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DIRECTORATE OF
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Intelligence Report

PEKING AND THE BURMESE COMMUNISTS:
THE PERILS AND PROFITS OF INSURGENCY

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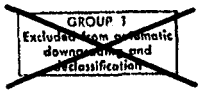

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PEKING AND THE BURMESE COMMUNISTS:

THE PERILS AND PROFITS OF INSURGENCY

MEMORANDUM FOR RECIPIENTS

This study documents a case where Peking's policy towards a client Communist movement has been guided throughout by primary regard for China's national interests. This is illustrated in the study's examination of Peking's facility in conducting a two-level policy, state-to-state and support of insurrection of Peking's readiness to subordinate Burmese Communist interests to those of China where necessary; of China's present direction of a "Burmese Communist" insurgency whose basis is for the most part neither Burman nor Communist; and of the apparent insistence of Peking that resolution of continuing state-to-state differences shall occur only on its own terms. The study also illustrates that Chinese material support of Communist insurrection was in fact significantly less than seemed to be the case prior to the rupture of Sino-Burmese relations in 1967, and has been significantly greater since that time than has come to light.

The judgments of this study have met general agreement among China and Burma specialists within the Central Intelligence Agency. Comments on the study are welcome, and should be addressed to its author, Helen-Louise Hunter, of this Staff.

Hal Ford
Chief, DD/I Special Research Staff

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PEKING AND THE BURMESE COMMUNISTS: THE PERILS AND PROFITS OF INSURGENCY

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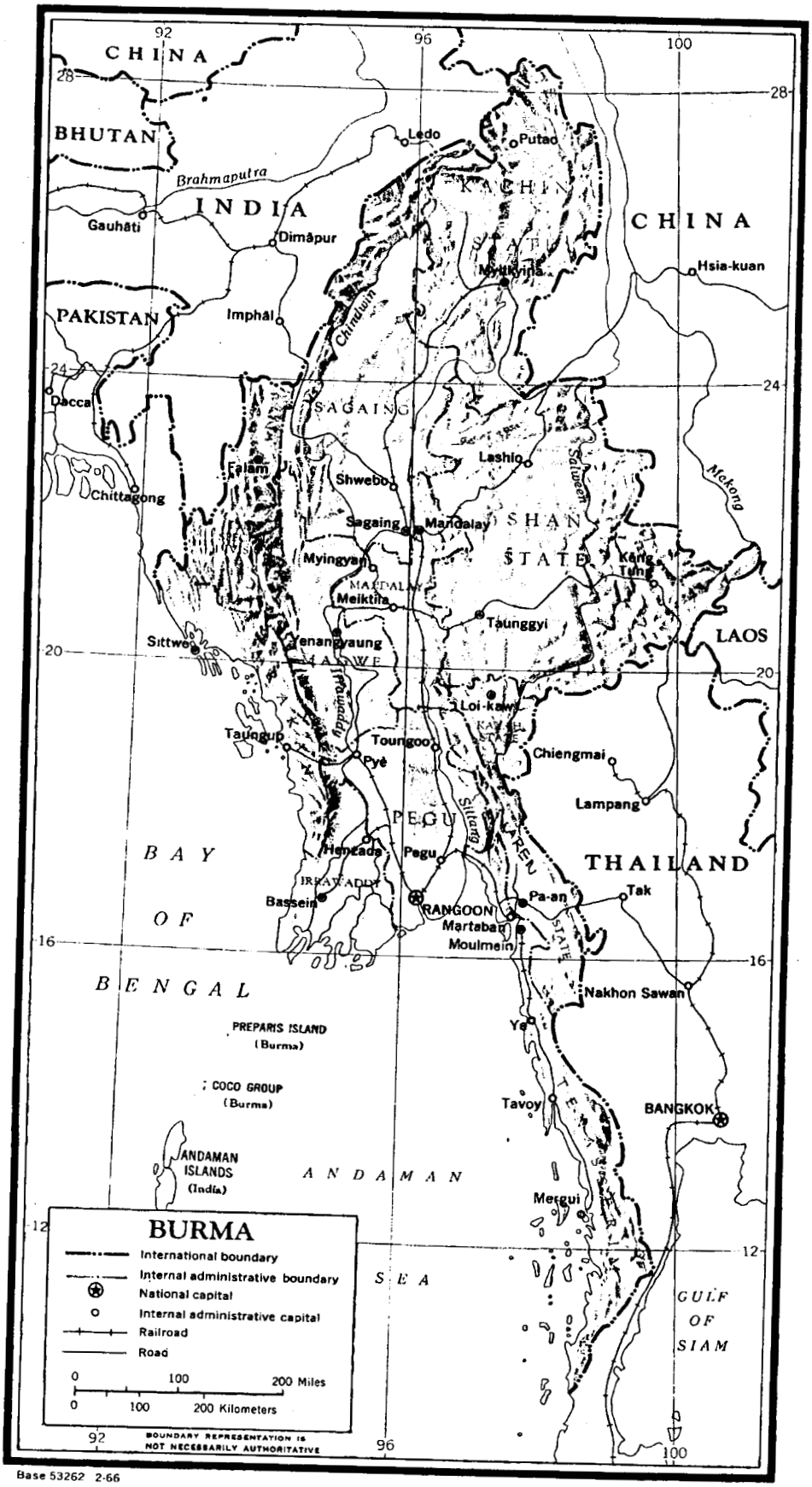

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PEKING AND THE BURMESE COMMUNISTS:

THE PERILS AND PROFITS OF INSURGENCY

Summary

The salient feature of China's relations with the Burmese Communist Party (CPB) during the past twenty years is the degree to which Peking has used the CPB to promote Chinese national interests. For more than fifteen years (1950-1967), while the Chinese enjoyed good relations with the Burmese Government (GUB), Mao Tse-tung was more than willing to sacrifice the interests of the CPB to the priorities of Sino-Burmese state relations. This was made perfectly clear in repeated Chinese initiatives to cement the already close relations between the two countries, while Peking all but ignored the revolutionary effort of the Burmese Communists -- even going so far as to urge them in private to seek an end to their armed struggle against the Rangoon government. Only in mid-1967, after Sino-Burmese relations were virtually ruined by an unexpected outbreak of anti-Chinese riots in Rangoon, did the Chinese suddenly begin actively to support insurrection in Burma -- and in this case, up-country ethnic minority groups having no connection with the CPB.

Although conventional wisdom might have presumed that the Chinese had always strongly supported the armed effort of the Burmese Communists, who were, after all, faithfully following Mao's precepts in waging rural guerrilla warfare, the fact is that for many years Peking contrived to ignore the insurrection being waged by the CPB in the Pegu Mountains of central Burma. In the

years immediately following the 1949 Communist takeover in China, Peking gave some propaganda support to "the national liberation war" in Burma, but even this limited support was toned down during the early 1950's; by 1955, it had stopped altogether; from 1955 until 1967, the Chinese maintained a discreet public silence on the whole subject. Despite many suppositions and rumors that the Chinese were providing covert aid to the Communist insurgents, Peking is not known to have supplied any material assistance prior to 1967, other than some portable radio equipment.

Through radio contact and the establishment of an organization known as the Overseas CPB in China, the Chinese managed surprisingly well in the 1950's and early 1960's to keep the allegiance of the CPB, even while they were doing nothing to advance its insurgent effort. Apparently, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) had first suggested the idea of a Peking branch of the CPB to the Burmese Communists as a means of maintaining control over the Burmese Party; once in China, CPB officials served Chinese interests above all else. The Overseas CPB, led by CPB Vice-Chairman Thakin Ba Thein Tin, received secret directives directly from the CCP Central Committee and relayed them by radio, in the name of the CPB, to Party Chairman Thakin Than Tun and the other Communist leaders in Burma.

In June 1963, Ne Win's offer of peace talks to all insurgents (Communist and non-Communist) provided a long-awaited opportunity for the Peking-trained Burmese Communists, who had lived in China since the early 1950's, to return to Burma. Ne Win's initiative also offered the possibility of a negotiated peace between the CPB and the Burmese Government, which the Chinese had long been pressing both the Communists and Rangoon to accept. Although the peace talks ultimately collapsed, to China's disappointment, the return to Burma of the China-trained Overseas Burmese Communists managed to bring the CPB under virtual Chinese control. This development was reflected in a new Maoist "campaign" atmosphere in the CPB, featuring

prolonged Mao study sessions, mass ideological meetings, intensive self-criticism, increasing fanaticism -- and, ultimately, a prolonged and ruthless purge. By early 1967, Thakin Than Tun had begun to execute his opponents within the Party, going well beyond the practices of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in his extraordinary use of terror, including particularly gruesome, ritualistic murder sequences. The climax to this series of events came with the assassination of Thakin Than Tun by a disillusioned Party member in September 1968. With his death, the CPB reached not only the end of a pathetic chapter in its history, but also the end of its long and close association with the CCP.

For at this important juncture in CPB history, the Burmese Party happened, for the first time in years, to be without radio contact with Peking -- as the result of a damaging Burmese army attack on Party headquarters only a few days before Thakin Than Tun's death. Thus, the Chinese were completely left out of the CPB decision on Thakin Than Tun's successor, the first major decision to be made without direct Chinese advice in twenty years. Apparently, to this day, the Chinese bear a grudge against the surviving CPB leadership for its choice of Thakin Zin, rather than Peking's most trusted protegé, Overseas CPB leader Thakin Ba Thein Tin, as the new Party Chairman. Indeed, this has been a major factor in the Chinese decision to shift its interest and attention away from the Thakin Zin-led CPB effort in central Burma to sponsorship of a new insurgency in northeast Burma.

The irony of the CCP-CPB estrangement at this time was that it happened soon after a reversal in Chinese state policy toward Rangoon which should have been helpful to the CPB. That reversal, which discarded a long-held policy of support for the Burmese Government in favor of a new policy of all-out opposition to it, had come as a direct result of anti-Chinese riots in Rangoon in June 1967. It was Cultural Revolution enthusiasm on the part of Chinese embassy officers in Rangoon which had been

primarily responsible for starting the chain of events that led to the riots. However, Peking would admit no fault on its part. The GUB's inadequate handling of the riot situation had given the Chinese some legitimate cause for anger, but Peking clearly over-reacted in accusing the GUB of "instigating" the riots, a charge which had no basis in fact and was guaranteed to infuriate the Burmese. The crisis culminated in Peking's making certain demands of the GUB. While Peking felt these to be legitimate demands considering the enormity of the injury as Peking saw it (the death of many Chinese residents of Rangoon), the Burmese considered the demands humiliating. Since 1967, Ne Win has yielded to the Chinese on some of the demands but has stubbornly refused to meet them all.

The direct relationship between the blow-up in state relations and the start of active Chinese support of insurgency was unmistakable: within a matter of days of the June riots, Peking mounted a full-blown campaign of anti-Rangoon vilification; within a few weeks, it began to supply Kachin and Shan ethnic minority insurgents in northeast Burma with arms and ammunition, specialized guerrilla warfare training in China, and even new recruits from among similar ethnic minority groups living on the Chinese side of the border. There is probably no better example of the opportunism of Chinese foreign policy than Peking's sudden willingness to support these ethnic minority insurgents -- most of whom were openly anti-Communist -- simply because of the new bond between them in their common opposition to the Ne Win government. Unfortunately for the Communists, Peking was not in a position to do much, if anything, to help the CPB insurgents, isolated as they were in the Pegu Mountains of central Burma, far from the border with China. Thus, for significant logistical reasons, as well as with a mind to creating an operation under Burmese leaders of its own choosing, Peking embarked on a new undertaking, the building of a totally new Communist insurgency in northeast Burma -- with little or no contact, and very little in common, with the old CPB effort.

In the intervening four years, the old indigenous insurgency has declined, the new one has prospered. Chinese support of the latter has grown to include supplies of food, medicines, and extra funds (in Burmese currency), as well as arms and ammunition, uniforms and other clothing, and propaganda materials. The type as well as the number of weapons has expanded: as of May 1971, Chinese supplies included B-40 rocket launchers, mortars, light machine guns, and a few heavy machine guns. At the same time, the Chinese have expanded their training of Burmese insurgents at a large guerrilla warfare school run by the Chinese army in Yunnan. During the past year, they have built a powerful radio broadcasting facility at the training site, which began broadcasting clandestine propaganda support for the Burmese insurgency in March 1971. They have also stepped up their recruiting of ethnic minority peoples living on the Chinese side of the border, a practice which they have not followed in supporting insurgencies in Laos and Thailand. Recent firm information also confirms another unique aspect of the Chinese covert aid program: the presence of Chinese military advisers attached directly to insurgent headquarters. It appears that some of the advisers, operating temporarily with certain units, have accompanied insurgents into battle.

Peking has gradually centered its support on one insurgent commander, Naw Seng, a Burmese Kachin leader who lived more than 17 years in China. In early 1968, the Chinese repatriated Naw Seng to Burma as the leader of an insurgent force of some 900-1,200 ethnic Shans and Kachins recruited from both sides of the border and trained in China. In order to give his movement Communist credentials, the Chinese simply co-opted Naw Seng into the CPB, first as a member of the Central Committee, and then as a member of the Politburo. In the same way that Chinese propaganda has attempted to condition observers to think of him as a CPB leader, it has created the illusion of his Northeast Command as being a "Burmese Communist" insurgency. In fact, what the Chinese have done has been

to take an essentially ethnic minority rebellion composed largely of persons who have never belonged to the CPB, to force-feed it with Chinese Communist doctrine, and to label it as the Burmese Communist movement. This rebellion has little in common with the long-established CPB insurgency in central Burma, which is and always has been ethnically Burman and entirely Communist, and whose present leaders do not even recognize Naw Seng as a Communist. The new Chinese-backed insurgency, despite its ostensible Burmese character, has all the trappings of Chinese sponsorship, including Mao badges, Chinese propaganda materials, and Chinese army manuals.

So long as the insurgency is confined to a remote area, composed almost exclusively of ethnic minority peoples, with virtually no appeal in Burma proper, it hardly constitutes a serious threat to the survival of the Rangoon government. The GUB would seem to be easily able to contain the insurgency at existing levels -- though not to root it out of upper Burma. This being so, the GUB still considers it the most serious internal security problem facing the government. Despite Ne Win's long hesitance to discuss the matter of Chinese involvement, for fear of further damaging Sino-Burmese relations, he was finally forced to admit the seriousness of the fighting between Naw Seng's forces and the Burmese army in late 1969. His hopes of bringing sufficient pressure to bear on the Chinese to get them to halt their support of the insurgents were clearly misplaced, however, as Chinese aid and the insurgency were both stepped up thereafter.

China's continuing support of the insurgency has clearly been the main motivating force behind Ne Win's efforts since early 1970 to improve relations with Peking. Largely at Burmese initiative, but with obvious Chinese encouragement, there has been a definite improvement in diplomatic relations since the fall of 1970, culminating in the recent exchange of ambassadors. As might be expected, this change has brought certain changes as well in Chinese policy towards the Naw Seng operation. For one thing, the Chinese appear to have taken steps to tone

down insurgent operations during the recent dry season (October 1970-May 1971) when secret negotiations concerning the restoration of ambassadors were underway. Also, the Chinese have sharply cut back their previous overt propaganda support of the insurgency. At the same time, however, they have taken actions that would seem to be aimed at strengthening the insurgency as a long-term threat to Burma, albeit one less blatantly identified with China. For instance, Chinese logistical support for the rebels has been maintained at an all-time high since the exchange of ambassadors this past winter, and the Chinese have recently inaugurated the powerful new clandestine radio facility in Yunnan which broadcasts vitriolic anti-Rangoon statements in support of the Burmese insurgents. Thus, there would seem to have been a shift towards making the insurgency less of an overt Chinese challenge to the Burmese government, but no overall reduction in the scope of Chinese covert support to the insurgents.

At the moment, the Chinese seem to be following a "two-pronged" policy towards Burma of improving state relations while, at the same time, maintaining an insurgency lever over the GUB to force concessions favorable to Peking. While they now avoid overt insults and attacks on the GUB and make obvious goodwill gestures, such as their recent extension of an invitation to Ne Win to visit Peking, they continue covertly to provide considerable military support to the insurrection.

It is difficult to judge how far Ne Win might be prepared to go to get the Chinese to stop supporting the insurgents. Certainly, further concessions on his part cannot be ruled out, although it seems unlikely that he will ever give in to Mao to the point of publicly assuming all the blame for the events of June 1967 -- one of the demands that Peking is still insisting upon. In the absence of Ne Win concessions on this and other points, it is unlikely that the Chinese will consider giving up their support of the insurgency.

In the long run, that is, after Ne Win and/or Mao, the chances for a significant improvement in relations are somewhat better. There is little reason to believe that a successor military regime in Burma would be much more inclined than Ne Win to make major concessions to the Chinese, but the chances of the GUB's making such concessions would be greatly increased in the less likely event of a civilian successor government. For its part, the new Chinese leadership, after Mao's death, might be more willing to work out some compromise with the Burmese government, especially if broader foreign policy benefits might accrue to China at the time. In such a case, the Chinese might well be inclined to back away from their previously-sponsored clients and allow the insurgency to wither away. But even then, as now, there would be powerful forces operating in favor of Peking's continuing support of the Burmese insurgency: the existence of various benefits in the insurrection for China, plus the momentum and commitments of policy and pride.

Foreword

In the three decades since the Communist movement in Burma was born, there have been two competing insurgent groups within that movement -- the White Flags and the Red Flags -- which have been engaged in continuous armed struggle against the government ever since the new state of Burma was founded. Theirs has been the longest continuous civil war in Southeast Asia.

Although the leaders of the two Parties -- Thakin Soe and Thakin Than Tun -- worked together in leftist causes in pre-independence days and were both members of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) in the early 1940's, they split over the issue of collaboration with the British. In 1946, Thakin Soe, against any compromise with the British, left the CPB to form a new Communist Party (the Red Flags) which immediately launched an armed insurrection which has continued to this day.

Thakin Than Tun's Communist Party, still called the CPB but also known as the White Flags, initially adopted a policy of placing militant pressure on the British by all means short of insurrection. However, after the Socialists ousted the Communists from the coalition of nationalist parties that had worked for -- and finally won -- Burmese independence in 1948, Thakin Than Tun launched his own armed insurrection which has also continued to the present day.

Of the two Parties, the Red Flags have been comparably insignificant. Thakin Soe's forces have never numbered more than 200-300 and have been confined to a small area in western Burma near the border with India. Thakin Soe has personally dominated his movement; many of his followers have been personal friends and family

members. He has never received international recognition from either the Soviets or the Chinese. Branded by other Communists as a Trotskyite, he has been virtually isolated from the rest of the Communist movement. With his capture and imprisonment by the Rangoon government in November 1970, the organization he has led for the past 25 years is not likely to long survive.*

The CPB (White Flags) has had a much more lasting effect, not only on the Burmese internal scene but on the international Communist movement as well. Although its strength has varied greatly over the years, there have been times when its armed challenge to the government has presented a serious problem for Rangoon. The CPB has also played a role in the Sino-Soviet dispute which has been greater than its position as a small Communist Party of Southeast Asia would seem to merit. Finally, its copying of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in an internal purge of its own has given its history of the past three or four years added international significance.

This paper is concerned solely with the CPB. In tracing the history of the Party during the past twenty years, it attempts to focus on the most significant questions involving Communism in Burma today: the effect of the evolution of Chinese policy toward the Burmese government upon relations between Peking and the CPB, the effect of the Cultural Revolution in the CPB on the present

**Thakin Soe's "capture" by the government may have been prearranged; it is widely believed in Burma that he actually surrendered to the government after receiving promises of good treatment and possibly a position in the government. This cannot be firmly documented at present, however, one way or the other.*

leadership of the Party, the nature of Chinese support for the Communist insurgency, and the prospects for the armed struggle.

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THE ERA OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

Ne Win's June 1963 Offer of Peace Talks

When Ne Win assumed direct control of the Burmese government for the second time in 1962, he gave the highest priority to ending insurgency. For almost 15 years the Rangoon government had been coping not only with the problem of Communist insurgency but with the larger, more serious problem of ethnic insurgency.* As a first step towards solving the problem, Ne Win announced a general amnesty to all insurgents who surrendered to the government. After this availed nothing, he went a step further in June 1963, inviting all underground groups, Communists and non-Communists alike, to come to Rangoon for unconditional peace talks. This was just the opportunity the CPB had long been hoping for.

CPB Party Headquarters: Waiting for Peking

The scene at CPB headquarters on the day that Ne Win announced his offer of peace talks has been well described in the recently published book, The Last Days

**Roughly one-third of Burma's total population of 28 million consists of ethnic minority groups that have been dissatisfied with their position ever since the formation of the Union of Burma in 1948. Since 1949, when the Karens became the first of these minority groups to take up arms, the Burmese government has been confronted with insurgent movements in three of its five component states -- the Karen State, the Shan State, and the Kachin State.*

Thakin Than Tun
CPB Party Chairman

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of Thakin Than Tun, written by former CPB members there at the time:

> *The Party headquarters was in the thick of the forests on the Pegu Yoma range.* There was nothing anywhere near it that resembled a village.*
>
> *There were about fifteen persons at the headquarters, including three of the top leaders of the Party: Thakin Than Tun, the Party chairman; Htay, Secretary-General of the Party; and Ba Tin (alias Goshal), a member of the Politburo.*
>
> *When the announcement (of the peace talks) was heard on the radio, the CPB headquarters was greatly stirred. The people there could not believe their ears...Thakin Than Tun was visibly perturbed. Since 1951 he had been calling for a negotiated peace. Now, this man who had been clamouring for negotiated internal peace could only remark*

**The headquarters of the Communist Party had been located in the Pegu Yomas (or "central mountains") since 1948, except for a brief period in 1958, when Thakin Than Tun and his men left their hideouts there in a vain attempt to establish a foothold in Upper Burma. Running north and south in the central part of Burma, the Pegu Yomas are lower than the Western or Eastern Yomas and thickly wooded, with no good roads. Thus, they are a suitable base for guerrilla forces. Located between the two main transportation routes (both highway and railroad) out of Rangoon in the direction of Prome and Mandalay, they are ideally situated for hit-and-run attacks on the main lines of communication in the country.*

that it was 'impossible for this class of reactionary bourgeoisie to offer negotiations for peace.'

*Thakin Than Tun was like the Chinese Emperor of the fable who loved dragons so much that he ordered his palace to be decorated with effigies and figures of dragons in various poses. He loved to look at the dragon in different poses. One day, a beautiful live dragon came to the palace, and the Emperor who loved the dragon in pictures was greatly frightened by the live one and ordered it to be destroyed.**

It may well be that Thakin Than Tun was at a loss as to how to respond to the government offer of peace talks. Apparently, he had grown accustomed to relying on the advice and guidance of the Chinese on important matters involving CPB policy. It was thus normal for him to wait to receive instructions from the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee (CCP/CC) before announcing a new CPB policy.

According to [redacted], there had been radio contact between the CCP/CC and the

As quoted in The Last Days of Thakin Than Tun by Mya, Ba Khet, Bo Min Din, Saw Hla, and Bo Tin Shein; Rangoon; 1970. This two-volume book on the CPB, covering the years 1963-68, was written by five ex-members of the Party who escaped Thakin Than Tun's purge of the Party in 1967-68 by defecting to the government. Allowing for some exaggeration and the obvious bias of the authors against Thakin Than Tun, the book is by far the best source available on CPB Party history. It is basically consistent with other information available on the CPB during this period.

CPB/CC since 1950, the CPB receiving directives directly from the CCP/CC.* According to [redacted]

> *The CPB had never formulated any plan or introduced any idea of its own; it took orders from the CCP and faithfully complied with them.*
>
> *The much-maligned '1955 line', adopted by the CPB/CC in 1955, advocating an end to the civil war and the re-establishment of internal peace, was a directive sent to the CPB from Peking over the wireless. At the central committee meeting, it was delivered under the label of 'The Resolution of the CPB/CC.'*
>
> *After having laid down the program to stop the civil war and re-establish internal peace, the CCP sent detailed instructions for implementation of that policy, also over the wireless.*

**The CPB had radio contact with Yunnan; messages were relayed from there to Peking.* [redacted] *Apparently, communications via the radio were also supplemented by courier traffic overland from China. There is no evidence that the Chinese embassy in Rangoon was involved in the communications system, however, either in transmitting clandestine radio messages to the CPB or in sending couriers to CPB headquarters.*

Thakin Ba Thein Tin
Chairman of the Overseas CPB

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Besides the radio contact, the Chinese had contact with the CPB through the Overseas CPB in China, an organization of some 60-65 Burmese Communists who had been living in China since the early 1950's.* The extent of this secret organization -- officially called the Overseas Branch of the CPB -- has only recently come to light, with the publication of The Last Days of Thakin Than Tun in 1970. Formed in 1953 by Thakin Ba Thein Tin and Thakin Than Myaing, who acted as its Chairman and Vice-chairman, respectively, it was founded with the purpose of establishing contact with other Communist Parties. Its members were supposed to meet with representatives of foreign Communist Parties who came to China and to represent the CPB at international Communist meetings.** CPB Party Chairman Thakin Than Tun,

In 1950, Central Committee members Aung Gyi and Bo Than Shwe were the first Burmese Communists go to China and stay. Then, in May 1953, Thakin Ba Thein Tin, the vice-chairman of the Party, led a group of 40 Burmese Communists who entered China secretly via Burma's northern frontier area between Myitkyina and Bhano. Finally, in September 1953, another group of 24 CPB members, including Politburo member Thakin Than Myaing and Central Committee members Thakin Pu and Bo Zeya, left Burma for China. Thus, by 1962, two of the CPB's seven Politburo members and six of its 21 Central Committee had been living in China for over ten years.

***In every case where the identity of the CPB delegate to an international Communist meeting is known, it was a member of the Overseas CPB, that is, a Burmese Communist who was actually living in China. For instance, the CPB delegate to the meeting of Communist Parties in Moscow in November 1960 was Thakin Ba Thein Tin himself. There is no evidence of the Burmese Communists who remained in Burma ever taking part in an international meeting.*

(footnote continued on page 12)

who had never been outside Burma and was neither internationalist in outlook nor particularly concerned about foreign assistance, was apparently more than willing to leave international matters to Thakin Ba Thein Tin and the Overseas CPB.

There is good reason to believe that the Chinese suggested the idea of the Overseas CPB to the Burmese Communists. Once in China, the CPB officials appeared to serve Chinese interests above all else. According to one Burmese Party member who had intimate knowledge of the workings of the Overseas CPB, the latter took its orders directly from the CCP:

> *Although the Overseas CPB should have been under the control of the CPB, since it was obviously a branch of the latter, it acted in a superior way to its mother organization and relayed the directives the CCP had to give to the CPB. The latter had to comply with the orders of the CCP.*

(footnote continued from page 11)
(In fact, there is no evidence that the Burmese Communist Party, that is, the Party in Burma, concerned itself with international affairs at all. Telegrams sent in the name of the CPB -- for instance, the telegram congratulating the Albanians for their stand against the Soviets in early 1962 -- were sent by Burmese Communists in China, no doubt at the direction of the Chinese.) At international Communist meetings, the Burmese Communists, who were invariably members of the Overseas CPB, always supported the Chinese position on issues in dispute in the international Communist movement.

In any event, as soon as word reached Peking of Ne Win's call for peace talks in June 1963, the Chinese are reported to have called an emergency meeting of the Overseas CPB at which a resolution was passed authorizing Aung Gyi and Tin Shein to proceed immediately to Burma to negotiate with the government.* It appears that Ne Win's move had provided the Chinese with an opportunity for which they too had long been waiting, inasmuch as the CCP is known to have sent the following directive to the Overseas CPB a few years earlier:

> *Nobody can tell when the comrades from Burma will be able to return to their country. A good opportunity for their return will have to be awaited, and so the period of their stay in China will surely be a long one.*

The Chinese obviously saw Ne Win's offer of peace talks as the long-awaited opportunity for the Peking-trained Communists to return to Burma, where they could exert a major role in shaping Burmese Communist policy. Regardless of the outcome of the talks, they afforded the Chinese an opportunity to tighten their control over the Communist movement in Burma. In addition, the Chinese

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**As it turned out, circumstances allowed the Overseas CPB to send considerably more representatives to the peace talks than originally envisaged. A first group of seven representatives, including Aung Gyi, Thakin Pu, and Tin Shein, arrived in Rangoon on 12 July; a second group, of eleven, led by Bo Zeya, arrived two weeks later; and a third group, led by Thakin Ba Thein Tin himself, arrived in early September. Before the first group left, the CCP gave a dinner in their honor attended by "high-ranking members of the CCP." Li Wei-han, who was in charge of the United Front Work Department of the CCP/CC, is also*
(footnote continued on page 14)

would seem to have been very much interested in the peace talks for their own sake. Contrary to widespread belief, they were interested at the time in an end to the unproductive Communist armed struggle in Burma. Apparently, they had real hope that the talks would result in a negotiated peace which would ultimately be exploitable by the Communists.

Chinese Pressure To End The Fighting

Although one might presume that the Chinese strongly supported the armed struggle of the Burmese Communists, who were, after all, faithfully following Mao's precepts in waging a people's revolutionary war (a rural guerrilla war), the fact is that Peking had given virtually no help to the Communist insurgency in Burma. In the years immediately after the Communist takeover in China, the Chinese gave propaganda support to "the national liberation war" in Burma, but even this was toned down during the early 1950's; by 1955, it had stopped altogether. From 1955 through 1963, the Chinese maintained a discreet public silence on the whole subject of the armed struggle in Burma.

Apparently, the Burmese Communists had expected support from the Chinese and had been very much surprised at the aloof attitude adopted by the CCP throughout this period towards the revolutionary struggle in Burma. Contrary to the many rumors and suspicions that the Chinese

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known to have briefed the delegation before its departure. There can be no doubt that the Chinese were providing the behind-the-scenes direction to the Communist representatives at the peace talks.

were providing aid to the Burmese insurgents, they are not known to have supplied any assistance -- either arms or equipment -- with the exception of the radio communications equipment they furnished the CPB.*

In addition to the evidence that the Chinese were not providing concrete support to the armed struggle in Burma, there is good evidence that they used their influence with both the Burmese government and the Communists to promote peace negotiations. In October 1960, Liu Shao-chi is reliably reported to have asked U Nu, then Prime Minister, why, "if Communism would not be defeated by arms alone" (as U Nu had said), did the government of Burma not stop the armed struggle and allow the Communists to serve in the government? U Nu is said to have answered that the idea was "not bad" and "might be tried," whereupon Liu urged him to stop the government's military operations against the Communists. In April 1963, Liu Shao-chi similarly pressed Ne Win to make peace with the CPB and allow Communist participation in the government. Chinese pressure may indeed have had something to do with Ne Win's decision that month to offer an amnesty, and two months later, peace talks.

In these same years that Peking was trying to get the government to offer the Communists peace talks, it was also actively promoting a peace line within the CPB. As noted earlier, it was the Chinese who in 1955 suggested a "peace line" to the CPB and sent detailed instructions on how to implement the policy of seeking to end the civil war. As soon as Ne Win's offer of peace talks was made public in 1963, Thakin Ba Thein Tin, the Chairman of the Overseas CPB in China, wrote Goshal and other CPB leaders in Burma, explaining why the CPB should accept "Ne Win's sincerity" in offering peace talks. Since Thakin Ba Thein Tin was -- and still is -- little more than Communist China's mouthpiece, this is good evidence that the Chinese were interested in inducing the CPB to take Ne Win's offer seriously.

**See pages 39-40 for a fuller discussion of the evidence of the lack of Chinese military assistance to the CPB prior to June 1967.*

Thus, the evidence is consistent that the Chinese were urging all parties concerned to end the fighting in Burma and re-establish peace on the basis of the Communists being allowed to participate in the government. In essence, what the Chinese were pushing for was the abandonment of the armed struggle in favor of a kind of united-front government, in which the Communists would obviously not have predominant power, but which they might come to dominate later. The Chinese apparently saw this as a short cut to power for the Burmese Communists, as well as a means of increasing Chinese influence over the Rangoon government.

As for China's motives, Peking's pressure to end the fighting and have the Communists participate in the government in Burma was in keeping with the general line of Chinese foreign policy at the time. With respect to Burma, it was probably motivated by the following special considerations: (1) the hopeless military situation of the CPB, (2) the real possibility that Ne Win would agree to CPB participation in the government (inasmuch as Communists who had defected to the government had received government appointments), and (3) the friendly attitude of the government of Burma towards China.* Of the three, the last was by far the most important.

Accordingly, the Chinese had good reason to be satisfied with Burmese foreign policy over the years. In 1949, Burma had been the first non-Communist country to recognize Communist China. During the early 1950's, it had supported China on a number of key international questions, including the question of Chinese admission to the UN and the UN resolution condemning Chinese

A "friendly" nation, from the Chinese point of view, was one that supported or at least did not oppose Chinese positions on important international issues.

intervention in Korea. In 1954, Chou En-lai chose Burma as one of the first countries he visited as Premier. The joint communiqué that he signed with the Burmese government elucidating the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" anticipated the later (1955) "Bandung Spirit." His visit was reciprocated by U Nu later in 1954, and after that there was a fairly steady exchange of high-level visits between the two countries. In 1955, Burma was the first non-Communist country to sign a civil air agreement with China, with the result that Burma became the customary transit point for Chinese leaders enroute to other foreign destinations. In 1960, Burma was the first country to sign a Treaty of Friendship and Non-aggression with China and the first to settle a boundary dispute. Finally, in October 1961, atop this long display of friendship and cooperation, China rewarded Burma with the most generous economic aid offer that it had ever made to a non-bloc country, an interest-free credit of $84,000,000.

So long as relations with Burma were good, and there was a good chance of getting pro-Chinese Burmese Communists into positions where they could influence Burmese policy even more favorably towards China, it was definitely in China's interests to maintain good relations with the government and not to allow Chinese entanglements with an insurgent CPB to disrupt these relations. The point to be stressed, since it has a direct bearing on developments in 1967-70, is that the 1963 Chinese assessment of the government (i.e., Burmese foreign and domestic policies) seems to have been the determining factor in its formulation of policy towards the Burmese Communist insurgency.

The Chinese had not only made their priorities clear, in repeated initiatives to cement the already close relations between China and Burma, while they all but ignored the revolutionary struggle of the CPB, but they had gone so far as to urge the Burmese Communists (in private) to give up the armed struggle against the government. Thus, Peking sought to remove the one issue

Signing of the Sino-Burmese Border Agreement, October 1960
(Photo shows U Nu and Chou En-lai signing the agreement, with Ne Win and Liu Shao-chi standing behind them)

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that might well bring them into conflict with the GUB. In the meantime, the Chinese had managed to keep the allegiance of the CPB -- mainly through the establishment of an overseas CPB organization in China and the proffering of advice and guidance via radio from Peking, without giving either materiel or public propaganda support to the Communist insurgency.

The Collapse of the Peace Talks: Chinese Dismay at the CPB

Ne Win's offer of peace talks applied to all underground organizations, not just the CPB; and almost all of the insurgent groups turned up: the Red Flag Communists, the White Flags, the Kachins, and the Karens. The government negotiated with each group separately, the talks lasting from August to November 1963. In every case but one, the talks were abruptly called off by one side or the other; in the end, only the right-wing Karens remained (the left-wing having made common cause with the CPB and having followed it back into dissidence). In March 1964, a ceasefire agreement with the right-wing Karens was announced, the only tangible result of the months of negotiations.

The Burmese government broke off the negotiations with the CPB on 14 November 1963. In announcing the end of the talks, the GUB claimed that the Communists "had failed to display a spirit of sincerity or honesty by taking advantage of the government through political, military, and organizational activities." It accused the Communists of exploiting the temporary lull in hostilities by "surreptitiously expanding CPB territory, levying taxes to increase Party funds, and conducting frequent raids and ambushes against government patrols and outposts."

It is difficult to assess the blame for the breakdown of the talks. It is true that the Communists,

interpreting Ne Win's offer of peace talks as a sign of weakness, tried to take advantage of the negotiations to expand their own territory at the expense of the government. Particularly annoying to the government was the outside activity of the Communist representatives at the peace talks who spent much of their time in Rangoon organizing demonstrations in support of the CPB and making contact with other opposition parties.* But while the Communists had been busy using the opportunity offered by the peace talks to extend their propaganda and organizational efforts into areas not previously under their control, the government had also been busy extracting maximum propaganda advantage from its original offer of peace talks.

It seems that the Communists' efforts to improve their military position during the peace talks may merely have been the pretext that the government used to break off negotiations. The real reason for the failure of the talks was probably the fact that neither side was willing to compromise. Among other things, the Communists demanded that the government recognize the CPB as a legal political party. Their demands were certainly unrealistic,

**The peace talks were abruptly terminated by the government almost immediately after a massive peace rally staged by the Communists in Rangoon on 10 November. Speakers at the rally implied that only the Communists were sincere in their desire for peace and that the government was seeking peace only because of Communist pressure. The rally was obviously an effort to pressure the government as well as to claim credit for the impending end to civil war -- credit which Ne Win was not prepared to share with anyone.*

considering the weak military position of the CPB.* One can only speculate whether they might have compromised on these demands had they thought that the government was about to terminate the discussions. There are several reports that the CPB was anxious to avoid a breakdown of the talks.

The collapse of the peace talks must have been a disappointment to the Chinese. We know that Thakin Ba Thein Tin, who had come from China to Rangoon to participate in the talks, worked very hard to make the

*We have no information as to what the Chinese may have advised the CPB as to peace terms. Presumably, they knew and approved of the position that the CPB took at the start of the talks. However, they may have misjudged the chances of the GUB's agreeing to the Communist demands. It is not clear whether they knew or approved of some of the Communist tactics during the talks -- such as the organizing of peace demonstrations. If so, they may again have misjudged the effect of these tactics on Ne Win and the GUB. In any case, they would have expected the CPB to be more flexible in adjusting its tactics to avoid a breakdown in the talks. Apparently neither the CPB nor the CCP suspected the government of being about to break off the talks; if they had, the Chinese would almost certainly have advised the CPB differently. Apparently, they depended on the CPB for a reading of GUB intentions, and the CPB was very much mistaken in this regard. Thus, although the CPB may have taken certain initiatives, such as the organizing of mass demonstrations (which the Chinese later criticized), the whole episode should not be taken as evidence that the CPB was unresponsive to Chinese control. It would seem to be more a case of both the Chinese and the Burmese Communists misreading the situation, rather than the CPB ignoring the advice of the CCP.

negotiations a success. During the talks, the Chinese had been very careful to play the role of sympathetic observer rather than interested party; and, when the talks broke down, they made no comment that indicated that they regretted the outcome. However, a year later, in October 1964, NCNA broadcast a message from the CPB to the CCP alleging that the peace talks had failed, "owing to sabotage by the forces of imperialism, internal reaction in Burma [i.e., right-wing forces in the government of Burma], and [Burmese Communist] revisionism." This is as close as the Chinese ever came to attacking the Burmese government prior to June 1967, when the big blow-up in Sino-Burmese relations occurred. The Burmese government is reported to have very much resented this obvious interference in Burmese internal affairs; in fact, it was said to have been more angered by this action than by anything else the Chinese did prior to mid-1967.

The Aftermath of the Talks: The CPB Internal Struggle

According to [redacted] the CPB "had no policy left after the collapse of the peace talks. The Party went bankrupt politically, organizationally, and militarily."

It is certainly true that this was a desperate time for the CPB militarily. Almost immediately after the breakdown in the talks, the Burmese army went on the offensive against the Communists in the Irrawaddy delta area. CPB military units, which had dwindled from an estimated 2,000 men under arms in February 1962 to less than 1,000 in late 1963, were no longer capable of mounting a military offensive; during the winter of 1963-64, they were reduced to sporadic acts of terror and sabotage, mostly against economic targets. For the most part, they avoided a direct challenge to the military, even of the hit-and-run terrorist type, and concentrated instead on economic interference and

harassment, such as the burning of government rice storehouses -- actions which proved generally ineffective.

It was against this dismal background that the Chinese began to interfere more directly in the internal affairs of the CPB. For at least a year before the peace negotiations began in the summer of 1963, Thakin Than Tun's position as Party chairman had been very shaky: in June 1962, he had only barely survived a direct challenge to his authority in the form of a vote of no-confidence in the Central Committee posed by Politburo member Goshal; setbacks to the Party in late 1962 and early 1963 had threatened his position even more seriously. It is doubtful that Thakin Than Tun could have survived another test of strength in the Central Committee if a vote on the Party chairmanship had been taken in June 1963.*

**At the Central Committee meeting in June 1962, Goshal made a long speech recounting all the errors of Thakin Than Tun's leadership, which Goshal blamed for the enormous losses suffered by the Party during 1958-62. At the end of the meeting, Goshal and some of Thakin Than Tun's other opponents moved to replace Thakin Than Tun as chairman. The vote was 4-3 in favor of the motion, with five absentions. Since the vote of a majority of those present (in this case, seven votes) was required to elect a new chairman, Thakin Than Tun continued as chairman. However, it was clear that he did not have the support of the majority. For the moment, Politburo members such as Htay, Thakin Zin, and Mya, who had abstained on the vote, held the balance of power. It was not clear at the time which way they would go. However, by June 1963, when Ne Win suddenly offered the Communists the unexpected opportunity for peace talks, Thakin Zin, Htay, and Mya had all become much more disillusioned with Thakin Than Tun, largely as a result of the disclosure in the meantime of his theft of secret Party funds.*

After a hiatus of several months, when all attention was focused on the peace talks, Goshal renewed his direct challenge to Thakin Than Tun in December 1963. At a meeting at Party headquarters, at which Thakin Than Tun presented his case that "the failure of the peace talks was due to the Revolutionary Council, which had tried to force the peace delegates [the CPB] to surrender to the terms it dictated", Goshal argued that

> *the [CPB] delegation had not worked for negotiations but had exploited the situation by expanding the underground organizational work of the party and by organizing demonstrations with a view to placing the Government in a fix. These activities created a misunderstanding at a time when misunderstandings should have been avoided. Thus, the responsibility for the failure of the negotiations rests with the party.*

For the first time, however, Goshal found himself virtually isolated in his opposition to Thakin Than Tun. In addition to Thakin Than Tun and his loyal supporter Thakin Chit, all of the CPB leaders who had returned from China were now solidly aligned against him.* The

**Three of the Central Committee members who came from China to Burma for the peace talks -- Aung Gyi, Thakin Pu, and Bo Zeya -- stayed in Burma after the collapse of the talks. Besides these three, 25 other Peking-returnees stayed in Burma permanently, joining Thakin Than Tun in armed opposition to the government. The rest of the Burmese Communists who had come from China, including CPB Vice Chairman Thakin Ba Thein Tin, went back almost immediately after the collapse of the talks.*

Peking-returnees, most of whom were now permanently attached to Party headquarters, had tipped the balance in favor of the previously discredited Thakin Than Tun; it was a significant change in the tide that had been running against Thakin Than Tun ever since June 1962. In the next few years, these Peking-returnees would play a significant role in the strong comeback of Thakin Than Tun as Party chairman. The December 1963 meeting signalled the fundamental change in the balance of power in the CPB that had occurred as a result of their return from China.

This lineup in support of Thakin Than Tun was clearly the result of Chinese advice. When asked by the CPB for its views on the breakdown of the talks with Ne Win, Peking had sent (by radio) a Top Secret message entitled "Our Views on the Negotiations." It is significant that this epistle from the Chinese managed to skirt the whole issue of the negotiations and to concentrate instead on the question of Party unity. As stated in The Last Days of Thakin Than Tun:

> *We may find it necessary to make a correct assessment of the past action, but it is better for us to avoid paying too much attention to the past and ponder on the trends and duties of the future.*
>
> *It would not contribute anything to unity within the Party to waste time on determining whether it was correct or not to hold a mass meeting on November 10th or*

*whether it was correct or not to negotiate with the National Democratic United Front (NDUF).**

If no agreement can be obtained on these points, the matters should be postponed. Time and circumstances will in due course offer answers to these questions.

Although the Party may have suffered some losses, the following are some of its successes:

(a) Some members of the Party abroad were brought back.

(b) We gained experience both in the good and the bad sides of things.

**In 1959, the CPB formed an alliance with the leftist Karen National United Party and three other minuscule minority parties: the New Mon State Party, the Karen Progressive Party, and the Chin Supreme Organization. The alliance was largely a paper organization until 1967, when for the first time mixed bands of Karens and Communists conducted joint operations in the Irrawaddy Delta under the name of the NDUF.*

In 1963, the Communists chose to negotiate with the government within the framework of the NDUF. To judge from the above message, the Chinese considered this a mistake. As a last-ditch effort to save the peace talks after the GUB terminated discussions with the NDUF, the CPB proposed that the "Revolutionary Council resume talks with the individual parties of the NDUF, even though talks with the NDUF as an entity have failed." The GUB refused to do this, however.

(c) We were able to expose Ne Win's bogus peace move and his bogus socialism.

(d) We were able to show the people that we were really desirous of peace and worked honestly for it.

It would be wrong to conclude that since the enemy has broken up negotiations this time there are no possibilities of peace in the future. The Party should repeatedly call for peace whenever an occasion arises.

Peking's message seems to convey a definite sense of disappointment, which is consistent with other evidence we have that the Chinese had hoped for a different outcome from the peace talks. There is also a hint of disapproval in the allusion to CPB tactics (i.e. the holding of mass demonstrations and CPB contact with other opposition parties during the peace negotiations), tactics which the Chinese probably did not specifically authorize and which the government was able to use as an excuse to break off the talks. But if the Chinese were somewhat less than satisfied with the CPB performance during the negotiations, they were unwilling to voice criticism of that performance directly because they did not wish to undermine the position of CPB Chairman Thakin Than Tun. Peking's stress on Party unity and insistence that the CPB not waste time reviewing the past, but concentrate instead on the "future possibilities for peace," were clearly intended to block any effort to use the failure of the peace talks to unseat him.

In April 1964, the Chinese intervened even more directly, making a number of specific recommendations on Burmese Party organization, all of which were promptly accepted by Thakin Than Tun and submitted to a meeting of the Central Committee in September 1964 under the

heading "The Chairman's Original Proposals."* These measures were obviously designed to increase Chinese control over the CPB. First, it was recommended that Thakin Than Tun be kept as Party Chairman -- allegedly because his name was "well known in Burma and abroad." Secondly, it was suggested that Central Committee members abroad (referring to the Overseas CPB in China) keep their full rank and position on the Central Committee, despite their prolonged absence from Burma. Lastly, it was recommended that Bo Zeya, a Peking-returnee, be elected a full member of the Central Committee. With the support of the Peking-returnees, Thakin Than Tun managed to have all these proposals accepted by the Central Committee.

The Central Committee meeting of September 1964 was the first of several important organizational moves, many of them illegal as far as the Party constitution was concerned, that Thakin Than Tun was to make during 1964-66 to maintain his control over the CPB. Having barely survived a no-confidence motion at the 1962 Central Committee meeting, he was obviously afraid to call a full meeting of the Central Committee in 1964. With the necessity of promulgating a new Party line after the failure of the peace talks, however, he had to make some pretense of holding a Central Committee meeting to approve the new line. Thus, he called a meeting of the Politburo members and the Peking-returnees who were at Party headquarters; two regional representatives of the Central Committee were invited to give it legitimacy as a Central Committee meeting. However, most of the members of the Central Committee were not informed of the meeting. This was the beginning of Thakin Than Tun's bypassing of the Central Committee and his use of other organizations within the Party, either the Politburo or more informal groups which he was to create, in order to make Party policy.

On the specific advice of the Chinese, the Central Committee also adopted a resolution on Party unity, emphasizing the special unity between those Central Committee members "who were abroad but have now come back and those who have always been in the country." Here again, the motive was the obvious one of strengthening CPB ties with China. The Chinese had made a definite point of the need for unity between Thakin Than Tun and his principal rival, Goshal.

> *It is necessary to promote the spirit of cooperation and confidence among members of the Central Committee. Gossiping, bringing disgrace, and factionalism should be avoided. It is desirable to pay special attention to building unity between the Chairman and Comrade Goshal.*

Although it was not spelled out, what the Chinese really meant was unity between Thakin Than Tun and Goshal on the basis of what Peking and Thakin Than Tun were advocating for the Party -- in other words, complete surrender by Goshal and his followers. It would be two years before the full import of the resolution would become clear; only in hindsight could it be seen clearly as the final warning to Goshal and his supporters that no more opposition would be tolerated.

The Cult of Thakin Than Tun

During 1965-66, a new atmosphere of militancy developed at Party headquarters, nurtured by Thakin Than Tun and the Peking-returnees.

> *This was the time when Thakin Than Tun, Thakin Chit, and Aung Gyi were crying*

themselves hoarse with such slogans as 'Fight the Ne Win Fascist Government to the last!', 'Destroy the enemy as an enemy!'. 'Don't hesitate to kill one's parents if they are enemies'. They constantly encouraged the youths [the students at the Central Marxism-Leninism School] to shout these slogans.

This was also the time when the word 'revolutionary' was in vogue. Everything was 'revolutionary' -- the 'revolutionary Politburo', 'the Revolutionary Central Committee', the 'revolutionary students', the 'revolutionary office superintendent' -- even the 'revolutionary kitchen'.

Every conversation at party headquarters was cluttered with the word of Mao.

By late 1966, Party headquarters was totally absorbed in Maoist-type campaigns, such as "the campaign against the Three Evils of Right Opportunism, Liberalism, and Sectarianism." Some of the campaigns had at least some semblance of a rational ideological basis; others, like the Dog-eating Context (those who didn't eat dog-meat were considered revisionists) were more obviously fanatical. The Peking-returnees openly acknowledged that these campaigns were modelled after similar movements in which they had participated in China.

In addition, there was a new emphasis on terror in CPB activities. The first of the torture-assassinations which were to become a familiar feature of the CPB in late 1967 occurred in November 1966. In this case, Thakin Than Tun ordered the assassination of Hla Kyi, a low-level Party official, and his wife solely because they had chosen to leave Party headquarters to return to their home town and work for the Party there.

Their grim, ritualistic murder was to be repeated countless times during the next year, with an increasingly orgy-like atmosphere and a greater number of participants in the symbolic act of murder. Terror was also used against local villagers who were suspected of giving aid to government troops in their search operations against the Communists. (In this case, the CPB was departing from a long-standing tradition of leaving villagers alone, as long as they provided safe haven and food and other provisions to the CPB. In many cases, the same villagers cooperated with the CPB and the government troops, depending on who came to their village.)

In early 1967, the ideological campaign reached a new height, when Party members were forced to swear that they would kill all "pacifists" (those advocating negotiations with the government) whom they discovered within the Party, including their own parents. In this atmosphere, it was only a matter of time before Thakin Than Tun's chief rivals -- Goshal and his supporters -- would become targets of the new reign of terror in the CPB.

The CPB Cultural Revolution, Stage I: The Purge of Goshal

The movement to purge Goshal and his two high-level supporters in the Party, Politburo member Htay and Party Headquarters Superintendent Ba Khet, began in early spring 1967. As the three men were permanently attached to Party headquarters, they were present at all the indoctrination sessions which preceded their arrest, trial, torture, and, finally, execution. (Only

Goshal
CPB Politburo Member

Htay
CPB Politburo Member

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Ba Khet was spared death, because he managed to escape from the bamboo prison where he was held shortly before he would have been executed along with Goshal and Htay.*)

Goshal was proclaimed a "revisionist" and a "paci fist who was opposed to revolutionary war". On 27 April 1967, Thakin Than Tun announced a Politburo decision to expel him from the Central Committee. Apparently, this decision had been reached at secret meetings of Thakin Than Tun, Thakin Zin, Aung Gyi, Thakin Pu, and Bo Yan Aung, only two of whom were members of the Politburo. Goshal was confronted with the charges against him at a meeting of this group on 28 April. After denying all the other charges, including the allegation that he was opposed to the Central Marxism-Leninism School (a stronghold of the Peking-returnees) and to Marxist-Leninist teachings, he addressed himself to the main charge, that of being a "revisionist." He said that he was "not prepared to admit that he was a die-hard revisionist, since he did not consider himself opposed to Marxism-Leninism Mao Tse-tung's Thought." In conclusion, he said that he accepted his demotion from the Central Committee and promised to work for the Party in any capacity that the Party wished.

Essentially the same scene was repeated for Htay and Ba Khet. The 27 April Politburo decision had also expelled Htay from the Central Committee and had dismissed Ba Khet from his post as Superintendent of the Party Headquarters Office. In announcing their demotions, Thakin

**During early 1967, Party headquarters was constantly on the move, and it was during one such move, on 6 June, that Ba Khet escaped from his prison guards. He immediately surrendered to the Burmese army and on 14 June held a press conference in Rangoon. This was the first that the outside world knew of the upheaval within the CPB.*

Than Tun declared:

> *This day marks the beginning of the historic revolution within the Party. The revolutionary Politburo has resolved to stand firm on Marxism-Leninism, Mao Tse-tung's Thought and to annihilate revisionism. This is a historic event, a triumph for the CPB over revisionism.*

Htay's son, a student at the Marxism-Leninism School, is reported to have led the shouting of slogans against his father. In the next few weeks, this young man was to be given a leading role in the struggle sessions against Htay and the other two condemned men.

This last, fanatic stage in the purge of Goshal and Htay was strikingly similar in many key aspects to the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Two of the most familiar features of the Chinese revolution which the Burmese Communists borrowed were the wall-poster campaign and the marathon "mass meetings" at which the accused were sentenced to death. The Peking-returnees even sought to make explicit the comparison of the Cultural Revolution in the CPB with that of the CCP: they are reported to have continuously referred to Goshal as "Burma's Liu Shao-chi," and to Htay as "Burma's Teng Hsiao-ping." After the arrest of Goshal, Htay, and Ba Khet in May 1967, the Politburo had adopted a "Resolution on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of China," which made Mao's Thought the official line of the CPB.* Its

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**Thakin Than Tun and Aung Gyi are reported to have authored the resolution on the Cultural Revolution. Although they reportedly wrote it in early spring, they had been unable to get it approved over the strong objections of Goshal and Htay. After the latter were*

(footnote continued on page 35)

eulogy of Mao Tse-tung rivalled the most extreme statement of praise for the Chinese Party Chairman in China itself:

> *Comrade Mao is the greatest Marxist-Leninist of our times. He has inherited Marxism-Leninism, defended it, and with his genius and creativeness brought about an all-round development of it... It is definitely recognized that the Thought of Mao has taken a new position, not only for China, but also for the history of Marxism-Leninism. In present times, Mao's Thought is the guiding thought in the international Communist movement.*
>
> *Since 1948 the CPB has expressed its desire to adopt the thought of Mao as a guiding principle in the same way as the teachings of Marx, Engels, and Lenin have been adopted. But today, such a position is not enough. Today Mao's Thought must be the sole guiding principle for the triumph of the revolution in Burma. For these reasons, in Burma opposition to Mao's Thought is the same as opposition to Marxism-Leninism. The CPB must fight uncompromisingly against those opposed to Mao's Thought. Such persons must be destroyed.*

(footnote continued from page 34)
arrested, it was submitted to a meeting of the Central Marxism-Leninism School, which declared itself to have the powers of a Party congress. The resolution was unanimously approved as the official Party line on 15 May 1967.

There is persisting confusion about the actual date of Goshal's murder, largely because the fact of his death did not become known outside the Party until late 1967. It was presumed that he had been killed sometime in the fall of 1967. Actually, he and Htay were liquidated in early June, at least two weeks before the eruption of anti-Chinese riots in Rangoon, which were the cause of the sudden break in Burmese relations with China. The timing is important in establishing the fact that the Cultural Revolution in the CPB pre-dated the break in Sino-Burmese relations. Because the Chinese began to give public support to the CPB Cultural Revolution in July 1967, after the blow-up in state relations, many observers naturally assumed that the Cultural Revolution began at that time. The presumption was that the Chinese had inspired and organized it after they began to support Communist insurgency in Burma. Thus, the CPB Cultural Revolution came to be regarded as an outgrowth of the new Chinese policy towards the CPB. It was thought that the Chinese had found it necessary to purge Goshal as a first step in gaining control of the CPB, presumably because he resisted China's intervention in CPB affairs after China's break with the Burmese government.

Actually, as we have seen, the Cultural Revolution was well under way by March 1967, when Goshal and Htay first came under fire. It seems probable that the purge would have proceeded much as it did even if the sudden rupture in Sino-Burmese relations had not ensued and the Chinese had not suddenly acquired a new motive for supporting the CPB against the government. Thakin Than Tun and the Peking-returnees had obviously decided, with Chinese acquiescence if not active encouragement, to purge Goshal and Htay and other "revisionist elements" in the Party well before the events of June 1967 brought the Chinese and the CPB together in a common opposition to the Ne Win government. As a result of the revision in Chinese policy, the Chinese began to praise the pre-existing Cultural Revolution in the CPB and to give increasingly serious support to other CPB policies, including the armed struggle against the government.

With the removal of Goshal and Htay in June 1967, the internal struggle within the CPB spread throughout the CPB, from the Politburo down to the most basic Party organizations. It extended, as well, to the Overseas CPB in China. According to [redacted] over half of the Burmese Communists in China were "liquidated" in the course of one year.* Included among the purge victims were Thakin Than Myaing, fifth in standing in the Politburo and Central Committee and the Vice-Chairman of the Overseas CPB. Like Goshal and Htay, he was accused of being a revisionist and an anti-Party activist, and was liquidated in China. With his death, three of the seven members of the Politburo had been purged, leaving only Thakin Than Tun, Thakin Ba Thein Tin (in China), Thakin Zin, and Thakin Chit -- all supporters of the new "revolutionary" line. The circumstances surrounding the purge of the CPB Party members in China are not known (we know only that Vice Chairman Thakin Ba Thein Tin took a leading role in liquidating Thakin Than Myaing), but there is abundant material on the terror used against the purge victims in Burma.

We have no specific information on Chinese directives to the CPB during this phase of the Cultural Revolution. It is clear, however, that the Peking-returnees played a major role in directing the Cultural Revolution, and it can be presumed that the Chinese not only supported it but probably suggested the idea of a Cultural Revolution to Thakin Than Tun in the first place. There is nothing to indicate that the Chinese tried to stop the killings within the CPB, although the killings went far beyond any of the methods employed in Mao's purge of the CCP. In 1968, when the Cultural Revolution in the CPB reached its most fanatical, bloodthirsty stage, Peking was still publicly endorsing it, a position which implies Chinese tolerance of the killings as well.

[redacted]

Peking's Hands-off Attitude Towards Insurgency

To appreciate the change in Chinese policy after June 1967, it it necessary to understand the Chinese attitude toward the CPB armed struggle during the years (1964-June 1967) when Thakin Than Tun managed to consolidate his position in the Party through a wholesale purge of the Party apparatus.

Chinese policy towards the armed struggle in this period had remained essentially the same as it had been during 1955-63, except that Peking dropped its pressure on the CPB to stop the insurgency. The Chinese continued meanwhile to pressure the Burmese government to negotiate with the Communists. During his visit to Rangoon in December 1964, Chen Yi apparently urged Ne Win to make another attempt to include "all patriots" in a united-front government. The Burmese leader flatly refused, explaining that he had no intention of negotiating with rebels who refused to lay down their arms. Again, the Chinese ambassador in Rangoon urged Ne Win, in late 1966, to resume talks with the CPB, and the Burmese President rejected the idea once more, saying that he had tried this once before and found the Communists insincere. However, in October 1966, Ne Win is reported to have met privately with a representative of the CPB/CC at the latter's request. Here he apparently asked the Communists to bide their time, promising that an initiative from the government would be forthcoming at a later date. In May 1967, just before the crisis in Sino-Burmese relations and at the height of the "anti-Goshal movement" in the CPB, the government sent a secret emissary to the CPB with an offer to reopen peace talks at a time of the CPB's

choosing.* The government emissary was not authorized to negotiate beyond the point of securing agreement "to discuss a negotiated settlement of the long-time insurgency," however. We do not know what the CPB response was, and in any case these events were overtaken by the blow-up in Sino-Burmese relations which removed the last hope for peace negotiations between the Communists and the Rangoon government.

Up to mid-1967, while the Chinese kept up the pressure on the GUB to negotiate with the Communists, they refrained even from propaganda support of the insurgency. So far as is known, they provided no material support for the CPB. Considering the detailed information that is available on Chinese contacts with the Burmese Party, it is almost inconceivable that there would be no mention of Chinese military aid to the CPB insurgents in The Last Days of Thakin Than Tun and other sources of information on the CPB, if in fact the CCP had been supplying the Burmese Communists with military assistance. The Last Days of Thakin Than Tun gives a rather complete listing of the meager supplies of arms and ammunition with which the Communists operated. Moreover, the Burmese Army has never claimed to have found large numbers of arms in any of its raids on Communist hideouts. In September 1968, the army staged a particularly successful attack on Party headquarters in which all of the arms in the possession of the Party leadership were captured. The most significant loss for the CPB was the army's capture of the radio communications

**The secret emissary was Bo Ye Htut, a former leader of the CPB who had surrendered to the government in May 1963. He had been one of Thakin Than Tun's supporters at the Central Committee meeting in June 1962 in voting against Goshal's motion to relieve Thakin Than Tun as Party Chairman.*

equipment with which the CPB had maintained contact with Peking. Otherwise, the arms amounted to a few small arms, apparently not of Chinese manufacture. In addition to this, there is no reported instance of Chinese arms destined for the CPB insurgents in central Burma being caught in transit across Burma.

Thus, the evidence simply does not support the view (voiced particularly since June 1967) that Peking was supplying money, arms, and/or training to the CPB insurgents in the years before June 1967. On the contrary, China seems to have provided neither materiel nor propaganda support. The Chinese were of course in close touch with the CPB, advising Thakin Than Tun via radio contact and maintaining a direct contact through the influential Peking-returnees at Party headquarters.

THE RUPTURE OF SINO-BURMESE RELATIONS

The Background to a Crisis

By 1967, Sino-Burmese state relations had grown considerably less cordial than they had been in the early 1960's. When Ne Win took office in March 1962, Chou En-lai expressed confidence that "the close relations of friendship and cooperation" between Burma and China would be further strengthened and developed. However, China's relations with Ne Win were never as warm as they had been with U Nu.

Although Ne Win made good relations with China a cardinal point of his foreign policy, this did not prevent him from resisting Chinese desires whenever he felt Burmese sovereignty or vital domestic policies to be at stake. Some of his domestic programs, such as the nationalization of Chinese businesses and the closing of Chinese schools and newspapers, presented problems for the Chinese. However, it was his increasingly strict adherence to a determinedly neutral and genuinely impartial foreign policy in the mid-1960's that seems to have annoyed the Chinese the most. During 1964-1966, Liu Shao-chi, Chou En-lai, and Chen Yi made repeated trips to Rangoon to gain Ne Win's support for the Chinese stand on such international questions as the Sino-Indian border dispute, the Afro-Asian Conference, Indonesia's "confrontation" with Malaysia, and Vietnam. Ne Win resisted the Chinese pressures, however, as he resisted Soviet and US pressures,

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Ne Win and Chou En-lai in Rangoon in February 1964

Ne Win and Liu Shao-chi in Rangoon in April 1966

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to take a public stand on these issues.* Although the Chinese became increasingly unhappy with these aspects of Burma's strictly neutral foreign policy, they were willing to tolerate a certain amount of annoyance with Ne Win in the interest of maintaining good relations with Burma.

*In February 1964, Chou En-lai visited Burma to gain Ne Win's support for the Chinese position on the Sino-Indian border dispute and to inspire enthusiasm for the Afro-Asian Conference. His efforts failed on both counts. Ne Win refused to take a position on the Sino-Indian border conflict, and he told the Chinese that he thought the proposed Afro-Asian conference would have a divisive, rather than unifying, effect on the nonaligned nations. Although he finally agreed to "consider" taking part in the conference if one was held, he refused to endorse the idea of a conference publicly. After this meeting with Chou, he was reported to have said that he "hated the Chinese more than ever."

In July 1964, Chou returned to Burma, with Chen Yi, to try to maneuver Ne Win into a pro-Chinese position on Vietnam and Indonesia's "confrontation" with Malaysia. The Chinese leaders also tried to pressure him not to allow the Soviets overflight rights in Burma. In April 1965, Chou is reported to have lectured Ne Win for three hours on the subject of Vietnam during another visit to Rangoon. Finally, in April 1966, Liu Shao-chi visited Rangoon to try, once more, to get Ne Win's support for the Chinese position on Vietnam; he, too, was unsuccessful. The final communiqué after his visit did not even mention Vietnam. More than anything else, it seems to have been the Burmese refusal to take an anti-US position on Vietnam, even after the massive escalation of the war, that soured the Chinese on Ne Win's foreign policy.

Mao and Ne Win in Peking in July 1965

Ne Win took much the same attitude. Although he had good reason to be annoyed with the Chinese, he recognized the overriding importance to Burma of maintaining an atmosphere of good relations with Peking. There is no doubt that he resented the many visits of Chinese leaders to Burma and the impression these visits created that Burma was susceptible to CPR influence. He also resented the propaganda activities of the Chinese in Burma.* Although there is no evidence to show that the Chinese embassy was in touch with the Burmese Communist Party, Ne Win and the Burmese government seem to have become increasingly concerned about this possibility from 1964 on. Ne Win's fears of Chinese subversion were heightened after the Indonesian coup in September 1965 and the step-up in Chinese-supported subversion in Thailand. By 1966, Ne Win was sufficiently concerned about the possibility of Chinese subversion in Burma that he directed the Burmese military intelligence service (MIS) to pay more attention to the problem of insurgency, particularly the possibility of Chinese contacts with the insurgents. In spite of Chou En-lai's repeated assurances that the Chinese were not supporting insurgency in Burma, Ne Win became increasingly suspicious. Apparently, several high-ranking Burmese military officers who were convinced that the Chinese were aiding the insurgents, were influencing Ne Win in this direction. These officers seem to have deduced the fact of Chinese support to the insurgents from the fact of the step-up in insurgency in late 1965 and early 1966. Whether or not Ne Win believed that the Chinese were actively supporting the Burmese insurgents, he certainly had his suspicions. In early 1966, he is reported to have said

**In February 1964, Ne Win had ordered the closing of the Chinese consulate in Mandalay because it flagrantly violated government regulations on the dissemination of propaganda.*

that he feared China more than any other country. About this same time, he is also supposed to have remarked that it would solve a long-range problem for Burma if "the US had to beat China up."

It was against this background of mutually increasing dissatisfactions, together with recognition of the need to maintain good relations, that the Cultural Revolution in China spilled over into Burma, in the form of Chinese Red Guard diplomacy, and caused a sudden break in relations which neither China nor Burma had expected.

The Anti-Chinese Riots in Rangoon, June 1967

It is a fundamental conclusion of this paper that the rupture in Sino-Burmese relations, which occurred as a direct result of the anti-Chinese riots in Rangoon in June 1967, was essentially a by-product of the Cultural Revolution in China. In hindsight, one can trace the events leading up to the riots to the return of the Chinese embassy officials to Burma in the spring of 1967. In January 1967, members of the embassy staff in Rangoon had been among the first of the Chinese foreign ministry officials to be called home for indoctrination in the Cultural Revolution. After several months of special training, they returned to Burma to spread Mao's word to the Overseas Chinese in Burma. In the atmosphere of increasing Sino-Burmese tensions described above, their zealousness in preaching the gospel according to Mao was almost certain to provoke a confrontation of some kind.*

**Burma was not the only country whose relations with China suffered or were ruined as a result of China's so-called "Red Guard diplomacy" in 1967. Even Communist North Vietnam was angered and alarmed by Peking's efforts*

(footnote continued on page 49)

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Chinese elementary school children in Burma wearing Mao buttons and waving Mao books, June 1967

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Student unrest at a Chinese High School in Rangoon, 23 June 1967

Chinese Communist Embassy officials visiting scene of student disturbances at the Chinese High School, 26 June 1967

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The immediate cause of the riots was the distribution of Mao buttons by the Chinese embassy officials to Overseas Chinese students in Rangoon.* Private representations by the Burmese government to the Chinese embassy to cease these missionary activities had no effect. Finally, on 19 June, the government issued an order forbidding the wearing of Mao badges. When Chinese students persisted in wearing the badges, the government reacted by expelling several hundred students from school and by closing the schools in question. In protest against this, the Chinese embassy organized a mass demonstration of Chinese students on 26 June. This was the spark that set off the riots.

(footnote continued from page 46)
to export the Cultural Revolution to its ethnic Chinese community. Apparently, the Chinese were primarily concerned that the Cultural Revolution be carried to Overseas Chinese, not other nationalities; thus, the countries which had a large Overseas Chinese community -- such as Burma, Cambodia, Ceylon, India, North Vietnam, and of course Hong Kong -- were the places which experienced the greatest difficulty with Chinese foreign policy during this phase of the Cultural Revolution.

**There had been long-standing differences between Ne Win and the Chinese over the question of the nationality of the Overseas Chinese in Burma. In 1962 the GUB had declared that all foreigners had to declare their loyalty either to Burma or to their country of origin; in other words, they had either to become Burmese citizens or take out passports from their country of origin. The Chinese never accepted this proposition that the individuals concerned should make their own choice. Peking took the position that the problems of dual nationality could only be settled by formal agreement between the governments. Thus, the local Chinese who adopted foreign nationality without the acknowledgement of the Chinese government were still regarded as Chinese citizens by China.*

For three days, Burmese mobs rioted in the streets of Rangoon, giving vent in the process to their pent-up feelings against Rangoon's Overseas Chinese by burning Chinese stores, houses, and cars. Although apparently no looting was involved, unruly crowds marched through the Chinese section of the city, destroying everything in sight. At the end of three days, at least 50-80 local Chinese had been killed (as well as a CPR aid technician), in addition to many injuries and thousands of dollars worth of property damage.*

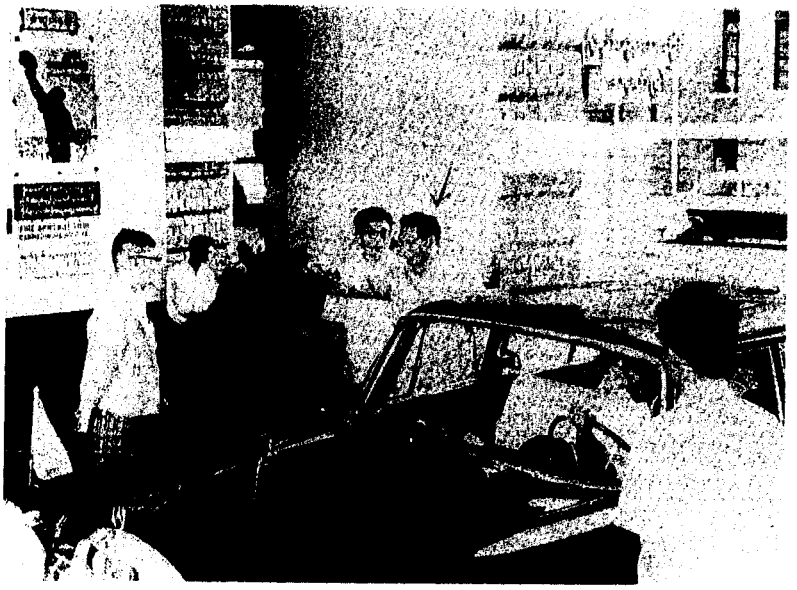
The first conclusion to be drawn from the evidence about the riots is that they started spontaneously, without priming; contrary to subsequent Chinese charges, we know that they were not planned by the Burmese government. They began as the natural response of Burmese citizens, already resentful of local Chinese student behavior, to the mass demonstration of Chinese students on 26 June, which they saw as a final affront to Burmese authority. In this sense, the riots were the culmination of a series of events that were never firmly under the control of either the Burmese or Chinese governments.

Clearly, the CPR was primarily responsible for starting the chain of events that led to the riots. The behavior of the Chinese diplomats in distributing Mao buttons to Rangoon residents in defiance of Burmese government regulations was unacceptable by any diplomatic

**The figure of 50-80 Chinese killed is the US embassy's estimate of the number killed during the riots. Peking claims a figure of "over 200." Inasmuch as Mao considered all Overseas Chinese in Burma to be Chinese nationals, he looked at the death of so many Overseas Chinese in Rangoon as a matter affecting the vital interests of the CPR.*

Wounded Chinese courier
28 June 1967

Chinese Aid technician slain inside Chinese Embassy, 28 June 1967



Chinese Communist Chargé d' Affairs Hsiao Ming (arrow, center) angered at Burmese refusal to allow his entrance to hospital where wounded Chinese were being treated, 5 July 1967

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standard.* But in assessing the blame for the break in Sino-Burmese relations, some responsibility must be assigned to the Burmese government, as well, for allowing the situation to deteriorate so completely. The GUB did little to stop the riots once they had started. US Embassy observers on the scene were impressed that the police and army, although visible on the streets, made no attempt to prevent the destruction of Chinese property or the killing of Chinese citizens.** In effect, the Chinese government began a chain of events which the Burmese government allowed to accelerate.

As might be expected, Peking's conduct showed no awareness of the Chinese having made a mistake in allowing the export of the Cultural Revolution to the Overseas Chinese in Burma. Rather, the Chinese seemed totally consumed with outrage at the Burmese government for its handling of the situation, especially its having allowed the riots to grow to the point where so many Overseas Chinese were killed.

Considering the enormity of the crime as the Chinese saw it (Burmese government acquiescence in the murder of Chinese nationals), it is not surprising that Peking reacted to events in Burma as it did, turning on Ne Win and the Burmese government as enemies of the Chinese

It is interesting in this regard that the Soviets accused "Chinese students" in Burma of "an act of provocation" in "wearing Mao badges." The Chinese later attacked the Soviets for supporting the GUB in its dispute with China (NCNA, 14 July 1967).

**The police and military units were given instructions not to use force unless they were attacked and their lives in danger. They were told that their role was to be strictly a passive one, serving to remind the people that the government had strength in reserve if it needed it.*

state in refusing to see the riots as anything but a calculated attack on China. No doubt, the Chinese felt betrayed by Ne Win, in view of the past Chinese investments in good relations with him: the economic and military assistance furnished Burma and the years of Chinese restraint from overt encouragement of the Burmese Government's opponents, including the Communists.

The suddenness and the completeness of China's about-face with respect to Burma are well known. Literally overnight, China abandoned the posture of a friendly benefactor and adopted that of a violent, name-calling enemy. Within twenty-four hours of learning of the "violent death of over 200" Overseas Chinese in Rangoon the Chinese discarded a policy which they had followed towards Burma for over 15 years: Burma fell from the category of states with which Peking had the "closest friendly relations" to the lowest category of foreign governments (as ranked by Peking), namely, that category of governments against which the Chinese publicly supported a Communist-led armed insurrection. On 29 June, the Chinese foreign ministry accused the Burmese of "deliberately" sabotaging Sino-Burmese friendship in "instigating the outrages of the previous four days"; NCNA denounced the GUB as "reactionary"; and hundreds of thousands of Chinese protested against the "fascist Ne Win government" in front of the Burmese embassy in Peking. In what was perhaps the most significant development of all, Peking for the first time publicly referred to the "armed struggle being waged by the National Democratic United Front formed by the Burmese Communist Party and other revolutionary organizations" in Burma. In a commentary on the "steady development" of the armed struggle in Burma, NCNA concluded that the GUB would "end in destruction."*

**After it became Chinese policy to attack the Burmese government and support armed insurrection against the GUB,*

(footnote continued on page 54)

The new lines of Chinese policy towards Burma had been set in that one day. What remained was for Peking to begin to support its words with deeds: i.e. to begin to play an active role in supporting the armed struggle against the Burmese government. This did not take long.

The Burmese Communists in Support of the Chinese: A New Role for the CPB

In keeping with its traditional role as spokesman for the CPB on international matters, the Overseas CPB was assigned a major role in support of the new Chinese policy towards Burma. Overseas CPB Chairman

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(footnote continued from page 53)
Chinese propaganda implied that this had always been Chinese policy. The fact that Chinese policy towards the Burmese government and towards the Burmese insurgency had actually changed 180 degrees was never mentioned. Mao was obviously embarrassed by the old Chinese policy of support for Ne Win and the past lack of support for the armed struggle.

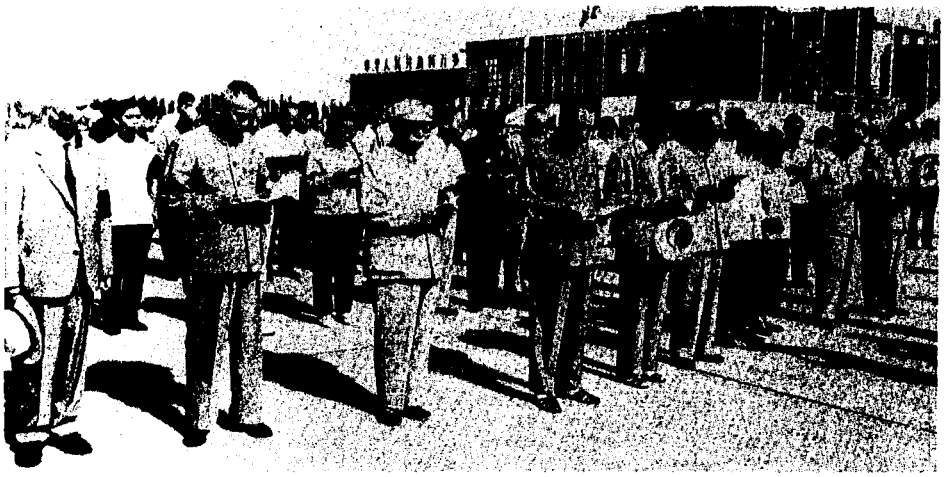
In this connection, it will be recalled that one of the charges made against Liu Shao-chi after Mao purged him during the Chinese Cultural Revolution was that he had supported a "bourgeois" policy towards Burma, a policy of "overfriendliness" to Ne Win and "indifference" to the Burmese Communists. In fact, it seems that Mao was simply making Liu the scapegoat for an old, discarded policy towards Burma. After all, the line Liu was accused of advocating had actually been Chinese policy, and it is likely that Chinese policy towards Burma before 1967 had the approval of Mao, Liu, and Chou. Certainly, Chou had been identified with the cultivation of Ne Win fully as much or more than Liu.

Thakin Ba Thein Tin figured prominently in the anti-Ne Win protest rallies in Peking and other public occasions such as the funeral of the Chinese aid technician killed in the riots in Rangoon. He authored a number of articles which appeared in People's Daily or were broadcast by NCNA, attacking Ne Win as "Burma's Chiang Kai-shek" and predicting the overthrow of the Burmese government "by the Burmese people who are applying [Mao's] theory of people's war." Most of these articles included a history of the armed struggle in Burma, which Thakin Ba Thein Tin characterized as a "great victory for the thought of Mao."

> *The most important experience gained in Burma's armed struggle during the past twenty years is that victory is achieved whenever we integrate Mao's thought with the practice of Burma's revolution and failure is inevitable whenever Mao's thought is violated.*

Every article on the CPB was full of such praise for Mao and the Cultural Revolution in China and Mao's great contributions to the Burmese struggle.

Although the Cultural Revolution in the CPB was already underway, Thakin Ba Thein Tin made no mention of the factional struggle that was going on within the CPB. It was more than a year before the Chinese acknowledged the internal dissension within the Burmese Party, by which time Thakin Than Tun and the Peking-returnees had succeeded in purging their opposition within the Party. In 1967, Thakin Ba Thein Tin provided a totally misleading picture of a unified CPB "in solid agreement and close unity" with the Chinese Communist Party. His comments alleged not only that the CPB was united in support of armed struggle but that the armed struggle was going very well.



Thakin Ba Thein Tin (fifth from left) at the Memorial Service in Peking for the Chinese Aid Technician Killed in the Riots in Rangoon, 5 July 1967

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While Thakin Ba Thein Tin and the Overseas CPB were playing a major role in the propaganda campaign against the Burmese government, the CPB in Burma was also involved in propaganda activities on behalf of the Chinese. The Chinese had been quick to call upon their assets in Burma -- primarily the Burmese Communists but also pro-Chinese elements in the student-youth movement and other front organizations such as the Burma-China Friendship Association -- for support of a new, concerted attack on the Burmese government. For the first time since 1949, Peking had a direct interest in using the long-standing opposition of these groups to the GUB for its own purposes. Such groups were quickly mobilized not only to attack Ne Win, but to publicly defend Chinese foreign policy interests generally. In the case of the CPB, this was a significant new development, inasmuch as Party cadres in Burma (as distinguished from the Overseas CPB members residing in China) had not previously been concerned with international affairs. It was a new thing for the CPB in Burma to make public pronouncements on the Cultural Revolution in China and on Chinese policy towards Burma.

Within a few weeks of the riots, the CPB organized a number of mass rallies denouncing the "foul crimes perpetrated by the reactionary Ne Win government against China." The Party was also involved in distributing thousands of leaflets and posters in Rangoon and other cities calling for opposition to the government and unity between the Chinese and Burmese peoples. Some of the posters specifically warned against government persecution of the Overseas Chinese. In these and other activities, the CPB was clearly serving Chinese interests above and beyond anything else -- a fact that was not lost on the Burmese population. Never

before had the CPB given the impression of being such a tool of Peking.*

Actually, however, the CPB was not in a position to do much to help the Chinese -- or anyone else -- in late 1967. The Party was on the defensive in the guerrilla war with the government,** and, more important, it was so much preoccupied with its own internal Cultural Revolution that it had little energy to devote to the armed struggle or to a sustained propaganda campaign against the government. Contrary to the glowing propaganda statements of the Chinese, the CPB was not on the verge of overthrowing the government and was not a strong, unified force within the Communist movement. Rather, it was in the midst of a massive purge of the whole Party apparatus which was to consume its energies for another full year. It was clear that it would be a major task for the Chinese to turn the CPB into a serious,

Apparently, a significant number of Burmese Communists (including some Party leaders) were afraid that the Party's support of Chinese policies would seriously damage its popularity following the rise of widespread anti-Chinese sentiment after the riots. In the fall of 1967, a large number of Communist insurgents surrendered to the government, apparently partly because of the polarization of the Burmese insurgent movement caused by Peking's open call for the overthrow of the Ne Win government and China's new, direct involvement in Burmese insurgency.

**In October 1967, the government mounted the most effective counter-insurgent operation against the Communists in twenty years. It was called "the Ba Khet offensive" because it was inspired by Ba Khet, the Central Committee member who defected to the government in June 1967 following his escape from Party headquarters. On the basis of information he supplied to the government, the army managed to encircle Party headquarters, though it did not directly attack the headquarters at this time. Conditions at Party headquarters reached the point of near-starvation, however.*

effective fighting force in opposition to the GUB. Considering the bankrupt state of the CPB, there was little chance of building a successful revolution on the basis of the Communist insurgency in central Burma.

While the CPB was not in a position to do much to help the Chinese, Peking was not in a position to do a lot to help the Communist insurgency either. As long as the CPB rebellion remained centered in the Pegu Yomas -- far from the border with China -- there were grave logistical obstacles to supplying the insurgents. Although these logistical difficulties had not been the main reason why the Chinese had in the past failed to support the Communists with materiel aid, the geographical problem nevertheless posed obvious limitations on the aid that could be given.

Thus, for a combination of reasons involving the bankrupt state of the CPB insurgency, the logistical difficulties in supplying the insurgents, and another important consideration that would arise later (namely, Chinese dissatisfaction with the choice of a successor to Thakin Than Tun), Peking seems never to have seriously considered a military aid program in support of the CPB insurgents. At least, as far as we know, the Chinese have never supplied any military aid to the Communist insurgents in central Burma, either before or since 1967.

The Chinese in Support of Insurgency: A New Role for Peking

Peking was in a very different position with respect to other insurgent groups in Burma, particularly the Shan and Kachin insurgents operating in northeast Burma near the border with China. Whereas the Chinese had no long-established contacts with these insurgent movements, they were in a very good position to help them militarily. There is probably no better example of the opportunism of Chinese foreign policy than

Peking's sudden willingness after June 1967 to support these ethnic minority insurgents -- most of whom were openly anti-Communist -- simply because of the new bond between them in the form of a common opposition to the Ne Win government. In their prompt support of the Shan and Kachin insurgencies in early July 1967, the Chinese displayed most emphatically their willingness to work with anyone, regardless of political persuasion, who was opposed to Burma's "fascist Ne Win government."

It will be recalled that there had never been any cooperation between the CPB insurgent effort in central Burma and the ethnic insurgent movement in either the Kachin or Shan States prior to June 1967. Although the Communists had been working towards greater unity of the insurgent forces in the Delta areas, they had not established contact with any of the insurgent groups in the northern states near the border with China. Such a development would have been highly significant, in that it would have given the Communists entry into areas bordering China; but it had been all but ruled out by the staunchly anti-Communist attitude of the Shan and Kachin insurgents.

As for Peking, the Chinese had actually fought the Shans and Kachins in the early 1950's, when the Chinese Communist and Burmese armies cooperated in joint military operations against Chinese Nationalist irregulars who were hiding in northern Burma with the aid and support of the minority groups there. In the intervening years, the Chinese had remained completely aloof from both the Shan and Kachin insurgencies. Thus, it was a major change for Peking suddenly to begin to court these ethnic minorities, as it did in August 1967. In a rash of activity, the Chinese started daily radio broadcasts in the Kachin and Shan languages which were designed to strengthen the influence of Peking and the CPB among the ethnic peoples living close to the border with China. The Chinese propaganda gave special attention to the possibility of an independent Kachin government, calculated to appeal to the great majority of the Kachin population,

and to the possibility of a united front between the Kachin insurgents and other insurgents, including both the Shans and the Communists. Over and over again, Peking stressed the need for unity of the insurgent forces. As might be expected, Chinese propaganda directed toward the Shans and Kachins avoided mention of ideology, which could only bring their differences with the Chinese to the surface; instead, the Chinese concentrated on the themes of independence from the Union of Burma and the necessity for all-out opposition to the GUB. This propaganda offensive wss the first expression of a totally new Chinese policy which was soon to be reflected in deeds as well as words.

The first reported contact between the Chinese and the Shans occurred in July 1967. On 25 July, Kang Yawi, a Shan insurgent leader in the Namkham/Muse area, met with Chinese military officials in China and was given arms, uniforms, and money for use against the Burmese government.* Kachin insurgents were soon thereafter also reported to be crossing the border for discussions with the Chinese. After a month's stay in China during January-February 1968, Zaw Tu, the Commander of the 2nd Kachin Independence Army Brigade, is reported to have returned to Burma with a "treaty" signed by the Chinese, promising a supply of arms and ammunition for three years. This document is also alleged to have promised, less plausibly, that if at the end of three years the Kachin effort were not successful, Chinese troops would "enter and help."

**In these early discussions with Shan and Kachin insurgent leaders, the Chinese did not make the offer of aid conditional on any requirement that Peking's ideological line be accepted. Peking later reversed this position and demanded a Communist ideological content to the Burmese revolution, which created serious problems for the Chinese in their relations with certain of the insurgent leaders.*

By late 1967, Shan and Kachin insurgents were crossing the border into China for military training. We know that a special insurgent training base was set up at Lu-hsi in Yunnan, China, not far from the Burmese border, in September 1967.* Apparently, the insurgents spent about one month in training at the base.** An indication of the size of the training effort being conducted there a year later is provided by a report that 1,000 Kachin insurgents crossed back into Burma in late October 1968 after receiving training at the base. As of February 1969, most of the 2,000 Kachin troops under the command of Kachin leader Naw Seng had received military training in Yunnan.

While the Chinese training base in Yunnan was apparently established for the sole purpose of training Burmese insurgents, some of them may also have been trained elsewhere. There are [redacted] reports of "Burmese-speaking passengers wearing Chinese army uniforms" arriving at Peking Airport in October 1967. The fact that the Burmese embassy had no knowledge of who these passengers were or why they were in China suggests that they were Shan or Kachin insurgents. The Chinese were obviously trying to keep their presence in China secret, judging from the unusually strict security

In the reporting from Burma, the Chinese town of Lu-hsi is usually referred to by its Burmese name of Mang Shih.

**The training course consisted of both military and political training. During the day, there was training in guerrilla warfare, intelligence collection, and weaponry; in the evenings, there was Communist indoctrination and propaganda training. After completing the course at the camp, the trainees were taken on a tour of PLA camps in the area. Before returning to Burma, each was given a uniform, a pistol, and 300 rounds of ammunition.*

precautions in effect at the time of their arrival. These passengers may well have been insurgent leaders in Peking for talks with the Chinese, or they may have been trainees scheduled for guerrilla-warfare training at one of the training bases near Peking.

Besides arms and training, the Chinese began an active recruiting program in China in support of the Burmese insurgent effort. The recruits in question were Chinese ethnic minority border peoples -- mainly Chinese Kachins and Chinese Shans -- similar to the minority peoples living on the Burmese side of the border. After training, the recruits were quietly sent across the border into Burma and integrated into Burmese insurgent units. The program was well under way by March 1968, when a total of 280 insurgents had been recruited from several Chinese villages in the Lu-hsi area. This policy of encouraging non-Han Chinese nationals to join the Burmese insurgent movement is particularly noteworthy in that the Chinese are not known to have had the same policy toward other insurgencies which they support. It will later be seen that this recruiting effort is one of the programs that the Chinese have greatly stepped up in the past two years as overall Chinese support of the Burmese insurgency has grown.

The CPR was also quick to exploit the Overseas Chinese in Burma as an underground force against the Burmese government. In September 1967, the Chinese embassy was involved in an attempt to organize Overseas Chinese resident in north Burma into armed insurgent groups. There is no information on the success of these efforts, but it seems likely that some of the reports of ethnic Chinese being involved with the Burmese insurgents refer to local Chinese living in Burma who have been recruited to help the insurgent cause.

Most of the training, recruiting, and other activity undertaken in China in support of the Burmese insurgents in late 1967-early 1968 was done by

Chinese military units. All during the summer of 1967, Chinese soldiers were engaged in building tunnel storage depots on the Chinese side close to the Sino-Burmese border. These depots were used to store supplies destined for the Burmese insurgents. Some military construction units were involved in building training facilities for the insurgents, and others in transporting supplies. For these and other reasons (including the tightening of border security in response to worsening Sino-Burmese relations), a significant number of Chinese border defense troops were dispatched to the Burmese frontier in late June and July 1967. Understandably, the Burmese were much alarmed by the reports of troop movements near their border; some feared an outright invasion by China.

The Northeast Command

In January 1968, the Chinese took the first concrete step towards the building of a whole new insurgent movement in northern Burma. In that month, they sent Naw Seng (a Burmese Kachin who had served in the Karen insurrection and later (1950) fled to China) back into Burma with a force of some 900-1200 ethnic Kachins and Shans recruited from both sides of the border. This was the beginning of the Northeast Command.

Although not a member of the Communist Party of Burma, Naw Seng, like Thakin Ba Thein Tin, Aung Gyi, and the other CPB Peking-returnees, had lived in China since the early 1950s. Some reports, difficult to evaluate, claim that he was a colonel in the Chinese PLA serving as political commissar in T'engch'ung, Yunnan. Immediately upon his return to Burma in 1968, he began to establish contact with other insurgent leaders, including Kachin leader Zaw Dan and Shan insurgent leader Sai Hla Aung. According to one report,

Naw Seng was accompanied to Burma by Thakin Ba Thein Tin, the Chairman of the Overseas CPB.*

As a result of his discussions with Shan and Kachin leaders, who were persuaded to join forces with him, Naw Seng quickly increased the force under his command to a reported 2-3,000 in late 1968. Although he was reported to cross the border into China frequently to regroup and resupply, he gradually solidified his position in a remote area along Burma's northeastern frontier, about 50 miles north of Lashio. The sector became known as the Northeast Command, and its military units were known as the "People's Liberation Army of Burma." By the end of the year, Naw Seng was mounting attacks, involving as many as 1,000 men, on Burmese villages throughout the Lashio district of Burma.

This report, while plausible, remains unconfirmed. Thakin Ba Thein Tin is reported to have made other quick trips to Burma in 1969-70 and, most recently, in March 1971. In each of these cases, he visited Naw Seng's insurgent headquarters -- presumably to relay secret instructions to Naw Seng. Thakin Ba Thein Tin is the one and only CPB leader who has switched his allegiance from the old CPB Party leadership in central Burma to the new Chinese-backed insurgent movement in northeast Burma, which is a good commentary on his basic loyalty to the Chinese (having spent the last 20 years in Peking). His affiliation with Naw Seng's insurgent forces has probably done more to give Naw Seng's movement the credentials of a Communist movement than anything else -- particularly since Naw Seng's claim to being a Communist derives from the CCP's actions in co-opting him into the CPB, rather than from any actions on the part of the CPB in accepting him as a member of the Party.

The CPB Cultural Revolution, Stage II: Hell Scenes at Party Headquarters

Meanwhile, neither the break in Sino-Burmese relations in June 1967 nor the sudden intrusion of the Chinese onto the Burmese insurgent scene had materially affected life at Burmese Communist Party headquarters. Chinese support for the insurgents -- which had altogether changed the picture of the insurgency in the north -- had not reached as far south as the Pegu Yomas.

There had been no observable activity on the part of the CPB in the aftermath of the June riots, except for the demonstrations mounted against Ne Win and the distribution of propaganda leaflets in support of the Chinese against the Rangoon government. As mentioned earlier, the Party found itself at a disadvantage because of the rising anti-Chinese feeling after the riots. It was also on the defensive in the guerrilla war against the government. During the winter 1967-1968, as a result of the government "Ba Khet offensive," the Party suffered the loss of a number of its most prominent leaders, whose death had a telling effect upon Party morale. In an effort to boost Party morale, Thakin Than Tun mounted a propaganda campaign remarkable for its being totally out of touch with reality: for while the Party was suffering extreme losses and enduring great hardships, including long periods with little or no food or water, Party headquarters was issuing a steady stream of directives on how well the Communist armed forces were doing.

As matters went from bad to worse, Party headquarters was itself subjected to its first direct attack by government forces in April 1968. A second, more serious attack in September took Thakin Than Tun and his comrades completely by surprise, and at least thirty of the 140 persons at Party headquarters at the time were killed. In addition, the Party suffered the loss of all the important Party papers normally kept at

headquarters, the capture of most of its supply of small arms, and most important, the capture of its radio equipment. This latter loss was of great significance, in that it left Party headquarters without contact with Peking. Five days later, when Thakin Than Tun was assassinated, the CPB had no way to inform the Chinese; thus, Peking was unable to play the role that it might otherwise have played in the choice of a successor to Thakin Than Tun. As we shall see, this had serious repercussions for CCP-CPB relations.

When the September 1968 attack on Party headquarters occurred, the CPB had been celebrating, in Thakin Than Tun's words, "victory after victory." In this case, he was referring to the "victory" over the "revisionists", which was the only kind of victory that the CPB had been winning. Even while on the run and in the most destitute condition, the Party Chairman and his supporters had continued with their purge. As dissatisfaction within the Party to the CPB's subordination to Peking increased, they only intensified their struggle "for the triumph of Mao Tse-tung's thought." Thakin Than Tun had not reported the deaths of the first two purge victims, Goshal and Htay, in June 1967. Word of these executions leaked out slowly, but for months there was uncertainty about what was happening at Party headquarters. As a result, a stream of unsuspecting regional Party leaders came to CPB headquarters during late 1967 at Thakin Than Tun's request, only to be immediately put under house arrest, tried, and sentenced in a "show-trial," and eventually put to death in the ritualistic manner of the CPB Cultural Revolution.

The purge continued throughout the spring and summer of 1968. Finally, in August, Thakin Than Tun made the mistake of carrying the purge into the Party's military leadership. In that month, Bo Tun Nyein, the commander of the most effective fighting unit of the CPB, who was highly respected by his men and apparently for that reason considered a threat to Thakin Than Tun,

was tricked into coming to Party headquarters where he was tortured and finally killed, in perhaps the most merciless execution of all.*

In the end, it was Bo Tun Nyein's murder that proved to be too much for some Party members to accept. In the early evening of 24 September, as the bedraggled remnants of CPB headquarters were regrouping after the 19 September attack on Party headquarters, a member of Bo Tun Nyein's military command who had escorted his leader to Party headquarters in August and stayed on after Bo Tun Nyein's death, walked up to the CPB Chairman and shot him as he stood alone by the edge of a creek.

The End of an Era

With the death of Thakin Than Tun -- following the purge of Goshal, Thakin Than Myaing, and Htay -- Thakin Zin and Thakin Chit were the only surviving Politburo

*Bo Tun Nyein's death was the first to feature a ritualistic washing of the feet in the victim's blood -- a symbolic act that was to be repeated often in the torture killings of the Cultural Revolution during April-September 1968.

The death of Bo Tun Nyein and other scenes of the Cultural Revolution in the CPB are vividly described in the previously mentioned Last Days of Thakin Than Tun.

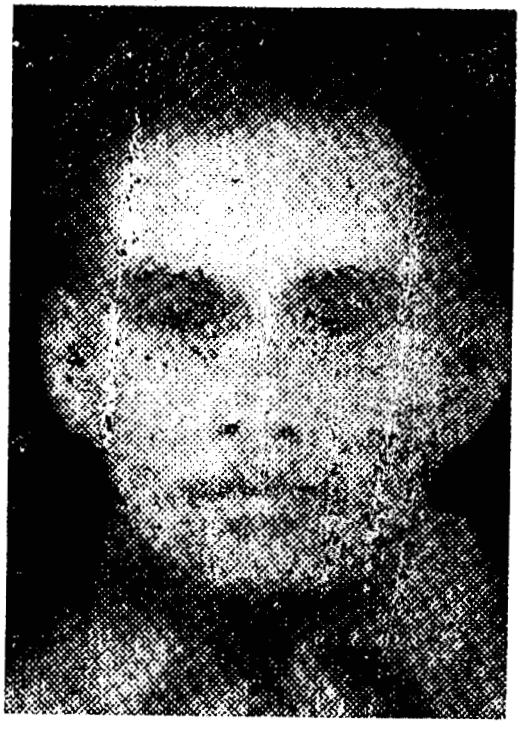
members in Burma.* It seems to have been accepted without much debate by those at Party headquarters that Thakin Zin, as the senior surviving member of the Politburo in Burma, would become the new Party Chairman. Although, according to the Party constitution, the new Party Chairman should have been elected by the Central Committee, no effort was made to call a Central Committee meeting -- possibly because so few Central Committee members were still alive, but more likely because the

*The following is a list of the Politburo and Central Committee, showing what happened to CPB/CC members during 1962-68. As can be seen, nine of the twenty-one CC members had been purged: one had been killed by a disaffected CPB member; two had defected to the government; and one had been killed by government troops. That left eight, as of September 1968, of whom two were in China.

CPB Central Committee (Politburo Members in Capitals)

(Dead)	(Alive)
THAKIN THAN TUN[1]	Yebaw Mya[4]
GOSHAL[2]	Bo Yet Htut[4]
THAKIN THAN MYAING[2]	THAKIN BA THEIN TIN[5]
HTAY[2]	Thakin Pe Tint[5]
Tun Maung[2]	THAKIN ZIN[6]
Mya[2]	THAKIN CHIT[6]
Toke[2]	Thakin Tin Tun[6]
Soe Than[2]	Aung Gyi[6]
Tun Sein[2]	Bo Myo Myint[6]
Bo Yan Aung[2]	
Bo Zeya[3]	

[1] *Killed by CPB member*
[2] *Purged.*
[3] *Killed by government troops.*
[4] *Defected to the Government.*
[5] *In China.*
[6] *In Burma.*



Thakin Zin
CPB Party Chairman

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Thakin Chit
CPB Politburo Member

leaders at Party headquarters had grown accustomed under Thakin Than Tun to making decisions in the name of the Party without regard for the Central Committee.

It was in the choice of a successor to Thakin Than Tun that the CPB's loss of its radio equipment was to acquire great significance. As a result of this loss, Peking, ignorant of a succession question, was left out of the process of resolving it. It is clear that the Chinese would have preferred to have Thakin Ba Thein Tun, CPB Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Overseas CPB in China, become the new Burmese Party leader.* Although he was at a disadvantage because he was not on the scene, as Vice Chairman of the Party he was the next-ranking leader to Thakin Than Tun, internationally the best known Burmese Communist, and the one person in the Party generally regarded as having outstanding leadership qualities. For these reasons and because of Chinese influence in the CPB Central Committee, the

*One indication that the Chinese were unhappy with the choice of Thakin Zin as the new CPB Party Chairman was their belated acknowledgement of the fact. Six months after the events, on 20 March 1969, NCNA first acknowledged Thakin Than Tun's death and Thakin Zin's elevation in a special broadcast featuring a condolence message from the CCP/CC to the CPB, a report on a recent meeting between Thakin Ba Thein Tin and Chou En-lai and Kang Sheng, and a statement by Thakin Ba Thein about Thakin Than Tun's assassination. The latter, in particular, made several remarks indicating chagrin over the decision to make Thakin Zin the Party Chairman. At one point in tne NCNA account, Thakin Ba Thein Tin is quoted as listing himself ahead of Thakin Zin and Thakin Chit; not until the end of his speech did he take note of the fact that "Comrade Thakin Zin has become the chairman and I the vice chairman."

Chinese had grounds to believe that Thakin Ba Thein Tun would have been chosen Chairman if the Central Committee had been allowed to do the choosing. (Of the eight surviving members of the CPB/CC in September 1968, two were living in China and another two were Chinese-trained men who might be expected to follow Peking's instructions.) Thus, the failure to convene the Central Committee to pick a new CPB Chairman prevented the Chinese from using their latent strength in the Party to consolidate control over the new Party leadership. Apparently, to this day, the Chinese bear a grudge against the surviving CPB leadership for its choice of Thakin Zin as the new Party Chairman. As we shall see, this has been a major factor in Peking's decision to shift its interest and attention away from the Thakin Zin-led CPB insurgent effort in central Burma to Naw Seng's new insurgency in the northeast.

THE COLD WAR PERIOD

The New Insurgency, Peking-style

By the end of 1968, following the death of Thakin Than Tun, the Communist insurgency in central Burma had been reduced to its lowest point in more than a decade. The leadership of the Party had been virtually decimated; over half of the Politburo and roughly two-thirds of the Central Committee either had been liquidated in the purge, had died in battle, or had surrendered to the government. The Party, as a whole, had become tainted with the label of being pro-Chinese at a time when China had become highly unpopular in Burma. As a result, it had forfeited the support of such groups as the leftist Karens, with whom it had been in the process of forging an alliance when the break with China occurred. The Party's 1967-1968 reversion to terror tactics -- burning, pillaging, and murder -- had further alienated large portions of the population. In short, the movement was at its lowest point in both membership and leadership, and its opposition to the government had never been weaker. All of these considerations apparently figured in the Chinese decision, taken during the spring of 1969, to remake the Communist insurgency in Burma.

The final consideration that must have figured in the decision to refocus the Burmese insurgent effort was Thakin Than Tun's death and the appointment of a new CPB Chairman not of Peking's choosing. By September 1968, the Chinese had made new contacts among Burma's ethnic insurgents and -- even more important -- they were in the process of creating a new Chinese-directed insurgency under the leadership of Naw Seng. It mattered

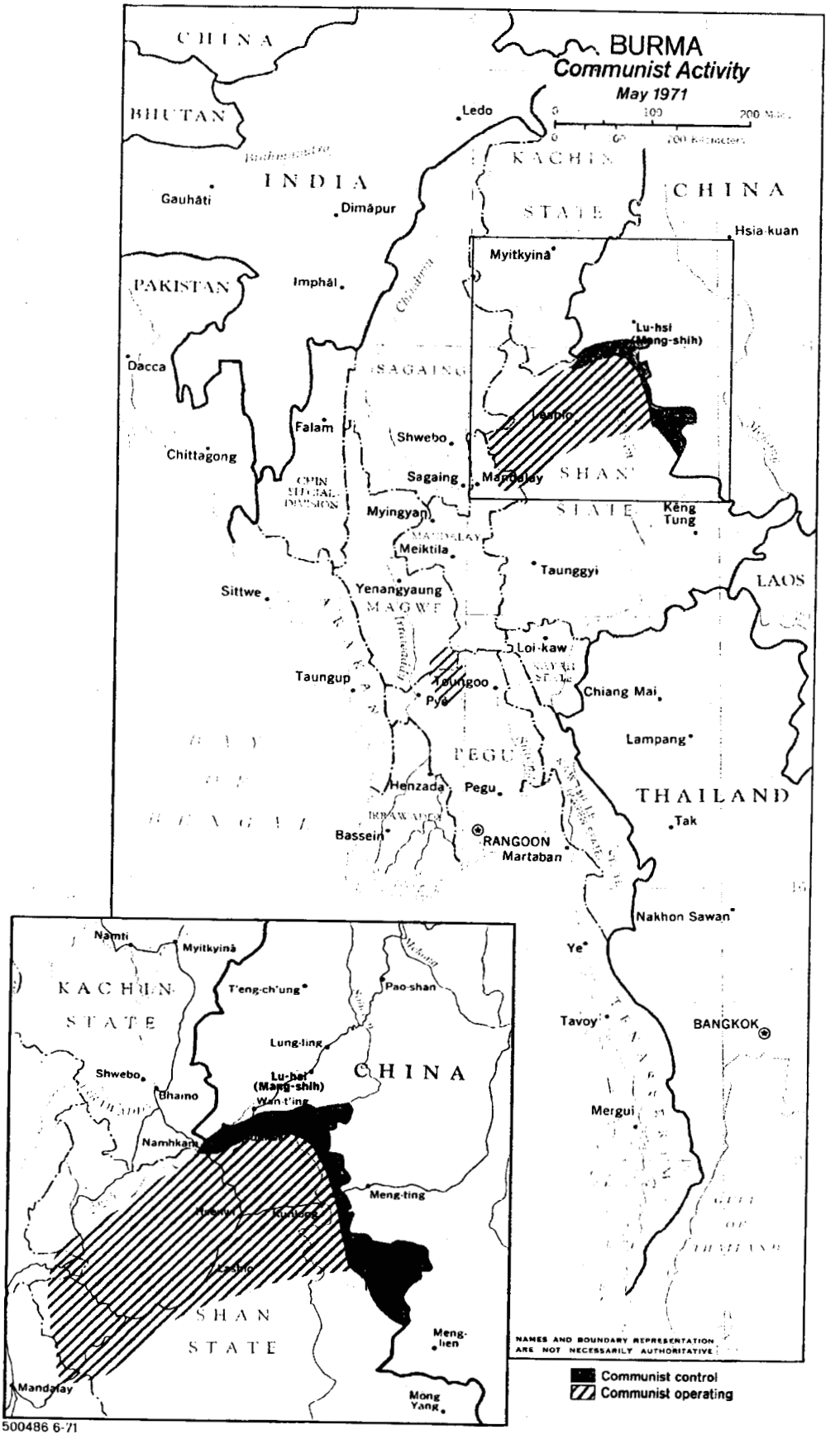
less that these insurgents were not members of the CPB than that they were susceptible to Chinese direction. With Thakin Than Tun gone, the Chinese apparently felt a closer tie with these groups than with Thakin Zin and the surviving CPB Party organization.

Thakin Than Tun's death provided a good opportunity to establish Naw Seng as Thakin Than Tun's heir as the new leader of the Communist insurgency in Burma. This required giving him legitimacy as a Communist as well as recognition as the foremost insurgent commander. It was easy for Peking to provide the former, simply by "annointing" Naw Seng into the Communist Party of Burma, first, as a member of the Central Committee and, then, as a member of the Politburo.

According to sources within the Party, Naw Seng had always been regarded as a Kachin nationalist, first and foremost. Although he had long had the full trust of the Chinese, he apparently was not readily accepted by CPB leaders. Because of the known reluctance of the Burmese Communists to become involved with him, the Chinese were all the more concerned to boost his pretensions as a Communist leader. In 1968, he was first mentioned in Chinese propaganda as a member of the CPB Central Committee. In June 1969, after Thakin Than Tun's death, the Chinese announced his elevation to the Politburo. Apparently, the Party leadership in Burma had nothing to do with this decision: there is no evidence that Thakin Zin or Thakin Chit or any of the other members of the Central Committee in Burma were even informed of Chinese intentions, much less consulted on the decision. The Chinese seem to have been acting on their own, with the connivance, of course, of the Overseas CPB in China, which was chosen to make the official announcement. From this point on, Naw Seng (in Burma) and Thakin Ba Thein Tin (in China) would be the official spokesmen for the CPB, as far as the Chinese were concerned.

The Chinese ploy in making Naw Seng an "honorary" member of the CPB Politburo has worked exceedingly well. He is now customarily listed along with Thakin Zin, Thakin Chit, and Thakin Ba Thein Tin as a member of the CPB Politburo, usually with no distinction made between him and the other Politburo members. In the same way that Chinese propaganda has attempted to condition foreign observers to think of him as a CPB leader, it has created the illusion of the Northeast Command as being a "Burmese Communist insurgency." This is of course a totally misleading picture of the insurgency in the north, which is essentially an ethnic minority rebellion composed for the most part of persons who are not Burmans and who have never belonged to the CPB -- a rebellion which the Chinese have created, nourished, force-fed with Maoist doctrine, and then artifically labelled the Burmese Communist movement. This rebellion has little in common with the long-established Communist insurgency in central Burma, which is --- and always has been -- (a) entirely ethnic Burman and (b) entirely Communist, in the sense that only CPB members are involved. Besides these basic differences, there is no evidence that the two insurgencies coordinate their activities in any way; as far as is known, Naw Seng has had no contact with the CPB leaders in central Burma since his return to Burma in early 1968.

It is clear that the Chinese now regard Naw Seng and the Northeast Command as the foremost insurgent group in Burma. A good indication of this is the fact that Mao has personally received Naw Seng on the two visits that the latter has made to Peking: one in March 1969, just before (and perhaps as a result of which) he was elevated to the Politburo, and the other in September 1969. Since then, Thakin Ba Thein Tin has made several secret trips to Naw Seng's command post in upper Burma to personally relay Mao's instructions, the most recent visit having been in March 1971 on the occasion of the 23rd anniversary of the founding of the CPB and the inauguration of a new clandestine radio broadcasting facility which the Chinese have provided the Burmese insurgents.


BURMA
Communist Activity
May 1971
CHINA
BHUTAN
INDIA
PAKISTAN
Ledo
Gauhāti
Dimāpur
Imphāl
Dacca
Chittagong
Falam
Shwebo
Sagaing
Myingyan
Meiktila
Sittwe
Yenangyaung
Taungup
Taungoo
Pyè
Loi-kaw
Chiang Mai
Lampang
Taunggyi
LAOS
THAILAND
Tak
Nakhon Sawan
Ye
Tavoy
BANGKOK
Mergui
Henzada
Pegu
Bassein
RANGOON
Martaban
Myitkyinā
Lu-hsi
(Mang-shih)
Lashio
Mandalay
Kēng Tung
KACHIN STATE
SHAN STATE
SAGAING
MAGWE
PEGU
Namti
T'eng-ch'ung
Pao-shan
Lung-ling
Lu-ho
(Mang-shih)
Wan-t'ing
Bhamo
Namhkam
Kutkai
Hsenwi
Meng-ting
Meng-lien
Mong Yang
NAMES AND BOUNDARY REPRESENTATION ARE NOT NECESSARILY AUTHORITATIVE
Communist control
Communist operating

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After various difficulties with other Shan and Kachin insurgent leaders, the Chinese are now reported to trust only Naw Seng. Since September 1969, they appear to have dealt solely with him to the exclusion of both the CPB insurgents under Thakin Zin and all the other insurgent leaders in northern Burma. All of the Chinese military aid for the Burmese insurgents is now channelled through Naw Seng and the Northeast Command. And whereas Peking in the past would send Burmese Communists resident in China to Party headquarters in central Burma, it is now sending leaders who have undergone political and military training in China to Naw Seng's headquarters in northeast Burma, where they now direct detachments in Naw Seng's forces.

The present Chinese policy of dealing exclusively with Naw Seng -- and indirectly through him with the other insurgent groups opposed to the Ne Win government -- reflects the difficulties which the Chinese experienced in their earlier policy (1967-69) of dealing directly with any and all insurgent leaders who were willing to cooperate with Peking. Zaw Tu, the Commander of the 2nd KIA Brigade who was among the first to establish relations with the Chinese in January 1968, is a good example of an insurgent leader who at first was willing to cooperate with Peking but later became disenchanted with the Chinese and refused to have anything more to do with them. In most cases, apparently, it was the Chinese insistence that a Communist content be introduced into the insurgency that soured insurgent leaders like Zaw Tu toward Peking. In their first efforts to appeal to the Shan and Kachin dissidents, the Chinese had played down ideology, but as their desire grew to strengthen the Communist credentials of the ethnic insurgency, they began to attach a strong ideological flavor to the insurgent operations. Besides objecting to Communist indoctrination, Zaw Tu is reported to have bridled at the Chinese insistence that the KIA accept CPB members into its insurgent organization. Rather than do that, he refused to accept any further aid from Peking. Thus, the Chinese found some of their early advances with the Shan and Kachin insurgents nullified by their dogmatic

stand on ideology; and this, in turn, gave Peking added incentive to concentrate its support upon Naw Seng and the Northeast Command.

Chinese Military Aid to the Northeast Command

During the past two years, Chinese support of Naw Seng has grown significantly. Not only has the supply of weapons increased but the type has improved: as of May 1971, the Chinese were supplying B-40 rocket launchers, mortars, light machine guns, and a few heavy machine guns, in addition to the semi-automatic weapons and submachine guns which they have been providing since late 1967.

In 1969, the Chinese indicated that they would not supply food, only military hardware. However, in January 1971, they are reported to have changed their minds and agreed to supply "food and livestock." During the second half of 1970, the Burmese insurgents were reported to be suffering from a shortage of both food and money. Because of the hardships which the troops were suffering, some of the ethnic insurgent commanders were reported to be having second thoughts about their relationship with Naw Seng and the Northeast Command. The reported decision in early 1971 to supply food as well as military hardware indicated Chinese determination to overcome this latest problem. In late 1969 and early 1970, they had met a similar pressing need of the insurgents for medical care of the sick and wounded. During this period, when casualties were higher than they had ever been, the Chinese were reported to be treating Burmese Communists in Chinese hospitals in Yunnan.

According to [redacted] a complete list of the supplies that the Chinese are providing the insurgents -- as of April 1971 -- includes, in addition to the weapons mentioned above, ammunition, explosives, tools, clothing and uniforms, medicines, food grains, printed propaganda (including Mao badges) and extra funds (in Burmese currency).

The Chinese program of recruiting ethnic minority peoples who live on the Chinese side of the border to serve with the insurgents in Burma has also been greatly stepped up. In most cases, the recruiting is actually done by Burmese insurgents, with the permission of local Chinese authorities. In some cases, however, local Chinese officials have been actively involved in the recruiting. The pressure that government authorities exert on Chinese non-Han citizens living near the border to join the Burmese insurgents is reported to have considerably increased in 1969 and 1970. Apparently, in some cases, Chinese officials virtually "order" Kachin youths to undergo military training "in preparation for service with the Burmese insurgents." In 1969, government authorities were recruiting under the slogan "Burma will soon be a liberated country." In 1970, they were said to be offering the added inducement of "a new watch for every dead Burmese soldier."*

Although the fact that Chinese nationals have been dispatched to fight in Burma may be regarded as confirmed, information on how many Chinese nationals have been involved

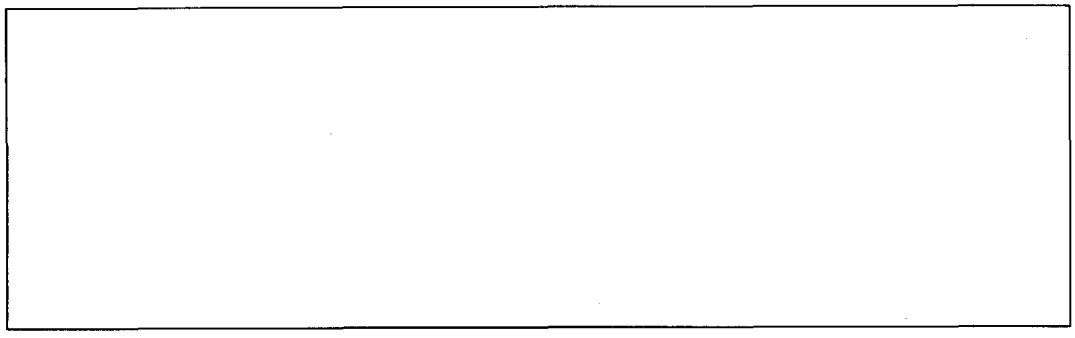
*Some reports claim that the Chinese nationals who have joined the Burmese insurgent effort have done so voluntarily, inasmuch as there has been no announced directive from the government encouraging people to join the insurgents. Whether or not there has been a publicized directive from the government is not the point, however. It is clear that it is Chinese policy to encourage Chinese minority peoples who are related to the minority peoples living on the Burmese side of the border to join in the fight against the Burmese government. Local authorities have obviously been acting on some kind of directive from Peking in encouraging people, and apparently sometimes ordering them, to join the Burmese insurgents.

is much less firm. [redacted] alleges that as many as 5,000 Chinese citizens crossed the border in 1970 to join the insurgents. According to [redacted] 4-5 battalions (approximately 2-2,500 insurgents) have been recruited in China. According to [redacted] most of the "new recruits" (as of late 1970) are now being recruited in China, rather than in Burma where Naw Seng is finding it "increasingly difficult to recruit Kachins since the vast majority of Burmese Kachins are loyal to the KIA and are not influenced by Chinese propaganda to join the Northeast Command."

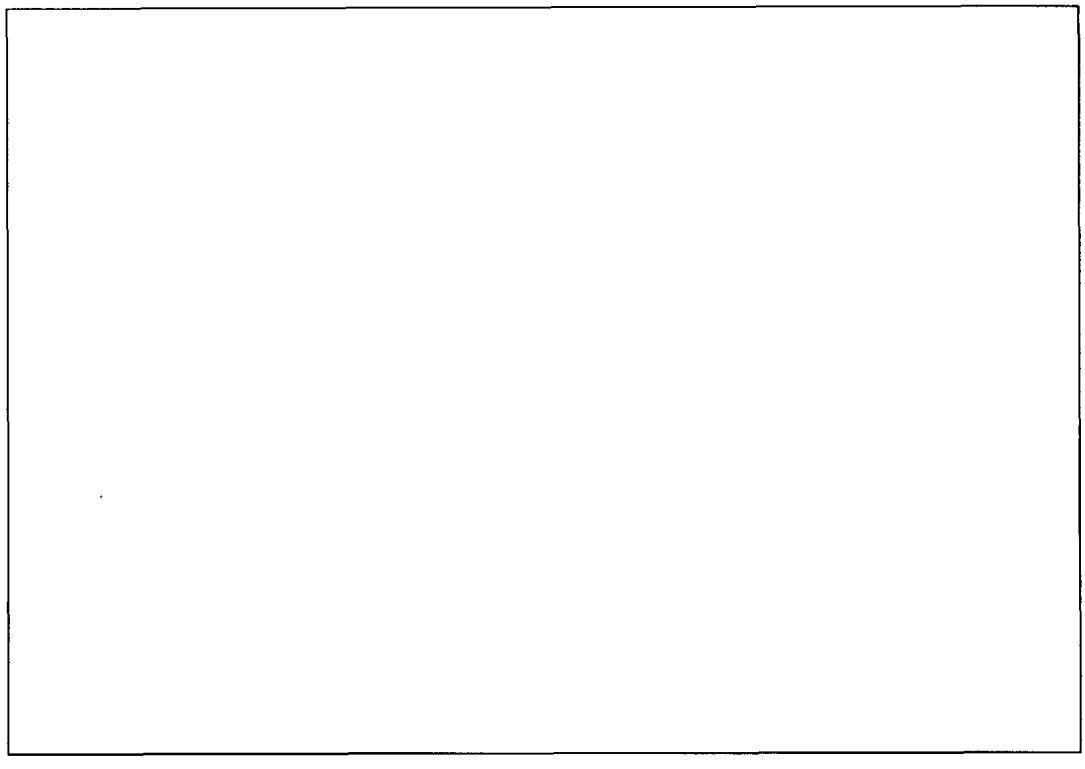
As mentioned earlier, most of the Chinese villagers recruited into the Burmese insurgent movement are Chinese Kachins, while some are Chinese Shans; only a few have been Han Chinese and fewer still other ethnic minorities from the area. "Sent down" students (students from Chinese universities who have been sent "into the countryside") are not supposed to join the Burmese insurgents, but apparently some have. After joining the insurgents, the new recruits are given two to eight weeks of military and political training in China and then integrated into units of the Burmese insurgent army. Since the insurgents have been operating no further than 50-60 miles from the border, it is relatively easy for the Chinese nationals to escape back into China if necessary.

The recruiting of Chinese citizens to serve with the Burmese insurgents is an unusual feature of the Chinese aid program to the Burmese insurgents. As noted earlier, the Chinese have not done this in the case of the Thai or Laos insurgencies, nor in North Vietnam, even though in the latter instance they have Chinese military units stationed there. Only in Burma is Peking known to have infiltrated Chinese ethnic minority troops across the border to serve with insurgent forces.

[redacted]



There seems little doubt that there is a small Chinese military advisory unit, headed by a deputy division



commander of the Chinese 14th Army, attached to Naw Seng's headquarters in China. According to [redacted] all military programs developed by the Command have to be submitted to the Chinese advisory team for approval. In addition, reports on these programs are said to be sent to Thakin Ba Thein Tin in Peking.

[redacted] the degree of control which the Chinese have over the Northeast Command. In addition to the control which they exert through PLA advisers attached to Naw Seng's headquarters and through representatives of the CPB in Peking, they apparently have a direct role in the command structure, as well. The Northeast Command is reported to have a Central Committee composed of 32 members, of whom 17 are Chinese Kachins, "sent directly to the Committee by the Chinese Communist Party." This is the first report of a Central Committee under Naw Seng and the first indication of Chinese nationals serving in the command structure. In fact, Naw Seng's deputy commander is reported to be a Han Chinese.

According to [redacted], the Northeast Command has four main units under Naw Seng's general command: a guard battalion, a machinegun/artillery battalion, a pack animal transport company, and the so-called 303 Unit, which is "staffed by Chinese Communist Army personnel." [redacted] According to [redacted], the unit moves around, operating in different areas at different times and not always as one unit. This suggests that the military advisers who make up the unit may be assigned to different insurgent groups, either permanently or on a temporary basis. It also suggests that they operate with these groups when they are in action in Burma.

While the Chinese have sought to disguise their control of Naw Seng's operation in Burma behind the facade of Burmese leadership, there are nevertheless many

of the outward appearances of a Chinese operation. Apparently, the Burmese insurgents openly display Chinese propaganda materials, carry pictures of Chairman Mao, and otherwise propagandize the cult of Mao. From the Burmese government point of view, the insurgents are "Communist" because they so obviously and openly promote Chinese Communist interests. Despite these trappings of a Communist movement, however, most of the insurgents -- at least most of the Burmese as distinct from the Chinese nationals serving with the insurgents -- are probably not dedicated Party members.

The Dying CPB Insurgency in Central Burma

While the Chinese-supported insurgency in the north has prospered, largely because of Chinese aid, Thakin Zin's forces in central Burma have been dwindling fast, cut off as they are from all outside aid. Since Thakin Than Tun's death in September 1968, there have been further serious losses. In April 1969, three of the leading Peking-returnees, one of them being Central Committee member Aung Gyi, were killed by government troops, leaving only 13 of the original 28 Peking-returnees. During the winter 1969-1970, four more Peking-returnees, including Central Committee member Thakin Pu, were reported killed. Finally, in December 1970, the CPB suffered the loss of Thakin Tin Tun, one of the five surviving members of the Central Committee. Of the remaining four Central Committee members (not counting Naw Seng), only Thakin Zin and Thakin Chit are still alive in the jungles of central Burma; the other two (Thakin Ba Thein Tin and Thakin Pe Tint) are in China. The best estimate is that over 80 percent of the CPB leaders, including military leaders, have been killed.

As might be expected, the loss of so many of the top cadres of the Party has had a very demoralizing effect. In addition to the main active insurgents who

Aung Gyi
CPB Central Committee Member

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have been killed by the government, others have simply quit the insurgent life and returned to their villages. There have been few new recruits in the past two years to take their places. Although there are no reliable estimates of the number of Communists still hiding out in the Pegu Yomas, the figure is probably in the hundreds, as compared to the 2,500-3,000 insurgents who were active in 1967-68. By 1969, the Burmese government was convinced that it had broken the backbone of the movement; as of that time, Communist operations had been reduced to sporadic acts of terror by small bands of insurgents confined to the most inhospitable redoubts. By mid-1970, guerrilla activity had all but ceased in central Burma. However, since mid-1970, when the government troops that had been involved in anti-Communist operations in that area were redeployed towards the northern frontier to meet the new insurgent threat there, the Communists seem to have become slightly more active in central Burma, thus posing the question of whether a CPB resurgence can be expected. Although such a comeback is conceivable over the long term, it does not seem likely that the Communists of the Pegu Yomas will again become a serious problem to the regime within the next few years.

During late 1967-early 1968, there were reports that some Burmese Communists were moving to the northeast, presumably to join Naw Seng's insurgent force in the border area. No further movements were detected during late 1968, however, and none have been noted since then. Apparently, some Communist units moved east to escape government troops involved in the "Ba Khet" campaign against the Communists in late 1967. There does not seem to have been any effort on the part of these Communist units to join forces with Naw Seng, however.

In late 1969, there were additional reports that CPB leaders were giving consideration to moving Party headquarters out of the Pegu Yomas to the vicinity of the Chinese border. Once again, nothing more came of the reports. It would be surprising if Thakin Zin or

Thakin Chit even seriously considered such an idea. A retreat to the northeast would represent, at best, a symbolic gesture of defeat by the Party and, at worst, the end of organized Communist insurgency in the heartland of Burma, the area where Communist revolution must take root if it is ever to succeed. It would seem that the CPB leaders must have serious reservations about submerging themselves in a Chinese-dominated tribal insurrection -- a move that would in effect represent a de-Burmanization of the Party and would place it much more firmly under Peking's thumb. So long as Thakin Zin and Thakin Chit remain in control, there seems little likelihood of Party headquarters being moved out of central Burma, since they and the other old-time leaders of the Party would almost certainly prefer to end their days in the area where the Communists have been fighting the government for over twenty years.

In a real sense, events have overtaken the need for such a decision and, in any case, reduced its relevance. The real operating center of the Communist insurgency in Burma is no longer CPB Party headquarters, but the Northeast Command under the leadership of Naw Seng. There is little chance that the old CPB leadership will ever be able to exercise significant control over the insurgency in the northeast, whether or not Party headquarters were to move. Thus, the Communist movement in Burma -- that is, the ethnic-Burman mainstream -- is likely to continue to go its own ineffectual way, while the new Chinese version of the Party operates independently in the Sino-Burmese border area.

This is not to say that the Chinese are likely to totally write off the Communist insurgency in central Burma. They will probably continue to give it propaganda support (at least, clandestine propaganda support, if not direct propaganda support attributable to Chinese sources). Up to September 1970, when they apparently decided to reduce overt propaganda support of the Burmese insurgency in general (because of the negotiations that

were then underway concerning the exchange of ambassadors) and to continue such support on a clandestine basis, Peking gave regular -- if only occasional -- propaganda backing to the armed struggle of the CPB in central Burma. The last NCNA broadcast on the Burmese insurgency (4 September 1970) consisted of a long commentary on "CPB successes" in the Pegu Yomas.* Two other broadcasts in June and August 1970 gave an equally glowing and misleading account of Communist military actions in central Burma. With such periodic propaganda support (averaging 6-10 radio broadcasts a year), the Chinese at least paid lip service to the armed struggle in the Pegu Yomas, while they did nothing to materially help the insurgents there.

There is no reliable evidence of any contact between the Chinese and Thakin Zin's group in the Pegu Yomas since Thakin Than Tun's death in September 1968. It will be remembered that the CPB lost its radio equipment in the attack on Party headquarters that same month. So far as is known, it has not acquired new equipment which would have allowed it to re-establish radio contact with China. No new Peking-returnees are reported to have been sent to the Pegu Yomas during the past two-and-a-half years. It is conceivable that the Chinese may have made some attempt to keep the lines of communication open by infiltrating small groups of insurgents from the Northern Shan State into central Burma. A few

*In public and in their propaganda, the Chinese have always stressed the positive side of the Burmese armed struggle. For this reason, a remark by a high-level Chinese leader, admitting the failure of the Communist insurgency in central Burma, is of considerable interest: in July 1970, CCP Politburo member K'ang Sheng is reported to have told visiting Communist officials, [redacted] that "the armed struggle of the Burmese Communist Party in the south (has) suffered serious setbacks, while (the armed struggle) in the north has developed very rapidly."

insurgent groups have in fact been detected moving southward, but there is no evidence to support the assumption that these groups were headed for CPB Party headquarters and, if so, that they reached their destination. Prior to his death in December 1970, CPB/CC member Thakin Tin Tun is reported to have been specifically charged with the task of "liaison with foreign powers" (meaning China), but there is no information as to any contacts he may have had with the Chinese.

The Rangoon Government and the Insurgency

Ne Win has long feared Chinese support of the Burmese insurgents. Even before June 1967, when the Chinese were not supporting insurgency in Burma, Ne Win was greatly alarmed by the possibility that Peking might be doing so. Even then, he had his suspicions about China, based more on what the Chinese were doing in other countries than on what they were known to be doing in Burma.

During the crisis period in late June 1967, when the Burmese government was in continuous session for four days debating Burmese policy towards China, the major consideration against taking a firmer line was the fear that China might decide to support the insurgents, with the aim of creating a Laos-type situation. It was decided, for this reason, that it would not be in Burma's best interests to break relations with China. Ne Win, with almost unanimous backing in the government, decided on a policy designed to maintain Burma's independence of action without further provoking Peking. In response to China's endless barrage of hostile propaganda, threats, and demands, the Burmese government reacted with quiet but firm determination, refusing to be drawn into a bitter exchange of insults. The GUB apparently hoped

that it could deflect the outburst of Chinese hostility towards Burma in such a way that peaceful relations might yet be restored.*

However, Ne Win's worst fears were soon realized with the start of Chinese aid to the insurgents, and the GUB found itself faced with the most alarming internal security problem in years. [redacted] Ne Win admitted this, though he was at first reluctant to publicize the insurgent attacks for fear of further damaging Sino-Burmese relations.

The facts about the fighting in 1969 have only gradually come to light. Apparently, Naw Seng began serious military operations on 1 January 1969, when the insurgents attacked the Burmese army in the vicinity of the Sino-Burmese border (the exact site of the attack is still uncertain). Although the Burmese army claimed that the insurgents lost nearly 800 killed, the army suffered an unprecedented number of casualties: reportedly, over 200; moreover, the army was forced to withdraw. A major disadvantage that the GUB found itself under was a handicap which was to bedevil its operations against the insurgents all during 1969-70: its unwillingness to operate up to the Chinese border for fear of provoking international complications. Not only could the insurgents escape into China for a safe haven, but they had a sanctuary in Burma itself within an area

*However, while avoiding polemical responses to Peking, the Burmese government within the first year after the riots did take two forthright steps which met the Chinese challenge head-on and had the effect of further worsening relations with Peking: in October 1967, Rangoon responded to a Chinese threat to remove Chinese aid technicians by ordering their immediate removal; and in February and March 1968, the GUB tried local Overseas Chinese for actions connected with the June 1967 riots. See the discussion below, page 116.

extending a few miles from the border, in which the Burmese army was instructed not to fire.

In ten months' fighting, up to November 1969, both sides lost heavily. Apparently, insurgent losses were much the higher (reportedly, ten to one) but army casualties were more than Ne Win and the military were prepared to pay. Ne Win was finally forced to call international attention to the problem, in the hope of getting Communist China to call off the insurgent attacks. On 6 November, he made the first public mention of the fighting between the Burmese army and "Communist insurgents" in northeast Burma in a speech to the opening session of a three-day conference of the ruling Burmese Socialist Program Party. Much to the surprise of the rest of the world, he revealed that there had been "eight major engagements and ten medium and small skirmishes along the border with China between January and August 1969." The Burmese army was announced to have suffered 133 dead (including 10 officers), 250 wounded (including nine officers), and 42 missing. Although not directly accusing China of supporting the insurgents, Ne Win hinted as much when he said that "the persons against us openly declare that they are bolstered by external aid." He nonetheless added that Burma wished to restore friendly relations with China.*

**Ne Win's alarm over the internal security problem in northeast Burma and, at the same time, his concern not to further damage relations with China, are best appreciated in the following passages from his 6 November speech:*

> *The most serious situation has been the fighting in the frontier areas where we share borders with China. It has been the heaviest we have experienced. I shall not give details as that would take too much time. From 1 January*

(footnote continued on page 91)

Ne Win's appeal for improved relations with China had little effect on the guerrilla activity. In 1970, the fighting was greatly stepped up. In March, the

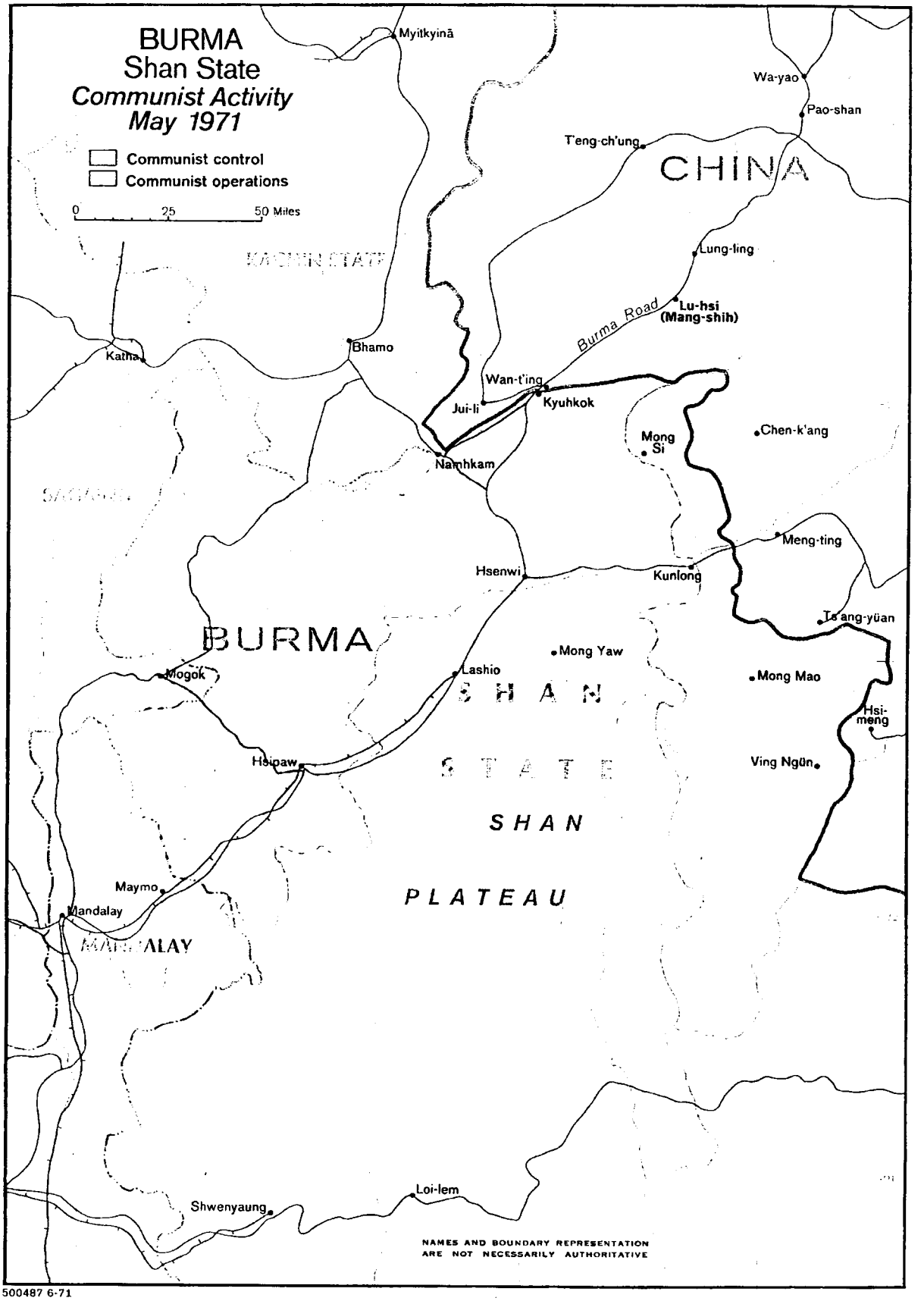
(footnote continued from page 90)

1969 to the end of August, there were eight major engagements and 10 minor or medium ones. We did not raise a hue and cry on every occasion or publish the news in the newspapers. We would rather talk less and do more. We prefer to talk about such things when the time is right. I am telling you this now because I feel the time has come to report to the people.

We have never suffered so many casualties before. Our casualties were 44 dead and 44 wounded in one engagement alone....

I want to appeal to the people of the country to restrain themselves. The persons who are against us have openly declared they are getting external aid. We on our part do not wish to enrage others. The question may be asked -- do we have the strength to retaliate? We do not have that strength. I ask the people not to be provoked to anger, to use harsh words, or to take action because of clashes in the frontier areas.

I wish to stress that we want to have friendly relations with all countries, especially with our neighbors... With regard to China, we would like to restore the cordial and friendly relations that previously existed. This will require efforts by both sides.... Despite the clashes at the borders and the present situation, we shall do whatever we can on our part to restore the old friendship.


BURMA
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Communist Activity
May 1971
Communist control
Communist operations
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KACHIN STATE
Myitkyinā
Wa-yao
Pao-shan
T'eng-ch'ung
CHINA
Lung-ling
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Bhamo
Katha
Wan-t'ing
Kyuhkok
Jui-li
Mong
Si
Chen-k'ang
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SAGAING
Meng-ting
Hsenwi
Kunlong
Ts'ang-yüan
BURMA
Mong Yaw
Lashio
Mong Mao
Mogok
SHAN
STATE
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Ving Ngün
SHAN
PLATEAU
Maymo
Mandalay
MANDALAY
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NAMES AND BOUNDARY REPRESENTATION
ARE NOT NECESSARILY AUTHORITATIVE

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small border town of Kyuhkok was evacuated by Burmese troops after a four-day battle. Two more small towns fell to the Communists later that month. In May 1970, an insurgent force reportedly led by Naw Seng staged a raid further into Burma on the larger towns of Lashio and Hsenwi, damaging the railroad station in the former and an important bridge near the latter. After these attacks, as after most insurgent attacks, the insurgents withdrew into their sanctuaries in the Shan State near the border with China.*

*

assembly and preparation for the attack, which included the attacks on Kyuhkok and the two other villages mentioned above, as well as the raids on Lashio and Hsenwi, began in February 1970. Three Chinese Communist advisers who were put in charge of the attacks accompanied the troops into action. The insurgents sustained between 80-90 killed (including one of the Chinese military advisers) and more than 100 wounded. After the insurgents retreated back into their sanctuaries along the border, meetings were called to review the failure of the offensive. The leaders concluded that the forces had gone too far into Burma and had overextended themselves. Communications between battalions and companies had been too slow, and ammunition had been insufficient. Many Burmese villagers had been afraid of the Communists and had fled before them, indicating that psychological operations prior to the battles had been insufficient to win the neutral villages.

Alarmed by the Communist incursions as far south as the sizeable town of Lashio, the Burmese government decided to make a concentrated effort to contain the rebels. This involved a command reorganization of the army, as well as an augmentation of troop strength near the border area, both of which paid dividends. Beginning in July 1970, the army scored its first real gains against the insurgents, the major success being the recapture of the town of Mong Si. In one battle with a 500-man Communist force that was reported to be using 60 and 82 mm mortars, the government claimed over 100 rebels killed. Despite its own relatively heavy losses and some retaliatory rebel ambushes during the summer, the army appeared to have regained the upper hand by September-October 1970. In the latter month, it scored perhaps its greatest victory to date, when the insurgents made a major -- but unsuccessful -- attempt to retake the town of Mong Si. For the insurgents, this was a particularly costly defeat in that they incurred a large number of casualties.

It was expected that insurgent operations would go down after May 1970, with the beginning of the wet season. What has been somewhat more surprising has been the low level of insurgent activity since the beginning of the latest dry season (October 1970-May 1971), as compared to the same period the year before. For the most part, the insurgents have stayed close to their sanctuaries along the border, where they are reported to be involved in a major training effort. On one of the few occasions when they have gone on the offensive, they managed to take the small town of Mongyah, near Lashio, in January 1971. After that, there was practically no activity until mid-April, when they again began moving troops into the area around Mong Si and started periodic shelling of army positions there. In late April they staged their first major attack in months -- on the town of Mong Mao, southeast of Kunlong. A large force -- estimated by the Burmese authorities at 2,000 Communists -- was involved in the attack. As of 11 May, the Communists still held the town, and the Burmese army was not expected to make any attempt to recapture it

until the beginning of the next dry season in October 1971. In what was probably their last military offensive before the onset of the rainy season, the insurgents were reported to have captured another small town (Ving Ngun) on 18 May 1971.

Thus, the picture has been one of a general lull in insurgent activities since September 1970, especially in comparison with the dry season offensive of the Communists last year, but with some increase in insurgent operations again in the spring of 1971. On the whole the Communists seem to be primarily concerned at this time with a recruiting and training effort (which would seem to reflect the recruiting difficulties that they are reported to have been having). There would seem to be little likelihood of major military action until the beginning of the next dry season in the fall of 1971. The attention to recruiting and training does suggest that the insurgents are preparing for sustained military action in the future, however.*

As of June 1971, the insurgents have control over a strip of land 5-10 miles on either side of the border (including the border town of Kyuhkok), plus roughly two-thirds of the former Kokang State. This is the so-called "liberated territory" or area under the control of the Northeast Command. Beyond this, Naw Seng's troops operate as far south as Maymo, as far west as Mogok, and as far east as Mong Mao; at times, they have occupied small towns like Mong Si for a short period, but they are usually quickly driven out by the Burmese army and air force.

The connection between the lull in the fighting and recent Chinese moves on the diplomatic front to improve relations with Burma is discussed in the next section of the paper, beginning on page 100.

The Burmese government has indicated that it will not make an attempt to retake the border town of Kyuhkok or the rest of the strip of land along the Sino-Burmese border that comprises the Northeast Command. However, it will almost certainly put up a fight to keep the insurgents from extending the occupied territory further than 5-10 miles from the border; the government certainly is not going to tolerate the occupation of major towns like Lashio. Thus, the situation is likely to stabilize very much as it now is, with the government maintaining control over the principal towns in north Burma and other areas where security forces are garrisoned, but with much of the remote hill area of northeast Burma vulnerable to insurgent attacks. While the government will not have effective control over the whole of Burma, the insurgents will not be in a position to disrupt life outside the highland area.

As for the nature of the threat that this poses to the Burmese government, it must be remembered that the GUB has never exercised full control in this area. As long as Naw Seng's insurgency is confined to a remote area along the frontier, supported almost exclusively by ethnic minority peoples, it can hardly be viewed as a serious threat to the survival of the government in Rangoon. No matter how successful the insurgent movement in establishing a secure base from which to operate, it must at some point either catch hold "in the lowland" (that is, among the population of Burma proper) or accept permanent status as an irritant. No one (apparently, not even the Chinese) argues that the Communist insurgency in the north is about to expand into central Burma. Even the Chinese recognize that the insurgents are not a realistic alternative to the present government.

Besides their almost total lack of appeal in central Burma, the insurgents would also seem to face certain difficulties in attracting the ethnic minority people in northern Burma. Apparently, Naw Seng is finding it increasingly difficult to recruit Kachin and Shan villagers from the Burma side of the border,

because of the large Burmese army presence in the area and also because of the traditional anti-Communism of these minority peoples. An United Front agreement reached between the Northeast Command and the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) in July 1970 is already showing signs of breaking down, because of KIA fears of Communist encroachment into its own areas.* In the past several months, there have been reports of fighting between the KIA and the Northeast Command. Naw Seng is in fact currently reported to be holding KIA soldiers as prisoners, having issued an order to shoot on sight any KIA forces intruding into CPB-controlled territory. Thus, the Communists are likely to have continuing problems with the other ethnic insurgent armies in the area, which will prevent them from concentrating their strength against the Burmese government.

Under these circumstances, it would seem well within the Burmese government's capability to keep a sizeable enough force in the northern Shan State to handle the

*The United Front Agreement signed in July 1970 was essentially a non-intervention pact, in which the KIA pledged not to interfere with the Northeast Command as long as the latter confined its activities to the border area. It was not a united front agreement in the sense of joining forces in a common alliance against the GUB. This agreement, like an earlier one signed in 1968, is already in the process of breaking down, essentially because of the built-in rivalry between the two groups. Although, in part, the dispute involves political and ideological matters, it is basically a rivalry between the two groups over commercial interests, such as tax collection and control over the revenues derived from the opium extensively grown in the area.

threat of the Communist insurgency there.* Roughly half of the 122,000-man army is presently engaged in counter-insurgency operations, against a total strength of insurgents of all types in all parts of Burma of approximately 20,000. Of these, the 4-5,000-strong Chinese-supported Northeast Command presents by far the most formidable adversary. The government takes a far more relaxed attitude towards the 14-15,000 non-Communist ethnic insurgents,** who, though collectively much more numerous than the Communists, are badly splintered, poorly armed, mutually hostile, and suspicious of all outsiders. For the most part, these non-Communist ethnic insurgents are confined to remote areas, where they pose little or no immediate threat to the lowland Burmese or their productive homelands in the Irrawaddy valley and delta, and show little disposition to unite. Therefore, the army has thus far been able to cope with the new threat of Communist insurgency in the north while keeping up its counter-insurgency efforts elsewhere. If a serious threat should begin to develop in the southeast, however, where former Premier U Nu has very recently begun anti-regime operations from Thailand, the government might find itself somewhat more pressed for troops.

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*The army is the main counter-insurgency force in Burma, although the police, who are trained in paramilitary activities, and the People's Militia play a supporting role. These security forces are adequately equipped and trained for their task and are able to contain the situation, at least to the extent of controlling the lowland area and maintaining garrisons elsewhere.

**These include the 3,500-man Kachin Independence Army, the 4-5,000 strong Shan State Army and Shan Independence Army, the 3,000-man Shan insurgent group operating independently under Khun Hsa, and the 3,000-strong Karen insurgents, divided about equally between pro-Communist and right-wing factions.

While the GUB would seem to be able to contain the Communist insurgency at existing levels, it would be hard put to root Naw Seng's insurgents out of the highlands -- not only because of the political prohibition against operations near the Chinese border but also because of the prohibitive military and economic costs. Even now, the cost to the government of its counter-insurgency operations is only slightly less than total national expenditures on education. At this level, the insurgency has become a political issue, with Ne Win's opponents attacking the administration for what is considered the high (over one-third) portion of the budget allocated to the military.

The cost of the insurgency has been even higher in terms of casualties. In 1970, the government for the first time released the casualty figure (over 1,000 casualties) of the insurgency in the north, thereby disclosing the substantial nature of the fighting between the government and the Communists in the Northern Shan State during 1970. Ne Win has made it clear that this casualty cost has been higher than the government is willing to pay.

Thus, the Burmese government has become increasingly concerned about the level of the insurgency even while it has managed to cope with the problem fairly successfully, in terms of limiting insurgent operations to remote areas traditionally not under the control of the government. An intensification of insurgent activity would present definite problems for the regime, not only in increased military costs and a rise in the number of casualties, but in the sharpening of existing antagonism between the line combat units and the soft-living military bureaucracy in Rangoon.

For these reasons Ne Win has become increasingly interested in improving relations with the Chinese. Since late 1969, he has made several overtures to that effect in the hope of getting the Chinese to stop, or at least to reduce, their support of the insurgents. It would

seem that the question of Chinese support of the Burmese insurgents is probably under review in Peking at this moment, considering the modifications in official Sino-Burmese relations in the last year. A few tentative conclusions about the direction of the new Chinese policy can be drawn on the basis of Chinese actions regarding both the GUB and the insurgents over the last eight months.

China's New Two-Level Policy Toward Burma

After three years of what might be described as the Sino-Burmese cold war -- during which the antagonist states maintained official contact at the chargé level -- there have been the first signs of an improvement in state relations beginning in the fall of 1970 and culminating in the return of ambassadors this past winter. This step has been followed by other signs of a more relaxed diplomatic atmosphere: much more frequent contact between Chinese and Burmese diplomats both in Peking and Rangoon, enquiries by Chou En-lai about the health of ailing Ne Win, and, most recently, an invitation issued by the Chinese ambassador in Rangoon to Ne Win to visit Peking.*

**On 14 June 1971, Chinese Ambassador to Burma Chen Chao-yuan made an official call on President Ne Win to discuss two main points: the Chinese invitation to Ne Win to visit China and Chinese concern over the arrest of Overseas Chinese who held false Burmese national registration certificates. If the Chinese were giving overriding priority to improving relations with Burma, it seems that they would not have brought up the matter of the Overseas Chinese in jail -- a matter that has been a sore point between the two countries -- on the same occasion that they chose to issue an invitation to Ne Win that promised to improve relations. The issuing of the invitation, combined with the demarche concerning the Overseas Chinese in jail,*

(footnote continued on page 101)

There is no doubt that the improvement in diplomatic relations, initiated by the Burmese but eventually accepted and furthered by the Chinese, constitutes a significant change in the situation. Yet even the manner in which the restoration of ambassadors was accomplished was indicative of continuing major reservations in the Chinese attitude towards the Ne Win regime: after intensive secret negotiations, Burma's Foreign Ministry announced the appointment of the new Burmese ambassador to China, U Thein Maung, on 12 October 1970; although he arrived in Peking in mid-November, the Chinese waited until March 1971 to announce the appointment of Chen Chao-yuan as Chinese ambassador to Burma. The obviously calculated delay in sending an ambassador to Rangoon, once the Burmese and Chinese had agreed to exchange ambassadors, is reported to have irritated Ne Win and the Burmese Government. The delay was typical of the procedure which the Chinese have followed in

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is a good illustration of the carrot-and-stick approach of Chinese foreign policy towards Burma since the fall of 1970.

Although it is probably true that Ne Win's recent ill health rules out a trip to Peking in the near future (the reason Ne Win gave for refusing the Chinese invitation), there are other reasons why Ne Win might refuse to visit China at this time. Considering the strained relations between the two countries since June 1967, he might well feel that his going to China would be interpreted as a sign of his having made certain concessions to the Chinese. In the past, he is known to have resented the many visits of Chinese leaders to Burma and the constant pressure on him to visit Peking because of the impression these visits created of Burma's being under the influence of the Chinese.

exchanging ambassadors with the USSR and other countries with which Peking has had strained relations.*

The exchange of ambassadors between two countries does not necessarily mean a resolution of basic differences between the countries. The Chinese themselves have downplayed the significance of a normalization of Chinese diplomatic relations with countries with which Peking has continuing fundamental grievances. One of China's top leaders recently stated ~~in private~~ (in a context other than Sino-Burmese relations) that the exchange of ambassadors between the CPR and countries with which China has major problems does not in itself mean an improvement in relations. This has been demonstrated in Peking's relations with several countries, including the USSR.**

It would seem that Chinese policy towards the Burmese insurgents is a much better indicator of the real state of Sino-Burmese relations than the diplomatic atmosphere between the two countries. If one accepts the conclusion that Chinese policy towards the Burmese insurgency is a

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*In the case of the USSR, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia, all of which are on poor terms with the CPR, the Chinese waited a considerable time after the ambassador from these countries had arrived in Peking before sending a Chinese ambassador to their capitals.

**China's relations with Burma are in some respects similar to its relations with the USSR, with which China has also exchanged ambassadors in the last year and with which Peking has similarly encouraged an improvement in the diplomatic atmosphere. This change has brought no resolution of the many major issues in dispute between the two regimes, however, and while relieving some of the existing tension, has not eliminated the underlying fundamental hostility between Moscow and Peking.

function of the overall condition of Sino-Burmese relations -- in other words, that the Chinese would never have begun to support the insurgents if Sino-Burmese state relations had not changed dramatically for the worse in June 1967, then it follows that a significant improvement in Sino-Burmese relations should be reflected in a major reduction, if not elimination, of Chinese support for the insurgents. So long as the Chinese continue to support the insurgents, there can hardly be good relations, at least from Ne Win's point of view.

As might be expected, the improvement in diplomatic relations has brought certain changes in Chinese policy towards the insurgents. For one thing, the Chinese appear to have taken steps to tone down insurgent operations during the recent dry season when secret negotiations concerning the restoration of ambassadors were underway; yet in the same period Chinese logistical support for Naw Seng's rebels seems actually to have been augmented. On the propaganda front, Peking has indeed cut back its previous overt support of the insurgency; but on the other hand, it has inaugurated a powerful new clandestine radio broadcasting facility to fulfill the same support function for the Burmese rebels. All this seems to add up to a shift in Chinese tactics toward making the insurgency less of an overt Chinese challenge to the Burmese government, but no overall reduction in the scope of Chinese covert support to the insurgents. On the contrary, the Chinese have taken actions that seem to be aimed at strengthening the insurgency as a long-term threat to Burma, albeit one less blatantly identified with China.

It would seem that the Chinese have used their authority over Naw Seng to enforce some curtailment of the scope of insurgent military operations over the last six

to eight months. This is suggested by the fact that the insurgents did not mount a major offensive against the government in the winter of 1970-71, as they did the previous year. Furthermore, Thakin Ba Thein Tin, the Chairman of the Overseas CPB and Mao's chief liaison with Naw Seng, visited the Northeast Command in March 1971 with new instructions to "put increased emphasis on civil administration in the Communist-occupied areas [of Burma], as opposed to concentrating solely on armed conflicts with the Burmese army." Thakin Ba Thein Tin asserted that improved administrative practices were needed in order to reduce the flow of refugees from Communist sanctuaries to government-controlled areas and to help allay the misgivings that many Burmese had about a Communist government. He added:

> *The process of liberating Burma will be slow, but it will be successful if we proceed in a firm and steady manner. The people in the [Communist-controlled] zones should be organized into militia and armed with weapons captured from the Burmese army.*

Although the Chinese would obviously try to put a good face on their decision to tone down the insurgency -- and Thakin Ba Thein Tin might naturally be expected to explain the decision to the insurgents in terms of its

being more important to build a Communist organizational base than to pursue further victories -- there would seem to be more than mere rationalization in Thakin Ba Thein Tin's words. The Chinese seem to be thinking in terms of a protracted struggle, requiring the strengthening of the long-term capabilities of the insurgents. Thus, the emphasis on building a Communist organization would seem to be aimed at strengthening the insurgency as a long-term threat to Burma.

Since Thakin Ba Thein Tin's visit to insurgent headquarters in March 1971, Naw Seng's forces are known to have taken steps towards building a strong organizational base. According to [redacted], the Communists have organized a village defense force in the area around Mong Si and are forcing every able-bodied man to join. Apparently, the insurgents are also involved in a land nationalization program, which has alienated many of the villagers in the area and caused some of them to flee the Communist zone.

While the Chinese appear to have been primarily responsible for the curtailment in Burmese insurgent operations this past winter, they must have approved the last-minute flurry of insurgent attacks in April and May, in the closing weeks of the 1970-71 dry season. Moreover, there is no evidence of a reduction in Chinese military aid during this period either in (a) the all-important Chinese logistical aid to Naw Seng (in weapons, ammunition, or food), (b) the training support Peking furnishes him through the Yunnan school, (c) the vital Chinese manpower help to him through recruiting for the insurgents on the Chinese side of the border, or (d) the assistance given Naw Seng's forces by Chinese military advisers. On the contrary, the latest available evidence suggests that the Chinese effort in 1971 in some of these fields is being increased.

On the propaganda side, there is no doubt that Peking has cut back its previous overt propaganda support

of the insurgency, though it has not ceased it altogether. In March 1970, Peking marked the 22nd anniversary of the CPB insurgency with several NCNA articles detailing the achievements and accomplishments of the Burmese revolution. In the next six months, there were three other NCNA articles on the "CPB-led Burmese people's revolutionary armed struggle" -- one in June, one in August, and one in September 1970. There followed eight months of silence, until May 1971. While this in itself might not be noteworthy, considering the periodicity of previous Chinese comment on the subject, Peking's failure to take note of the 23d anniversary of the launching of the Communist insurgency in March of this year was certainly a marked contrast to its propaganda treatment of the anniversary last year.

China's long silence on the subject of the Burmese insurgency was suddenly broken in May 1971 when an NCNA article on "the excellent revolutionary situation in Southeast Asia" specifically mentioned the "victories of the people's armed forces led by the Communist Party of Burma and the armed forces of the various national minorities in Burma." Thus, Chinese overt propaganda support of the Burmese revolution has not completely ceased, although it does seem to have been significantly reduced.*

**The 19 May 1971 NCNA article was a major article that was written to commemorate the first anniversary of Mao's statement of 20 May 1970 in which he stressed that "revolution" was the main trend in the world today. Thus, the article was a reaffirmation of that part of Peking's policy that is devoted to encouraging revolution. The article seems to have been a response to Soviet baiting that the Chinese were not true supporters of world revolution; in part, it seems also to have been meant to deflect the criticism of foreign revolutionaries who had complained in private to the Chinese that Peking was not*

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Meanwhile, the Chinese have inaugurated a powerful new clandestine radio broadcasting station to fulfill the same support function. The radio station -- called the "Voice of the People of Burma" and broadcasting in Burmese to Burma -- is located in China, at the site of the training base at Lu-hsi.* Thakin Ba Thein Tin is reported

(footnote continued from page 106)
giving enough support to the cause of revolution. Thus, there was a special reason for the Chinese to cite the revolutions and insurgencies which they were supporting. Although the Chinese need not to have mentioned Burma (if they had been primarily concerned to improve relations with the GUB), the mention of the Burmese insurgency in this context was not equivalent to Chinese devotion of an entire article to the subject. In other words, it does not constitute the same degree of support that Peking has previously given Naw Seng insurgents in Chinese propaganda.

**Although there have been reports that the radio broadcasts originate in Burma, it has been reliably established that the radio station is located in China, at the site of the training base at Lu-hsi. It is a fairly sophisticated facility, which was built over the past one-and-a-half years. It has the capability of transmitting anywhere in Burma and can be clearly heard as far south as Rangoon. It transmits on a number of different frequencies and in five languages: Burmese, Kachin, Shan, Karen, and Chinese (Mandarin). Daily broadcasts occur between 0700-0800 and 1830-1930 hours. In areas of Burma under Communist control, printed programs and broadcasting schedules are reported to be available ahead of time. Each broadcast starts with a Burmese song and ends with the Communist Internationale.*

to have come from Peking to participate in the inauguration of the new radio station, timed to coincide with the 23d anniversary of the Burmese armed struggle on 28 March 1971. Thus, while the Chinese took no official note of the anniversary in Chinese media, they chose to celebrate the occasion in another rather dramatic way.

It should be noted that the Chinese never provided the CPB with a clandestine radio station during all the years that Thakin Than Tun and the old CPB leadership were engaged in armed struggle against the government in central Burma. It is ironic that a new radio station should now be broadcasting in the name of the Burmese Communist Party, now that the Chinese have virtually nothing to do with the old CPB leaders in central Burma. The radio can hardly be said to speak for the remnant Party, when the Party leadership, including Thakin Zin and Thakin Chit and the other Party leaders in central Burma, have absolutely no connection with its operation. The Chinese have simply established the radio as the official voice of the CPB and lent credence to the claim by the association of Thakin Ba Thein Tin and Naw Seng with its inauguration -- in the same way that they have established Naw Seng as the new leader of the Communist insurgency and lent credence to that claim by co-opting him as a member of the CPB Politburo.

The first broadcast of the new "Voice of the Burmese People" featured a statement made in the name of the Central Committee of the Burmese Communist Party which repeatedly attacked the "Ne Win military government," a term not used by Peking in its own name since October 1969.* In a second unattributed "important

**After the riots in June 1967, Chinese propaganda attacked Ne Win by name, in referring to the "Ne Win fascist government" and the "Ne Win fascist clique." NCNA continued to refer to the GUB in these terms until October 1969, when it stopped using the word "fascist" but continued*

(footnote continued on page 109)

article," the radio went so far as to call for "the overthrow of the Ne Win military government," a demand that has been repeated in subsequent radio broadcasts of the "Voice," such as a 1 May 1971 broadcast of the CPB May Day slogans.* In general, the radio broadcasts have served to emphasize the progress of the Communist insurgents and to link the Burmese Communist insurgency with the "liberation movements" in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos; they have also continued to attack the Ne Win government in the most uninhibited terms.

The Chinese role in setting up and operating the radio station is beyond dispute. Besides the actual construction of a sophisticated broadcasting facility, well within the boundaries of China, the Chinese seem to play the major role in the planning and broadcasting of the programs themselves. At least one announcer is clearly recognizable as one of Peking Radio's Burmese-language announcers. This suggests that the Burmese staff of Radio Peking, both its writers and announcers, may well have been transferred from Peking to Yunnan, where all propaganda activities on Burma are to be centered for the moment. From the very beginning, the broadcasts have had a professional technical and content quality.

(footnote continued from page 108)
to attack Ne Win personally (i.e. the "Ne Win military government"). A month later, it dropped the personal attacks on Ne Win; since then, it has referred only to the "reactionary government" or the "Burmese reactionaries."

**It is interesting, in this regard, that the "Voice" also broadcast a call for the overthrow of President Marcos of the Philippines, although the Chinese in their own media have never even attacked President Marcos by name. The broadcast was made in connection with Ne Win's visit to the Philippines.*

Thus, Chinese restraint in providing direct propaganda support of the Burmese insurgents since September 1970 has been offset to some extent by the establishment of a clandestine radio facility in China that provides even stronger indirect propaganda support for the insurgency and more provocative attacks on the GUB. In this way, the Chinese have sought to circumvent the dilemma posed on the one hand by the constraints of their diplomatic objectives and on the other hand by the propaganda needs of Naw Seng's insurgency. So long as they avoid making direct attacks on the Ne Win government in their own name, they may hope to maintain "correct" Sino-Burmese diplomatic relations while they continue to support the armed struggle against the Burmese government on a clandestine basis.*

Besides considerations arising out of Sino-Burmese relations, there would seem to be other reasons why the Chinese have toned down their previous overt propaganda support of the Burmese insurgents. In view of overriding foreign policy considerations, such as Chinese admission to the UN and Sino-US relations, Peking has reason to want to camouflage its support of revolutionary activity such as the Burmese insurgency for the sake of international public opinion. It is clearly sensitive to the charge (made by the Soviets and others) that China is directly interfering in the affairs of other countries; by keeping their support of Naw Seng on a more strictly covert basis, the Chinese better protect themselves against such charges

**It is possible that Chinese media will begin to quote from the broadcasts of the "Voice of the Burmese People" in the same way that NCNA and Radio Peking often cite the "Voice of the Malayan Revolution" and the clandestine radio broadcasts of the Thai Communist insurgents. In this way, Chinese media could be used to give additional propaganda support to the Burmese insurgents while preserving the fiction that Peking itself is not attacking the GUB.*

being made in the case of Burma. By not attacking the GUB directly and by not openly proclaiming their support of the insurgents, they may hope to preserve the fiction (with Burmese and international audiences) that they are not interfering in Burmese affairs, while they actually continue to maintain a high level of support for the insurgents.

Ne Win and the Burmese government have not been fooled, however. While reportedly pleased with the recent improvement in diplomatic relations between the two countries, the GUB has apparently been both alarmed and annoyed by other aspects of current Chinese policy towards Burma. For instance, it was reported to consider the Chinese role in the inauguration of a clandestine radio broadcasting facility for the Burmese insurgents to be a particularly unfriendly act. Ne Win was said to have been very much embarrassed by the start of the radio broadcasts less than a week after the arrival of the new Chinese ambassador in Rangoon. GUB security services were immediately ordered to monitor the broadcasts and, where possible, to jam the frequencies used by the radio.

In view of the reaction of the Burmese government to the new radio station, the Chinese can hardly expect to have significantly improved relations with the GUB so long as they engage in such provocative acts. Since they must realize that they are jeopardizing continued further improvement in state-to-state relations with such actions, their behavior suggests that they will not give top priority to improving relations with Burma, at the sacrifice of the "people's armed struggle," unless and until they can have state relations more or less on Chinese terms.

At the moment, Peking would seem to be following a "two-pronged" policy towards Burma -- of improving state relations while, at the same time, maintaining an insurgency lever over the GUB. While the Chinese now avoid overt insults and attacks on the GUB and make obvious goodwill gestures, such as their recent extension of an invitation to Ne Win to visit Peking, they continue covertly to provide considerable support to the insurgents,

including both military aid and clandestine propaganda support. A similar combination of seemingly contradictory elements has been noted in Chinese policy towards other countries, specifically, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand, during the past several months. Whereas some observers have described Chinese policy towards these countries as "ambivalent," it would seem more apt to describe it as "two-pronged" -- aimed at improving relations with these countries with which China has been on bad terms (in keeping with China's overall effort to improve its image in the world today) and, at the same time, at maintaining leverage over these governments to force concessions favorable to China.

The Burmese Insurgency as an Instrument of Chinese Foreign Policy

It is an underlying thesis of this paper (1) that Chinese support of the Burmese insurgents began as a direct reaction to a sudden and serious deterioration in Sino-Burmese relations and (2) that it has continued as a direct result of the failure of China and Burma to solve the particular problems arising out of the incident that wrecked Sino-Burmese relations. In other words, Chinese support of the Burmese insurgents is seen to be closely tied to certain demands that the Chinese government made of the Burmese government at the time of the anti-Chinese riots in Rangoon in June 1967. While the Chinese felt these to be legitimate demands, considering the enormity of the injury as they saw it (the death of many Chinese residents of Rangoon), the Burmese considered the demands humiliating. Since 1967, Ne Win has yielded to the Chinese on some of the demands, but he has stubbornly refused to meet them all -- at the cost of continued Chinese support of the insurgents.

In the midst of the riots in June 1967, the Chinese Charge d'Affairs in Rangoon personally presented the Burmese Foreign Ministry with five demands, which the Chinese

government made public the following day in a Chinese Government Statement of 29 June 1967. In the words of the government statement, the demands are that the GUB:

(1) "severely punish the culprits;"

(2) "give relief to the families of the victims;"

(3) "publicly offer apologies to the Chinese government and people and the broad masses of the Overseas Chinese in Burma;"

(4) "guarantee the safety of the Chinese Embassy in Burma and other Chinese agencies and all their Chinese personnel;"

(5) "immediately put an end to the fascist atrocities against Overseas Chinese.

Since June 1967 these demands have been repeated and paraphrased countless times in Chinese propaganda and by Chinese officials, in public and private.

Since the riots, the Chinese have raised other demands, such as the demand that the GUB release Overseas Chinese in jail in Burma (some of whom were apparently arrested in connection with the riots but most of whom were arrested on other charges, such as smuggling, black marketeering, the possession of false national registration certificates, or minor criminal offenses). According to some reports, the Chinese have also insisted that Rangoon, rather than Peking, take the initiative in reopening trade between the two countries. These and other demands are usually mentioned, along with the original five demands, whenever Chinese officials discuss the subject of Sino-Burmese relations. For this reason, there

has been persisting confusion about the original five demands and a tendency to assume that Burma has yielded on one or another of the five demands when the GUB has agreed to some other Chinese request, such as the release of Overseas Chinese in jail.

A careful review of Sino-Burmese maneuvering on the subject of the five demands shows that the Burmese have actually met only two of the original five demands. What Chinese officials say about the status of the demands -- namely, that the Burmese have not met three of the demands -- is quite consistent with the facts, as best we can determine them. Thus, when the Chinese say that further improvement in Sino-Burmese relations awaits Ne Win's capitulation on the remaining three demands, they are taking essentially the same position that they have taken since June 1967; it is not a question of their having come up with new demands to justify their continued support of the insurgents or of their falsely accusing the GUB of not having met their stated demands when in fact the GUB has.

The GUB's only formal response to Peking's demands at the time of the riots was a rather belated note presented to the CPR Foreign Ministry on 11 July 1967. In part, it was a formal rejection of Peking's demands and accusations and, in part, a token gesture towards meeting certain of the demands. Denying Peking's charge that the Burmese government had instigated the riots, the note emphasized that the GUB had always "exerted efforts" to protect the CPR Embassy and Chinese experts "in accordance with international tradition." It went on to say that a recurrence of the riots would be prevented by "correct security measures." So far as is known, this is as far as the Burmese have ever gone in meeting the fourth and fifth demands. As we shall see, the Chinese have indicated that they still do not consider this statement satisfactory as an "assurance of no further harassment of the Overseas Chinese," although Peking apparently has accepted the sentence regarding the safety of Chinese officials in Burma as an adequate guarantee on their part.

As for the demand for a public apology and official punishment of those involved in the anti-China riots, the Burmese note assured the CPR that it was carrying out an investigation of the events and would take "appropriate action" in accordance with Burmese law. The note stated that the government was "very sorry" about the death of the Chinese expert stabbed on CPR Embassy premises. Obviously, neither of these statements met Peking's demands for "severe punishment." Moreover, the Burmese note completely ignored the Chinese demands for compensation of the victims of the riots.

On 4 October 1967, the GUB held the trial of the only Burmese citizen apprehended for a serious crime in connection with the June riots, the stabbing of a Chinese Embassy official within the Embassy compound.* At the end of the trial, the judge acquitted the defendant of the primary charge of "causing grievous hurt" (on the grounds that the wounds inflicted by the stabbing were superficial) and found him guilty on the lesser charge of criminal trespass; he then allowed the man to go free "since he had already been detained 98 days pending trial." It is not surprising that Peking found Burmese justice somewhat lacking in this regard. In a strongly-worded blast at the GUB (on the day after the trial), the Chinese government reiterated its demand for "severe punishment of the chief culprits" and warned the Burmese government that Chinese aid technicians in Burma would be recalled unless there was a "satisfactory reply to China's proper and reasonable demands."

Having directly linked the continuance of the Chinese aid program to Burmese compliance with their five demands, Peking was almost certainly taken by surprise when Ne Win took the initiative in expelling all the Chinese technicians from Burma on 6 October 1967, before the Chinese could follow through on their threat. Although they protested the expulsion of the technicians (31 October CPR government statement) and accused the GUB of "unilaterally tearing to pieces" the Sino-Burmese Economic and Technical Cooperation Agreement, the Chinese complied with

The Chinese embassy official who was stabbed suffered only minor wounds; it was a Chinese aid official who was killed.

Ne Win's order by having all of their technicians out of Burma by the end of the month. Several weeks before, Chou En-lai had indicated that the Chinese would withdraw their ambassador at the same time as the technicians, and they did so.

Relations between the two countries deteriorated further in February 1968, when the GUB staged the first of a number of trials of Overseas Chinese arrested in connection with the June 1967 riots. In contrast to the lenient treatment given the Burmese youth accused of stabbing the Chinese Embassy official, the Overseas Chinese were given long prison terms for much lesser crimes. In March, there were more arrests of Overseas Chinese in what Peking described as "stepped-up persecution" of Overseas Chinese and "deliberate anti-Chinese outrages." NCNA warned that these were "grave steps in further aggravating" Sino-Burmese relations.

These signs of hostility between Rangoon and Peking strongly suggested that there had been no further give on the part of the Burmese with respect to China's five demands, and this was confirmed by [redacted] the Chinese Chargé in Rangoon in June 1968, to the effect that "the Burmese had always responded with rejection and had continued their policy of persecution of the Overseas Chinese." A 14 June 1968 Chinese Foreign Ministry Note to the Burmese government, protesting the GUB's "systematic persecution" of Overseas Chinese, warned that "the debt you owe will sooner or later have to be settled."

Meanwhile, Burma adopted a wait-and-see attitude. While it continued to avoid direct public attacks on the CPR, such as the Chinese indulged in towards the GUB, it indicated no willingness to capitulate on the five demands.

[redacted]

By this time, Chinese actions in support of the Naw Seng insurgents had become another cause of increasing friction between the two countries. In late November 1968, the [redacted] commented [redacted] that China's open support of the insurgents "has now become the major obstacle to better relations." He indicated that the Chinese would have to take the initiative, if they wanted better relations with Burma, by withdrawing support from the Communist insurgents.

As the fighting between Naw Seng's forces and the Burmese army became much more serious during 1969, however, with mounting casualties on the Burmese army side, Ne Win was forced to take the initiative. In a speech to a conference of the ruling BSSP party on 6 November 1969, he made what many observers considered a back-handed apology for the events of June 1967. At the end of the speech, in expressing Burma's interest in restoring "the cordial and friendly relations that previously existed with China," he said:

> *We regard the 1967 incident as an unfortunate one. We would like to heal its wound and forget the ugly incident. Our two countries are linked by land and water. We would like to always remain friendly. We will try not to make any mistakes on our side.*

It is clear that Ne Win and the Burmese government hoped that the Chinese would accept Ne Win's statement as the public apology they had long demanded. By promoting the idea that Ne Win considered it an apology, the GUB may have hoped to persuade the CPR to settle for such a halfway gesture, letting it be known at the same time that Rangoon was not prepared to go further in making an humiliating, abject apology.

China, for its part, has made it abundantly clear that it does not accept Ne Win's statement as the unconditional,

public apology that it demanded. An authoritative confirmation of this came from high-level Burmese officials [redacted] in late November 1969; they indicated that there had been "no basic change in relations with Peking" after Ne Win's speech and expressed "Ne Win's disappointment over the lack of a Chinese response" to his speech. The Chinese Chargé in Rangoon at this time is reported to have commented on the speech: "Deeds speak more eloquently than words". He was very explicit on the point that the Chinese were not prepared to accept the speech as a Burmese apology for the riots. He listed three preconditions as still having not been satisfactorily met by the GUB, one of them being the public apology. Since November 1969, Chinese officials have many times, both in public and private, restated their refusal to accept Ne Win's partial apology. As recently as October 1970, after the agreement on the exchange of ambassadors had been worked out, the Chinese Chargé told [redacted] Burma still had not made its intentions clear with respect to the Chinese demand for an apology.

The Chinese Chargé's statement is the most authoritative source available on the present status of the five demands. In October 1970, he listed the same three demands which he had cited in November 1969 as still having not yet been satisfied by the GUB: the demand for a public apology, the demand for compensation for damages, and the demand for a guarantee against similar incidents happening in the future. This is in keeping with all the evidence available on the Burmese response to the various demands over the past four years. As mentioned earlier, the CPR has apparently accepted the 11 July 1967 Burmese Foreign Ministry note as a guarantee of the safety of Chinese officials in Burma. Peking seems to have given up on the demand for "severe punishment" of those guilty of anti-Chinese actions during the riots, having apparently accepted Burma's version of justice in the matter. The other three demands it considers unfulfilled; and from all the available evidence, it would seem correct to say that they are in fact unfulfilled. Although Ne Win has gone half-way towards

meeting two of the demands -- that of a public apology and a guarantee against future such incidents -- he has clearly not met China's precise demand in either case. As for the fifth demand, the GUB has apparently made no effort to compensate the Overseas Chinese for their losses during the June riots. In January 1970, the Chinese Charge was reported to have said that this was the most important of the demands, as far as the Chinese were concerned.*

Thus, the GUB and the CPR would seem to be at an impasse on the most important matters at issue, even though the atmosphere of Sino-Burmese diplomatic relations has improved. A succession of private statements from the Chinese over the last year has confirmed Peking's continuing coldness toward the GUB. According to one unconfirmed report, Chou En-lai is reported to have told Ch'en Kuo-ho, an emissary of the GUB who went to Peking in August 1970 to seek an improvement in Sino-Burmese relations, that "the Chinese people, as well as the Overseas Chinese in Burma, do not like the Ne Win government." Apparently, Chou refused to make any further comment on the subject, though he went on to stress the friendship between the Burmese and Chinese peoples. Other Chinese officials who have been asked about the state of Sino-Burmese relations have been frank in their acknowledgement

*To underscore Peking's interest in ethnic Chinese everywhere (and its particular interest in the payment of damages suffered by the Overseas Chinese in Rangoon in June 1967), the Chinese Embassy in Burma has provided various kinds of aid to the victims of the riots. The aid has taken the form of outright embassy grants to the families of those killed and disbursement of other aid to ruined businessmen and destitute families. Although the total amount of the aid is unknown and may in fact be relatively small, the Embassy gets credit for being the only institution which even purports to look after the welfare of the Overseas Chinese community.

of no real improvement in relations. They still speak of the events of June 1967 with bitterness and indicate that it is up to the GUB to prove to China that the Burmese deserve China's friendship after the "anti-Chinese events" of four years ago. In November 1970, when questioned directly about the "contradiction between China's professed policy of peaceful coexistence and its actual support of the Communist insurgents in the northern Shan State," Shih Tsien, the Chinese Chargé d'Affairs in Rangoon, explained:

> *There is no contradiction. China believes in peaceful coexistence between countries with differing social systems, provided these countries treat China on an equal footing and do not deny specific claims by China which she considers to be just [a reference to the five demands]. China will then follow a policy of peaceful coexistence with the country concerned in diplomatic, consular, trade, cultural, and other spheres.*

In January 1971, Shih Tsien was even more direct in expressing China's continuing resentment over the events of June 1967 and its righteous indignation over Burma's continuing refusal to make amends. According to Shih Tsien, "when China is justifiably angered, hard-hitting language is instinctive."

The new first secretary in the Chinese Embassy in Rangoon, who arrived soon after Shih Tsien's departure from Rangoon in January 1971, has provided the latest and most authoritative statement on the current state of Sino-Burmese relations. In February 1971, he is reported to have told a group of Overseas Chinese in Burma that "there was still a long way to go before Sino-Burmese relations would reach the state of normalcy that existed in the period prior to the June 1967 riots." Although he admitted

that the two governments had been attempting to iron out their differences, he emphasized that the GUB had not fully accepted China's five demands; he made it clear that China would continue to take a hard line in talks with the Burmese government and that further normalization of relations would depend on the attitude of the GUB. At the same time, in accordance with a policy followed by the Chinese Embassy since late 1969, he cautioned the Overseas Chinese leaders to avoid any disturbance that might lead to a new crackdown against them or jeopardize further normalization.*

Finally, the most recent propaganda evidence points to continuing strains in Sino-Burmese relations. While, in accordance with their new policy, the Chinese refrain from initiating direct and overt attacks in their own name on the GUB, Chinese media nevertheless continue to publicize occasional messages attributed to the CPB which contain such attacks. Thus Peking published a 1 July 1971 CPB/CC message to the CCP/CC -- obviously written or authorized

*In late November 1969, in a dramatic contrast to the "Red Guard diplomacy" of early and mid 1967, the Embassy was reported to have sent out a verbal message to pro-Communist Overseas Chinese associations warning them not to display overtly their anti-Burmese sentiments -- even though, as the Embassy explained, "Sino-Burmese relations have not been normalized and the Chinese government will continue to support the Burmese people in their struggle for the liberation of Burma." In late 1969, the Chinese Embassy was also reported to be telling prominent Overseas Chinese leaders that the Embassy would like the Overseas Chinese in Burma to keep away from local politics and take a neutral attitude towards the Ne Win government. The second secretary of the Embassy was quoted as saying: "The Chinese people are helping the Burmese people in their struggle against the Ne Win regime, but under no circumstances should the local Overseas Chinese show an undue hostile attitude towards the Burmese authorities."

in the first place by the Chinese themselves -- which boasted of the "sure defeat of the Ne Win military regime." In other respects, the coolness of the Chinese propaganda posture toward Rangoon contrasts sharply with the warmth of the Soviet posture toward the GUB. Thus, when the First Congress of the Burmese Socialist Program Party was held in June 1971 -- representing perhaps the most important political event in Burma in years, the Soviets provided extensive and very favorable comment on developments at the Congress. Peking remained totally silent.

In summary, then, there are indications that the Chinese want improved relations with Rangoon but that Peking feels that it is up to the Burmese to make the concessions and take the initiatives to bring this about, since the Chinese apparently still consider themselves the "aggrieved" party. They show no inclination to make major concessions to get good relations. While it can be argued that the Burmese government's diplomatic offensive to improve relations with China has been reciprocated to a degree in non-substantive areas, such as in displays of affability by Chinese officials to Burmese representatives, there would seem to be little more that the GUB can reasonably hope to accomplish short of concrete Burmese concessions on the Chinese demands.*

**This general line of interpretation recognizes that available evidence is not conclusive and that other shadings of construction can be placed upon the character of present Sino-Burmese relations -- and the role therein of the insurgency and the Chinese demands. For example, as compared with the above judgments, the possibility cannot be excluded (1) that the Burmese government may in fact have secretly gone farther towards meeting China's demands, (2) that Peking may secretly have eased up on its demands, (3) that state-to-state relations may therefore have become more amicable, (4) that Peking's support of the insurgents may be less closely related to Rangoon's meeting the Chinese demands, and (5) that the Chinese consider that*

(footnote continued on page 123)

It remains to be seen whether the Chinese will, in the end, succeed in compelling the GUB to make the concessions demanded by Peking. One can not be sure how far Ne Win might be prepared to go in order to get the Chinese to stop supporting the insurgents. Certainly, further concessions on his part cannot be ruled out. On balance, however, it seems unlikely that he will ever give in to Mao to the point of publicly assuming all the blame for the events of June 1967, unless the Chinese-supported insurgency in the northeast were to become a much more serious threat to the government than it now is. As for the Chinese, they are not likely to give up their support of the insurgency at least until Ne Win bows to their pressure on this and other points.

There is the separate question of whether the Chinese are likely to give up their support of Naw Seng if the Burmese should, in fact, give in to the Chinese demands. Although it would be difficult for Peking to justify its abandonment of active support for the Burmese revolution, not only to the Burmese insurgents but to other revolutionaries around the world, it has not hesitated in the past to sacrifice the interests of the Burmese Communists and other revolutionary groups to the overriding interests of Chinese state relations. Other things being equal, it seems that the Chinese would have more to gain from being on good terms with the government of Burma, as they were for so many years, than from continuing to maintain an insurgency that has no support in Burma proper and only very limited support even among the Burmese ethnic minorities.

(footnote continued from page 122)
they derive certain special benefits from support of the insurrection, over and above the leverage factor. The study nonetheless holds that the available evidence clearly supports the line of reasoning presented in the text.

At this point, however, there is considerable momentum behind a continuation of the Chinese policy of support for the insurgents. Once started, there are considerable problems in cutting off such an operation. Because of the degree to which the Chinese have become committed to the insurgents, it seems likely that they would not stop their activities in support of the insurgents even if the Burmese met all, or most, of China's stated demands; and there is always the possibility that the Chinese will use the demands as a wedge for introducing new demands, thereby prolonging the usefulness of the insurgency as an instrument of pressure against the GUB.

Up to a point, Chinese support of the insurgency is useful as a means of pressure on the GUB; but at some point, it is bound to become counterproductive. Thus, in the long term, the Chinese are faced with a dilemma, and they will have to choose between their commitment to the insurgency and their investment in Sino-Burmese relations.

The foregoing has assumed the continuance in power of the present governments of China and Burma. Obviously, the situation would be greatly changed by the death, incapacitation, or removal from power of Ne Win and/or Mao. To some extent, the dispute between China and Burma has become a feud between Mao and Ne Win. Thus, the continuance in power of these two leaders tends to work against a Sino-Burmese accommodation which might lead the Chinese to give up their support of the insurgents.

In view of the information available on attitudes within the Burmese military, there is little reason to believe that a successor military regime would be any more inclined than Ne Win to make concessions to the Chinese. However, the chances of the GUB's making such concessions would be greatly increased in the less likely event of a civilian successor government. The possibility that Mao may eventually be confronted with a successor Burmese government has been made more real of late because of Ne Win's serious health problems.

The uncertainties that would be raised by Mao's death are also great. It seems likely, however, that if he were to pass from the scene, the Chinese leaders might find it easier to compromise with the Burmese government. For one thing, they might not be so concerned about past indignities -- imagined or real -- inflicted upon the Chinese by the Burmese in 1967. Thus, they might find it much easier to accept the view that it is in China's best interest to cultivate good relations with a country like Burma, whose policy of strict neutralism in foreign affairs since 1948 can hardly be construed as anti-Chinese.

In short, the prospects for significantly improved relations between China and Burma -- while not overly bright as long as Mao and Ne Win are in power -- are somewhat better in the longer run. In the future, as in the past, the prospects for continued Chinese support of the insurgents will depend on the state of Sino-Burmese relations. Should there be a significant improvement in state relations, the Chinese might well be inclined to back away from their previously-sponsored clients and allow the insurgency to wither away. But even then, as now, there would be powerful forces operating in favor of Peking's continuing support of the Burmese insurgency: the existence of various benefits in the insurrection for China, plus the momentum and commitments of policy and pride.