

The Korean War

Brief History:

In the late 1800's Korea came under pressure from Japan, the United States and European powers to change its isolationist policy. In 1894 Japan fought a brief but decisive war against China. As a major outcome of this war China agreed to let Japan dominate Korea. From 1910 to the end of World War II Korea was under Japanese rule. The Japanese forced Korea to industrialize. Japan's harsh rule bitterly created resentments with the Korean people. But the factories built during this period helped Korea develop a modern economy.

Division of Korea

Japan lost control of Korea during the last months of World War II. In 1945, when the war ended Soviet troops occupied the northern part of Korea while U.S. troops occupied the southern part. As a temporary measure, the Soviets and Americans agreed to recognize the **38th parallel** (line of north latitude) as the dividing line between the two controlled areas.

The Soviets helped a communist government take control of the north. A non-Communist government was formed in the south after UN sponsored elections were held. Two Koreas came into being: **Pyongyang** becoming the capital of North Korean, **Seoul** being the southern capital.

Korean War

In June 1950, North Korean troops began a massive invasion of South Korea. The United Nations denounced the invasion and authorized UN members to give military aid to South Korea. Many nations took part in defending South Korea; most of the troops came from the United States.

The UN armies, under the command of General Douglas MacArthur at first succeeded in pushing back the North Korea offensive. After the UN forces advanced deep into North Korea the Communist Chinese leader Mao Zedong intervened. He sent Chinese armies to aid North Korea. Now the war saw the Soviet Union, China, and North Korea against the UN forces and the United States. After months of intense fighting the war became **stalemated near the 38th parallel**. By 1953, North and South Korea agreed to a cease-fire but no official peace treaty was signed.

U.S. Troops still patrol the border between the two Koreas.

North Korea: From 1948 to 1994 Kim Il Sung controlled the government. He kept a tight grip on every aspect of North Korea's political, economic and social life. Similar to Stalin and Mao Zedong he set ambitious goals for industrializing his country. The state controlled industries made much progress but not as much as those in the south. In the early 1990's North Korea was secretly manufacturing nuclear weapons. Although it signed a Nuclear Nonproliferation treaty they did not disarm their weapons. In 1994 North Korea agreed to dismantle its nuclear weapons in exchange for over \$4 billion in energy aid from the United States, South Korea and Japan.

South Korea: Until recently there was little democracy in the country. While the government allowed elections there was only one political party. The first two-party, free election took place in 1987. Since then South Korea has grown at a rapid rate. It is one of the "four tigers" of Asia along with Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan, who compete on the world marketplace. South Koreans are well educated, possess a high work ethic and along with government assistance has increased the average incomes six fold in a 30-year period.

