

September 21, 1955

Conversation of Comrades N.A. Bulganin and N.S. Khrushchev with the Japanese Parliamentary Delegation on September 21st, 1955

Citation:

"Conversation of Comrades N.A. Bulganin and N.S. Khrushchev with the Japanese Parliamentary Delegation on September 21st, 1955", September 21, 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 52, op. 1, d. 596, ll. 1-20. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Allison Smith.

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Summary:

Khrushchev and Bulganin meet with the Japanese parliamentary delegation. They discuss the establishment of direct diplomatic relations and ending the official state of war between the Soviet Union and Japan (which happened in 1956, almost one year later), industrial and cultural collaboration, trade prospects between the two countries, and the fate of Japanese POWs on Soviet territory.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Conversation

of comrades Bulganin N.A. and Khrushchev N.S. with the Japanese Parliamentary Delegation on September 21, 1955

Comrade Bulganin. We welcome you and are ready to listen to you.

Comrade Khrushchev. We are glad that you came. This [conversation] will allow us to get to know each other better, and to know our and your intentions better. We have the very best intentions of establishing amicable relations with the Japanese people. I think it is in the interest of the Japanese people to also build and develop amicable relations with the Soviet people. There are great difficulties along the way. But we need to think that today's contact with you and your stay in the Soviet Union will help facilitate relations. We will hear what you have to say. We will also offer considerations on how we view further prospects of the Soviet Union's relationship with the Japanese nation. We request to speak frankly.

Comrade Bulganin. Who asks to say something?

Kitamura (leader of the delegation). Allow me to thank you with my whole heart for the opportunity to visit you today. We came to your country with a fervent desire to do everything possible for the improvement of relations and the establishment of amicable ties between our countries. We also believe that relations between our countries are a very important factor in the common cause for peace throughout the entire world. With this hope we came to your country and we want to do something to move in this direction. When we left Japan, all of our people were deeply involved in the struggle for peace.

We are well aware of the enormous role the Soviet Union played in the consolidation of peace, and, in particular, the active role Premier Bulganin played at the recent meeting.

Our first impression after arriving from small Japan is the immensity of the Soviet Union's territory. Second, we are convinced that science, economics, and culture have reached such a high level of development here.

We also believe that this warm welcome, which we have been given here in the Soviet Union, is very important for the establishment of peaceful and amicable relations. We are eager to make all efforts for the strengthening of peace.

If we move to concrete issues, they are such:

First, the territorial issue. Then, the economic issue, in particular, the issue about fishing, and in connection with it, the issue about the expansion of trade. The issue about cultural ties. There are others. We believe that to resolve them, we need to approach [these issues] with a wide scope and consensus, and try to resolve them in a warm and amicable environment.

There is also an issue about the release of war criminals. This is a fervent desire of the Japanese masses. And we ask Premier [Bulganin] to demonstrate generosity in this matter. The resolution of this issue would be the best memorable gift for the 38 members of the Japanese parliamentary delegation present in your country.

Yesterday we had the good fortune of visiting a camp of Japanese war criminals in Ivanov. If it would be possible, it is our fervent wish for a similar meeting in a camp in Khabarovsk. We would strongly request such approval and would be grateful for it.

In conclusion, allow me to thank you again for all of the care that has been shown to us here. And the last question. Will you mind if the content of our conversation today is published?

Masaru Nomizo. Allow me to supplement several parts of Kitamura's speech, where he touched upon concrete issues, and ask to hear both Mr. Bulganin's and Mr. Khrushchev's views. I want to touch on territorial issues, as well as the issues about war criminals, trade, fishing, and cultural ties.

We are well aware that the territorial issue is very complicated. It is connected to the Treaty of San Francisco with the resolution of the issue regarding the island of Okinawa. But we know about the major changes that occurred after the meeting of the four main powers, in which both Mr. Bulganin and Mr. Khrushchev participated. The Japanese people have shown great interest in this issue and hold great hope for

the further development of events. We would ask, to the extent possible, for the favorable resolution of the territorial issue in order to serve the development of the forces of peace.

As for the issue of war criminals, I would first like to express gratitude for the statement that was published regarding the location of 365 people, and also for the release of 36 people who returned not long ago. The settlement of the issue regarding war criminals/former prisoners of war would meet the aspirations of all Japanese people, and we ask your cooperation in resolving this issue, which would contribute to the establishment of amicable relations.

We heard that as a result of Chancellor Adenauer's visit to the Soviet Union the issue regarding German war criminals was positively resolved. We hope that in the same way we can come to a resolution regarding the issue of Japanese war criminals.

As for trade, our request is to develop trade on the basis of mutual favorability as the first of measures taken to normalize relations between both countries.

As for the issue of fishing, Sino-Japanese relations in this regard have already been successfully settled. Now, it would be highly desirable to settle all complicated issues related to fishing and Japanese-Soviet relations, in particular, the issue of fishing in the Northern waters.

We would think that it is possible to create some kind of special body to settle this issue. A portion of the members of the parliamentary delegation who are present here could enter [the body]. We also ask for your assistance in developing cultural ties, including in sports, art, etc.

Comrade Bulganin. Comrade Khrushchev will answer the questions raised.

Comrade Khrushchev. I would first like to talk about how we view the establishment of amicable, diplomatic relations and the issue of ending the state of war. We believe that this is the main issue that should be resolved by our nations because it is the starting point. Before everything else, we need to talk about ending the state of war and forgetting former wars and conflicts between the Soviet Union and the Japanese nation. We need to establish normal bodies, which would represent the Soviet Union in Japan and the Japanese government in the Soviet Union.

This would create a situation where our governments could connect through normal diplomatic channels and conduct negotiations regarding all issues arising between us. This seems so elementary to us that it surprises us a little that negotiations conducted in London between the representatives of the USSR and Japan are being dragged out regarding this issue. This creates the impression for us that the Japanese side does not show much interest in normalizing relations between the Soviet Union and Japan, and therefore, artificially drags out time. We see no manifestation of interest from the Japanese side in successfully concluding negotiations.

The speakers in front of me, Mr. Kitamura and Mr. Nomizo, cited the resolution of the German army's issue of war criminals/former prisoners of war, and indicated that this issue was favorably resolved. This example really shows that the issue regarding former prisoners of war/war criminals can be favorably resolved. But since you have set forth the resolution of the issue with the Germans as an example, I turn your attention to the following. With Mr. Adenauer, our negotiations lasted five days. During this time, we agreed on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and the German Federal Republic and the establishment of embassies in the capitals of the relevant nations. And we gave Mr. Adenauer our word to consider the issue of war criminals/former German prisoners of war.

At the same time, negotiations between the Soviet Union and Japan regarding the same issue lasted around four months and did not go any further than pleasant conversations. Representatives drink tea, conduct amicable conversations among themselves, and reassure each other that both sides want peace, the elimination of the state of war, and the establishment of diplomatic relations. I think that four months is quite enough time to reach an agreement. Evidently, the delay of negotiations is not because the parties' representatives cannot explain all issues because they speak different languages - Japanese and Russian through interpreters - but obviously, because the Japanese delegation has no interest in quickly resolving these issues.

We had fairly tense, even aggravated relations with the government of the German

Federal Republic. Negotiations with the representatives of that government also proceeded fairly intensely, but there was a desire on both sides to reach the normalization of relations between the Soviet Union and the German Federal Republic, and, therefore, a favorable outcome was achieved.

After negotiations with the government of the German Federal Republic, we also negotiated with the representatives of the German Democratic Republic, the results of which you know from the press. But in doing so, I want to point out that we discussed the issue regarding the release of war criminals/former prisoners of war earlier, when Comrade Bulganin and I returned from Geneva and stopped in Berlin. Now, as you know, this issue has been favorably resolved. Preparatory work for the release of former German prisoners of war/war criminals and their corresponding transfer to the German Democratic Republic and the German Federal Republic is happening now.

The conclusion is that maybe the question you presented to us should first be put to the representative of the Japanese Government authorized to negotiate with representatives of the Soviet Union in London.

The issues that have turned out to be disputed during negotiations in London are already now fairly exposed and points of view have been identified. We would need to practically resolve them already.

The issue of war criminals/former military personnel of the Japanese Army is not unsurmountable. We believe that a lot of time has passed since the end of the war and war criminals sentenced for their crimes have already served part of their sentence. Now we could be generous and release these people, transferring them to the Japanese Government so it can proceed with them at its discretion.

We are not motivated by a feeling of revenge for the past in this matter. We, statesmen, should primarily proceed not from the past, but from the future.

We presume that an early release of these people would bring joy to their families and loved ones. An early release would contribute to a better mutual understanding and the improvement of amicable relations between our countries.

We believe that it would be better to immediately resolve issues about ending the state of war between the USSR and Japan, establishing diplomatic relations, and releasing war criminals.

The settlement of these issues would be welcomed by the people of Japan. The Soviet people would be happy about this act. Therefore, these issues should not be separated into pieces, but need to be resolved together. This would be a good gift for the Japanese and Soviet peace-loving peoples. Such is our point of view.

Masanobu Tsuji. I wanted to focus on one fact. Currently, there are 439 war criminals who have also still not been released, after having served their sentence according to judgments by American-English courts. The Japanese Government and the Japanese people wait for such war criminals to be released soon. It is my fervent request that the war criminals in the Soviet Union would be released earlier than they are released by England and America.

Comrade Khrushchev. I can assure you that the war criminals will be released relatively earlier than the war criminals who are located in the prison you named along the lines of the USA and England. This is explained in the following manner: America's and England's diplomatic relations with Japan were restored in 1947. We still do not have them [diplomatic relations]. Therefore, I promise you, as soon as we end the state of war and restore normal diplomatic relations, war criminals will be quickly released. This will be, consequently, the quickest release after the establishment of diplomatic relations.

I ask you to understand the psyche of our people. The state of war is still not ended between our nations. We still have not concluded a peace treaty and established diplomatic relations. But the Soviet Union already released war criminals. Then, our people would say how is it possible to do this, especially when the Soviet Union offered to end the state of war, conclude a peace treaty, and establish diplomatic relations. I believe all this has importance. In the war, the Soviet Union was the victor, but the defeated does not want to accept our offer. This means that it has some kind of evil intentions against us, and asks us to release the war criminals we have in order to use them against us. What kind of logic is this? And they will accuse us of not

meeting the wishes of the Japanese people. I believe, that we are meeting the wishes of the Japanese people. We want to resolve this issue in an amicable and brotherly way, but we do not meet reciprocity.

I repeat that we are also ready to resolve the issue with the Japanese government like the example you mentioned regarding negotiations with Mr. Adenauer. This will take no more than 4-5 days, if the Japanese Government manifests the same kind of interest and desire as German Federal Republic Chancellor Adenauer did.

Hozumi. We understood very well everything that Mr. Khrushchev said in the meeting, and returning to Japan, we will try to inform the Japanese people.

Tahara. Maybe it would be possible before the final release of the war criminals to do like the Australian Government did, which transferred the war criminals to Japanese detention centers.

Comrade Khrushchev. It is not out of the question at all. But you need to take into account my previous statement. Otherwise, it turns out that the Japanese side intends to delay ending the state of war and establishing diplomatic relations, and seeks to obtain war criminals at its disposal earlier than this act. Are we really setting up such unsurmountable obstacles, which damages the Japanese people and are difficult to resolve? We just believe it necessary to agree about ending the state of war and establishing diplomatic relations. This is elementary. Our nations exist and if they want to coexist and peacefully [illegible] their relations, then this issue cannot be disputed. [illegible] to draft relevant documents and sign.

Tanaka Hajime. Unfortunately, we do not know what kind of conditions will be put forth for the cession of the state of war between the Soviet Union and Japan. We do not know. If some kind of clarity could be provided on this issue.

Comrade Khrushchev. I almost set out in my statement the kinds of issues presented. We do not put any other questions before the Japanese side: ending the state of war, establishing diplomatic relations, and exchanging embassies. After this we are ready to examine any question that interests the Japanese side on the basis of reciprocity. We almost have no questions for you, except for the desire to establish good-neighborly relations.

Kikuchi. The leader of the delegation withdrew my statement.

Comrade Khrushchev. That is your discretion. We are ready to give you a chance to say something.

Comrade Bulganin. Does someone else want to say something?

From the floor: there will be no other questions.

Comrade Khrushchev. We are moving on to the next question. (So that you do not think that we will not give concrete answers to concrete questions).

The territorial issue was raised. For this issue, there is a fairly clear and plain position, which focuses on known treaties and documents that were signed by the Soviet side and the Japanese, American, and British sides. We firmly and unconditionally stand on this position. We believe that during negotiations we need to start from these documents.

During negotiations in London, the Japanese side raised the issue of the Habomai and Shikotan Islands. We believe that this issue is also resolved in the documents I referred to. But we believe that these islands are so close to the Japanese islands, that here the Japanese Government's interests and amicably developing our relations need to be taken into account.

Therefore, with respect to these islands, the resolution can be found in a reciprocal understanding of both sides' interests, that is, if Japan would pay attention to the issues now being discussed in London. Our offers in no way infringe on the sovereign rights of the Japanese people and the Japanese Government and do not pursue any kind of material benefit.

Now about fishing.

We understand the kind of interest fishing represents for the Japanese side. But I would like to turn your attention to the fact that you offer to resolve the fishing issues only in the interests of the Japanese nation and fail to recognize any kind of principle of reciprocity. We are so generous that we will discuss this issue. A capitalist country

in our position, having had warred against another nation and come out the victor, would simply reject negotiations.

(If the Japanese side was in the same position and you answered me, and I was in your position, I would think that this answer is right). But we as a people are very patient and persistent. We believe in our rectitude. Therefore, we are patiently listening and giving answers to this question, guided by the desire to establish good-neighborly relations. We know that resolving this issue is so important for the Japanese people. Frankly, it is not in the interest of the Japanese people to delay ending the state of war and concluding a peace treaty. The point is that we can wait forever to end the state of war and conclude a peace treaty, since this carries almost no kind of political or economic loss for us. The Japanese people have great loss from this. The question is why are we so actively seeking this [the ending of the state of war and concluding a peace treaty]. We are guided by common interests in this issue: the interest of ending of the state of war, the easing of tension and creating conditions for peaceful, amicable coexistence with nations that have different social structures from us. So, finishing here, I can repeat that we are ready to quickly negotiate about fishing and review this [issue] taking into account the Japanese people's interests, after ending the state of war and concluding a peace agreement

If my answers are satisfactory, then I will move to the next question.

The leaders of the Japanese parliament's delegation raised the issue of trade. I already indirectly answered this question when I talked about fishing. I can add that we believe it is necessary to fully develop trade with all countries. We would really like to develop trade with Japan. Japan is closest geographically to China, Korea, and the Soviet Union. The structure of the Japanese economy and industry is such that it would be able to satisfy its needs very well while developing trade with China, Korea, and the Soviet Union. It is not in the Japanese people's interest if there is no normal trade now and trade is in its infancy. It is not our fault that trade is at such a level. On the contrary, we want to get our trade relations out of such a state. In Japan, the business circles and progressives, who understand the prospect of developing trade relations and the benefits for the Japanese people, also support these positions.

Shipbuilding is very developed in Japan. We could give you large orders. We could place other orders in Japan. For our part, we could satisfy the Japanese demand for oil, gas, coal, wood, and other materials that Japanese industry and the Japanese economy need. This raw material is abundant in both Japan and the Soviet Union. Japanese industry and the Japanese people understand this. At the same time, trade is not being developed and Japan mainly suffers from this. This means that there are powers that influence the Japanese Government [to maintain minimal trade relations]. The Japanese Government, apparently, cannot overcome the actions of these powers, and therefore, keeps trade relations with the Soviet Union, the People's [Republic] of China, and Korea in this condition.

I would not like to name the concrete reasons for this, so as not to give a pretext to say that I am interfering in your internal affairs. I think the deputies of the parliament are more aware of this issue than I.

Here there was a request for permission to visit a camp of war criminals in Khabarovsk. Right now, I am just not ready to give an answer to this question because I do not know the locations of the camps for war criminals. Therefore, Comrade Bulganin and I will need to ask the Minister of Internal Affairs. We promise you to study this question, and if war criminals are located in Khabarovsk, we will try to satisfy your request.

It seems I gave answers to all of the questions raised. I do not know how much these answers satisfy your inquiries, but I tried to make it so that you correctly understood our positions on these issues.

Kitamura. Mr. Khrushchev spoke completely frankly and we understand everything. Since negotiations between the representatives of the Soviet Government and the Japanese Government are ongoing, we would like to avoid touching concrete questions here as much as possible. I would like to note just one thing: the Japanese people want to resolve the fishing and territorial issues before the normalization and establishment of diplomatic relations. We want to resolve all issues and have them reflected with the conclusion of a treaty. Therefore, this is why it is difficult to

negotiate.

We understand well the position of the Soviet Union in both the territorial issue and trade issues. We do not want to make any conclusions here. We are just talking about the aspirations and desires of the Japanese people. We all understood what Mr. Khrushchev hinted at in his speech.

In conclusion, I wanted to touch on the issue of cultural ties. It seems to me that this issue can be singled out, and that an exchange of representatives in art and sports could facilitate a mutual understanding and have a positive impact on the London negotiations.

Morishima. Everything that Mr. Kitamura said describes the Japanese Government's position relative to negotiations. But, in Japan the situation is somewhat different than in the Soviet Union. There are a number of political parties and there are parties that adhere to the same point of view expressed by Mr. Khrushchev. The Socialist Party of Japan believes that all Japanese people desire the quickest settlement of the normalization of relations between Japan and the Soviet Union. A group of the Socialist Party, which is present in our delegation in the person of Mr. Nomizo, will make a relevant report to the government after returning to Japan.

But it would be very desirable if you could somehow hint that the issue of Habomai and Shikotan will be resolved in Japan's favor so we can look forward to such a prospect.

Khrushchev. I am implying that here in front of authoritative witnesses.

Morishima. For me that is completely enough and I do not want to go deeper into this issue.

Khrushchev. Mr. Kitamura, would you like to resolve issues regarding fishing and war criminals before concluding a peace treaty and ending the state of war?

Kitamura. I believe that the delay in negotiations is apparently due to the fact that for the Japanese Government further resolution for all of these issues can cause complexity. We would like these issues to be resolved with the conclusion of a treaty.

Khrushchev. This is a fundamental issue. For us, the resolution of this issue is a question of prestige. When the other party, with whom we are negotiating, insists that we need to resolve these kinds of issues first, this already sounds like a demand, like an ultimatum, like a particular condition: if you do not accept this, then we will not sign a treaty to end the war and make peace.

Can we really go to such conditions? The acceptance of such terms damages our prestige. We do not want to put forth questions, which will belittle and damage the prestige of the Japanese Government or of the Japanese people. Therefore, we ask you to understand us and reciprocate.

Kitamura. I understand you well, but I am not a member of the government.

Khrushchev. I am also not a member of the government, and only a deputy of the Supreme Council of the USSR. The difference is that when I make statements as a member of the Supreme Council, I hope that I express the point of view of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and the point of view of my government. You, it appears, have a different situation. We take this into account.

Kitamura. Yes, the situation is different.

Khrushchev. Now I would like to answer the question, which Mr. Kitamura quite rightly set forth. This is the question of cultural ties. We are the ones who stand for the development of cultural ties between the Soviet people and the Japanese people. Sending delegations, artists, athletes, book exchanges, and movies, and establishing contact between our scientific institutions has many channels, through which we can develop our relations to benefit our people.

I would like to note the statement of Mr. Morishima, the representative of the Socialist Party. I am pleased with your statement that our point of view has complete understanding. I think that your meetings with the Soviet people, our meeting today, and further activity toward rapprochement and mutual understanding between our people can serve the general struggle for peace and strengthen amicable relations. But for this we need to eliminate formal obstacles. We are having an amicable conversation, but are in a state of war. This means that this is a carry-over from 11

years in the past. Let's eliminate this formality, establish peace and together we will strengthen amicable relations.

In concluding the conversation, I ask that you relay our very best wishes to the Japanese people for a successful development of their economy, culture, and material well-being; and the most important thing that peoples of the world expect and dream about, that they no longer worry about such a tragic situation that the Japanese people lived through in this war, when a terrifying atomic weapon exploded over the Japanese islands.

We wish that peace and good relations forever blossomed between our people and are beneficial for both the Japanese and Soviet nations.

Bulganin. Are you satisfied, gentlemen, with Comrade Khrushchev's explanation for your questions?

Exclamations from Members of the delegation: Completely.

Bulganin. I am very happy that Comrade Khrushchev's explanation completely satisfied you. I am glad because what Comrade Khrushchev said here is the Soviet Government's point of view, and I, as Chairman of the Council of Ministers, completely subscribe to everything that was said here by Comrade Khrushchev.

Comrade Khrushchev explained very well our position in relation to Japan and to the conclusion of a peace treaty with Japan.

It is very good that you visited us. Your stay in the Soviet Union will facilitate a right understanding of our position in Japan.

We can say to you here that the Soviet Union is interested in quickly normalizing our relations and concluding a peace treaty. We do not view any serious obstacles on the way to this. If we are to study in detail the still unsettled differences that are coming between Mr. Masumoto and our Ambassador Malik in London, then I would say that these differences are quite minor. The point is that the Japanese Government needs to have the desire to more quickly conclude a treaty for the normalization and establishment of diplomatic relations with Japan.

Khrushchev. If they do not want to, then we will say we will wait. We can wait.

Bulganin. I completely agree with this comment. I already said that I completely subscribe to what Comrade Khrushchev said. Using the meeting with you, I ask you to convey from the Soviet Government and the Soviet people our very best greeting and wishes to the Japanese people.

Convey to the Japanese people from the Soviet people and the Soviet Government that we desire to live in peace and friendship with the Japanese people and to conduct negotiations on terms that are mutually beneficial for both the Soviets and for the Japanese people