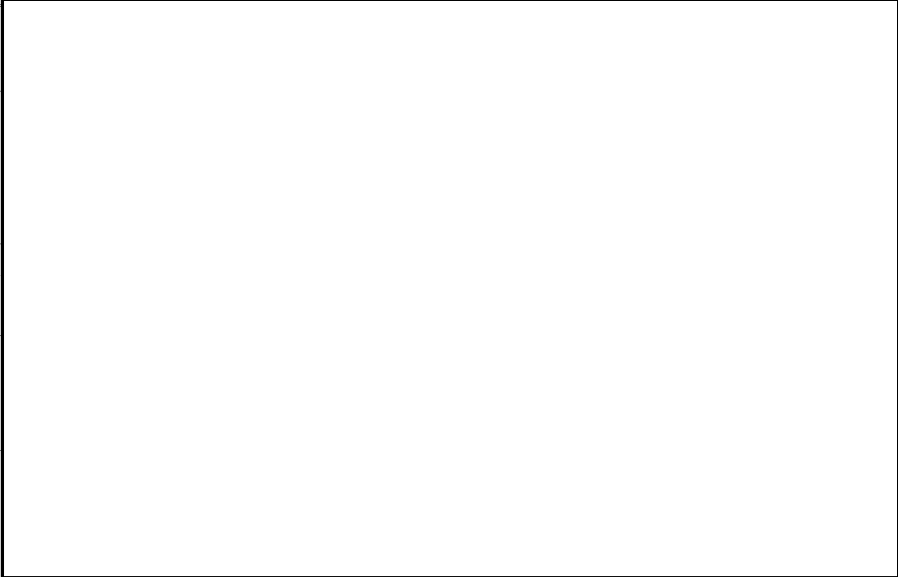
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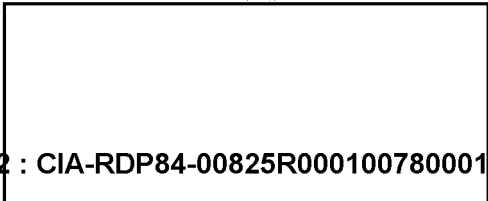
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About 30 million young people, men and women in the 15-24 age range, live in the five provinces. Mao Tse-tung's blanket indictment of youth as a problem group "with strong revisionist tendencies" suggests that some particular subgroups in southern China should be examined briefly.

a. Students and Ex-Students

Students in midcourse have in recent years experienced much interruption of studies by labor assignments or by grueling field assignments as Four Clearances task forces. Even after graduation, many have found that they could not be used in their fields of specialization, and they have been sent down to the countryside to work at inferior occupations. The 7,000 college graduates in Kwangtung in 1965 were all sent to the countryside to work. In recent years, concurrently with steady elimination of unneeded city jobs, efforts have been made to weed out in advance more of those for whom there will be no job after graduation. This, however, does not remove the shock of elimination. The weedouts, called "social and intellectual" youth, are those who have failed to pass examinations, matriculate for higher schools, or find employment and have fast become a growing fringe group of alienated youth in the cities where they live or to which they have drifted.

The process of removal of student weedouts from the cities is necessarily slow. To move them out permanently the regime has to ship them far away. Before it can do this the authorities must bring them as individuals to the point of readiness to enlist for labor and then screen them for reliability. Otherwise, many find a way to return from ordinary conscript labor assignments close at hand.

On the state farms they have little to anticipate except endless menial work.

In practice, these youth who do not graduate and who therefore fail to qualify to receive the select professional assignments will in the future become part of a subintelligentsia that the regime now flatters in its propaganda but actually views only as the means for proletarianizing the

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countryside. This group has provided the youthful defectors who have reached the Free World. Their potential for protest in the cities is not great, but in the state-farm network it is conceivable that they might have a potential for organization.

b. Youth of Poor Class Backgrounds

The most unfortunate of China's unemployed and unusable youth are those whose "class background" condemns them permanently to inferior status. Even those who willingly turn on their own families may find that this unnatural deed does not gain them full Party acceptance. A relatively large proportion of such youth live in the coastal areas of southern China, where past KMT affiliations of family members -- as well as suspect connections with Overseas Chinese -- tend to frustrate their careers. Theirs is a formidable plight, and this group has readymade objectives to justify possible future dissidence.

c. Overseas Youth

The regime has had only qualified success with Overseas Chinese youth who have returned to China for education and careers. They are often highly disappointed in what they encounter, frequently resist work or study assignments, claim special privileges and rights, and seek the main chance -- even to the point of escape. Southern China has received its share of these youth; some have families there. Wherever they go they are a leavening element. As a highly mobile group destined to be mostly rootless, they merit close watching.

d. Peasant Youth

The origins of country youth who seek industrial employment have never been studied. Some rural communities probably send few youth to the cities, but other villages have for generations seen their youth go to the cities. With this avenue now closing to them, rural youth have fewer opportunities, despite their having the same aspirations as city youth. The lackluster China Youth League (CYL), now refurbished under strong regime pressure, provides the means for youth work, cadre training, and selection of Party membership candidates; but the CYL recruitment task is an uphill one because of the joylessness of its Party mission. For such youth, if they avoid military service, militia service has some attractive privileges. The long-term prospect for peasant youth is one of increasing exposure to the same influences and pressures that motivate city youth, with the likelihood that their sophistication will increase to the point that political dissidence may finally become possible for them.

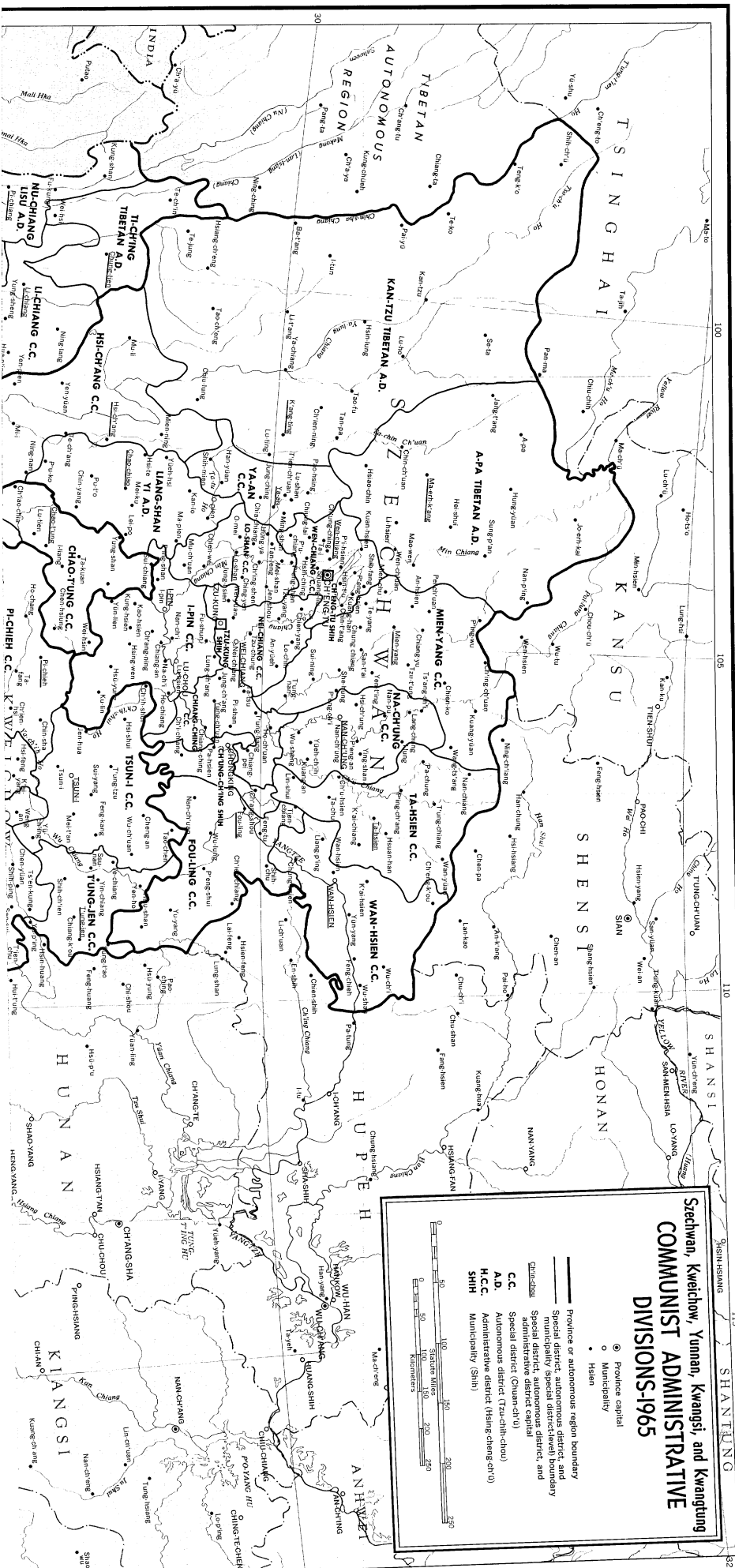
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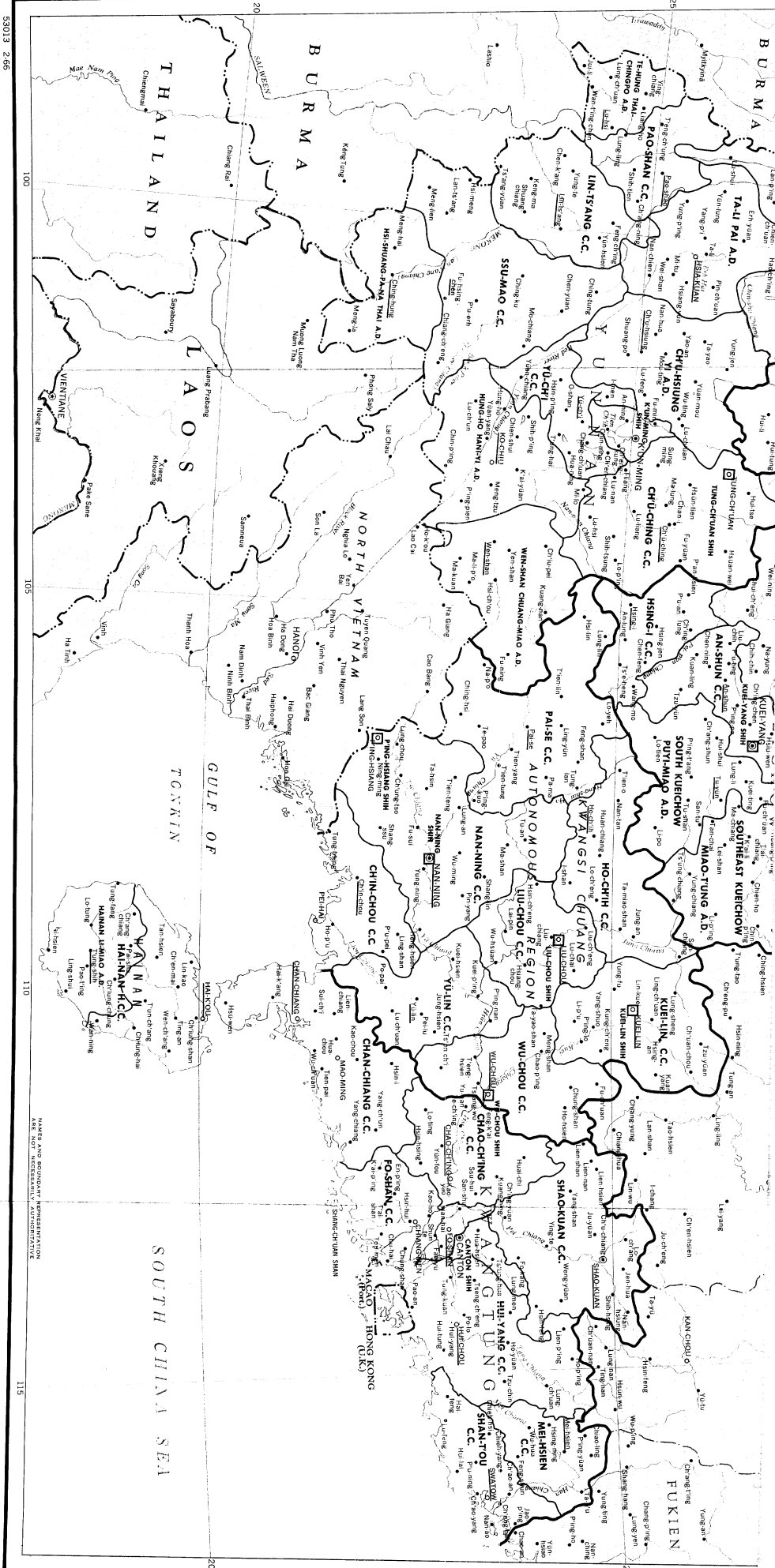


**Szechwan, Kweichow, Yunnan, Kwangsi, and Kwangtung
COMMUNIST ADMINISTRATIVE
DIVISIONS-1965**

● Province capital
 ○ Municipality
 ● Hsien

— Province or autonomous region boundary
 — Special district, autonomous district boundary
 — Municipality, special municipality boundary
 — Special district, special municipality boundary
 — Special district, autonomous district, and administrative district capital
 — Autonomous district (Chuan-ch'ü)
 — Administrative district (tsing-cheng-ch'ü)
 — Municipality (Shih)

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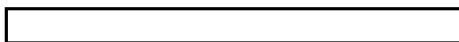
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