

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Korea

REPORT NO.

SUBJECT Conditions in the P'yongyang Area

DATE DISTR. 23 March 1954

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1. In July 1953 there were approximately 70,000-80,000 people residing in and around P'yongyang.¹ Most of these lived outside the city. There were no street-cars in the city. The roads were barely passable, but were under repair. The number of houses which were habitable was negligible; within the city limits people lived in bomb shelters and caves. Public markets were also in the bomb shelters and caves. The concrete buildings in the city were demolished and only skeletons remained. Not more than 20 to 30 percent of these buildings were repairable.²
2. Because the water system was damaged, the populace used water from rivers and wells. Rice was plentiful because of a bumper crop, but there was a shortage of vegetables, meat, fish, and milk, because of disrupted transportation facilities. Much of the food of the Chinese Communist forces found its way into Korean markets through barter for local goods. Primary local products were beer, sake, candy, cakes, matches, and low quality leather and tobacco. Sugar to manufacture cakes and candy was imported.
3. Almost all new clothing came from China or European satellite countries. The most common footwear was tennis shoes imported from China; clothing and cloth came from the European countries. A small but negligible percentage of cloth was spun locally. Most clothing supplies for the North Korean army came from China, but overcoats were supplied by the Soviet Union.
4. The rate of disease and epidemics was very low, considering the conditions under which the people existed.³
5. The salaries of public workers were barely enough to cover living requirements. The people rarely had cash in their possession, drawing their food and clothing from rations. However, inflation had not taken place because of stringent government control.⁴

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- 25X1 1. [] Comment. The June 1950 population of P'yŏngyang was approximately 500,000.
- 25X1 2. [] Comment. Plans for rebuilding P'yŏngyang included building the P'yŏngyang Central Railroad Station in the area of the old West P'yŏngyang Station, building a tunnel under the Taedong River near the bridge, and building by Czechoslovakia of an automobile plant capable of manufacturing 700 cars a month.
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- 25X1 3. [] Comment. This low rate of disease and epidemics was probably because of the antibiotic inoculations and vaccinations that were administered to the people by the government as a follow-up to their propaganda accusing the United Nations Command of bacteriological warfare.
- 25X1 4. [] Comment. An assistant chief of the Procurator Bureau was said to have been shot in public after being found guilty of embezzlement and wasting national resources.

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