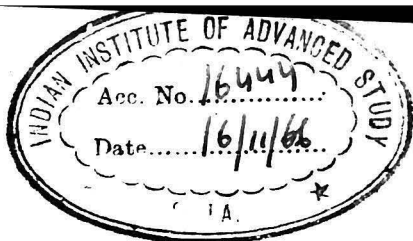


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KOREA

By SIR ARTHUR N. RUCKER, K.C.M.G., C.B., C.B.E.

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Luncheon lecture given to the Royal Central Asian Society on December 16, 1953.
Admiral Sir Cecil Harcourt, G.B.E., K.C.B., in the chair.

The CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen,—You will agree with me that it is very kind of Sir Arthur Rucker to have come here to talk to us on the reconstruction of Korea. Sir Arthur's record is far too well known to need any introduction from me; he has a long period of very distinguished service as a civil servant in the British Civil Service; now he is in the service of the United Nations. In that capacity he has been working in Korea and is still working in connection with that country,—Sir Arthur Rucker.

WHAT I hope to do today is to give you, perhaps, some travellers' tales of what Korea is like, to discuss with you some of its problems—and certainly there are many problems in that country—and to consider a little what the United Nations, what all the nations of the world together, may be able to do to relieve those problems.

THE KOREAN SCENE

What sort of country is Korea? It is, I think, the most beautiful country I have ever been in. It is a country a little, perhaps, like Italy; that is to say, like Italy it is a peninsula with a long coastline, but unlike Italy it has a great many islands lying off its coastline and making the most beautiful little inland seas where the islands occur. Like Italy, Korea has mountains running down the centre—it is indeed, largely mountainous and, as in Italy, the mountains were covered with forests. Unfortunately, many of them have now been cut for fuel and the hills are rapidly being denuded. The valleys between the mountains are for the most part full of paddy fields in which the brilliant emerald of the rice paints the countryside in spring. The climate is temperate. True, in winter it is cold in the north and in the middle of the summer hot everywhere. Yet, in general, the climate and scenery of Korea are, in my experience, unequalled.

HISTORY

Korea has a long, complicated history, of which it may truly be said *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. All that is going on there today is what has gone on all down the ages, the country always having been menaced by attack, sometimes from the north and sometimes from the east. How similar is the picture today.

Somewhere in 200 B.C. there came probably the first big movement into Korea from China, from the valley of the Yellow River. Then for a long time Korea was divided into three kingdoms. In the tenth century the three kingdoms were superseded by a single kingdom, the Koryo kingdom, which again in the fifteenth century gave place to the Yi

dynasty, which lasted until our own times, when the Japanese moved in, took over the country, occupied it and ruled it from 1910 until the end of the second World War.

Even during all these centuries there were constant invasions. There was a devastating Mongol invasion in the thirteenth century, the bitterness of which still remains. There was a Japanese invasion in the sixteenth century. At that time there was a famous naval victory in which the Koreans destroyed the Japanese fleet.

THE KOREAN PEOPLE

They are largely an agricultural people, living in small villages and small towns. There are few big towns. Seoul is a modern and beautiful city, rivalling the great capitals of the world; battered to bits at the moment but beautifully set among its hills. Pusan is not so attractive; it is mainly built of small shacks and wooden houses, though there are a certain number of stone and brick buildings in the centre of the town. The village life is the real life of Korea, and it is a family life, a life in which the thought of every person is primarily and mainly towards his family. The status of women has been what many who know the East will be accustomed to. In the past woman has been the *femme de ménage*; she has not been accustomed to go out with her husband, but has remained at home and cooked the food. At parties, as in Japan, it was and still is the custom to have Kissang girls, the equivalent of Geisha girls, to entertain the men guests. But all that is changing.

There is one charming point in regard to Korean clothes which gives me particular pleasure. In Korea when a man reaches an age of dignity, certainly when he becomes 60, he is entitled to put on a striking black hat with a brim, rather like a top-hat, made of horse-hair. In Korea 60 is 59, because you are one year old when born, and next year I am going to have a black hat. The ladies wear the most graceful garments, long flowing skirts with a little cape at the top coming down to the waistline. That, with the great flowing skirt below, gives a beautiful and graceful appearance. It is not considered polite for a lady in Korea to show her shoulders, so that even in the evening the women wear the little capes over their shoulders.

As to food, rice of course is the staple diet of Korea, with a little fish and meat when it is obtainable (today there is little meat in Korea), aided by a kind of pickle called kimchi, to which, in all truth, the Westerner finds it difficult to become accustomed; it has a powerful smell which the Westerner does not like until he becomes accustomed to it. After two years I was just beginning to enjoy *kimchi*. As against that, the Koreans say that the cheese and milk which we eat and drink also produce a horrible odour, which is just as nauseating to the Koreans as *kimchi* is to the incoming Westerner.

Agriculture is the primary industry; upon it everything turns and depends. At this moment, with a population of something like 23,000,000 in the small area below Seoul, there are too many people trying to farm too little land, but if unification takes place there will be great opportunities. Korea grows probably the finest rice in the world. It has also

splendid fishing grounds, but its chief economic hope lies in its minerals. Korea has large deposits of coal; true, it is a hard anthracite coal which to be used needs to be made into briquettes, but there is a large amount of it and there are also valuable deposits of graphite, tungsten and gold, as well as some copper and some silver; probably a good deal more than anybody realizes or knows of. There lies one of the main hopes. Korea has also some industry; it is quite erroneous to suppose that the country was never industrialized. In the Japanese period quite a lot of light industry started, some of it in the North.

The social services at this moment are pathetic. There is no money available for them. The hospitals of Korea are terrible to visit; they cannot pay properly the doctors or nurses. The army has been helping the hospitals, and at one point we were in the position that the rich could go into hospitals and could afford to pay for their food and pay the doctor, but they could not get any drugs for treatment because the drugs were being brought in by the army and given as relief to the poor in the community. The poor could go into the hospitals and get drugs, but they had no money for food and doctor. The social services of Korea inevitably are starved.

In the Korean schools, the teachers could not be paid enough to live on but the Koreans have a passionate desire for education and somehow or other the parents make up the wages of the school teachers. The culture of Korea is old and deep, akin to the Chinese from which it derived originally. Unlike most other eastern countries, Korea has a true alphabet. They use Chinese and Japanese characters, but there is a Korean alphabet which can be used to spell out words.

There are those who say that Korea is today without religion. That I believe to be profoundly untrue. On the other hand, I do not think there are a large number of Koreans who belong to an established orthodoxy. The percentage of Christians, for instance, is somewhere between 2 and 5 per cent., and there is a small percentage of Buddhists. Most Koreans are influenced by a veneration for their ancestors and their families, but I believe it is profoundly untrue to say they are without a sense of religion even if they do not believe in any organized Church. I do not understand how any people could have such profound patriotism if they were not inspired by a spiritual force.

THE NEEDS OF KOREA

What are the needs of Korea today? It is difficult to paint in ordinary language a picture of the extent of the war damage. You must remember that during the last three years the country has been fought over three times, and from Taegu northwards practically all the towns and villages were destroyed. The damage done to agriculture and industry has been appalling. Fortunately, it is very difficult indeed to destroy a rice paddy; but irrigation channels were destroyed and cattle died. At least 10 per cent. of the fishing fleets were completely destroyed and great damage was done to the rest. Most of the mines were destroyed or damaged and put out of action; so too the industries. Forests are being cut down three times faster than they are being replanted. And that is not the whole

story. It is not merely that the trees are lost, but that when the trees go the hills are denuded.

Housing conditions are tragic. Close to Pusan station there is a little strip of land between the road and the railway. On that there are built a series of little shacks, constructed out of flattened petrol and beer tins, old bits of packing-cases, cardboard and straw, and in those hovels there are living innumerable families; no water, no heat; just cooking their meals in a primitive way. Those are the conditions under which many of the people are living, and, of course, all the overcrowding and suffering were made far worse by the fact that there came out of the North, pouring down into the South, some 3,000,000 refugees. Finally, in the hills there has never been a complete cessation of guerrilla fighting and banditry. It is not, I think, a very serious matter at the moment, but it does all pile up the problems and difficulties.

What has the effect of all this been? What has happened to the economy of the country? The Government of Korea is doing its best to get together enough money to keep its services going and to feed the people. On top of that there is a vast army from overseas for which labour and services have to be provided. For a long time the local currency put up for this labour was not repaid. Now it is repaid in dollars, but no one can eat dollars, and until those dollars begin to bring in consumer goods on a large scale the only possible effect is steadily rising inflation. That is up to this moment what has happened. In August, 1953, compared with June, 1950, wholesale prices in those two and a half years had risen by 1,650 per cent., and retail prices had gone up 2,337 per cent. Wheat flour today costs roughly 3s. a lb. at the official rate of exchange; beef 14s. lb.; cotton and cotton shirting 6s. 8d. a yard. The trouble is Korea's disbalance of trade. During July 1953, Korea had to import, to live, goods worth 2,780,000,000 Hwan. Her exports were worth only 290,000,000 Hwan. There in a nutshell is the problem. Until we can begin to put the economy of Korea back again where the country earns its own living, these terrible conditions must prevail.

UNKRA AND ITS TASK

What is being done about it? The Government of Korea is doing everything possible. They are taxing heavily; they are struggling hard; they are exporting all the tungsten they can, and so on. In addition, two big sources of outside aid are going in to help them. First the United States of America is giving a great deal of direct aid. At this moment for the current period, perhaps six months, it is putting in \$200,000,000. That money is being spent through the Civil Assistance Command of the army, mainly on relief. In addition, UNKRA, the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency, the organization to which I belong, is putting in something like \$100,000,000 per year, provided we can get it. That money is being spent primarily on reconstruction—getting industries going again, rebuilding irrigation dams, restarting the mines, and so on. The actual work of reconstruction is, of course, being done by the Koreans themselves, but we are trying to help them with money, with imported materials and machinery and with some technical assistance.

UNKRA has now three programmes: a \$71,000,000 programme for 1952-53 which is in full operation, a larger programme of \$85,000,000 for 1953-54 which is just being prepared, and a bigger programme still in preparation for 1954-55 of \$110,000,000, making a total expenditure of \$266,000,000. These three programmes are being planned to fit in with the reconstruction schemes which the Koreans are able to finance for themselves and with the schemes financed by the direct aid of the United States. There is thus a single overall programme of relief and reconstruction for Korea, an important part of which is assigned to UNKRA.

So far, thirty-three countries have given financial support to UNKRA. Of these, twenty-five are members of the United Nations, five are not. Much the largest contributor is the U.S.A., who, in addition to all the direct aid she is giving to Korea, pays some 65 per cent. of UNKRA's costs. I am glad to say that this country has promised £10,000,000 to the total programme, and other Commonwealth countries and European countries—particularly the Scandinavian countries—have contributed generously. But nothing like enough money has yet been put up. It is my special task to explain this and to beg for more.

Let me try now to give a few concrete examples of what the UNKRA programmes actually mean. What is it that we and the Koreans are doing with all this money? I will quote from the 1952-53 programme now in operation. First of all, we imported \$20,000,000 worth of grain and fertilizer. More fertilizer was imported by the United States, and as a result of all this fertilizer, the black market began to disappear and prices fell. For the first time, farmers had enough fertilizer and there was a bumper rice crop. We are also importing cement for irrigation works; that will mean that this next year there will be another 63,000 acres under rice. We are importing farm tools. We have a big inoculation campaign against animal diseases—generally the Koreans lose 58 per cent. of their swine; in 1952-53 there was no such loss. We have a reforestation campaign and have purchased 43,000,000 seedlings to try to restart the forests.

Large sums of money are being spent on ropes, nets, and boats, and on lumber to make boats, for the fishing industry. We bought nearly £1,000,000 worth of textile machinery from a Manchester firm to re-equip Korean textile factories. We sent from this country £500,000 worth of trucks. We are putting in briquetting plant, and we hope to start a fertilizer plant.

Power is one of the main problems. Most of the power came from the North, where the best water supplies are, but there are water supplies down in the South too—in Hwachon, just south of the border, for example—and there is great opportunity for hydraulic electric development. The Civil Affairs Command are doing that for us and UNKRA is putting up the money, but it is a Korean Government scheme. What could be a better system of co-operation?

We are helping the Koreans to drill for gold. There are some sands in Korea which seem to have a really high gold content. There may be a great future there. We are also reconstructing some of the coal mines.

I said earlier that the future of Korea depends largely on its minerals. Believe it or not, at present there is no means of getting a sample of

mineral ore assayed in Korea. It has to be sent over to Japan. Therefore we are building an assay laboratory at Taejon, and we hope it will be in operation in January, 1954. We are importing from South Africa machinery for making blocks with which to build houses. The Korean house is built normally on a timber frame with a hot floor; that is to say, the flue of the kitchen is carried under the floor of the living room, so that all through the cold Korean winter you are kept warm.

Our plans for education include the building of classrooms and the provision of books and laboratory supplies. On the health and welfare side, Taegu Hospital is being rebuilt, with its medical school, which is one of the three big medical schools in Korea. We hope to get the teaching of medicine there restarted very soon. We are also helping to rebuild and equip a large rehabilitation centre at Tongnae, close to Pusan.

Probably this brief picture suggests a somewhat haphazard method of working. Yet I can say truthfully that that is not so. What we are doing is part of an overall plan for Korea, in which we and the Koreans and the Civil Assistance Command are all playing our assigned parts.

For all this work we have a staff of about 200 people, mainly in Korea. We have a small office in Geneva trying to collect money and a larger office in New York.

THE FUTURE OF KOREA

I will spend my last few minutes in asking myself a question which I find very much more difficult to answer. It is fairly easy to tell you what the history of Korea has been, what its geography is, and what has happened. It is much more difficult to tell you what the future is, or whether all this tremendous effort is worth while. Is there going to be peace in Korea? Will there be a political conference in Korea? Is there going to be any unification of Korea? I do not know. I do not believe anybody knows. I have no crystal ball, but what I do want to put forward is this: if the nations of the world do not put this money into Korea, do not start to get Korea right again, it does not matter what happens, because Korea will certainly be destroyed and ruined and lost. If we do not start now and help to reconstruct Korea there will not be any Korea. It will be finished, and all we have fought for will be lost. So I do not believe, from the point of view of what our duty is, that it matters what the answer is to my question; our duty is clear. We must go to the help of Korea, and go to her help now.

If we do that, can we make the economy of Korea viable? Is it ever possible? Can Korea be made self-supporting? It will be enormously easier if there is unification. To maintain 23,000,000 people and their descendants in South Korea alone, will be difficult, but not impossible. I think that with all the big agricultural and mineral possibilities the economy of South Korea can be made viable. But certainly unification is urgently desired, even if for the moment it would make things more difficult, because there must be even more damage to restore in North Korea than in the South. For the rest, we have to face it honestly that in the long run Korea has got to find an outlet for its trade and must

develop trade either with China or Japan, or both. One tremendous asset the Korean Government have in making their economy viable is that they have a very remarkable people, people of immense fortitude and great industry, and a people with amazing patriotism. I have been in hospitals and have seen Koreans in the operating theatre without proper anæsthetics, and just whimpering. I do not know how people are so brave. I do not believe that that amount of bravery can be lost. I think a country which has people with that kind of bravery must come through. Of course Korea is not perfect any more than any other country is perfect. There are individualists in Korea, people who consider their own private profit instead of the country's good. Of course there are. Is there no glass in our house that we can afford to throw stones? Often the trouble is due to inadequate pay. How can one expect the ordinary salaried official who is not paid enough to feed himself, let alone his family, to maintain a perfectly high degree of integrity such as we would demand of our Civil Service? How can one expect that in a country where nobody is ever paid anything like enough on which to live? Most of them, to their honour, somehow do another job; do paid work on farms and somehow make do, but of course there are evils sometimes. That is inevitable. And the only answer is to pay the people properly, and that depends on a restoration of the economy.

Lastly, let me voice one other criticism which is always being made. I approach this with a great sense of delicacy, but it is asked by all sorts of people in the West: If we put up this money to help Korea, can we be sure their President and their Government will play with us, will understand what we are doing? Will the Koreans do their part in this combined bargain? There are one or two things we should remember. The Korean Government and President have been criticized quite a deal in this country. Let me put a little analogy to you which you might bear in mind when you feel critical of some of the things that have happened during the last few years. Supposing—I will not name any particular country—supposing a country at war with us, a bitter enemy of ours, was occupying the northern parts of these islands from the east across to Bristol, and around London there were congregated most of the armies of the rest of the world, what do you think a Prime Minister of England would have said and done? It seems to me that we ought to have some understanding of the attitude towards the situation in which he has found himself of a President who is a profound patriot and who has been imprisoned for his patriotism and exiled for it over many years. It may be that things have been done by the Korean Government which were criticized in the West: It may be that in the troubles of last May there were things that happened of which the United Nations were justifiably critical. With all that, consider the situation as it is, consider the history of these people, consider what they have been doing in trying to fight for their country. Are they not bound to seek at all costs to hold it together? Those are political questions into which I have, perhaps, no business to go, but I feel that sometimes in this country there has not been sufficient understanding of what the President and his Government have been up against.

CONCLUSION

All I want to say in conclusion is that we cannot go to Korea and tell the Koreans how to run their country. We would not like it if anybody came and told us how to run ours. But we did go to help to fight a war there in the hope of preventing a third World War. We are hopeful that we have succeeded; and in the process the country has been destroyed and ruined and the result has been the death of thousands of Koreans. Surely the rest of the nations of the world owe it to Korea to redress that terrible suffering? That is what we in our humble little way are trying to do. It is an appalling task. At first it was terribly frustrating. Now I see some hope, but it can only be a task successfully carried out if the Governments of the rest of the world are prepared to go on putting up money in these very large sums and if, when they do that, they have the support of public opinion. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is you.

The CHAIRMAN: Sir Arthur Rucker has kindly offered to answer questions. I ask the first. I am not clear from what you have said, Sir Arthur, whether in this reconstruction of Korea you have managed to cover the whole of Korea, North and South, or only part?

Sir ARTHUR RUCKER: Across the centre of Korea just north of Seoul, running diagonally north-east, there is still a Front Line, and we cannot set foot north of it. All I have been speaking about so far is the reconstruction of South Korea, but of course we all hope and pray that a political answer will be found and that we can treat the country as a whole. That is the only satisfactory way in which to restore the economy. The figures I gave were for South Korea only. We have no knowledge of North Korea except that the Russians have said they will put in 100,000,000 roubles.

Mr. C. G. HANCOCK: Would the lecturer comment on what would happen if United Nations troops were withdrawn from Korea? Would Communism then get the upper hand? If so, would they use it as a stepping-stone to Japan?

Sir ARTHUR RUCKER: I would have thought that if United Nations Forces were withdrawn from Korea and Chinese troops not withdrawn, then Communism would certainly get the upper hand. I do not see how you could expect South Korea to stand up against China alone. I would have thought that to hold South Korea was an important part of the holding of the Western Line.

Lt.-Col. DIMMOCK asked if there were any ethnological or linguistic distinctions between North and South Koreans or were they the same people.

Sir ARTHUR RUCKER replied: I would be grateful if some of my Korean friends would answer that. I believe I am right in saying that there are the same kind of distinctions as between Scottish and English; it is substantially the same, but I am told a South Korean can tell a North Korean accent. We certainly could not. It is, however, just the same difference as there is between northerner and southerner of the same race and type.

Mr. C. J. EDMONDS: The lecturer told us that deforestation was going

on apace. Is that because the troops require fuel or because of the destruction of houses, or any other particular reason arising out of the war?

Sir ARTHUR RUCKER: It is because the ordinary people in the countryside require fuel; mainly it is the villagers. The Korean winter is very cold, and the normal method of getting fuel over the last few years, and unfortunately still is, to go on the hillside and cut down wood. There has been a bad habit of taking even the grass and leaves off the hillside, which makes denudation proceed faster. It is a problem of getting cheaper fuel to the villagers.

Mrs. A. St. JOHN COOK: Is there not plenty of nice fruit growing in Southern Korea?

Sir ARTHUR RUCKER: Yes; the Taegu apple is famous all over the East, and the persimmon is a lovely thing to see on the trees. There are some grapes grown also, but I have never heard of any grape wine being made. The most famous fruit is the apple.

Mr. C. W. LARGE: I have been reading a number of articles on Korea. Many refer to Korea as Chosen, which I believe means "The Land of the Morning Calm." Is that poetical or is it an actuality?

Sir ARTHUR RUCKER: I can only quote Mr. Osgood. According to him the Land of Morning Calm was Chosen, so named originally by the Chinese, who saw the Sun rising in the East over Korea. Hence the name. Whether that is true or not, I do not know. That is Mr. Osgood's account of it.

Group-Captain H. St. CLAIR SMALLWOOD: I believe that is perfectly true. I have been in Korea, though not for a long time, and it is unusual to have any stirring in the air in the morning. There is an extraordinarily still beautiful air. The name is very well chosen.

Sir ARTHUR RUCKER: It is a very suitable name. I did not mean to deny that. Korea is the most lovely country I have ever been in.

The CHAIRMAN: If there are no more questions, I feel sure you would wish me to thank Sir Arthur Rucker for the wonderful description that he has given us of the country of Korea, the people and the problems. In his task of trying to raise money for Korea he has made a very fine case for it, which was really summed up almost in his last sentence in which he pointed out that we went into Korea to stop aggression, hoping thereby to stop a third World War. It is quite certain that if we had not gone into Korea to stop aggression, there would have been further aggression elsewhere, and very quickly. We do, therefore, owe a very great debt to Korea and to the Koreans, over whose country this battle has taken place.

