

MIS Special Questions for Korean PWs

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In the 1940s, the Japanese Empire conscripted Korean laborers and utilize them as civilian personnel for the war efforts in the Pacific islands. From June to August 1944, the U.S. Navy occupied the Pacific islands region including Saipan, Tinian, and Peleliu islands, which were the territories previously under Japanese control, and captured Korean POWs on these islands. Those who had highly valuable information were interrogated in multiple locations including the front line and the POW camps in Honolulu, Hawaii. After the value of their information was assessed on Angel Island, California, the POWs were further interrogated at Camp Tracy in California. Once the interrogations in California are completed, the POWs were sent to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin where they were further interrogated, if necessary. The Joint Intelligence Center (JIC), a joint agency of the U.S. Army and Navy, took charge of this process. The Captured Personnel and the Material Branch (CPMB) of Military Intelligence Service (MIS), War Department, took part of it on the side of the Army.

This document contains the Special Questions for Korean POWs, sent from Russel H. Sweet (Colonel, GSC, Chief of the Capture Personnel and Material Branch, Military Intelligence Service, War Department) to the Commanding Officer of Camp Tracy, on May 4, 1945. The thirty questions were designed to gather information that were specific to the Korean POWs. In the introduction, the document says, “[A] special interest in Korea and in Koreans has been activated recently,” and “Interrogators should also try to classify each Korean as to his interest in the program of liberation of Korea from Japanese rule,” although Koreans were conscripted by the Japanese military. The document recommended to ask certain questions only for Koreans who were against Japan.

The listed questions concern Japan's forcible mobilization of Korean laborers (question nos. 3, 5, and 6), the distribution of food (nos. 7, 8, and 10), and the military conscription (nos. 12, 13, 14, 15). Question no. 18 asks if Koreans knew about the recruitment of Korean girls by the Japanese Army to serve as “comfort women” and what the attitudes of the average Koreans were toward the recruitment. The fact that there were questions specifically about the “comfort women” system indicates that the Military Intelligence Service, the central intelligence agency of the U.S. Army, accumulated substantial information about the “comfort women” system as it acknowledged the magnitude of the issue. The question regarding the average Koreans’ response toward Japan’s mobilization of Korean girls for the “comfort women” system points to the U.S. intelligence agency’s conclusion that the Koreans would bear hostility against the Japanese for this reason. It is assumed that the intelligence agency intended to use the information on the “comfort women” system to wage psychological warfare against Japan by intensifying the conflicts between the Japanese and the Koreans. Reports no. 11 and no. 13 are the results of the interrogations based on the abovementioned questions.

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