

November 18, 1955
**Letter, Minister Yong Shik Kim [Kim Yong-shik] to
the President**

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Summary:

Explanation regarding civil trade with Japan, with information on Japanese policies towards Communist blocs

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November 18, 1955

To: Minister Yong Shik Kim

From: The President

Thank you for your letter dated November 3 in regard to Korea-Japan trade.

I am afraid that what I told you regarding the purchase of goods from Japan and also the sale of rice have caused you misunderstanding. What I meant was not to open regular civil trade between Korea and Japan. I did not touch upon the general trade arrangement between the two countries since I ordered that all business dealings be cut off altogether with Japan because Japan was taking extreme measures to join with north Korea and invade south Korea together with the Communists. If you tell this to the Americans they laugh at you because they trust everything the Japanese tell them. The Japanese will not give them the impression they are dealing with Soviet Russia, Red China and north Korea to extend their power. But you and I see clearly what the Japanese are driving at. They have signed an agreement with Kim Il Sung to freely expand their fishing activities in north Korean waters. All these clearly demonstrate that it is not only fish they are after, but to come into south Korea in every way possible ever since we kept them out. You may remember the Japanese fishery associations wanted to come out a number of times but we refused and they had no chance to do anything. Now they are going to tie up with the Communists.

In the early stages of the Communist war in Korea, the Japanese proposed to bring in 30,000 Japanese troops to fight the Communists in Korea but I declared that if one Japanese soldier lands on Korean soil we would set aside the Communist war and fight the Japanese instead.

We are going to capture any Japanese fishing boats found even in northern waters and beyond the peace line and fire at Japanese naval vessels which protect their fishermen who are deliberately violating our line.

The Communists and anti-Korean elements in Japan are openly organizing societies to undermine the ROK government. In order to keep them out we had to take drastic measures. One was to keep private individuals from going back and forth between the two countries and carrying out their anti-Korean activities.

Since my statement was published we found out that there were certain articles which the government had already agreed to purchase, that deals had been concluded and that it was very difficult to cancel

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them because we need the things badly. So I told our Ministers to carry out the purchases already agreed upon. There are certain things we must buy immediately in order to keep inflation down. But these business deals must be handled only through official channels and no individual contacts between the two countries are to be allowed. I ordered them to make a list of the things they have to buy or sell, the description of goods, prices, etc., and send them on to you so the Mission personnel could negotiate with the Japanese. The agreed feached upon should be a temporary one because it must first be submitted to those who do the buying and selling for their approval. This was my rough idea.

In order to do so we must ask the Japanese to agree to busy so much and we would reciprocate and the amount of business we do should be equal between the two countries. In this connection, I wish to say that when we told Ambassador Allison we would sell our rice for \$185, he promised to make the Japanese withdraw their property claim and the Kubota statement but they have not done so and I do not believe the Ambassador will ask us to live up to the oral understanding made at that time since he failed to accomplish what he undertook. I am sure he has done all he could and therefore we should not mention this fact to anyone in order not to embarrass him. I am only saying that if we insist on the original price Mr. Allison will have nothing to say in the matter. Furthermore, since we talked about selling our rice to Japan, I understand the Japanese government raised the price of rice and tried to buy from the farmers at the rate of \$195 instead of 185. If that is the case I do not see why we should not hold our rice until the Japanese pay the equal price, at least. Besides we are trying very hard to buy rice from our farmers.

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In connection with the sale of our laver I think you should find out the real reason the Japanese government prohibited custom clearance of laver from Korea and report to me. We do not want the Japanese to tell the Americans that we have repented and want to buy things from Japan. As far as I am concerned our original idea was to keep the two countries separate, at least in commercial relations.

Suppose we send our official representatives to Japan to form a Commission as the Taiwan government did. That means we must withdraw our former announcement to sever trade relations and conduct, as the Japanese say, normal trade relations, but I cannot see how this can be done until the Japanese have changed their policy and attitude toward us.

The United States State Department is working hand in glove with the Japanese. They will raise the question as to the legality of our maintenance of the peace line and continue to refuse to say anything regarding the Japanese property claims. Whenever I mention this the Americans laugh at me and say it is ridiculous, and that is exactly what the Japanese want them to do. If it is ridiculous and preposterous as they say, why don't the Americans tell the Japanese to stop making such claims?

It is hard to keep the Japanese and Korean communists from smuggling into Korea money, goods, weapons, literature, etc., and creating trouble for our government? How can you commercially deal with Japan while she is trying up with the Communists. The Communists will then find it easy to bring their underground, materials and ideas into Korea. If we fail to keep our doors hermetically sealed against communist infiltration we cannot maintain our security, politically or otherwise. However, there is one point which should be put into consideration: Will the Japanese agree to buy \$12 million worth of goods from us as we are going to buy that much from Japan. Economically it may help us. In the first place we are importing large quantities of consumer goods from abroad in order to check inflation. Instead of bringing in things from America and other countries for the time being until we succeed in keeping prices of commodities steady and if we are to enter into such an understanding, chances are we will buy more from Japan than they from Korea. Whatever the case may be unless we take drastic measures in dealing with Japan we can never be able to protect ourselves against Japan's invasion of Korea, commercially or otherwise.

If your suggestion on how to keep Japanese and communist influence from spreading into Korea is taken into consideration I will be very glad to reconsider my original proposal. Our fishermen and those interested in marine products must be protected and Japan seems to be the only channel open for them to sell their goods, but I do not know how this can be arranged to our advantage without jeopardizing our situation.

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