

HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY MILITARY GOVERNMENT IN KOREA
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OPINION TRENDS #20

The material in this report is a compilation of the results of opinion sampling in all provinces of South Korea. It cannot be too strongly stressed that this is public opinion as reported by staff interviewers, and that it does not purport to represent actual fact. Unless otherwise indicated, opinion is that of both urban and rural areas. All references to "per cent of people" refer to the per cent of the people interviewed.

GENERAL

An interesting political phenomenon has been taking place along the North-east coast of South Korea. People in YANGGONG and SANGCHOK consider Ordinance #72 to be anti-leftist, legalizing oppression of Leftist elements. Seeing the writing on the wall, and conditioned by ruthless Japanese suppression of political belief, but simply to be on the right side of the fence.

The suspension of the ordinance has not yet had an effect, but it is predicted that the tendency toward the Right will soon reverse itself. However, it is felt that it will take considerable time before the Left will be able to regain its former power in this area.

Talk throughout South Korea hinges on the topic of complete independence for the Korean People. Korea has seen through the curtain of tutelage, has tasted of liberty, and now wants for herself an unshared, unified and complete independence. Freedom from American-Russian economic control, abolition of the 38th parallel, unification of the Right and Left wing parties, a re-opening of the Joint American-Soviet Commission, a South Korean Provisional Government, and the legislature proposed by General Archer L. Berch, are all items of interest where-ever people gather to discuss political problems facing them.

General concern over flood and cholera victims is noted, along with a continued fear of the further spread of cholera.

Rising prices of foodstuffs and the overall increase in living costs poses another problem in South Korea.

In a recent survey conducted in SEOUL in connection with the proposed "break up" of the New Korea Company some 984 persons were questioned. 70% of the people had heard of the plan to "break up" the company into smaller private companies. When asked whether or not they approved of this plan 51% said "yes", 35% said "no", and 14% offered no opinion.

The consensus of those who approved of the plan points to its encouragement of individual enterprise and its increased efficiency as reasons favoring the "break up".

Those who disapproved, fear individual exploitation and excessive profits for the private owners. They also feel that any contemplated changes for the New Korea Company should be instituted by the future Korean Government.

ECONOMICS

The difference in the official price placed on rice and barley is puzzling to the Korean people. Officially, barley is ¥85 per small mal (2.38 gallons) and rice is ¥38 per small mal. People cannot understand why the price of what they consider to be an inferior grain is higher than that of rice. Moreover, the program of price control on a few items is thought to be inadequate and one which will not keep other prices from rising.

In SEUL rice continues to be brought at about ¥490 per small mal when it is available.

Continued disfavor with the existing food distribution policy of Military Government seems to rest in the amount of the food distributed. INCHON, PYONGTAEK, MOKPO, KOCHANG, SUMON, CH'ANJU, and SEUL all claim poor distribution.

The belief that prices will rise, which first existed only in SEUL, is now reported from all of South Korea. In SEUL 62% of the people questioned believe that prices will continue to rise while in the provinces 50% of the people registered the same opinion.

Public opinion on the disposition of both former Japanese farmlands and those owned by large Korean landlords continues as it has in the past; the Korean people want this land held until a Korean Government can decide what is to be done with it.

Further questioning indicated that a plurality of those questioned wanted former Japanese owned farmlands sold to the tenant farmers by the future Korean Government. 46% of the people questioned wanted this confiscated land sold to the tenant farmers, 20% wanted it given to the tenant farmers, 27% would offer no opinion.

In reference to lands owned by large Korean owners, a larger percentage of those questioned (53%), wanted this land sold to the tenant farmer. The reasoning behind this is, undoubtedly, the belief that a Korean should be compensated for the land which is being taken from him, 15% favored giving the land, 23% favored a nationalized land system, and 7% had no comment.

A continued trend is reported in the people's desire that only large industries be owned by the government (Korean). A similar government ownership of farmlands is vetoed by a majority of the people questioned.

Opinion on labor unions goes from one extreme to the other. Many would offer no comment, saying that the unions are too weak to have any influence whatsoever. Others laud the unions' efforts for the laboring man, while still others see merely an effort on the part of labor unions to turn labor against capital.

Without raw materials from north of the 38th parallel SANCHOK claims that her factories cannot operate. KOCHANG reports that gold and tungsten mines that were operating before 15 August 1945 are not now in operation. A general lack of raw materials, money and managerial ability is the reason given for the inefficient way that factories and mines are now operating in their localities. Little hope for improvement is noted by the people questioned.

Mail delivery is said to be slow, while trains are too few and too crowded. Realizing that cholera epidemic has disrupted travel, there still is optimism reported concerning possible improvement of communication and transportation facilities.

GOVERNMENT

Brightening the picture regarding government officials is the frequent comment that both American and Korean Government officials are slowly gaining in an understanding of the Korean mind. The work done by Military Government in cholera and general sanitary projects have also greatly impressed the people.

EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Although unfavorable criticism is still being voiced against the physical equipment of the schools, there continues to be an optimistic outlook regarding possible future improvements. Lack of text books and properly qualified teachers, and teacher's low salaries remain the chief reasons for dissatisfaction. Favorable mention is made of the fact that the Korean alphabet is being taught in school and also that both boys and girls are allowed to attend school.

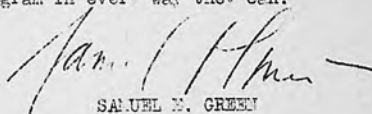
R E S T R I C T E D

Probably due to the anti-cholera program, the people are reporting improvement in medical facilities in their areas. Last week 45% of the people questioned expected improvement, 39% did not, and 16% were in the "do not know" category. This week the percentage foreseeing an improvement in medical facilities has risen to 49%, 30% saw no improvement in medical facilities and 21% offered no opinion. Criticism still persists concerning the lack of properly trained doctors, and adequate supplies of medicines.

KOREAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

Mirroring previous reports, this week only 9% of those questioned had heard of any incident taking place in their locality which might have affected Korean-American relations one way or the other, 91% in the negative. Black market activities, and an alleged general disrespect for the Korean and his customs are the chief causes for any ill feeling on the part of Koreans towards the American soldier.

This week 53% of the people questioned felt friendly toward the Americans, 26% did not, and 21% would not answer. The people of KOCHANG appreciated the Military Government lecture given there on adult education and expressed a desire to help this program in every way they can.



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