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COPY NO.
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, ONE

030173

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

146

COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS
IN ASIA THROUGH MID-1953

DECLASSIFIED
NND 947003
BF NARS, Date 4/7/94



NIE - 47

Published 31 October 1952

ACCOUNTABLE DOCUMENT
TO O/CDI REGISTRY,
7E-47 Hqs.

The following member organizations of the Intelligence Advisory Committee participated with the Central Intelligence Agency in the preparation of this estimate: The intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and the Joint Staff.

All members of the Intelligence Advisory Committee concurred in this estimate on 24 October 1952.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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HRP 93-3

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COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES AND INTENTIONS IN ASIA THROUGH MID-1953

THE PROBLEM

To examine the capabilities of the USSR and Communist China for political and military warfare in Asia¹ and to estimate their probable courses of action in Asia through mid-1953.

CONCLUSIONS

1. We believe that the USSR and Communist China are united in their determination to eliminate Western power and influence from Asia.

2. During the period of this estimate, Soviet and/or Chinese Communist forces in Asia will almost certainly continue to have the capability of conducting the following operations concurrently: (a) overrunning Hong Kong, Macau, Indochina, Burma, and Thailand if opposed only by the forces currently in these areas;² (b) rapidly reinforcing with Chinese Communist and Soviet forces the Communist forces now in Korea, and at the same time of undertaking an invasion of Japan by Soviet forces; and (c) attacking Western shipping in the Pacific by submarines and mines and conducting air attacks and surface raids

against Western bases and shipping in the western and northern Pacific.

3. The Communists probably estimate that an attempt to seize additional territory in Asia by the identifiable use of Chinese Communist or Soviet forces would stiffen non-Communist opposition, particularly in Asia, and might create grave danger of war against mainland China, of general war in the Far East, or even of global war. The Communists probably also estimate that the economic and military vulnerabilities of Communist China and the Soviet Far East would make the outcome of a general war in the Far East at best uncertain. Finally, the Communists are probably confident that further progress can be made towards the achievement of their objectives in Asia by political warfare. [We believe, therefore, that during the period of this estimate the Communists will refrain from initiating new courses of action involving the identifiable use of Chinese Communist or Soviet forces.]

¹ Asia, as here used, includes Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Ceylon, and all of mainland Asia east of (but not including) Iran and Afghanistan.

² Provided that US naval and air forces are available to defend Taiwan, a Chinese Communist invasion of Taiwan would almost certainly fail.

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2

4. We believe that during the period of this estimate the Communists will not intensify their efforts to overthrow non-Communist Asian governments by the open rebellion of indigenous "armed liberation" movements. Such movements have been reduced in effectiveness or stalemated, and the overthrow of non-Communist governments through these movements would now require Chinese Communist or Soviet intervention of such magnitude as to entail the possibility of war against mainland China, general war in Asia, or even global war.

5. [In Korea, the Communists will probably not take the initiative to break the military stalemate during the period of this estimate.] We believe that the Communists will protract the armistice negotiations so long as they consider that they can continue to gain political and military advantages from the situation in Korea, and so long as they estimate that a continuation of the Korean war does not involve grave risk of global war.*

6. [With regard to Indochina, the Chinese Communists will probably continue their present type of support to the Viet Minh, but probably will not invade Indochina or introduce large numbers of combat troops in the guise of "volunteers."]

*The Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State, concurs in the conclusion that the Communists will probably not take the initiative to break the present military stalemate in Korea. However, he finds that the second sentence of the paragraph, which carries an implication that the Communists might accept UN cease-fire terms if the UN were to threaten an expansion of the Korean war, is not supported by available intelligence. He believes that available intelligence does not enable us to estimate whether the unwillingness of the Communists to conclude an armistice on terms currently offered by the UN will continue throughout the period of this estimate.

7. In Malaya, the Communists will continue guerrilla warfare against the British but will probably not receive increased aid from the Chinese Communists.

8. Communist political warfare capabilities in Asia continue to be great although they have declined somewhat in a number of countries since 1950. These capabilities will probably remain substantially unchanged during the period of this estimate.

9. Throughout the period of this estimate the Communists will give a high priority to strengthening their organization in non-Communist countries, weakening Asian ties with the West and exploiting Asian neutralism. At the same time, they will make organizational and psychological preparations for the intensification of "armed liberation" movements at a later date. The Bloc will increase its use of economic inducements to influence the governments and peoples of Asia. These Communist tactics will be used with particular vigor in efforts to prevent the resurgence of an armed and non-Communist Japan.

10. [We believe that the Communists will not significantly increase their power and influence in Asia during the period of this estimate.] However, the Communists will probably make some progress in their efforts to strengthen both their economic and industrial base and their armed forces in order to increase Communist influence in Asia and become better prepared to resist possible Western pressures, and, if necessary for the attainment of Communist objectives, to apply military force against neighboring countries.

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3

DISCUSSION

COMMUNIST SOLIDARITY AND OBJECTIVES

The Sino-Soviet Relationship

11. Communist China and the USSR present a united front to the world. We believe that for the period of this estimate the factors tending to divide the USSR and Communist China will be far outweighed by close ideological ties and continuing mutual involvement in the pursuit of common objectives.

Current Objectives

12. Judging by their actions and their propaganda, it appears that the two powers are agreed at the present time upon the following aims:

- a. To eliminate Western power and influence from Asia;
- b. To prevent the resurgence of an armed and non-Communist Japan;
- c. To increase their military potential in Asia, both offensive and defensive;
- d. To advance the world Communist movement, and in particular to divide and confuse the non-Communist countries and weaken their ability and determination to combat Communism.

13. While pursuing these common objectives, each of the two powers will probably also attempt to advance its own ends, but not at the risk of impairing the solidarity of their relationship. We believe that Moscow will try to extend and intensify its control over Communist China, and to dominate Communist parties elsewhere in Asia. The Chinese Communist leaders will resist Soviet efforts to extend control over the internal affairs of Communist China, and will attempt to strengthen Chinese control over Manchuria, Sinkiang, and Inner Mongolia, and to expand Chinese Communist power and influence elsewhere in Asia.

COMMUNIST POTENTIAL IN ASIA

Internal Political and Economic Factors

14. The stability of the Soviet regime is such that fear of internal political repercussions will not deter the Kremlin from initiating any policy in Asia which it feels will further the

global interests of the USSR. Likewise, the Chinese Communist regime has firm control over mainland China, and although such control has not been consolidated to the degree it has been within the USSR, there is little likelihood that fear of domestic political repercussions alone will deter the Peiping regime from initiating policies which it estimates will further Chinese Communist objectives in Asia.

15. The economic base for Soviet military operations in the Far East is limited in comparison with that of the USSR in Europe. The extent to which this base can be supplemented by shipments from the Bloc in Europe is restricted by the capacity of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and the long sea routes. Distribution and utilization of goods in the Communist Far East are further restricted by the limited transportation facilities of Communist China and by the underdeveloped nature of the Soviet Far Eastern and Chinese Communist economies.

16. Despite the strain of the Korean war, Chinese Communist production has been maintained and even somewhat increased. With Soviet aid at current levels, the economy of Communist China could support the Korean war effort at current levels through the period of this estimate. We also believe that the Chinese Communist economy, with Soviet economic assistance, would be able to support, at least in its initial phases, a war in the Far East which involved, in addition to the Korean war, Chinese Communist military operations elsewhere in Asia.

Communist Military Capabilities⁴

17. The Soviet Far Eastern ground forces represent about one-sixth of the total Soviet ground forces. These forces in the Far East are believed to be adequately equipped and combat effective.

18. The Soviet Far Eastern Air Forces represent approximately one-fourth of the total combat air strength of the Soviet Union. The capabilities of this air force are currently

⁴Detailed strength estimates of Communist forces in the Far East are contained in NIE-64.

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4

being increased through a major re-equipment program. Over one-half of the Soviet Far Eastern fighter establishment is equipped with jet fighters; it is estimated that about 80 percent of Soviet Far Eastern fighter strength will be jets by mid-1953. Light jet bombers are currently being introduced and TU-4 strength is being steadily increased. We estimate that approximately 15 percent of the Soviet medium bomber strength is currently located in the Soviet Far East.

19. The Soviet Pacific Fleet has the capability of supporting short-haul amphibious operations and conducting mine and submarine warfare against shipping and harbors in the Pacific.

20. Soviet military capabilities in the Far East will almost certainly be improved during the period of this estimate by: (a) modernization of ground force equipment; (b) continued conversion to jet fighters and light jet bombers; (c) the continued, gradual development of Soviet long-range aviation in the Far East; (d) improvements in air defense; and (e) the addition of naval craft to the Far East fleet.

21. Intensive operations by Soviet Far East forces could be sustained for a time by local production, existing stockpiles, and supplies sent from the western USSR via the Trans-Siberian Railroad. However, the restricted productive capacity of the Soviet Far East and the limited capacity of the Trans-Siberian Railroad would cause increasing difficulties if such operations extended longer than six months to a year. These difficulties would arise earlier if productive facilities and railroads were subjected to sustained air attack.

22. Although Communist China has large manpower reserves, Peiping's capability for expanding the field forces is limited by a severe shortage of equipment and by the high manpower requirements of the agrarian economy. Nevertheless, there will almost certainly be some improvement in the ground forces during the period of this estimate as a result of modernization of equipment, reorganization and training, and combat experience in Korea.

23. The Chinese Communist Army is the largest and, aside from that of the USSR, the most effective indigenous ground combat force in Asia. The combat effectiveness of Chinese Communist ground forces in the Korea-Manchuria area is substantially greater than that of the forces located in China proper. The Chinese Communist Army has the capability of undertaking military operations elsewhere in Asia concurrently with operations in Korea.

24. Since the beginning of the Korean war, the Communist Air Force in China, which is believed to be made up of Chinese Communist, North Korean, and Soviet elements, has been built to an impressive size. The jet fighter units in the Korea-Manchuria-North China area are believed to be progressively improving. However, the capabilities of the CAF in China are, and will remain during the period of this estimate, largely limited to the air defense of North China, Manchuria, and North Korea under conditions of good visibility, and to limited attacks against UN forces in Korea and adjacent waters. We believe the CAF in China will continue to expand gradually during the period of this estimate but will remain entirely dependent upon the USSR for aircraft and equipment, spare parts, and technical supervision, and almost entirely dependent upon the USSR for aviation fuels and lubricants. Unless some type of light jet bombardment aircraft is introduced, the offensive capabilities of this air force will remain extremely limited. Redeployment from the Manchuria area would be necessary for sustained air operations against Taiwan and Southeast Asia.

25. The capabilities of the Chinese Communist Navy during the period of this estimate will remain slight. It has limited capabilities for coastal minelaying, motor torpedo attacks, and short-haul amphibious lifts.

26. The Chinese Communist forces are largely dependent upon the USSR for heavy equipment and POL. The capabilities of these forces will therefore be reduced in those areas far removed from the relatively extensive communications network of Manchuria, particularly if mainland transportation systems were subjected to effective attacks.

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6

duce the power of the Communist insurgents. We estimate that the Burmese Communists will decline in strength during the period of this estimate unless they are given increased technical and logistical aid by the Chinese Communists.

c. *Thailand.* The growth of Communism in Thailand has thus far been confined largely to the overseas Chinese community, a fact which reduces its popular appeal, and Communist political warfare capabilities in Thailand are very limited. Communist capabilities for guerrilla warfare would be increased if the Communists are successful in their efforts to organize the Chinese population of the southern Thai provinces in support of the Malayan bandits. In addition, through their control of some key labor unions, the Communists in Thailand are capable of directing sabotage and this capability may increase somewhat during the period of this estimate. On the whole, however, the development of Communist strength in Thailand will probably depend largely upon events in Indochina, Burma, and Malaya. An increase in Communist strength in those countries would almost certainly be reflected in Thailand, where the government has traditionally followed the currents dominant elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

d. *Malaya.* The political warfare capabilities of the illegal Malayan Communist Party, the membership of which is predominantly overseas Chinese, rest largely upon the activities of Communist guerrillas. These 3,000-5,000 guerrillas, supported by a much larger number of followers among the Chinese population, are likely to retain their current capability of harassing the British and disturbing the economy. However, they are unlikely to gain widespread support or to threaten the British position unless Communist control is established in nearby areas, or unless large-scale outside support can otherwise be provided.

e. *The Philippines.* Communist political warfare capabilities have decreased considerably in the Philippines since 1951 and are not likely to increase during the period of this estimate. Although the Philippine armed

forces and police are not yet strong enough to cope with all Huk raids in all parts of the Philippines, Huk military strength will probably continue to decrease during the period of this estimate. The Philippines' geographical position, and pledged support from the US, make it relatively immune to external Communist pressure.

f. *Indonesia.* Leadership of the small Indonesian Communist Party is well-disciplined and the party appears well-organized; it controls the largest and most important labor federation and a number of important front organizations for peasants, women, and youth groups; and it controls almost 20 percent of the seats in Parliament. Some aid and guidance is probably received through Communist China's Embassy, which is also actively engaged in proselytizing among Indonesia's large Chinese population. The Indonesian Communist Party has the capability to harass the Indonesian Government with sabotage and guerrilla activities, especially in Java. The disturbed situation resulting from the insurrectionary activities of Darul Islam and other rebel groups increases the opportunities for Communist sabotage and guerrilla action. However, we believe that the Communist Party will not, within the period of this estimate, develop the capability to seize power.

34. *Japan.* Although the Japanese Communist Party now has only about 100,000 members (about half of whom are underground), it is well-organized and well-disciplined, and has significant capabilities for espionage and sabotage. Communist influence in Japanese labor organizations, various front organizations, and among students and the intellectuals provide the Japanese Communist Party with important instruments for disseminating propaganda and for exploiting economic unrest and resentment against the US, but its violent action program has tended to alienate popular support. The efforts of the party to encourage and capitalize upon popular dissatisfaction with the government are supported by the continuing Bloc strategy of combining military threats to Japan with economic and political inducements. However, it is not likely that such efforts will be able to

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7

impair seriously Japanese cooperation with the West, and the party will lack the capability for seizing control of the government during the period of this estimate.

35. *Indian Subcontinent*

a. Communism does not now pose a major immediate threat to India, although the Indian Communist Party and allied parties received 6 million votes (of 103 million) in the 1952 elections. The Indian Communist Party still has only about 50,000 members, but it has small vocal groups in several state legislatures and the national legislature. The Communist Party members in the national legislature will be able to do little more than to embarrass the government and to use their positions to spread Communist propaganda. In those states where Communist strength is greatest, the party may be able to obtain representation in local coalition governments and even seriously to disrupt parliamentary processes. If the Indian Communist Party continues its present tactics, it probably will make additional gains in popular strength. However, we believe that there is very little likelihood that the Indian Communists can make sufficient progress seriously to contest the dominant position of the Congress Party. If the Communist Party should again emphasize the role of violence, its popular support would probably diminish and the government would almost certainly revive its earlier repressive measures.

b. The Pakistan Government has acted with vigor and determination against the small and immature Pakistan Communist Party. Bloc political warfare capabilities in Pakistan through the period of this estimate will almost certainly remain limited, although Soviet trade with Pakistan and Soviet political maneuvers on Kashmir may strengthen these capabilities.

c. The Communists in Ceylon may gain some popular support by exploiting domestic unrest, but will be unable to exert any substantial influence upon the government's policy or to seize control of the country.

PROBABLE COMMUNIST COURSES OF ACTION

General Considerations Affecting Communist Policy

36. The Communists probably estimate that an attempt to seize additional territory in Asia by the identifiable use of Chinese Communist or Soviet forces would stiffen non-Communist opposition, particularly in Asia, and might create grave danger of war against mainland China, of general war in the Far East, or even of global war. The Communists probably also estimate that the economic and military vulnerabilities of Communist China and the Soviet Far East would make the outcome of a general war in the Far East at best uncertain. Finally, the Communists are probably confident that further progress can be made towards the achievement of their objectives in Asia by political warfare. We believe, therefore, that during the period of this estimate the Communists will refrain from initiating new courses of action involving the identifiable use of Chinese Communist or Soviet forces.

37. From the late 1940's, the Communists in Asia directed their efforts chiefly toward the instigation and support of open rebellion by "armed liberation" movements within non-Communist countries. These efforts seemed to offer prospects of continuing success because of the prevailing "nationalist" and "anti-imperialist" sentiment in Asia, the prestige and the strategic opportunities enjoyed by Communism as a consequence of Communist military victories in China, and the lack of firm and cohesive leadership in the non-Communist countries of Asia. However, since 1950, the risk of Western retaliation against this type of action has greatly increased, and at the same time some non-Communist governments in the area have become stronger.

38. We believe that during the period of this estimate the Communists will not intensify their efforts to overthrow non-Communist Asian governments by the open rebellion of indigenous "armed liberation" movements.

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8

Such movements have been reduced in effectiveness or stalemated and the overthrow of non-Communist Asian governments through these movements would now require Chinese Communist or Soviet intervention of such magnitude as to entail the possibility of war against mainland China, general war in Asia or even of global war.

39. We believe that Communist China and the USSR will attempt to maintain the "liberation" forces already in the field, such as the Viet Minh, the North Korean army, the Chinese Communist "Volunteer Forces in Korea," and the Malayan guerrillas. Moreover, they will undoubtedly continue some guerrilla activity in other areas of Southeast Asia. At the same time, they will make organizational and psychological preparations for the intensification of the "armed liberation" movements at a later date, and will work toward strengthening local Communist military and paramilitary forces.

40. Throughout the period of this estimate the Communists will give a high priority to strengthening their organization in non-Communist countries, weakening Asian ties with the West, and exploiting Asian neutralism. Their tactics will vary from country to country but will be designed to attract particular groups—intellectuals, women, workers, varied ethnic and religious minorities, etc.—into front organizations. National and local Communist organizations will also increase their efforts to form "united fronts." Bloc diplomacy and Bloc propaganda will support these political warfare tactics within each country. In particular, we believe that the Bloc will increase its use of economic inducements to influence the governments and peoples of Asia.

41. We believe that the Communists will not significantly increase their power and influence in Asia during the period of this estimate. However, the Communists will probably make some progress in their efforts to strengthen both their economic and industrial base and their armed forces, in order to increase Communist influence in Asia and to

become better prepared to resist possible Western pressures, and, if necessary for the attainment of Communist objectives, to apply military force against neighboring countries.

Courses of Action in Particular Areas through Mid-1953

42. *Korea.* The Communists in Korea appear to be prepared for any of the following contingencies: the resumption of full-scale hostilities, an indefinite military stalemate, or the conclusion of an armistice agreement. The Communists have the capability for launching a major ground and/or air attack with little or no warning, but we believe that they probably will not take the initiative to launch such an attack during the period of this estimate. We believe that the Communists will protract the armistice negotiations so long as they consider that they can continue to gain political and military advantages from the situation in Korea and so long as they estimate that a continuation of the Korean war does not involve grave risk of global war.⁷ If an armistice is concluded during the period of this estimate, we believe that the negotiation of a political settlement will be complicated by Communist injection of Far Eastern issues unrelated to Korea. Whether or not a political settlement is achieved, we believe that the Communist objective to gain control of all Korea will remain unchanged.

43. *Taiwan.* The Communists almost certainly will not attempt military invasion of

⁷ The Special Assistant, Intelligence, Department of State, concurs in the conclusion that the Communists will probably not take the initiative to break the present military stalemate in Korea. However, he finds that the second sentence of the paragraph, which carries an implication that the Communists might accept UN cease-fire terms if the UN were to threaten an expansion of the Korean war, is not supported by available intelligence. He believes that available intelligence does not enable us to estimate whether the unwillingness of the Communists to conclude an armistice on terms currently offered by the UN will continue throughout the period of this estimate.

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9

Taiwan during the period of this estimate.⁸ They will continue their efforts to infiltrate and subvert the Nationalist regime.

44. *Indochina.* The Communists almost certainly estimate that the West, and in particular the US, might retaliate against the China mainland if Communist China invaded Indochina or committed "volunteers" in sufficient numbers to insure a decisive victory by the Viet Minh. Furthermore, the present situation yields considerable advantage to the Communist Bloc, by tying down a major part of French military power and by imposing a heavy financial drain on France and the US; and the Communists probably believe that the Viet Minh will ultimately be successful without overt Chinese Communist intervention. Therefore, we believe that during the period of this estimate the Chinese Communists will continue their present type of support to the Viet Minh. They probably will not invade Indochina or introduce large numbers of combat troops in the guise of "volunteers."

45. *Malaya.* The Communists in Malaya probably will not receive increased aid from the Chinese Communists during the period of this estimate. They will continue their guerrilla warfare in the attempt to harass the British administration and disturb the economy. They will also attempt to strengthen their internal organization and through propaganda and agitation, particularly among the labor unions, to increase their popular appeal.

46. *The Philippines.* The Philippine Communists will probably attempt to conserve their guerrilla strength during the period of this estimate and will place greater emphasis on propaganda and organizational activities. Through these activities and by capitalizing on government failures to relieve basic social unrest in the Philippines, the Communists probably hope to regain the popular support and organizational strength lost in 1951.

⁸ Provided that US naval and air forces are available to defend Taiwan, Chinese Communist operations against Taiwan would almost certainly fail.

47. *Burma.* We believe that the Chinese Communists will not greatly increase their aid to the Burmese Communists or openly intervene in Burma during the period of this estimate. The Burmese Communists will probably continue their present political warfare program involving: agitation for a united front with the left-wing political elements and the formation of a coalition government; opposition to government policies representing a departure from neutralism; and attempts to rebuild their strength in base areas in preparation for an expansion in insurrectionist activities.

48. *Thailand.* The Communists will endeavor to increase their potential for subversion and guerrilla action, working mostly within the Chinese community. Organizational activity may be concentrated in the southern provinces where the Communists are in contact with Malayan guerrilla groups. Simultaneously, the Communists will attempt, by political pressure, to weaken the government's alignment with the West. Agitation for development of a united front and sponsorship of "front" organizations will continue.

49. *Indonesia.* Whether or not the Indonesian Communist Party, which is represented at present in the Indonesian Parliament, continues as at present to give nominal support to the Indonesian Government, the Communists will take full advantage of the opportunities for sabotage and subversion offered by popular unrest and lack of firm governmental control. Simultaneously, they will make every effort to intensify the neutralist and anti-Western feelings now prevalent in Indonesia.

50. *Japan.* The weakening of Japan's present pro-Western orientation and the prevention of the resurgence of an armed and non-Communist Japan will be important Communist objectives in Asia during the period of this estimate. In pursuit of these objectives, the Communists will place economic, diplomatic, and psychological pressures on Japan in the attempt to encourage and exploit the Japanese sense of insecurity and desire for improved relations with the Bloc. Commu-

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10

nist threats to Japan will continue to be coupled with offers of trade with Communist China and the Soviet Bloc. At the same time, the Japanese Communist Party will continue to agitate against the government and its pro-US policies and will attempt to increase its subversive potential and popular following.

INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

51. *India.* The two primary Communist objectives in India during the period of this estimate will be: (a) to prevent closer cooperation with the West, and (b) to build up the strength and popular support of the Communist Party. To achieve these ends they will work to exploit national and Asian sentiment in an effort to direct foreign policy into anti-Western channels. At the same time, while continuing to spearhead "united front" oppositions in both national and state legislatures and to build up large-scale Communist "front" organizations, the Communists will strengthen and expand their underground activities in preparation for a return

to the strategy of violence. In India's strategic northern frontier area, particularly in Nepal, the Communists will continue their efforts to stimulate popular discontent and direct it against control from Delhi.

52. *Ceylon.* Since the Communist Party of Ceylon is too weak to gain control of the government, it will continue, through its parliamentary position, to concentrate its efforts on the opposition groups and on undermining the support of the incumbent United Nationalist Party. The Communists will also attempt to encourage close economic and cultural ties between Ceylon and Communist China and to intensify anti-Western sentiment.

53. *Pakistan.* The Communist Party of Pakistan is small and without any considerable popular following. The Communist objective will be to turn Pakistan away from the West by accelerated propaganda efforts aimed at Muslim and anti-colonial sentiment and by economic inducements.

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