

May 5, 1953
Letter, Syngman Rhee to John W. Staggers

Citation:

"Letter, Syngman Rhee to John W. Staggers", May 5, 1953, Wilson Center Digital Archive, B-014-063, Official Correspondences, President Rhee's Correspondences, Syngman Rhee Institute, Yonsei University. <https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/122825>

Summary:

Syngman Rhee writes about his desire to have the Korean Government participate directly in the disposition of relief funds and purchase of aid materials.

Credits:

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Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan



May 5, 1953

Dear John:

I have read your letter of March 31 enclosing a copy of your letter to Ambassador Yang together with the attached copy of UNKRA program summary. I have to answer first your letter addressed to the Ambassador.

As you know, we have been fighting the ECA and UNKRA all this time for the privilege of participating in the purchase and procurement and also in the disposition of aid and assistance funds. Sometime ago I told my secretaries to send you and Col. Goodfellow a copy of the list of things we desire to buy. Mr. Kingsley has not agreed to our request to participate in the buying and we are still insisting on doing it. Please understand my position clearly and when you speak to other people just repeat what I said so that there will be no misunderstanding and confusing stories. What we call participation is we must know how much they have received for Korea, what they are going to buy and for what purpose.

As I said in the first place, we want to know what these agencies are doing with the money U.S. Government and people are giving for the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Korean economy and the relief of the suffering people of Korea. We have at last succeeded in establishing the Combined Economic Board representing the UN Command and the ROK Government. That Board is known to be the supreme planning body which is solely in a position to receive all the aid and relief funds or goods. When they have decided to buy things or to construct anything, they will make a complete list of the things they are to purchase and then copies of them will be given both to UNKRA and ROK Government. Each will try to purchase machines and materials required at the best possible prices. Before these purchases have been completed, they will be submitted to the CEB. The Board will then decide which should be bought. That is all we ask and still the Agent General refuses to agree to it. Their representative here in Korea has sent final word to New York telling them that if they are going to buy and bring things unilaterally without our knowledge, we are not going to receive such aid or assistance. Instead we will ask them to do either one thing or the other - that is, allow us to have that much authority to participate or give us a loan instead of aid and assistance funds. Sir Arthur Rucker, the Agent General's representative here, is waiting for the final reply from New York. That is how the matter stands now.

cc Yang
BCH
Goodfellow

Stoffens



-2-

You understand, dear John, why we have not been able to ask or some other friends to do the purchasing for us. It was because we have no authority to do any buying. We had wanted you to make some money by purchasing things for us just as others get their commission. If we succeed in it, we will be glad to give you an opportunity to buy some things for us. I wish you would talk to Col. Goodfellow about it so that he will understand our situation.

Another thing is we desire to use you in some way in connection with our Government but I do not know what arrangements we can make. You cannot come over and live here and work for us. We tried all we could to bring back Harold Lady to come and help us but as you know we are helpless in this matter. When either the Embassy or the Consulate employ a lawyer, they have authority to choose such people whom they know best, but I cannot tell them to accept my friend. As a matter of fact our Embassy has no other adviser besides Jay. I wish you would suggest what we can do to help you in some way.

By the way, I wonder if you have collected the money you loaned to a certain Korean lady. It was the most unfortunate thing that ever happened. I want you to know that I have no responsibility in this matter. If you have any suggestion to make along this line I would appreciate it if you would let me know.

I wish you would make a trip to Korea sometime. We would like to see you very much.

In your letter to the Ambassador I noticed that you suggested as a matter of record we should submit a list of items for immediately delivery such as food, medical supplies, fertilizer, etc. If you were here to see what we have done and how they ignored us, I know you would swear. Since the ECA days, we have been pounding for fertilizer and cement factories. We are still importing fertilizer and cement and nothing has been taken up so far.

Regarding your suggestion that mineral pigments for manufacturing paint should be shipped to Korea, why don't you make a list of these things and show us the price, etc., so we will have an idea what we will need right away. We are going to do some of these things ourselves. If you have some good material which we need at a good price, why don't you let us have a list of them. If we are fortunate enough to get their agreement, we may be able to do some buying ourselves, but if not we will buy some of them with our own money. We need fertilizer, but we will insist on starting fertilizer and cement factories, instead of bringing them from Japan and spending in that way good money which is allocated for Korea.

You talk of saving Korean money, but the only way of saving Korean money is to get rid of all the racketeering in Korea. The American people and Government are giving valuable money and goods to help Korea, but all those racketeers and commission-seekers utilize everything they can except using the funds for the purpose for which they were given. Therefore, we are at the end and we have repeatedly told them that we would rather receive no assistance at all because in paper we are the receiving nation, but in fact Japan and the racketeers are the real beneficiary.

With best wishes to you and Mrs. Stagers,