

THE FORGOTTEN KOREAN A-BOMB VICTIM



Lithograph by
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THE PLIGHT OF THE KOREAN ATOMIC-BOMB VICTIM

100,000	A-BOMBED AT HIROSHIMA AND NAGASAKI
50,000	KILLED IMMEDIATELY OR SHORTLY AFTER
50,000	SURVIVORS (8,000 REMAINING IN JAPAN)
30,000	RETURNED TO KOREA SAFELY, OF WHOM:
10,000	SINCE DIED, MOST OF ATOMIC DISEASES
20,000	TOTAL SURVIVORS NOW IN SOUTH KOREA

The above figures represent not the Japanese victims of the A-bombs dropped on Japan in 1945, but the Koreans. It is a surprise to most Americans to learn of these facts but no surprise to those who know the long and sad history of Koreans in Japan.

From 1910-1945, Japan ruled Korea as a colonial power. During this period, around 2 million Koreans were forcibly transferred to Japan as cheap labor to work in construction, mines, and factories at half the wages of their Japanese counterparts. Often treated as slaves, they faced extreme discrimination and harassment.

It is hard to ascertain exactly how many Koreans were in Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the time of the bombing, as many Koreans were not registered or were serving as forced labor in secret military factories. Since many were there without their families or because whole families, not registered, perished, the exact list of casualties has been difficult to compile.

Immediately after the blast, Koreans, fearing repercussions from the Japanese, stayed near the epicenter, increasing their chances of contracting "atomic disease." Those who sought treatment found they were often ignored, as Japanese were treated first.

When Korea was liberated from the Japanese in late August, 1945, thousands of Koreans in Japan returned to Korea only to face the horror of war again. After the Korean War, the south Korean government was too busy with economic development and military expenditures to help the thousands of A-bomb victims get sorely needed medical help. Many came down with a "strange disease" without knowing what they had or how it should be treated.

Discriminated against when they returned to Korea because of language problems and their Japanized life-style, many could not get employment and pay for medical treatment they so desperately needed. Poverty and sickness compounded by mental blockages of the actual event plagued the victim back in Korea.

After the Japan-Korea Normalization Treaty of 1965, Japan absolved itself of all responsibility for the Korean A-bomb victims. Prior to 1965, A-bomb victims were covered for partial care under the A-bomb Victim Medical Care Law in Japan. Few Koreans left in Japan, however, were able to receive any compensation, and the victims back in Korea found it difficult to find the finances to go to the only special hospital for A-bomb victims in Hiroshima. In 1967 a Korean Association of Atomic Bomb Sufferers was formed in Korea to agitate for their rights and today has over 9,000 members. In 1971 a Korean Atomic Bomb Sufferers' Relief Association of Japan (KABSRAJ) was formed to work with Korean groups and to do fund-raising and research. Perhaps an indication of the work that these groups need to do for the "forgotten survivors" is symbolized by the Korean A-bomb memorial which is near, but outside, the Peace Park in Hiroshima.

The struggle of these Koreans, unfortunate victims of the Japanese colonial policy of forced labor and then victims of our decision to use atomic weapons against the people in Japan, continues. The organizations mentioned above continue to tell their

story to the outside world and try to raise funds to support their medical needs. Over 4,000 victims live in a village in southeast Korea called "Hiroshima in Korea" where they are trying to establish their own self-help village and are aided by the concern and support of Church Women United. With the help of a Japanese citizen who raised funds, cooperating with a Korean who donated the land, a hospital has been built in that area that specializes in "atomic diseases". But the hospital, run on donations, operates on a budget of \$65,000 a year -- most of which pays for the staff of 10 doctors and leaves little for medical supplies. But more help is needed. As KABSRAJ says, the responsibility for these victims lies not only with Japan and the U.S., but with "all people who stand firmly against the existence of nuclear weapons on our only home, planet earth."

ACTION SUGGESTIONS:

1. Over 1/4 of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombing casualties were Korean, yet very few people are aware of this fact or know about the struggle of the Korean survivors for recognition and adequate medical care. We urge you to join their struggle by educating yourself and others! Write to them at: Korean Atomic Bomb Sufferers' Relief Association of Japan, 3-36-5 Momoyamadel Suite, Osaka, JAPAN. Letters of support and concern would be appreciated and would let them know that they have not been forgotten.
2. Financial help is greatly needed by the survivors to help maintain the "Hiroshima in Korea" village and hospital and to send Koreans to Japan for specialized medical care. In 1980 the Japanese and Korean governments made an agreement to jointly finance and send 50 south Korean atomic victims a year to the Hiroshima A-bomb Hospital. But, of course, that will only touch a small group of sufferers. If you would like to contribute to these efforts, please contact Church Women United, 475 Riverside Dr., N.Y., N.Y. 10115.

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