

June 28, 1955

Letter, Syngman Rhee to J. W. Staggers

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Summary:

Syngman Rhee explains his concerns with the Korean-American Export & Import corporation and Staggers statements to the American press.

Credits:

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June 28, 1955

Dear John:

This is in answer to another one of your letters in which you mention I expressed a wish that certain friends organize a legitimate corporation through which they may make something for themselves while helping to furnish items which Korea needs. I do not remember exactly what I said to you in this connection, but in all sincerity I wish to see some of our friends help us in furnishing Korea with its needs and thereby making the usual commission or other income.

You know, John, that I am never interested in money matters. I know nothing about the Korean-American Export & Import, Inc., nor that Lowell Bradford was a member of this corporation. I wish you would let me know if I have committed myself to any such organization. Bradford is evidently the young lawyer whose father was our next-door neighbor on 16th street. Harold told me you had some trouble with him and I would like to know how I can help you in such trouble. I remember now that you remind me in your letter, that the enemies of Korea are attacking us on account of a certain statement you made through the press. Whatever the statement was I do not remember nor care; but I recall particularly in this connection that you announced to the press that the Korean-American Export & Import Inc. or the American World Trade, Inc. was working for the monopoly of Korean trade. I asked you at that time either change the objectives of this commercial organization or dissolve it, my only interest being to correct you in your intentions to monopolize Korean trade. You said this at a time when the Communists were trying to propagandize against capitalistic America, creating anti-American spirit in every possible way. At that time the Communist influence in this country was strong as the U.S. Government and the military government in Korea were trying all they could to appease the Communists. I wish you had listened to me when I asked you to tell the world that this monopoly idea was not your own. Now I am sorry that you dissolved the corporation.

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To organize a corporation is not to monopolize trade. How can you monopolize any nation's trade or commerce?

I believe you are confused on some of these matters. The first time I wrote asking you to correct the announcement of the monopoly was during the days of the American Military Government. It has nothing whatsoever to do with the corporation you organized subsequent to our conversation at the Carlton Hotel, which was in 1947 when I visited the States for the second time. You could not have dissolved that organization in 1946 at my request. Furthermore I would never ask you to change or dissolve your business organized as a result of my suggestions. There is no reason why I should. As a matter of fact I do not see why you should not have such an organization through which you can do some legitimate business in importing and exporting commodities between our two countries and for that reason the suggestion I made to you in the Carlton Hotel still holds good as far as I am concerned, although I do not say that you will succeed if you attempt any monopoly business. There are many organizations in America whose representatives are here now, and whenever there are purchases of certain materials and goods to be made they submit applications and all worthy organizations are given opportunities to participate in the bidding. I do not see why you should hesitate to do what these others are doing. You do not need any special privilege or concession for what is strictly under the authority of the U.S.-ROK coordinators. Neither the U.S. coordinator nor the Korean coordinator may carry out his own decision but must be in complete agreement in making any purchases or in allocation of funds.

Naturally, I cannot guarantee that if you form an organization of this kind it will be successful, although I do not see why if others make a good business, yours should not. If I can do anything to help you or your company within my power and according to our law, rest assured that I will do all I can to be of assistance.

I told Harold that I would like to help you in some way and I would do anything I can within my power but to pay the young Korean woman's debt is out of the



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question. Believe me, John, when I say I do want to help you. As you know I have no way of getting money. Every dollar belonging to the Government must be accounted for and I have to be very careful.

I do not see why I tell you all these things, but I do sincerely desire to help you if I can do it in a proper way, which no one can criticize. I will be glad to ask for some aid in order to help you out with any difficulties you may be in now or some other time.

I advise you to forget all the things which you say people are saying about you. No one is trying to defame or vilify you by writing to me. I assure you there is absolutely no one in or out of Korea who tries to do so.

The only thing that I vaguely recall now is when you were last year in Korea a man by the name of Handleman came here with your introduction. I do not recall his reasons but pretty soon an article appeared in an American paper that he paid you "\$1000" for your trip to Korea and this was all referred to me. I remember I wrote you later asking you not to send anybody here in the hope of making some money and create a sensation by attacking innocent people. Since that time I do not believe there was anything more said about your integrity or honor. I think all these things do not alter our friendship nor my confidence and trust in you.

In regard to the house on 16th street, you report that you are unable to settle the house question for us. I gave you authority to be solely responsible for the house leasing and the result was that the house rent was below the general rental rate in Washington at that time. You leased the house without any consideration of how to get the house back and the tenants did not spend a penny for caretaking and the house is in a deplorable condition. They will not move out or permit us to raise the rental. I asked you to turn the power of attorney to Minister Han to let him handle it to his best ability. You will not have anything more to do with it.

Thank you for all the trouble you have taken for your old friend.

With warmest regards to you and your family,

Cordially,

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