

Relations between Canada and Korea

ON JANUARY 14, 1963, the Secretary of State for External Affairs, Mr. Howard Green, announced that Canada had agreed to establish formal diplomatic relations with the Republic of Korea (South Korea). The first Korean Ambassador to Canada, His Excellency Soo Young Lee, presented his Letter of Credence to the Governor General on January 22. Mr. Lee is concurrently Korean Permanent Observer at the headquarters of the United Nations.

The establishment of diplomatic relations with the Republic of Korea represents a formal culmination of increasing contacts between Canada and Korea, which began with Canadian missionary activity some 80 years ago and included the participation of Canadian armed forces in the United Nations resistance to aggression during the Korean War.

Korea, Ancient and Modern

Korea's recorded history spans a period of more than 2,000 years. At the beginning of the Christian era, the Korean peninsula was already the home of a distinct people with a language of its own. For more than 1,200 years, from the seventh century to the twentieth, Korea was politically united and substantially independent under successive native dynasties. The only important breaks in this long record of independent national existence were the Mongol overlordship of Genghis Khan and Kublai Khan in the thirteenth century and the Japanese annexation from 1910 to 1945. Yet Korea's long history has included, with periods of high civilization, many invasions and much domestic strife; and within the past century three major wars — in 1894, 1904-5 and 1950-53 — have centred on Korea, attesting its political and military importance in North-east Asia.

Today, as a result of developments immediately following the Second World War, Korea is a divided country. About three-quarters of its nearly 35 million people live in the Republic of Korea, which Canada officially recognized in 1949 as an independent sovereign state; about a quarter live in North Korea. The Republic of Korea fully supports the objectives of the United Nations in Korea, annually reaffirmed by the General Assembly — to bring about, by peaceful means, the establishment of a unified, independent and democratic Korea under a representative form of government, and to restore international peace and security in the area.

Early Canadian Contacts with Korea

The earliest contact between Canada and Korea came about through the activities of Canadian missionaries who, as early as 1880, were beginning to make important contributions, with Christian missionaries from other countries, to the religious, social and educational life of the Korean people. Indeed, by 1940, the