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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

POPULATION AND MANPOWER OF KOREA  
1954

CIA/RR IM-396

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Office of Research and Reports

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CIA/RR IM-396  
(ORR Project 45.550)

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POPULATION AND MANPOWER OF KOREA\*  
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Summary

The most recent firm estimate of the population of Korea is for 1949, when the total population of 29.3 million included 9.1 million north of the 38th Parallel, and 20.2 million, south. It is estimated that the total population of Korea in 1954 is 29.5 million, of which 21.8 million are in South Korea\*\* and 7.7 million in North Korea. This total is only a small increase over 1949, since the rapid rate of natural increase has been about offset by war casualties. The distribution of the population, however, has reflected the migrations of refugees and some disparity in the effect of war casualties upon the rates of growth in North and South Korea. The population of South Korea increased by about 1.6 million and that of North Korea lost about 1.4 million. About 40 percent of the population in each section was under 15 years of age. In 1949 the Korean labor force, using the broadest definition, was about 12 million of whom 4.3 million were in North Korea. The post-World War II repatriation of some 280,000 Japanese removed a large percentage of the top-level workers. This critical gap has been only partially filled by vocational training in South Korea, and by the use of Soviet, Satellite, and Chinese skilled and technical personnel in North Korea.

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\* The estimates and conclusions contained in this memorandum represent the best judgment of the responsible analyst as of 1 August 1954.

\*\* North Korea and South Korea in this memorandum refer to the areas north and south of the 38th Parallel.

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The population of the whole of Korea increased from 23.7 million in 1940 to 29.3 million in 1949. Of the 1949 population, 9.1 million were in North Korea and 20.2 in South Korea. 1/\* Some of the 1940-49 increase was attributable to a net in-migration of repatriated Koreans exceeding the number of repatriated Japanese. Over 5 million, however, were accounted for by an excess of births over deaths, 2/ thus indicating a rate of natural increase during the 1940's of about 2 percent per year.

If this rate had continued from 1949 to 1954 the population on both sides of the Parallel would have been over 32 million with about 10 million in North Korea and over 22 million in South Korea. The Korean civil war, however, probably caused deaths to exceed births in the North and in addition sent an estimated 1 million refugees from North to South Korea\*\* with the result that on 1 January 1954 there were from 7.5 to 8 million persons in North Korea and about 22 million in South Korea.\*\*\*

South Korea, in 1949, already had an excess population due to the influx of nearly 1.5 million\*\*\*\* refugees immediately after the expulsion of the Japanese and to the return of some Koreans from Japan. The arrival of additional refugees during the recent hostilities and the continuing high rate of natural increase coupled with the fact that few refugees seem to have returned since the armistice have left South Korea with an increased population.

Table 1\*\*\*\*\* gives estimates of the age distribution of the population of North and South Korea in 1949 and 1954.

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\* Footnote references in arabic numerals are to sources listed in the Appendix.

\*\* It is estimated that 700,000 had defected by April 1952. 3/ Accurate estimates are lacking, because the tendency is for refugees from North Korea to conceal their origin where possible and merge with the ROK population.

\*\*\* One ROK publication gives a figure of 19.4 million as of 1 January 1953, exclusive of armed services. 4/ Another gives 21.8 million as of 30 April 1954. 5/ The latter, or a somewhat higher figure, would seem to correspond most closely to past trends.

\*\*\*\* Official ROK sources estimate a net gain of 1.6 million from migration (including refugees) between October 1945 and January 1950. 6/

\*\*\*\*\* Table 1 follows on p. 3.

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Table 1

Population of North and South Korea by Age a/  
1949 and 1954

	<u>Millions</u>			
	<u>Years of Age</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>0-14</u>	<u>15-59</u>	<u>60 and Over</u>	
North Korea				
1949	3.8	4.7	0.6	<u>9.1</u>
1954	3.5	3.8	0.4	<u>7.7</u>
South Korea				
1949	8.4	10.7	1.1	<u>20.2</u>
1954	9.0	11.2	1.6	<u>21.8</u>

a. Estimated by applying the 1940 age distribution to the 1949 totals derived above and adjusting for war losses and migration.

As in most Asian populations, the persons in the dependent ages (under 15 and over 60) constitute a large proportion of the total. The productive ages therefore constitute only about 49 percent of the total in North Korea and 51 percent in South Korea. The productive age group decreased nearly 20 percent in North Korea from 1949 to 1954 as against about a 5-percent increase in the South.

Employment statistics since 1940 are sketchy. CIA estimates, however, place employment for all of Korea in 1949 at over 12 million. 7/ Of this total 4.3 million were in North Korea. Many children and partially employed adults, however, were included among those considered to be employed.

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In 1940, there were 280,000 Japanese in Korean employment. Their repatriation left a critical gap in the top-level positions in the economy, and probably reduced over-all efficiency.

Since the cessation of hostilities, technical assistance has been extended to North Korea by the Bloc and to South Korea by the US. Estimates as to the number of workers involved are not firm. By far the largest group of workers in North Korea are Chinese who are reconstructing and operating the railroads and engaging in other construction projects. It is estimated that at least 30,000 to 40,000 Chinese would be required for the permanent maintenance and operation of the North Korean railroads alone.

In broadcasts mentioning that the USSR and the European Satellites had supplied 700 technicians to North Korea, it was specified that Russians are rehabilitating an iron works and waterways, Czechoslovaks and Hungarians are employed at machine works, and Poles are working at coal mines. 8/

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APPENDIX

SOURCES AND EVALUATION OF SOURCES

1. Evaluation of Sources.

The census of Korea taken by the Japanese in 1940 is considered accurate. The tabulations from this census by province make it possible to divide the population north and south of the 38th Parallel as of 1940. The ROK census of South Korea in 1949 is reasonably accurate and makes it possible to estimate with some degree of confidence the population of North Korea also. The trends since 1949 as estimated in this memorandum have no such firm basis but are inferred from estimated rates of natural increase, war losses, and fragmentary information on refugees. The refugees are hard to segregate because of the deliberate policy of the ROK government to blend this group with the native population as quickly as possible.

Estimates of present employment are totally lacking and previous estimates do not provide a reliable basis for calculating changes because so many of the North Korean enterprises are not operating. Information concerning the use of foreign technicians in North Korea is likewise scattered and inadequate.

2. Sources.


Evaluations, following the classification entry and designated "Eval.," have the following significance:

<u>Source of Information</u>	<u>Information</u>
Doc. - Documentary	1 - Confirmed by other sources
A - Completely reliable	2 - Probably true
B - Usually reliable	3 - Possibly true
C - Fairly reliable	4 - Doubtful
D - Not usually reliable	5 - Probably false
E - Not reliable	6 - Cannot be judged
F - Cannot be judged	

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"Documentary" refers to original documents of foreign governments and organizations; copies or translations of such documents by a staff officer; or information extracted from such documents by a staff officer, all of which may carry the field evaluation "Documentary."

Evaluations not otherwise designated are those appearing on the cited document; those designated "RR" are by the author of this report. No "RR" evaluation is given when the author agrees with the evaluation on the cited document.

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1. Irene B. Taeuber, "Korea and the Koreans in the Northeast Asian Region," Population Index, Oct 1950. U. Eval. RR 2.
  2. Ibid.
  3. NIS 41, Section 44. C.
  4. Reference Handbook of the Government of the Republic of Korea, Seoul, Sep 1953, p. 171. U.
  5. State, Seoul, Despatch No. 46,260, 26 Oct 1953. C.
  6. Taeuber, op. cit.
  7. NIS 41, Section 44.
  8. 

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