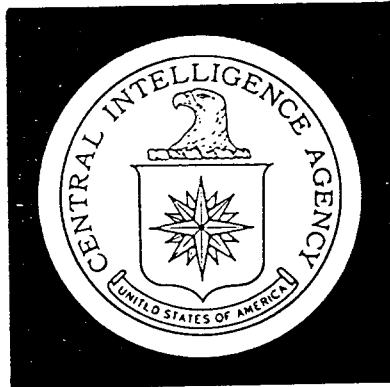


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# Intelligence Report

*Highland Peoples of Southeast Asia's Borderlands With China:  
Their Potential for Subversive Insurgency*

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CIA/BGI GR 70-5  
April 1970

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Directorate of Intelligence  
April 1970

INTELLIGENCE REPORT

HIGHLAND PEOPLES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA'S BORDERLANDS  
WITH CHINA: THEIR POTENTIAL FOR  
SUBVERSIVE INSURGENCY

INTRODUCTION

This report discusses the highland peoples of northern Southeast Asia and assesses their potential in expanding or countering Communist-sponsored, subversive insurgency against the free governments of the region. Main attention is given to the highland peoples in Thailand and Burma; the treatment of their counterparts in Laos consists primarily of some observations concerning the experience gained there by Meo tribesmen, who have been involved since 1961 in guerrilla activities against the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese. The report does not include a discussion of the highland peoples of North Vietnam, which is already a Communist state. A companion report, GR 70-6, deals with highland peoples in South Asia.

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## THE SETTING

1. A disarray of densely forested, north-south-trending mountains, with intervening valleys, often gorges carved by great rivers, separates the cultural realm of the Chinese from those found on the lowlands of Southeast Asia. Extending from the eastern Tibetan highlands, these mountains comprise the northern regions of the Southeast Asian countries from Burma on the west to North Vietnam on the east. Rugged and high—with elevations of 19,000 feet above sea level in northern Burma—they have historically been a deterrent to the southward extension of Chinese influence. Nevertheless, the Chinese at one time subdued the Tonkin Delta area and some of the coastal lowland of present-day North Vietnam, a territory that they subsequently occupied for a thousand years.

2. This highland frontier zone has long been a refuge for minority peoples seeking to escape the pressures exerted by the Chinese in their historic southward expansion from the lowlands adjacent to the Yangtze River. Many of these minority peoples retreated from China in a more or less continuous drift down the valleys of the great south-flowing rivers. Other migrations were more precipitant; such, for example, was the sudden exodus of the Shan in 1254, following the destruction of their capital, Tali, by the Mongol armies of Kublai Khan. The migrations have continued into modern times—thousands of Meos began entering Southeast Asia in the 1800's—and in recent years there has been a continuing trickle of migrants into northern Southeast Asia because of Chinese oppression.

3. As a consequence of these centuries-long migrations, diverse minorities, numbering in the millions, are now scattered throughout the highlands of southern China and northern Southeast Asia, generally with little regard for international boundaries. Members of the same tribal groups are commonly found in both China and Southeast Asia. For example, there are thousands of Meo in North Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, and more than 2½ million Meo in China. Anthropologists have classified these minorities in broad ethnolinguistic groupings which in turn are fragmented into a complex of secondary classifications (see Map 77468).

4. Southeast Asian governments, whose leaders generally come from lowland areas and reflect the views of lowland people, have traditionally neglected these highland tribal groups. Instead, they have focused their attention and efforts on their people in the great coastal deltas, the "rice bowls" of Asia, where the politicoeconomic centers and the capital cities are located. In consequence of these short-sighted policies, little effort was made, prior to the last decade, to improve living conditions of the hill tribes or to integrate tribesmen into the political-economic fabric of the various Southeast Asian nations. On the contrary, the actions of minor officials, who commonly resented being sent to the hinterlands, the attempts of the Government to collect taxes and preserve forests, as well as the depreciating attitudes displayed by most lowlanders, often tended

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to alienate the tribesmen. Thus, in effect, official governmental policies in Southeast Asia have created a fertile field for Communist subversive propagandists.

5. In contrast, during the 1950's the Chinese Communists took an active interest in the minorities of their country, where nationalistic aspirations were contained by the creation of "autonomous" administrative units. Four such regions were created by 1958, and although this administrative concept actually involved self-administration rather than self-determination, it afforded at least symbolic indulgence of minority cultures and was far more effective than the negative or nonexistent minority policies typical of the Southeast Asian countries.

6. The late French author, Bernard Fall, once observed that "revolutionary warfare cannot be left to happy improvisation anymore than nuclear warfare." With apparent recognition of this truth, the Chinese Communists began to prepare for the present insurgencies in Thailand and Burma. According to reliable sources, their propaganda and indoctrination programs among the hill tribes were begun in the 1950's. Potential insurgent leaders were sent to China for training at that time, and as a consequence the Chinese now have significant personnel assets in Thailand.

7. During the 1950's the Chinese also began a number of road construction projects near the borders of their southwestern frontier provinces. Several new roads in Kwangsi and Yunnan provinces were extended to the Indochina border at that time, thus facilitating the logistical support of the Viet Minh in their fight against the French. Significantly, in 1968 the Chinese extended the K'un-ming—Meng-la road to Muong Sai, Laos, and they are now lengthening it to Muong Houn, from which it may eventually reach Pak Beng, a settlement on the Mekong River close to the area of insurgency in Thailand.

8. In the section of this report dealing with Thailand, major emphasis is placed on the Meo, who are currently engaged in Communist-supported insurgency against the Central Government. The Lahu and the Karen, who also occupy upland tracts in the north and west, have been the targets of Communist propaganda for the past decade or so. Even though neither is currently participating in active insurgency against the Government, both appear to have a definite potential to do so. In the discussion of insurgency in Burma, the report focuses on the Kachin and Shan—major ethnic groups in the north and northeast frontierlands. Chinese Communist-supported Kachin and Shan insurgents have engaged the Burmese Army in a number of bloody battles in recent years. The Wa and the Lahu, who occupy the rugged uplands of northeastern Burma, have also been the targets of Chinese Communist propaganda and aid, and they have provided men for some Shan-led insurgent forces.

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## LAOS

9. The conventional troops of the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese are mainly responsible for Communist military action in Laos. Hill tribal peoples have been little used as guerrillas by the Communists. Furthermore, there is no recent information on the Meo Resistance League, formed by the Communist Meo leader, Phay Dang, in 1946. Tribesmen within Communist-controlled areas in Laos, including those in the two Meo battalions that existed in the early 1960's, apparently have been integrated into the regular Communist forces.

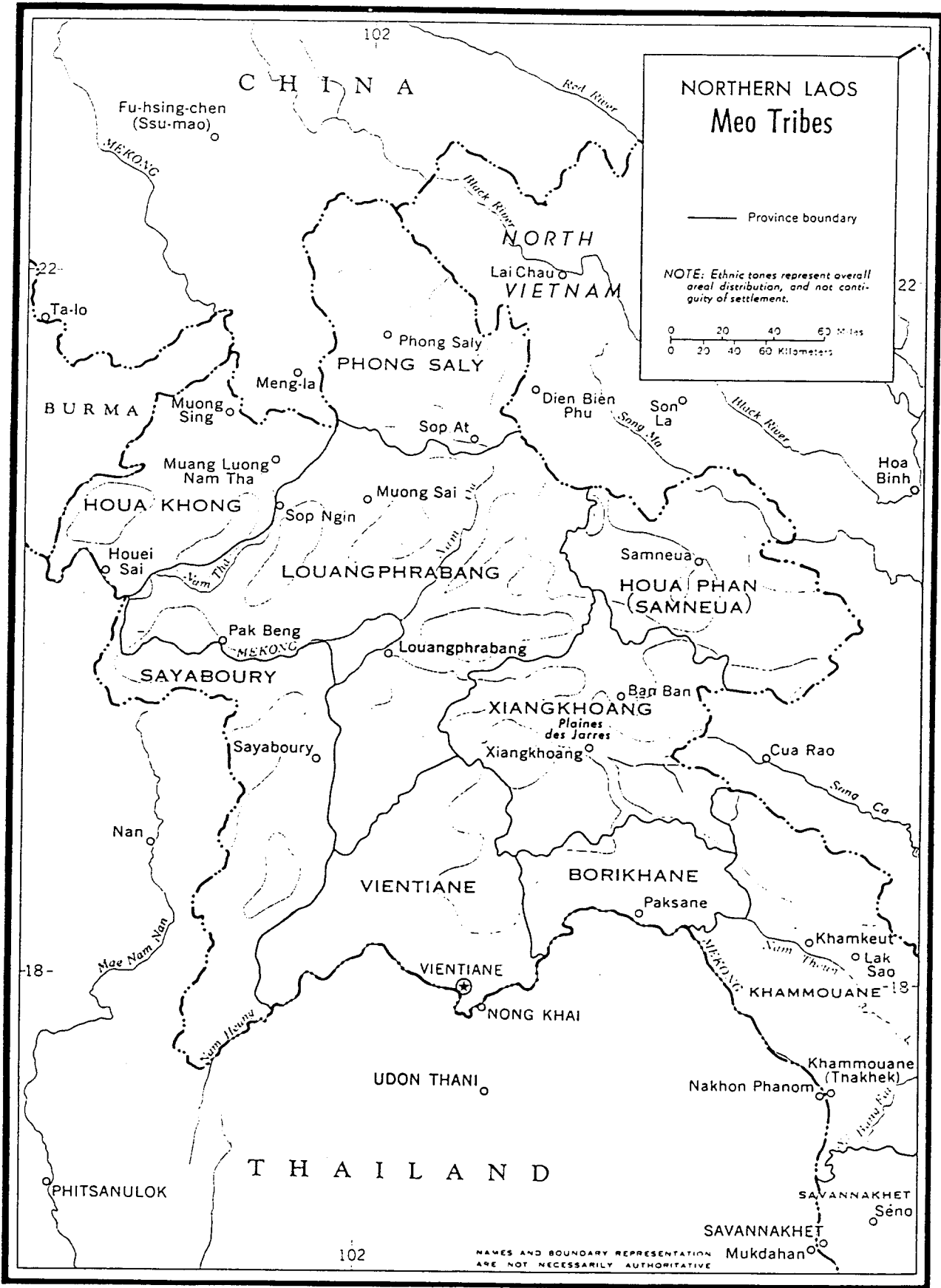
10. Various tribes, however, have been used by the Laotian Government in the guerrilla program initiated in 1960 and expanded when Communist military actions threatened Laos in 1961. The Meo have been principally involved in this effort (see Map 77573 for their location in Laos), but other tribes, particularly the Yao, also have been armed and encouraged to resist Communist encroachments.

11. The Meo in Laos are citizens according to the Laotian constitution. Nevertheless the Laotian Government, like the others of Southeast Asia, has generally neglected them. The Meo, therefore, have had little reason to involve themselves in a war for "national cause." Their loyalty is to family and village, not to a distant and ostensibly disinterested Central Government in Vientiane. Government-supplied arms, when accepted by the average Meo, are taken for one fundamental reason—to protect his home and family from Communist attack.

12. In contrast to the negligence of the Royal Lao Government, the Communist Pathet Lao consciously incorporates minority interests into their laws, and they have continued to emphasize appeals to tribal groups. As one of his first acts as president of North Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh created the Thai-Meo Autonomous Zone for the tribes in that country; this zone had a common boundary with some of the highland provinces of Laos where the Meo live, and the appeal of "autonomy" was not lost on the Meo of Laos.

13. All highland tribes in Southeast Asia, including the Meo, have a considerable degree of mobility, a reflection, in part, of dependence on a slash-and-burn type of agriculture. When there is no more suitable forested land in a given locality that can be cut and burned in preparation for planting crops, the tribe must move to a new location. In addition, they travel extensively in their hunting and trading activities. In Laos, however, because of the armed conflict, normal mobility has been limited in consequence of the desire of the Meo to be near home. It has been only when his family has been relocated to a secure area that he has been willing to volunteer for service in aggressive combat forces such as the Special Guerrilla Units (SGU's).

14. The Laotian Government was fortunate in having an outstanding tribal leader, Vang Pao, around whom the tribes could rally. His authority was deliberately enhanced by an official policy, wherein he alone furnished the Meo



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arms and supplies at critical times in the armed conflict. It was because of General Vang Pao's charisma, along with the controlled flow of American supplies, that many Meo tribesmen were converted into a guerrilla force.

15. One of Vang Pao's principal tasks was the development of a spirit of interdependence and cooperation among the Meo. The Meo village, usually a settlement of perhaps 100 people, typically is located on a high mountain ridge line, and it is generally separated from other villages by precipitous valleys and steep-sloped mountains. In the past the Meo have not been unduly concerned with events outside their immediate village. For example, even when Communist forces attacked Meo settlements in other areas, including some that were not too distant, other Meo generally have stood idly by because they were not themselves immediately threatened. While Vang Pao has been successful in creating a cohesive, efficient Meo fighting force, probably even he could never expect the Meo to follow him blindly.

16. The use of terror by Communists against tribal settlements often has caused villagers to decide to join the pro-Laotian Meo forces. Pro-Government sentiment has been promoted also by the unfulfilled promises of the Communists and by the attempts in Communist-controlled areas to regiment tribesmen who are prone to individualism. In effect, the actions of the Communists have often served to induce the Meo to join the forces of the Laotian Government.

17. Air support—logistical and tactical—has been a key element in the development of the Meo guerrilla program. Using light planes (including helicopters) and such cargo craft as the C-46 and the C-123, the Government is able to react quickly and support the Meo despite very difficult terrain. Light planes, often STOLS (short take-off and landing craft), and helicopters permit Meo leaders and support officers to frequently travel to and between mountainous redoubts. Almost daily these planes deliver medical supplies and other high priority items. Cargo aircraft are used chiefly to drop supplies into designated zones.

18. Aerial supply is expensive, and it can be dangerous, particularly during periods of heavy monsoonal weather. In areas of difficult terrain, however, or when the intervening territory between support bases and outposts make the risks of interdiction unacceptable, aerial supply is of vital importance. In such circumstances it has been critical to the survival of Vang Pao's guerrilla forces.

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## THAILAND

19. The hill tribes of Thailand, numbering about 300,000 in an estimated total population of 35,800,000, are distributed chiefly in the mountains of the north, in the western mountains that form the border with Burma, and in the mountainous spur that extends southward through the triprovince area of Loei, Phitsanulok and Phetchabun (see Map 77572). As in other Southeast Asian countries, these tribes are diverse and do not represent a unified force.

20. Some tribes in northern Thailand are currently involved in active, organized insurgency. The Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) furnishes this insurgency with much of its leadership, which is derived mainly from the lowland Thai and the Sino-Thai. There is little doubt, however, that Communist China shapes the ideological and strategic views of the insurgents, that it trains senior leaders, and that it provides the movement with limited material assistance. North Vietnam is involved principally in the training of middle- and lower-level cadre.

21. The principal tribe involved in the insurgency at present is the Meo. Also participating, but to a lesser degree, are the Yao, Tin (Htin), and Khmu (Khamu). Should the Communists wish to extend the area of insurgency, they might also attempt to subvert the Lahu and Karen, both of whom appear to have paramilitary potential. Subversion of the Lahu would permit the extension of Communist influence westward. Subversion of the Karen, if successful, would give the Communists control of most of the Thai-Burma border area, and put them in a position flanking the Thai lowland all the way from its northern limits to an area south of Bangkok.

22. Until 1955 the Central Government paid little attention to the tribal peoples. Contacts with them were rare because of the remoteness of their mountainous settlements and because local authorities assigned almost exclusive priority to the administration of the more populous lowlands. With the initiation of the Border Patrol Police (BPP) program in 1955, however, the Government deliberately involved itself in tribal affairs. The BPP were instructed to provide "control and public safety in the remote hills and frontier regions," and as part of their work, they carried on a civic action program that included the building of schools and the distribution of medical and agricultural equipment.

23. Government-tribal relations became strained, however, following the official ban on the production of opium in 1958. In an attempt to improve relations, the Government in 1959 established "settlement areas" (Nikhoms), which later became training centers where tribesmen learned new agricultural techniques; most of these centers are no longer functioning. More recently, as a result of a 1961-62 socio-economic survey, a Tribal Research Center was established at Chiang Mai by the Hill Tribes Welfare Division of the Public Welfare Department. This center serves as a permanent advisory institution to the Government.

24. Confronted with active tribal insurgency beginning in 1967, the Government developed a multi-faceted program to contain it. In this program, it sought



to better its presence among the tribes by improving tribal living conditions and by providing them security. Friendly tribal peoples were moved from areas of insurgency into refugee camps in the provinces of Chiang Mai, Nan, Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, and Tak, where approximately 11,000 tribesmen, mostly Meo and Yao, are presently located. The program, however, has been handicapped by its belated inception, by the ineffectiveness of official personnel in remote areas, and by the increasing Communist control of the hill tribe population.

### The Meo

25. The Meo of Thailand have their origins in southern China, where an estimated 2,500,000 Meo still reside. Early in the 19th century they began a large-scale migration into Southeast Asia. Presently they number about 54,000 in Thailand, about 20 percent of the total hill tribe population (there are an estimated 175,000 Meo in Laos and about 120,000 in North Vietnam).

26. The Meo of northern Thailand are located in 11 general areas (see Map 77572), some of which are ideally situated for continued insurgency. In several cases, significant concentrations of Meo are located within 25 miles of changwat (province) capitals; Chiang Rai is an example. One Meo concentration in Thailand is within 25 miles of Pak Beng, Laos, possibly the Mekong River terminus of the road the Chinese Communists are extending down the Nam Beng Valley.

27. Areas of active insurgency in which the Meos are involved are: (1) Nan and Chiang Rai provinces in the extreme north; (2) the triprovince area—the junction of Loei, Phitsanulok, and Phetchabun provinces; and (3) Tak Province on Thailand's western border. In these areas there are an estimated 1,300 to 1,600 insurgents, not all of whom are Meo.

28. The paramilitary capability of the pro-Communist Meo has been revealed in action against Thai Government forces. They have successfully harassed Government patrols and Government positions, ambushed Government vehicles, repelled attacking Government forces, damaged supporting Government aircraft, and interrupted construction of an important road in Tak Province. By these tactics, as well as by the judicious application of terror, they have been able to gain control of large areas along the Lao border in Nan and Chiang Rai provinces.

29. The Meo have always traveled extensively throughout northern Thailand. They may make hunting or trading trips of several days duration, and it is not uncommon for them to visit lowland towns to trade. Additionally, their slash-and-burn-type agriculture, as well as their preoccupation with opium cultivation, necessitates rather frequent moves.

30. Meo insurgents travel long distances in order to train. Many have crossed the Mekong River to centers operated by the North Vietnamese in Communist-controlled areas of Laos and, reportedly, some have also gone to China. Because of this mobility the Meo have been very effective in guerrilla-type actions against Government forces, and the pattern and timing of some of their

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engagements suggest that small bands—10 men or less—have the capability to harass several different Government positions in the course of a single day.

31. The contiguity of northern Thailand to Laos and the relative proximity of Communist China and North Vietnam facilitate the support of the insurgency. The operational headquarters of the insurgents is Laotian-based, being situated in an area near the Lao-Thai border, and training camps are also situated in that country, some distance to the northwest. Furthermore, Communist-controlled parts of Sayaboury Province, in Laos, immediately adjacent to the Thailand border, provide a sanctuary from which the insurgents may receive logistical support. The border area, comprised of densely forested and ruggedly mountainous terrain, provides excellent concealment for clandestine crossings.

32. Since the 1950's, top lowland Thai and Sino-Thai insurgent leaders, usually CPT members, have been trained in China, and starting in the 1960's, intermediate and rank-and-file members have received political-military schooling in North Vietnam or in the Pathet Lao areas of Laos. Tribesmen are provided ideological training at sites in Laos, where Chinese Communist materials are employed.

33. Peking's assistance appears to include the provision of ideological and strategic advice, contributions to the Thai propaganda effort, and some material support, including small amounts of ammunition and weapons. The existing track and trail system seems to be more than sufficient for the logistic support of the insurgents. Understandably, therefore, the Thai Government is deeply concerned about the implications of the road the Communist Chinese are building southwestward from Muong Sai.

34. Insurgent strategy apparently is to gain control of the highland tribes first, and then to extend this control to the lowland Thai. For the time being—and particularly until they have secured a base area in the Nan-Chiang Rai area—most of the targets of the insurgents will probably be in the highlands or in the nearby lowlands. They will continue to harass Government posts and patrols, to interdict roads in or near the highlands, and use propaganda and, where necessary, coercion and terror, to gain control over reluctant villages.

35. The terrain of northern Thailand favors the extension of insurgency into the lowlands, where population centers, located in intermontane basins and gently rolling valleys, are largely isolated from each other by densely forested, steep-sloped mountains. If the insurgents were to eventually gain control of the main routes in northern Thailand, these centers could be even more effectively isolated from each other than they now are.

36. An attitude of indifference, and even hostility, has always existed between the highland tribes and the lowland Thai people. This attitude has been aggravated in recent years; the Meo feel that their traditional means of livelihood is threatened by the Government's present policies of forbidding opium growing and forbidding the clearing of forested areas for new crop fields. Opium has long been the cash crop of the Meo and some other highland tribes. The traditional slash-and-burn agriculture of the highland tribes commonly requires an annual clearing and burning of a new plot of forested land. The lowland Thai rice farmers,

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on the other hand, claim that the loss of forestland has lowered the water table, which may decrease their rice harvest.

37. The Meo also resent specific acts of injustice that they have suffered at the hands of Thai officials over the years. They claim, and with some reason, that Thai police sometimes arrest tribal people for little or no cause. Furthermore, the Government's initial repressive reaction to insurgent activity in the north—which resulted in "overkill" airstrikes against Meo villages and the forced relocation of 6,000 tribal refugees to unprepared camp sites where food, water, and medical facilities were inadequate—embittered the tribes and handed the insurgents an excellent propaganda issue. The relocation of tribal people is now principally at their own volition, a new policy that is due, in part, to the high maintenance costs of the camps. Hence, the Government now encourages tribal people to stay in their own villages rather than to flee when Communist insurgents are in the area.

38. The Meo, like other hill tribes in Thailand, have not been absorbed into the "national fabric" of the country, and are not even citizens. Consequently, they have little, if any, allegiance to the Thai Government, reserving their loyalty for family and village. Furthermore, unlike Laos, there is no well-known tribal leader in Thailand to unite and persuade them that it might be in their interest to fight for rather than against the Government.

39. Communist success in subverting the Meo is essentially a result of the long, though quiet, exploitation of anti-Government tribal grievances. When this is not sufficient, terror tactics are used against those who have been nonreceptive. Communist propaganda generally centers on the "oppressiveness" of Thai authorities. Unpopular policies, such as those that prohibit the cultivation and sale of opium or "inflict" Government taxes, are exploited, while at the same time insurgents offer a "bright tomorrow." Tribesmen are promised that they will be able to grow and sell opium, that taxes will not be necessary, and that they will not have to work so hard in the future. The theme of unity among non-Thai ethnic groups frequently recurs, and insurgent propagandists make every attempt to identify themselves and the insurgency with tribal aspirations.

40. Threats, implicit and explicit, are invariably used by insurgents during their meetings with tribesmen. At these meetings they boast of their strength and underline the inevitability of insurgent victory. One villager, for example, reports that he was told that "big forces" would reinforce the insurgents and enable them to take over Nan Province, and that the Communist-built road from China toward Pak Beng, Laos, would be used eventually for the transport of supplies destined for the insurgents.

#### The Lahu

(See also discussion of the Lahu of Burma, paragraphs 103-109 of this report.)

41. The Lahu in Thailand number about 15,000. Having immigrated from Burma and Laos during the last 60 years, most of them are scattered across the extreme northern part of the country. Some, however, are located west and north-



west of the town of Tak (see Map 77572). Lahu villages are usually located in remote mountainous areas, occupying sites that are over 3,000 feet in elevation. Typically, villages are established on flat ridge tops just below the summits of high ranges.

42. Although they are not known to have ever engaged in guerrilla warfare in Thailand, historically the Lahu have had such experience elsewhere. They clashed many times with the Chinese in Yunnan during the latter half of the 19th century, and in Burma, they fought as guerrillas against the Japanese during World War II. In the early 1960's reports told of entire Lahu villages being moved from Thailand to Burma, where the Thai Lahu were recruited by the Burmese Government to fight the dissident Shan. Thus the guerrilla potential of the Lahu is impressive. With leadership and training, they could probably be developed into a formidable paramilitary force.

43. The Lahu have been characterized as the most agile mountain climbers and the greatest hunters of all the tribesmen in Southeast Asia. In recognition of their hunting ability the Thai call them "Mussuh," a Shan word meaning "hunter." The following translation of a Lahu tribal chant indicates the importance they attach to their hunting/fighting pursuits:

"So seek you always the high ground,  
Stay you always on the long fingers  
of the ridgelands,  
For over all valleys they spread,  
And swoop you like eagles upon baby chicks,  
Swoop down quickly and return to your  
high perch,  
Stay not on the lowland where the  
leopard lurks,  
Quickly swoop and return upon the  
high perch."

44. Like many other hill tribes, the Lahu exhibit great mobility. Frequent and long hunting trips take them into some of the most densely forested and rugged areas of northern Thailand. Furthermore, because of their slash-and-burn agriculture, they are accustomed to moving frequently. There is little doubt that they would be at least as mobile as the Meo in attacks against Thai Government troops.

45. Because of the remoteness of Lahu villages and the ruggedness of the terrain that they occupy, Communist logistical support would be difficult. Some Lahu, for example those who are in the eastern part of northern Thailand, possibly could be supplied from Communist bases in Laos. Those farther west, however, would probably be dependent upon supplies smuggled through eastern Burma from China. The local acquisition of guns, by ambush of Thai police and soldiers

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and through illicit trading channels, conceivably could also become an important source of arms.

46. Communist subversion of the Lahu, if successful, would permit the establishment of Communist bases in several areas across the extreme northern part of the country. From these mountain bases the insurgents could then move along the north-south ridge lines and descend to attack targets in the lowlands. Probably they would hope to eventually duplicate the success they have had in Nan Province—that is, deny the Government access to the region.

47. Most of the comments previously made about Meo attitudes and loyalties apply also to the Lahu, who apparently have been exposed to Communist propaganda for at least the past decade. Intelligence reports of unknown validity, dating from the mid-1950's into the 1960's, indicate that Communist agents have used the Red Lahu religious Man-God (Maw Na or Pu Chawng Luang), who lives in Burma, to disseminate anti-Thai Government propaganda in some of the Lahu villages of northwest Thailand. Although the Lahu purposely have little to do with the Meo in everyday life, they would probably cooperate with the latter in guerrilla activities if given effective Communist leadership.

#### The Karen

48. The Karen are the most numerous of Thailand's hill tribes. Numbering about 162,000, they have been emigrating from eastern Burma to Thailand for many years. Most of them live in a highland region that extends from the northwestern part of the country southward along the Burma border to about 11°N. Karen are also distributed along an axis that extends across North Thailand from the extreme northeast to the southwest (see Map 77572). Their villages generally occupy sites on sloping foothills at elevations below 2,000 feet; some settlements, however, are located in the valleys.

49. The Karen in Thailand, especially those in the highlands, usually are proficient in the use of blowguns, bows, and spears, and some of them also possess modern rifles. Although the Karen in Thailand have had no recent military training or experience, those in Burma have been in an armed insurgency since 1949. The Karen on both sides of the border have distinct paramilitary potential, but those in Thailand would need training, leadership, and motivation, in addition to arms.

50. Karen generally migrate in response to a need for new agricultural land, and their movements are usually localized within a 20- or 30-square-mile area. Presumably they become thoroughly familiar with the terrain in such an area—a definite asset in guerrilla warfare. Some of the more mobile Karen, however, own elephants, and they hire them out to transport heavy commodities, such as logs, over relatively long distances.

51. The custom of matrilineal marriage probably involves the Karen in their longest range of travel. Karen women regularly get their husbands from other Karen villages. In one known instance, the husband came from a village 150

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miles away from the bride's residence. This practice probably results in some degree of unity among Karen villages, which could conceivably aid the spread of propaganda from one village to another.

52. Most of the Karen of Thailand are very remote from the Communist support bases in Laos; only the few in northern Chiang Rai Province are within practical range to expect Communist help from that source. The majority, along the Burma border, would have to depend upon much the same sources as the Lahu for their guns and ammunition. Most weapons would probably be acquired as a result of successful attacks on government forces or installations. An appreciable number could also be bought through illicit trading channels.

53. Successful subversion of the Karen would give the Communists control of most of the Thai-Burma border area. Most important, it would permit the insurgents to make flanking attacks from the west against the north-south length of the central lowland.

54. The Karen of the lowlands appear to be generally satisfied with the Thai Government; in the highlands, however, many of them have had only limited contact with the Government, and they often distrust visiting Thai officials. They particularly resent the Thai for their preconceived notions about the way the Karen should conform to Thai customs. Furthermore, in their view the Thai make no attempt to understand or appreciate Karen tribal culture. In Tak Province some Karen reportedly joined with Meo insurgents in late 1969 because of resentment to Government interference in their opium trade and in their cattle smuggling operations. If the Communists were to "develop" a strong insurgent Meo leader in the Tak area, Karen with serious grievances against the Thai Government would probably cooperate with him.

55. The primary loyalty of all Karen, educated or uneducated, however, is to their village. Those who are educated probably have some degree of allegiance to the nation, but the vast majority are indifferent to it. Missionaries who have worked with the Karen have expressed the opinion that if Communist indoctrinated Karen entered a Karen village and told the tribesmen that they understood their problems and would provide them with assistance the villagers could be subverted.

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## BURMA

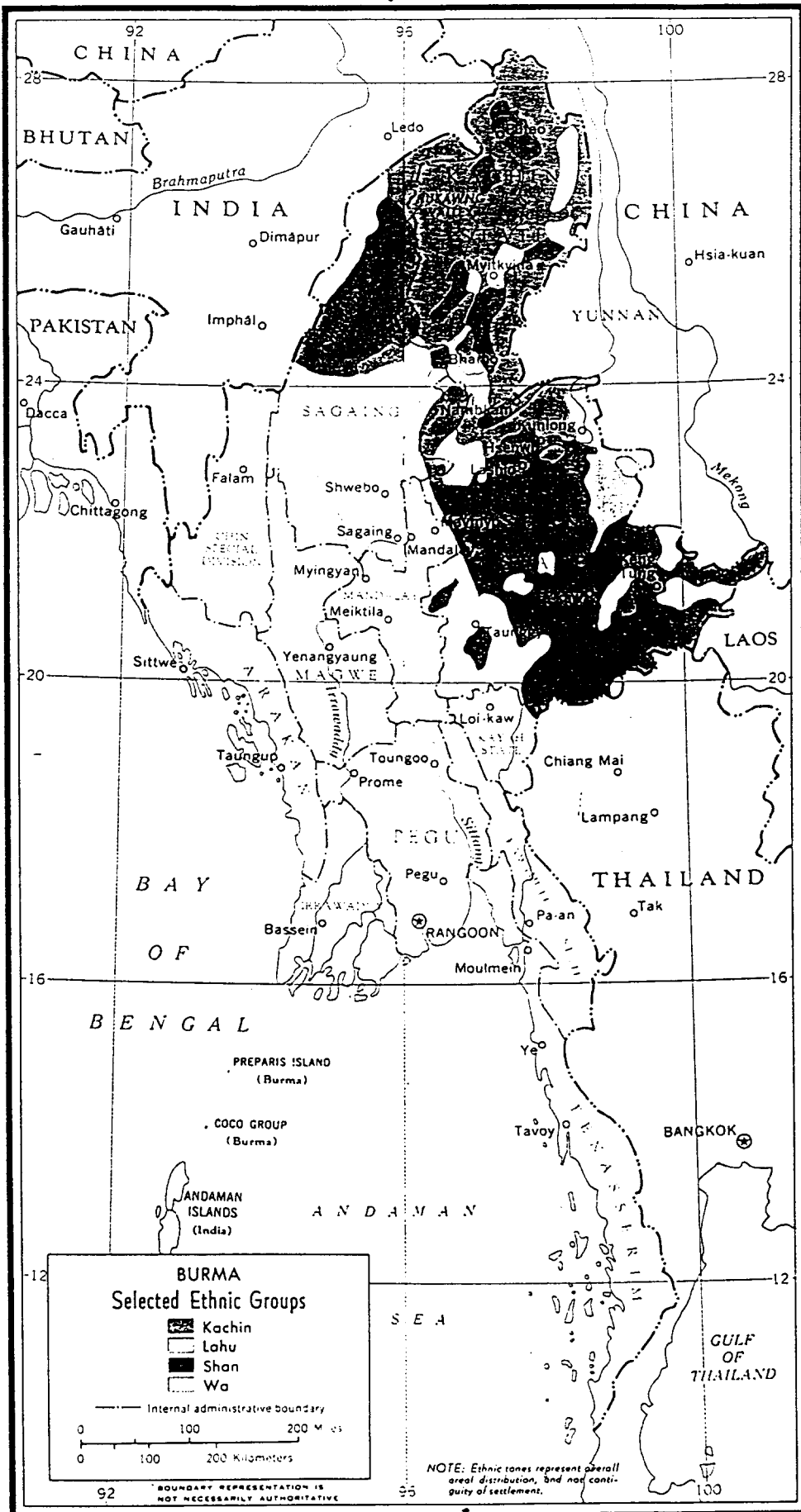
56. Burmans,\* the predominant ethnic group in Burma's central lowland, account for nearly three-fourths of the country's 27,000,000 people. Indigenous ethnic minorities—Kachin, Shan, Karen, Chin, and a number of smaller groups—comprise most of the remainder; they are settled in relatively remote and lightly populated upland territories, in locations that are peripheral to the area of Burman concentration (see Map 77571). Because of strong cultural distinctions and ethnic pride, the integration of these minorities into contemporary Burmese society has been slow. Burman-minority relations have been marked by mutual antagonism and suspicion, and insurgency by minorities desiring greater political autonomy, consequently, has been endemic in the peripheral areas—including the northern and northeastern frontiers with China—since Burma attained independence in 1948. Such insurgency has grown out of the demands of the minorities for greater autonomy and the efforts of the Government of the Union of Burma (GUB), dominated by Burmans, to strengthen federal control of the minority areas.

57. At the time that Burma was granted independence, semiautonomous political units encompassing major ethnic minority areas—including those of the Kachin and Shan—were established. Autonomy was token, however, and GUB-minority relations deteriorated steadily during the 1950's. Attempting to counter such deterioration, the GUB has at times modified integration policies to rally minority support to the Government. For example, the Government in 1962 reversed its predecessor's 1961 decision to adopt Buddhism as the state religion, and in 1968 a number of minority leaders were appointed to a civilian advisory body created by the GUB in order to study and make constitutional recommendations to promote national unity; a charter presumably included the topic of minority integration.

58. Proximity to the border, close ethnic ties, and ineffective administration of the physically difficult north and northeast have strengthened the traditionally close contacts existing between the minorities of Burma and their ethnic brethren living in the contiguous areas of China. These factors tend to facilitate Chinese sponsorship of insurgency in Burma by such groups. In recent years, China has wooed the Burmese hill peoples living near those sectors of the border where GUB control has been minimal by offering hard-to-get consumer commodities at low prices in bazaars located on the Chinese side of the border. In addition, itinerant Chinese traders have traditionally peddled their wares in Burmese tribal villages. Although they are now presumed to be more restricted in their cross-border circuits, Chinese peddlers reportedly have seeded some of the villages in Burma's frontier with Chinese propaganda items.

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\*The term "Birman" applies to members of Burma's dominant ethnic group; the term "Burmese" refers to nationals of Burma without regard to ethnic distinctions.



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59. Ethnic insurgent forces along Burma's northern and northeastern frontiers have been strengthened and clashes with the Burmese Army have been more frequent since mid-1967, when China began to step up its previously low-key aid to the insurgents. During 1969, intelligence reports indicated that intensified Chinese materiel support had enabled the insurgents to engage Government forces in several major encounters and to inflict serious defeats in some instances. Despite the apparent willingness of certain ethnic Burmese insurgent groups to accept arms and training wherever offered, however, they are not necessarily willing to accept Communist direction, Chinese or local. Ethnic diversity in northern and northeastern Burma and factionalism among the insurgents, moreover, tend to lessen the chances that China could develop a large and unified movement responsive to its control. Disenfranchised minority peoples, living in areas remote from population and political centers, do not necessarily provide a solid base for rebellion on a wider scale.

60. The Kachin and Shan are the major ethnic minorities in north and northeast Burma. Their insurgent armies have long infested these regions, and some of them have been armed and trained by the Chinese. The Wa and the Lahu have also been active in anti-GUB insurgency, and intelligence reports indicate that they, too, have received some Chinese aid. The only other ethnic group in the Burma-China frontier area reported to have been penetrated by China is the Akha—a primitive people occupying the Burma-China-Laos tri-border area and numbering some 30,000 to 50,000 in Burma. Information received in 1969 indicates that up to 200 Burmese Akha were recently trained and armed in China. More than 2,000,000 Karen live in a ribbon of mountainous terrain astride the Thailand-Burma border, extending south from the Shan State well into the Kra Isthmus. Although they have long plagued the Burmese Government, there have been no reports of Chinese Communist support of their insurgency. The more than 300 miles of rugged terrain lying between the Karen lands and China, moreover, makes significant Chicom aid unlikely. The Karen of Burma, for these reasons, have not been discussed in this report.

61. Because overland communication across segments of the Burma-China border are difficult, the nature and extent of Chinese support of large-scale insurgency in Burma are limited. The Burma Road, extending northward from Lashio and winding through the rugged terrain of Yunnan, is the only route that could support a large-scale movement by motor vehicle. A few dry-weather motorable routes are suitable for the restricted movement of men and materiel between China and the Shan State, but all of these become impassable for vehicles, and difficult even for pack animals, during the May through September wet season. Even on the Burma Road, landslides, washouts, and swollen streams may halt traffic for days at a time during these rainy months. Border crossings between China and the Kachin State are limited to mule-caravan tracks and to coolie paths through difficult mountain passes, most of which are blocked by snow during much of the winter (late December to April). There are no

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railroads to link China with Burma; the nearest railheads are at Kun-ming, China, and at Lashio and Myitkyinā in Burma.

### The Kachin

62. The Kachin\* are the most widespread of the tribal groups in north and northeast Burma. They number somewhat more than 500,000, with about four-fifths of them being concentrated in Kachin State, where they comprise three-fourths of the total population. The remainder are found, for the most part, in the northern part of Shan State. Several hundred thousand Kachin also occupy territory in Yunnan Province as far eastward as the Salween River. In Burma the Kachin occupy upland slopes from the northern tip of the country well into Shan State and, in the west, the slopes of the Hukawng Valley and other valleys extending into Assam.

63. The Kachin have an impressive military background. Having formed a significant part of the British Colonial Army in Burma, they continue to furnish the GUB with some of its best battalions. They distinguished themselves in all phases of warfare under their British and American mentors during World War II. Not only were they adept at intelligence-gathering activities, but they became excellent soldiers and crack riflemen as well. They continue their military traditions today: five battalions of Kachin Rifles fight on the side of the Government against insurgent groups that infest many parts of the country, while thousands of Kachin guerrillas, under the banners of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA), the Northeast Command of the Communist Party of Burma, or other insurgent or bandit groups, plague Government troops and installations throughout much of the Kachin and Shan States.

64. Kachin migrations from the eastern Tibetan Plateau region of China into upper Burma, which began centuries ago, continue to this day. Many Kachin living in upper Burma (Kachin State and northern Shan State), in fact, have trekked across the border from China in the past two decades, fleeing from China's oppressive minority policies. Such refugees trickle through the border passes and, if undetected by GUB officials, settle among their Burmese Kachin brethren.

65. The travels of the average Kachin peasant are confined to regular visits to the nearest market town and to occasional hunting expeditions. For those involved in two traditional enterprises—opium cultivation and soldiering—on the other hand, travels are more extensive. The Kachin are inveterate cultivators, users, and traders of opium. That part of the crop that is not consumed locally is transported by pack train either into Assam or, in much larger volume, southward across the Shan State into Thailand, where it is commonly traded for arms and ammunition destined for Kachin insurgents. Opium shipped to Assam is usually transported by Kachin merchants; that going to the Thai market, however,

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\* "Kachin" is a Burman term meaning "primitive." It is applied to a number of culturally similar but linguistically distinct peoples in the northern hills of Burma.

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is most often carried by Shan or Chinese Kuomintang (KMT)\* traffickers; they procure their supply from Kachin growers in major towns such as Myitkyinā or Bhamo.

66. Kachin officers and enlisted men in Burmese Army units are found in all parts of the country; the Kachin serving with the various insurgent bands, on the other hand, are confined to upper Burma. Although their effectiveness would be diminished if they were to operate in unfamiliar terrain far from their hilly homelands, Kachin rebels probably have fewer qualms about moving further into the heartland of the country than insurgent representatives of other ethnic groups in north or northeast Burma. They would have to be financially motivated, however, to foresake the security of their hills in order to attack distant targets in the central Burma stronghold of the GUB.

67. At times down through the centuries China has extended suzerainty well into the Kachin lands of upper Burma. The area that is the focus of present Kachin-led insurgency in the northern Shan State, in fact, has been on occasion under at least nominal Chinese control. During the British expeditions into upper Burma, which sought to bring the highly independent Kachin under effective governmental control (1885-1915), China provided sanctuary for anti-British Kachin rebels, much as it is doing for pro-Communist insurgent groups today.

68. Christian proselytizing by Western missionaries among the Kachin in both Yunnan and upper Burma helped to establish bonds between the Kachin living on both sides of the border. Missionary activity in China was squelched after the Communist takeover, however, and cross-border religious ties were largely severed. Many Christian Kachin subsequently fled from China into upper Burma.

69. Various factions of the KIA control most of the Kachin country outside the limits of the major towns in which GUB military garrisons are maintained. As a consequence, transportation facilities in rural areas are particularly vulnerable to insurgent strikes. The few roads in the region are more often under insurgent control than not and, even when controlled by the GUB, the possibility of traffic interdiction from insurgent sabotage is a constant threat. The only rail line that taps upper Burma, which reaches to Myitkyinā from Mandalay and points south, has been a popular target for insurgent attacks.

70. The Kachin, as well as other hill peoples of upper Burma, lived in virtual isolation for centuries before the arrival of the British colonialists. Prior to the British intrusion in the late 19th century, Burmese suzerainty had been minimal, and contact between the Burmans and the Kachin was limited. The Kachin, consequently, were unaccustomed to the more stringent controls imposed by the British, and they remained in a state of rebellion during much of the British colonial reign. Grievances were aggravated after the transfer of power to the Burmans in 1948. The resentments created by these grievances exploded in 1961 with the formation of the KIA, and they remain, for the most part, unrectified to this day.

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\*Remnants of former Chinese Nationalist military forces who retreated southward from China into the Burma-Laos-Thailand borderlands in the late 1940's.



71. Few Kachin have developed a strong sense of Burmese nationalism. If given the option, in fact, most would elect to secede and form an autonomous Kachin State. Educated Kachin believe that the GUB has done little for them in its more than 20 years of rule. They are of the opinion that the GUB policy has not promoted educational improvement, economic development, or self-expression in the Government for their people. A principal source of resentment is the inadequacy of educational facilities in the state. The opportunities for a Kachin to acquire a high school education and to attend a university are slim. Paradoxically, as the GUB strives to improve educational facilities, the Kachin resent having to learn Burmese, without which they cannot pass the entrance exam to enroll in a university. Kachin are also dissatisfied with the GUB's modest development plans for their state. Although their contributions to Central Government coffers are minimal and, hence, the budgetary support from Rangoon is actually disproportionately large, the absolute sums are small and lead to the conclusion that Rangoon is not really interested in Kachin welfare. Lack of representation at a high level in the Government is an additional irritant. Although many Kachin occupy positions in the State Government, few have important positions in the National Government in Rangoon.

72. The 1961 constitutional amendment which established Buddhism as the state religion of Burma was resented by Kachin Christians\* and animists alike. Even though the Ne Win Government, which came to power in 1962, renounced the amendment, the memories of this religious issue remain to feed suspicion of the GUB. This issue, probably more than any other, led to the formation of the KIA. The harassment and eventual expulsion of foreign missionaries by the GUB in the middle 1960's further rankled Christian Kachin. Noteworthy is the fact that most Kachin insurgent leaders are Christian.

73. The Kachin revolutionary spirit was solidified during the 1960's to the point that now a majority of all Kachin probably support the independence-minded KIA. Although not widely backed by the Kachin populace initially (KIA taxes, like those of the GUB, are not popular), the KIA has gained supporters, due largely to clumsy GUB counterinsurgency efforts. It is now the most unified and popularly backed insurgent group, and has an estimated armed strength of about 4,000 men. Ruthless and poorly focused GUB suppression operations, such as the burning of an entire village if one villager is found to be serving in the insurgent army, has produced recruits for the KIA. Kachin distrust of the GUB has been further heightened by the imprudent behavior of some of the Government troops stationed in upper Burma. There have been enough instances of rape, knifing, and chicken-stealing to foster bitter resentment among the Kachin. Such improprieties are naturally blamed on the present Ne Win Military Government. The forced transfer of the entire population of Kachin villages from insurgent-infested areas, furthermore, has not been popular among those who have been resettled.

74. Burmese Kachin attitudes toward the present Communist rulers of China vary. Those who have lived on both sides of the border, and who have experienced

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\*About one-third of the Kachin are at least nominally Christian.

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or heard tales concerning the oppression of fellow tribesmen in China, hate the Chinese with a fierce intensity. Those whose contacts have been limited to the local Chinese merchant, on the other hand, tend to view the Chinese far less passionately. Some leaders, critical of the Rangoon administration, feel that China could be no worse than the GUB. As part of her policy to improve relations with Burma's border peoples, China has told Kachin insurgent trainees that she favors the incorporation of Kachin lands on both sides of the border into one autonomous region. Although such a ruse may strike a responsive chord among the more gullible Kachin, those who are better educated are not likely to accept such a proposal. Most Christian-educated leaders, who have strong anti-Communist convictions, would be particularly dubious of such a promise. Anti-Chinese attitudes and resistance to Communist organizational efforts are especially strong south of Bhamo, an area where a natural corridor slices through the border terrain and where, consequently, Chinese refugee crossings have been heavy. The KIA reportedly began the compulsory registration and heavy taxing of all ethnic Chinese inhabitants in this area in 1969.

75. Because of the great intermixture of Kachin and Shan throughout upper Burma, contacts between the two groups have always been closer than those between the Kachin and the Burmans or between the Kachin and the Chinese. Many Kachin, consequently, have adopted the socio-political system, religion, dress, and agricultural practices of the Shan. Inter-marriage has been common. Shan influence has been particularly strong in the northern Shan State, and the Kachin living there have lost much of their ethnic identity.

76. Chinese Communist recruitment of Kachin youth for paramilitary training was first reported in the late 1950's when several hundred young Burmese Kachin traveled across the border. Their indoctrination into Communist ideology was not intensive, and they returned to Burma to be integrated into KIA units with little trouble. Later on, however, trainees apparently were more vigorously indoctrinated by their Chinese teachers, and their subsequent integration into KIA units led to hassles with anti-Communist commanders. Because of these disagreements some pro-Chinese KIA troops fled to China; others joined Naw Seng's pro-Communist Kachin People's Liberation Army, which had entered the northern Shan State in late 1967.

77. Naw Seng's army, equipped and trained in China and reportedly accompanied by Chicom PLA (People's Liberation Army) advisors, operates in the border area of the northern Shan State between Namhkam and the Salween River. Its 2,500 to 3,000 troops include Kachin, Shan, Sino-Burmans, and probably a few Wa, Lahu, and other hill peoples. Naw Seng, a former captain in the Burma Army, had fought Communist insurgents in the years after Burma's independence. He defected to China in 1950 and commanded a PLA unit of several hundred other Burmese Kachin defectors. This unit was subsequently swelled by Kachin recruits from China before becoming an insurgent Burmese "liberation army" prior to its infiltration into the Shan State.

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78. Attempts by the Naw Seng army to recruit KIA troops were not well received by KIA leaders, and bloody skirmishes ensued. As the intensity of these clashes diminished, de facto spheres of influence were established and, by late 1969, a tenuous truce existed. The truce polarized the Kachin insurgent groups into anti- and pro-Chicom segments, with most of the KIA factions remaining staunchly anti-Chinese. One KIA leader (Zaw Seng), however, maintains that he will continue to accept all sources of assistance so long as no political strings are attached. Another leader (Zaw Tu) reportedly receives Chinese arms in exchange for allowing Indian rebel groups to cross his territory en route to training sites in China.

### The Shan

79. The Shan account for about half of the population of the Shan State (in 1969 a total of 2,725,000 people were in the Shan State, according to a GUB estimate); the remainder is comprised of Burmans and a variety of hill peoples, including Kachin, Wa, and Lahu. Shan are also widely dispersed outside the state: nearly 100,000 live in the valleys of upper Burma, particularly in the Hukawng Valley, around Putao, and between Myitkyinā and Bhamo; others live in central Burma. Although most live in the hilly or mountainous regions of the country, the Shan are not truly a hill people; they occupy intermontane valleys where they cultivate wetland rice.

80. The Shan are a Tai people, physically and culturally related to the Thai of Thailand, Lao of Laos, and a multitude of hill groups of northern Southeast Asia and southwestern China. The Tai ethnic family numbers some 25,000,000 to 30,000,000. Despite wide geographic distribution of Tai groups and their mutual isolation from each other, their dialects are mutually intelligible.

81. The Shan do not have the skill with weapons or the traditional inclination for warfare that is exhibited by their upland neighbors. For example, unlike the Kachin, their resistance to Japanese occupation during World War II was minimal. Despite their lack of a strong military heritage, however, local insurgent and bandit groups, manned partly by Wa and Lahu "mercenaries" hired from the neighboring hills, have long plagued Shan country, and the Shan have a history of resistance to rule from Rangoon, whether British or Burman. Since independence, insurgent bands have thrived in the Shan State and hit-and-run raids have been conducted against GUB installations and patrols.

82. The Tai peoples, including the Shan, began migrating out of China into northern and northeastern Burma, Thailand, Laos, and North Vietnam centuries ago. Shan migrations into Burma, like those of the Kachin, are still continuing; many Shan living in the southern Kachin State and northern Shan State are recent immigrants from Yunnan. Some highly Burmanized Shan have drifted out of the Shan State into central Burma; a few have moved southward and settled in the Irrawaddy Delta and northern Tenasserim. Shan living among the Kachin in upper Burma, although culturally and linguistically related to those of the Shan State, remain isolated from them and identify more readily with their Kachin neighbors.

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83. Most Shan peasants do not travel farther than the nearest market town; a few, however, are traders, and others are engaged in opium traffic and gun running. Such entrepreneurs are likely to travel throughout the Shan State as well as into upper Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Yunnan. Insurgents and bandits also travel a good deal and may, from time to time, cross international boundaries to avoid GUB suppressive operations.

84. As in the Kachin State, Chinese suzerainty has at times extended well into the Shan State; sawbwas (Shan feudal princes) in the territory east of the Salween, in particular, have been intermittently responsive to Chinese rule. (Chinese maps for some time after Burma's independence depicted this tract as belonging to China.)

85. The western edge of the Shan State is an escarpment which, for most of its 400-mile length, rises more than 2,000 feet above the plains to the west and forms a barrier to surface transportation between the Shan country and the Burmese heartland. Only two good roads cross the scarp—between Mandalay and Maymyo in the north (part of the "Burma Road" which leads into China), and between Meiktila and Taunggyi in the south (which leads eastward to Kengtung). A rail line extends from Mandalay into the State as far as Lashio and another connects Taunggyi with the trunk line extending through the Sittang Valley. Both road and railroad targets have been attacked by insurgents. The deeply entrenched Salween River—crossed by only two bridges in its course through the Shan State—is a serious deterrent to surface movement and restricts logistical support of GUB military operations east of the river. GUB presence in the trans-Salween territory has been minimal, limited to a large garrison at Kengtung and a few military outposts scattered elsewhere. Consequently, the territory has been rife with ethnically mixed bands of insurgents, bandits, and opium smugglers, who have been able to operate free from substantial GUB interference.

86. The Shan share a great many cultural traits with the Burmans, including a body of customs, ceremonies, folk beliefs, and values associated with Buddhism. Those living within predominantly Burman areas, moreover, have been largely "Burmanized" and have adopted Burman dress and language—in much the same way that the Kachin living in predominantly Shan areas have absorbed Shan ways. Despite common traits and extensive acculturation, however, the Shan remain a distinctive people. Most dislike and distrust the Burmans. They further feel that Shan culture, particularly its socio-political system, is superior to Burman culture and that their present politically subservient status is an unfair vestige of British colonialism. Most Shan, like the Kachin, would prefer to govern themselves.

87. The Shan are physically and culturally closer to the Tai peoples living in neighboring countries than they are to ethnic groups within Burma's borders. Such cross-border ethnic ties have been particularly strong among those Shan living east of the Salween. Movement into northern Thailand has been common among trans-Salween Shan insurgents seeking arms and sanctuary from GUB

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counterinsurgent operations. Pan-Tai nationalist movements, proposing to unify all Tai-speaking peoples, have been advocated by extremists from time to time, but they have never "gotten off the ground."

88. Chinese influence among the Shan, particularly in the border zone, has been greater than it has been among the Kachin or other hill peoples, and considerable intermarriage has taken place. The Shan dislike of the Chinese, consequently, is not as pronounced as that of the Kachin. The Shan with Chinese blood and those whose contacts with the Chinese have been frequent feel a much closer kinship to them than to the Burmans. A sizable number of Chinese refugees who fled into Burma after the takeover of China by the Communists still live in the eastern Shan State; many of them have married Shan. Remnants of KMT irregular armies are still active in the Burma-Laos-Thailand triborder area, engaged mostly in the extortion of taxes from the opium or arms caravans that traverse their territory. Various KMT armies have reportedly fought bloody skirmishes with each other in recent years over the control of such traffic.

89. Ties between the hill peoples of the Shan State (including Kachin, Wa, Lahu, Akha, and Palaung) and the Shan are far stronger than those between the hill peoples and either the Burmans or Chinese, both of whom are far outnumbered by the Shan. Shan cultural influence has been strong. The hill peoples often were the pawns in rivalries between Shan sawbwas as they served as mercenaries in their armies. Such alliances continue today as Shan insurgent armies are manned largely by an assortment of hill peoples.

90. The traditional Shan political system—comprised of a number of feudal principalities, each ruled by a sawbwa—continued to flourish during the British colonial era (the British ruled the Shans through the sawbwas). After Burmese independence, however, the sawbwas were gradually stripped of their powers by the GUB and their states were incorporated into a single Shan State, administratively within the Union of Burma. Loss of their powers, coupled with GUB failure to abide by a constitutional provision that guaranteed the Shan the right to secede from the Union after 10 years, led to insurrection by some disenfranchised and disgruntled sawbwas in the late 1950's. Shan insurrection intensified during the early 1960's as various insurgent factions, demonstrating for a brief while an unusual degree of cooperation, declared Shan independence and formed a Shan Revolutionary Council to serve as a government in exile in Thailand. Factionalism and vicious internecine quarreling has otherwise characterized the Shan insurgent movement. The Shan States Army, with 4,000 fighting men, and the Shan Revolutionary Army, with 3,000 troops, are the major insurgent groups. Other armies, such as the Shan States National Army and the Nam Suk Han, are comprised of a handful of fighting men at most. After the Sino-Burmese rift of 1967 the GUB, in an effort to pacify Shan dissidents and solidify its position in its frontiers, granted amnesty to surrendered rebels and established a cease-fire between GUB forces and Shan dissident groups in the trans-Salween territory. Such measures, however, did little to patch up differences between the dissident Shan and the GUB.

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91. Some Shan insurgent and bandit leaders, in quest of support for their continuing battle against GUB interference in their activities, have received arms and training in China. Chinese-trained and Shan-led armies, manned by several hundred ethnically mixed troops, have engaged the Burmese Army in battles in the northern Shan States battlefield. Other Chinese-supported armies, however, have not so readily joined the Chinese-backed confrontation with GUB forces. They have, instead, utilized their training and arms in battles against other enemies—competing Shan and KMT bandit groups.

92. The GUB, frustrated in its attempts to combat the increasing Chinese Communist-supported insurgent activity in the northern Shan State, has in the past two years organized bandit and smuggling groups into militias (called "Kha Kwaiyei" or "Self-Defense Forces") to defend their areas against the insurgents. Such forces agreed to side with the GUB in exchange for Government non-interference in their illicit activities. Comprised of several thousand troops, they are led mostly by Shan or immigrant Chinese; enlisted men are mostly hill tribesmen. GUB control of the militia forces has been tenuous, as the latter have increasingly fought against the Burmese Army rather than the insurgents. Militia harassment of GUB forces north of Lashio increased in late 1969 and early 1970, largely in retaliation for the GUB detention of one of the militia leaders.

#### The Wa

93. The Wa are concentrated in rugged and remote hill country east of the Salween River, astride the China-Burma border. A few of their villages, however, are sprinkled southward into the southern Shan State. They are a primitive and belligerent people, whose contact with outsiders has been minimal. Estimates of their numbers range widely—from 300,000 to 800,000 in Burma, from 200,000 to 300,000 in Yunnan.

94. The Wa were classified by the British into two categories: (1) "Tame" Wa, who live in the southern part of the Wa territory, have been largely acculturated by neighboring Shan; (2) "Wild" Wa remain isolated in the north, suspicious of all outsiders. They formerly were avid collectors of heads, a practice believed to have been associated with offerings to a harvest spirit for the purpose of assuring a good crop. Although most Wa have been pacified and forsaken their headhunting practices, some "Wild" Wa reportedly have taken the heads of Chinese patrols who have trespassed into their territory in recent years.

95. Historically, the Wa have fought not only among themselves but against uninvited outsiders—British, Burman, Shan, or Chinese—who have dared to intrude into their territory. Formidable fighters using traditional weapons such as the crossbow with poisoned arrows, they also excel in the use of more modern weapons. Despite such qualifications, however, they played only a minor role in guerrilla operations against the Japanese forces during World War II, largely because their warlike reputations and suspicion of strangers made them difficult to recruit. Allied and Japanese forces only rarely entered their remote homeland.

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96. The Wa are not a mobile people; few venture far from home. Traders from China or from elsewhere in the Shan State have traditionally come into the Wa area to trade locally unavailable goods for opium—the major cash crop of the Wa farmers. A few Wa, however, now journey to Thailand to barter their opium. Several hundred of them reportedly ventured southward into northern Thailand in 1968 to seek refuge from the deteriorating military-political situation in their homelands. Because their territory extends on both sides of the China-Burma border, the Wa cross it at will. The presence of hostile Wa astride the border, in fact, was a major reason that the border was left undefined until 1960. Wa from China formerly traveled into the Shan State to seek employment, usually returning home with a nestegg after a few months' work.

97. Wa country was historically a disputed area subject to both British and Chinese territorial claims. It has never been under more than nominal outside control. Lack of substantial GUB presence, coupled with the Wa position straddling the border, facilitates Chinese sponsorship of any Wa insurgent movement.

98. The block of land occupied by the Wa is one of the most remote territories in Burma. Targets for an insurgent force are few. There are no major towns (Kunlong is the largest) and no major transportation routes (a road crosses the Salween River at Kunlong but it does not reach the border). The remoteness of their territory and their reluctance to venture from it rules out the likelihood that the Wa could be used in a major insurgency force closer to the heartland of the country.

99. The Wa—particularly the "Wild" Wa of the north—are a fiercely independent people. Because of their geographic position in the China-Burma border zone, however, they have become enmeshed in international politics as their lands have become a battleground in the current battles between Chinese-sponsored insurgents and the Burmese Army. Wa respect strength. The apparent GUB inability to cope with the insurgency does not enhance its image. The more sophisticated "Tame" Wa of the south, moreover, have been critical of the GUB failure to provide services or to settle problems arising within the Wa areas. Their "Wild" brethren, on the other hand, prefer their isolation and resent any GUB intrusion into their territory.

100. Although the Chinese have traditionally been the principal enemy of the Wa, KMT irregular units were allowed to settle in Wa territory after the downfall of the Nationalist regime in China. Strong KMT-Wa alliances ensued, and attempted Chinese Communist attacks on the KMT camps were abortive; the attackers were ambushed by the Wa and their heads taken. The Chinese Communists, nonetheless, have made progress—largely through the dispensing of gifts, medical services, and propaganda—in gaining the loyalty of some Burmese Wa villages near the border.

101. Like the Kachin, the Wa traditionally have had closer and more favorable relations with the Shan than with either the Burmans or the Chinese. The Wa and Shan, however, have had their differences—created mostly by Shan

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attempts to subjugate the Wa. Although the Wa have never acknowledged more than token allegiance to any Shan sawbwa, Wa outlaws have frequently allied with Shan insurgent or bandit groups. They have acted as "toll collectors" along opium caravan routes to ensure that the trade of one Shan sawbwa was not encroached upon by others when traversing Wa country.

102. Several hundred Chinese-trained and -armed Wa insurgents launched attacks against Wa militiamen loyal to the GUB near Kunlong in 1969. (Much of the civilian population of Kunlong had been evacuated by the GUB in May, 1969.) Reportedly, hordes of militiamen subsequently defected to the insurgent ranks. Most—whether pro-GUB or pro-China—are more concerned with protecting their opium traffic than fighting for or against the insurgents.

### The Lahu

(See also discussion of the Lahu of Thailand, paragraphs 41-47 of this report.)

103. The Lahu have settled throughout the area of southwestern Yunnan, north-eastern Burma, northwestern Laos, and northern Thailand. In the Shan State, where they number about 100,000, they live in scattered mountainous sites east of the Salween. Between 150,000 and 200,000 Lahu live in Yunnan, and 2,000 in Laos.

104. Although less truculent than their Wa neighbors, the Lahu are reported to be extremely ruthless and, at times, almost fanatic killers. They are well-versed in all phases of guerrilla warfare and, when effectively led, can be molded into efficient fighting forces, on a par with the Kachin. During World War II, the Lahu distinguished themselves in guerrilla attacks against Japanese forces that occupied northeastern Burma. Some Lahu have, since Burma's independence, served as scouts in the Burmese Army and participated in military forays against Shan and KMT outlaw groups operating in the eastern Shan State. They have, in addition, participated in a GUB-sponsored "home guard" program in which peasants have been armed to protect their villages from insurgent or bandit harassment. Other Lahu reportedly have been organized by the Chinese Communists into anti-GUB guerrilla forces.

105. The Lahu, unlike the sedentary Wa, travel a good deal. Their wanderings may be associated with the moving of a village a few miles to cultivate fresh soil; a hunting expedition of dozens of miles to exploit game-rich territory; or a trek of a hundred miles or more across an international boundary to seek freedom from government interference in "internal" affairs. The Lahu, like other hill peoples, pay little heed to international boundaries. Many of those living in the Shan State migrated from China in the past two decades because of persecution by the Communist regime. Similarly, a large group of Lahu from the southern Shan State has fled to northern Thailand in recent years in order to settle in an area more sheltered from government harassment. Although the Lahu grow opium as a cash crop, only a few are engaged in the movement of the commodity to distant markets; most is sold or bartered to Shan or Chinese traders who make the rounds of the opium-growing Lahu villages.



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106. Transportation facilities in Burma's trans-Salween territory are poorly developed and a cross-country trek over the generally rugged terrain between most Lahu areas and China would take several days. Consequently, poor logistical connections between China and the Burmese Lahu would be a limiting factor in any substantial Chinese Communist sponsorship of Lahu insurgency. On the other hand, since the GUB exerts only token control over most of its trans-Salween country, a Chinese-Lahu tieline would not be subjected to serious GUB interference.

107. The Lahu are a mobile people, and an effectively led Chinese Communist-supported Lahu insurgent army would be capable of striking any GUB target in the Shan State east of the Salween River. Key targets would include the Burmese Army garrison at Kengtung and bridges across the Salween at Kunlong and Ta-kaw.

108. The Lahu, in general, are less isolated than the Wa and have had more frequent contact with Burmans and Chinese. Like other hill peoples of Burma's northern and northeastern frontier, they are not fond of either. Most refugees from China despise the Chinese and would side with the GUB in any China-Burma hassle; other Lahu, particularly those who have received paramilitary training in China, are staunchly anti-GUB. Some advocate the formation of a Lahu autonomous state which would encompass land in both Burma and Thailand. Relations with neighbors other than the Burmans and Chinese have also been strained. Lahu outlaws have clashed with both Shan and KMT armies over the control of opium and arms traffic through the eastern Shan State.

109. There have been unverified reports for years that the Chinese Communists had subverted, trained, and armed a large group of Burmese Lahu under the leadership of the so-called Man-God (Maw Na). Originally armed and trained by the Burmese Army in order to combat the incipient Shan insurgent movement, Maw Na and his followers turned against their Burmese mentors in 1962, and there ensued long and bloody battles in which entire Lahu villages were wiped out. There have been, in addition, reports of other Lahu going to China for training in recent years. In late 1969, unsubstantiated reports claimed that Chinese Lahu officers of the PLA approached a Burmese Lahu insurgent leader to ask for his cooperation in fomenting a Communist insurgency in Burma. Their request was rejected.

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## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

110. Chinese Communists have long been interested in encouraging insurgency in northern Thailand. Taking advantage of the Thai Government's traditional neglect of their highland peoples, they have propagandized among some tribes and trained certain insurgent leaders in China. The effectiveness of these efforts is indicated, in part, by the marked escalation of the Meo insurgency that took place in December 1967. Currently the Communists have de facto control over a part of the border area in two provinces that are contiguous to Laos. Widening the present areas of insurgency, particularly in northern Thailand, would probably require Communist forces to progress, almost literally, from mountain to mountain, starting from the present Communist-held territory. The Communists would probably interdict lines of communication into the intervening valley, thus hopefully denying Government access to the valley, before moving on to the next mountain top.

111. In contrast to the early preparations made in Thailand, the subversive efforts of the Chinese Communists among the highland tribes of Burma were minimal during the 1950's, even though some of these groups were engaged in anti-government activities as early as 1948. When diplomatic relations between Burma and China reached the breaking point in 1967, however, the Chinese Communists quickly launched a tribal subversive effort, attempting by this means to bolster the activities of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and to establish Communist-controlled areas along the Sino-Burmese border.

112. At present the major areas of insurgency in Thailand and Burma are remote from their politico-economic centers. Logistical problems alone, in terms of distance, would probably discourage the extension of insurgent actions toward the national heartlands, that is, toward the great deltas. Should the Communists successfully widen the area of insurgency in northern Thailand, however, they would envelop many lowland Thai, with unforeseen consequences for the Thai nation as a whole, since lowlanders constitute a substantial majority throughout the northern region. In Nan Province, for example, of a total population of about 300,000 in 1967, only 15,600 were estimated to be tribal people.

113. In any attempt to extend the insurgency, Communist leaders may discover that the potential of the tribes to cooperate is limited. Although sharing some common attitudes, e.g., antipathy toward lowlanders, the foremost loyalty of each tribe is to itself. Given the freedom of choice, any one group, therefore, might be reluctant to cooperate with another in insurgency operations. The Black and Red Tai villagers, however, rallied to the Meo leader, Vang Pao, in Laos in the early 1960's, and other instances of intertribal cooperation may be noted in Burma, where a single insurgent band may be comprised of Shan, Wa, Lahu, and Kachin.

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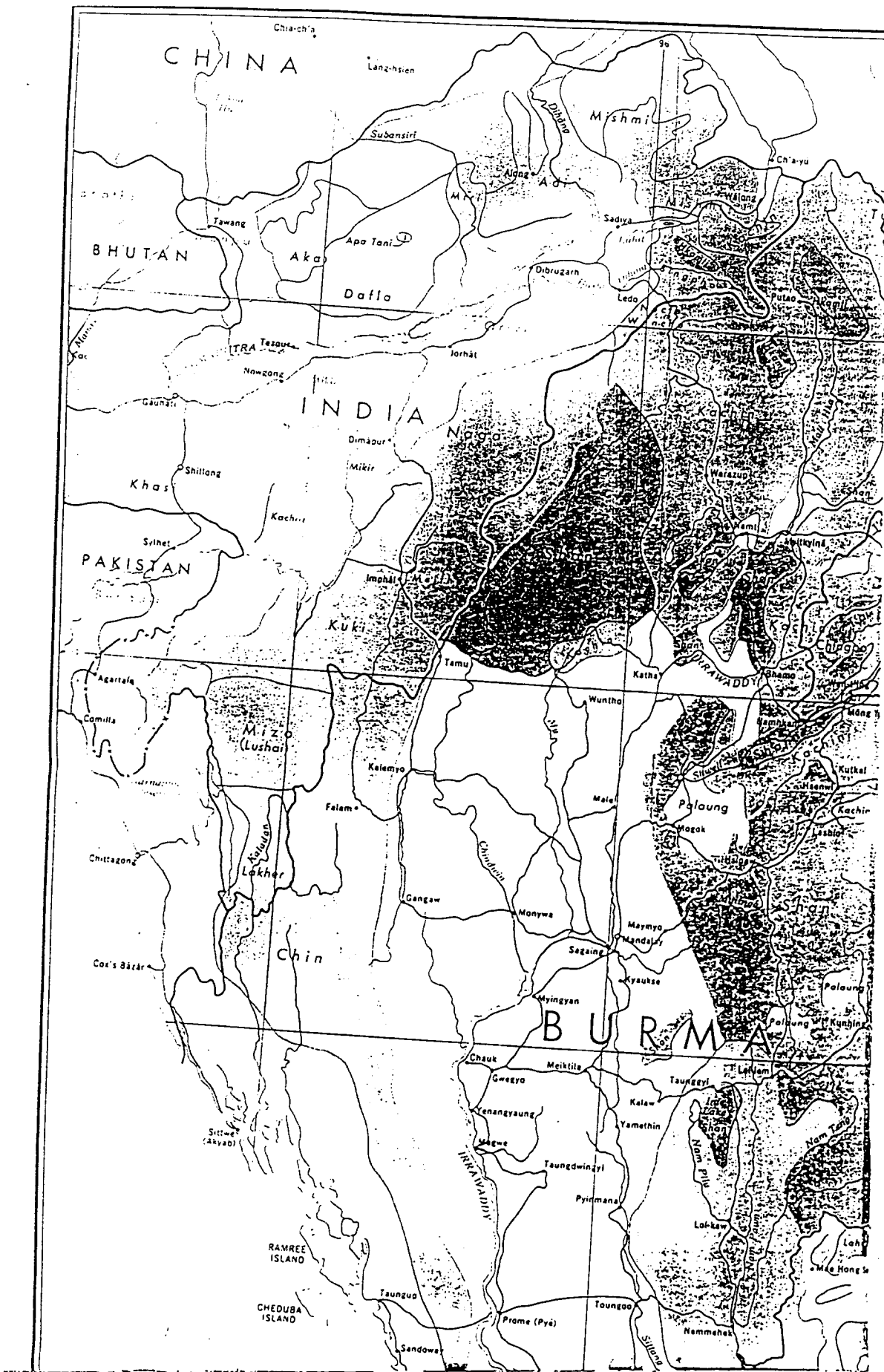
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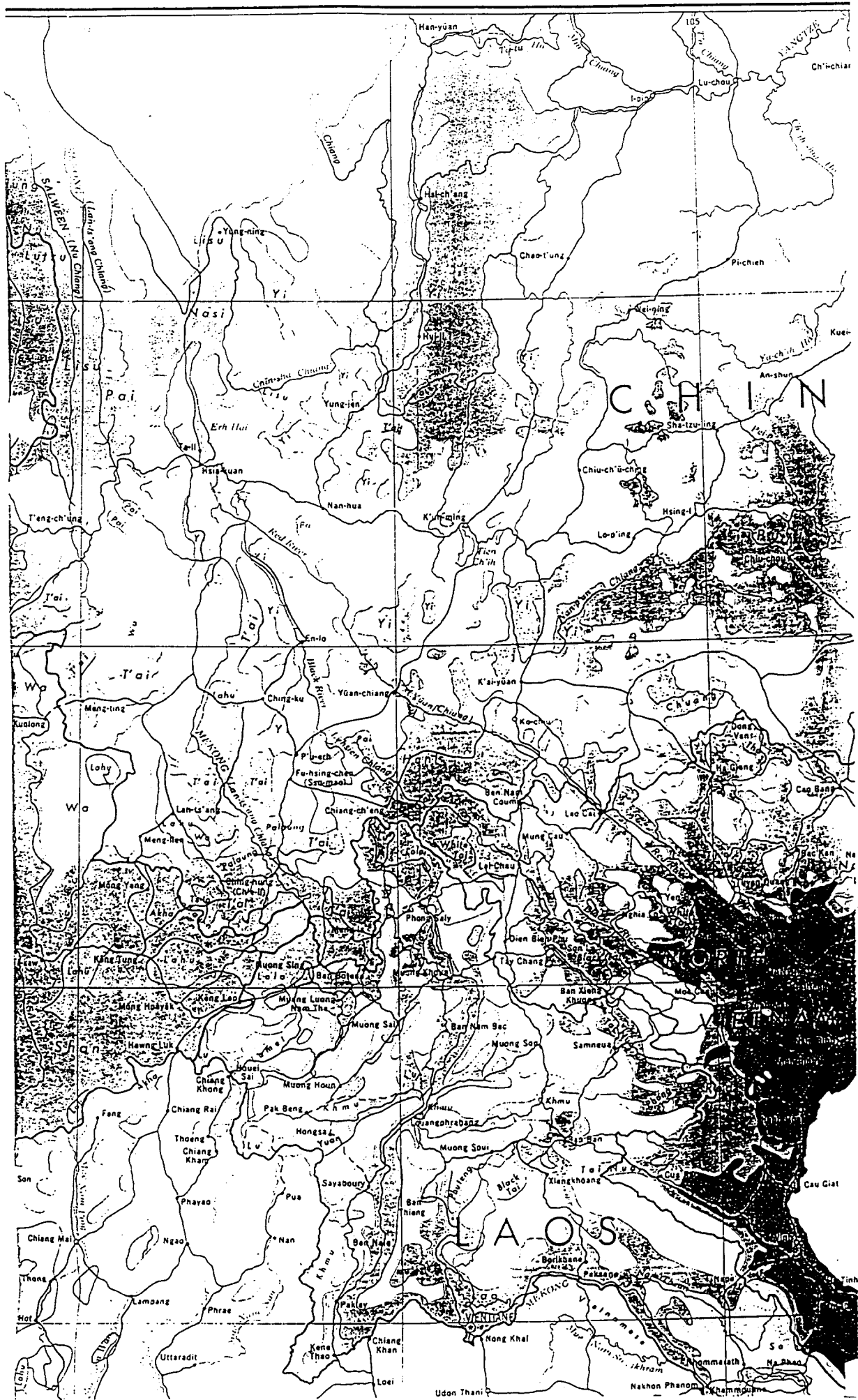
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114. The Communists have used the "carrot-and-stick" technique in their recruiting efforts, promising tribal people "the good life" if they will join the insurgency. If the tribesmen hesitated, terror has often been used to persuade them to "volunteer." In all three countries, however, disillusioned recruits have defected because of excessive regimentation and political indoctrination.

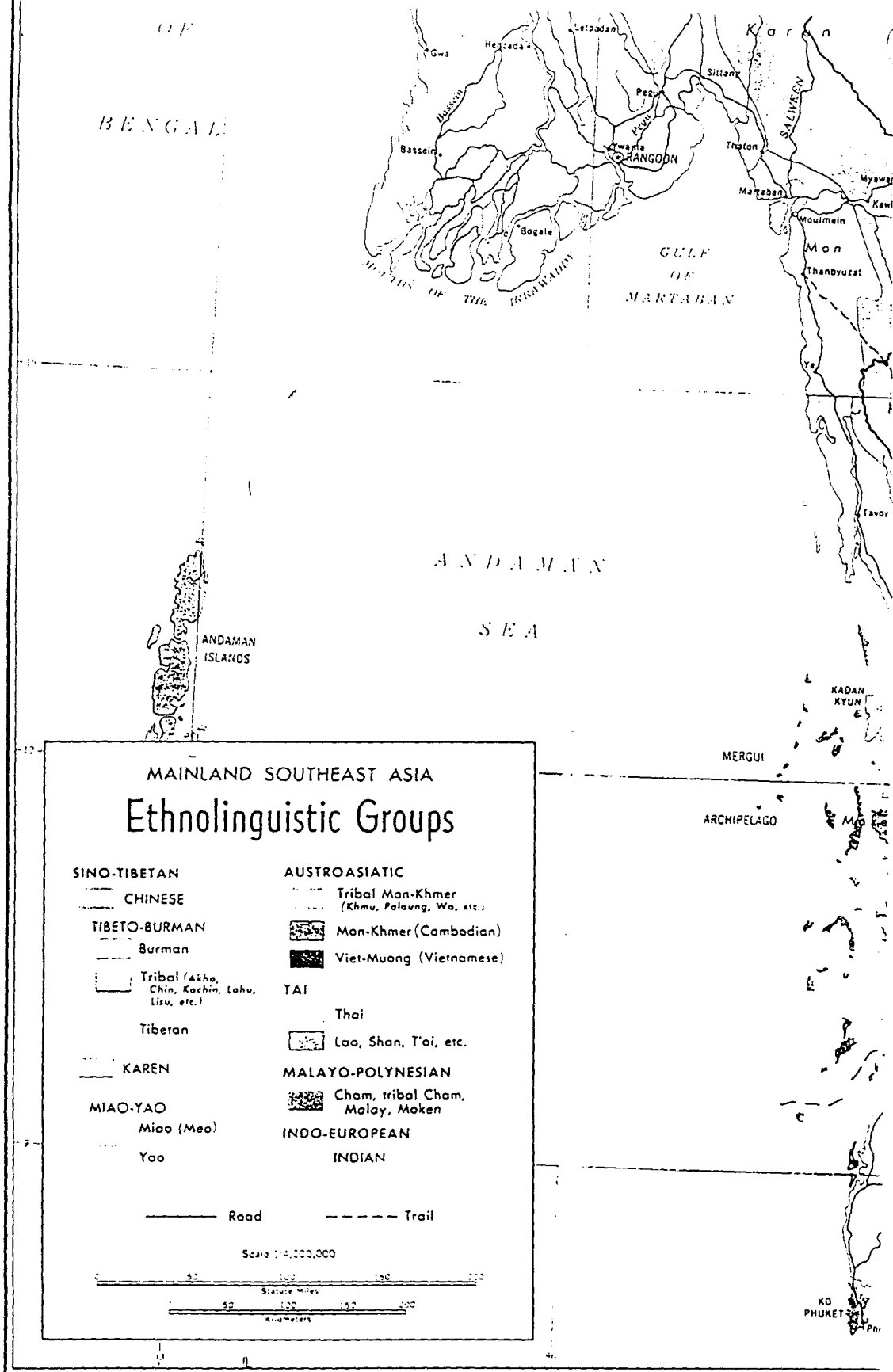
115. Should the Communists ever gain control of a significantly large area of northern Thailand, they may become more subtle in their relations with tribes; as in China and North Vietnam, they might offer them a nominal autonomy. If the tribes were to object to Communist restrictions on their traditional freedoms, however, they probably would have no more recourse than did the "autonomous" minorities in Communist China and North Vietnam.

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