

December 8, 1955

**Letter, Kim Yong-shik of the Korean Mission in Japan
to President Syngman Rhee**

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Summary:

Report on the Japanese House of Representatives' decision to meet with Korean minister to discuss Japan-ROK relations and the summary of dialogue between Kim and Japanese officials

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REPUBLIC OF KOREA

KOREAN MISSION IN JAPAN

Tokyo, December 8, 1955

Excellency:

The Foreign Affairs Committee of the Japanese Lower House at its session on Dec. 3 passed a resolution that a few representatives of the Committee meet the Korean Minister to exchange views on the Korea-Japan relations on an informal basis. In accordance with this resolution Chairman Etsujiro Uehara of the Foreign Affairs Committee visited me Monday morning to make an appointment with me for his group.

As it was considered that such a meeting with Japanese Diet members might afford us an opportunity to make our stand clear to the Japanese public and also wedge between the Diet and Government, I made an appointment to see them at 4 Monday afternoon. Thus, seven Diet members (3 Socialists and 4 Liberal-Democrats) came to see me, apparently after being briefed on the Korea-Japan relations by Japanese Foreign Office officials. The talk lasted about an hour.

Before going into the main subject, Uehara said that their visit was made without Japanese Foreign Office's knowledge and its purpose is to merely exchange mutual views on the current fishery issue as well as to find out the real situation, therefore, neither side would make any commitments.

In the beginning Liberal-Democrat Kikuchi stated that since the Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff statement was issued, a tense atmosphere prevailed in Japan and the public opinion was stiffened. He also asked me if the said JCS statement represented the view of the Korean Government and if it intended to fire upon Japanese fishing vessels violating

the Peace/

His Excellency
President Syngman Rhee

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the Peace Line.

I replied that the Korean Government had repeatedly made clear through public statements as well as official notes to the Japanese Government the policy toward the enforcement of the Peace Line and that the recent JCS statement was reiteration of such policy in view of increasing tendency of violations of the Line on the part of Japanese fishing vessels, especially escorted by armed government patrol boats. The Korean side is determined to protect the Line at any cost, I said. I continued: in case Japan continues to infringe on our waters escorted by armed vessels, thus giving threats to our security, our naval forces would not tolerate it.

Another Liberal-Democrat, Suma, himself a veteran pre-war diplomat, spoke next. He said that the unilateral establishment of the Peace Line was at variance with international law and that the enforcement of the Line, which deprive Japanese fishermen of fishing ground, posed serious question to these fishermen. I immediately countered his remarks with a statement that the Peace Line was drawn after Japan had refused the Korean proposal to conclude a fishery agreement in November 1951. I reminded the Dietmen present that under Articles 9 and 21 of the San Francisco peace treaty Japan was obligated to conclude such an agreement with Korea, however, when the above proposal was made, Japan answered that she was not ready. Under such circumstances, I said, Korea was obliged to establish the Peace Line in view of the necessity for conservation of fishery resources and forestalling unnecessary disputes between the two countries.

Evidently above-mentioned provisions of the San Francisco treaty were something new to them and I put them on the defensive there. I continued: Japanese fishing industry called mass meetings here and there, denouncing the Korean Government and also appealing to the US side to discontinue aid to Korea, etc. I strongly warned the visiting Dietmen that such practice must be stopped, saying that they should realize that this kind of propaganda would only serve the aggravation of the situation, far from helping settlement of the pending problems. At this point they nodded.

I then told them that there were a million of Korean fishermen who are entirely dependent for their livelihood on fishing. Before the end of World War II Japanese fishermen monopolized our fishing ground and in addition Korea was devastated in the recent War. When our country

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just started rehabilitating various industries, including fishery, Japanese fishermen came over to our waters in an enormous number and engaged in poaching. Thus, Korean fishermen found themselves unable to sustain their own living unless Japanese fishermen refrained from approaching our fishing ground.

The Japanese Diet representatives stressed that the public opinion in Japan was getting stiffened since the JCS statement was issued and asked me what was the best solution. After telling them about demonstrations staged by our people in Korea where they renewed their determination to protect the Peace Line, I told them that the best way was for Japan to refrain from fishing in the disputed area. I said: Supposing Korean fishermen in such a large number come all the way to Tokyo Bay and engage in unrestricted fishing, what would be the Japanese reaction. As far as the Korean side is concerned, it has done everything in its hand for settlement of the pending problems, however, the Japanese side has not responded, I said.

Suma then said that since Japan had enough fishing net and other rigging, if fishing representatives of both sides started talking, mutually satisfactory conclusion might be arrived at. And he suggested that a temporary settlement on the fishery issue be arranged between the two sides. I replied that any such temporary settlement of any issue would be unacceptable, because it would mean that fundamental problems remained unsettled. I told them that in the past Japanese Chief Delegate made remarks insulting to Korea and our Government repeatedly requested its retraction along with the withdrawal of the property claims. And I called upon the visiting Diet representatives to approach their Government to make it show sincerity toward the settlement of the problems with Korea rather than engaging in propaganda campaign.

At this point they repeated their remarks, proposing to conclude a temporary arrangement on fishery in view of the fact that overall settlement would take considerable time. They then suggested that another meeting be held between representatives of the fishing industry and myself. When I asked about the purpose of such meeting, they said that it was not to conclude a temporary agreement on fishery but to make each other's position understood well. I did not give any definite commitment to this suggestion. It is obvious that their main purpose of visiting me is to give their respective constituencies the impression that they were exerting efforts for the settlement of the

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Korea-Japan problems.

The Diet members then proposed that they wished to visit Korea to discuss the fishery problem with our officials, if the Korean Government agreed. I told them that a group of Japanese fishing representatives visited Korea in 1953 without avail and that there hardly was any necessity of repeating it. I am sure that they do not expect it possible to send them to Korea.

Before closing the meeting one of the Diet members present asked me if the Korean Government would accept US mediation in case the latter offered it. I replied to him that I did not know of any such US mediation and that such question would be considered when the talks were resumed.

With sentiments of loyalty and esteem, I remain,

Most respectfully,

Syngman Rhee Kim