

**November 24, 1955**

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

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**Summary:**

Report on Japanese political issues and Japanese reaction on ROK statement on fishery issue

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## REPUBLIC OF KOREA

KOREAN MISSION IN JAPAN

Tokyo, November 24, 1955

Excellency:

I beg to acknowledge with appreciation the receipt of Your Excellency's letters dated Nov. 17 and 18, respectively. I have already reported to Your Excellency on my meeting with Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Kadowaki by cable and a supplementary report is being sent under separate cover.

Following is my report on recent development of the situation here and also the reaction of the Japanese side to the statement issued by our Joint Chiefs of Staff on Nov. 17:

With the conservative merger just completed the Japanese policy-makers are striving, in their political maneuver to strengthen their position, to divert the attention of the people from domestic issues to external affairs, thereby moulding the public opinion to back their policy.

It was in the midst of such efforts on the part of the Jap conservative party that our Joint Chiefs of Staff announcement concerning the intensified enforcement of the Peace Line was reported to the Japanese public. The Jap policy-makers lost no time in capitalizing such opportunity for the fortification of their position. Thus, as soon as the statement in question was reported, they mobilized radio network and press media for anti-Korean campaign.

As briefly mentioned in my cable report last week, Jap Foreign Minister Shigemitsu told the Cabinet meeting

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last week that the Japanese Government was seriously concerned with the recent Korean statement and such might lead to a grave situation involving war.

Next morning the local newspapers editorially denounced our stand, some, however, stressing the importance of realistic settlement of the issue. For instance, the Japan News (a local daily published in English by the Australians) voiced in its editorial an opinion favoring the mediation by the United States Government as the only ~~feasible~~ way of settling the fishery issue, including the current problem.

Separately, Chairman Suzuki of the unified Socialist Party, after declaring that his Party did not recognize the Peace Line, called for a meeting of Soviet Russia, the United States, North Korean puppets, Japan and our side to settle the issue. He further blamed the United States side for not exerting sufficient effort toward the settlement of the problems between Korea and Japan.

The US Embassy sources here are still watching the development of this situation without showing any sign for active mediation so far. It appeared that the leaders of the merged conservative party of Japan would capitalize this situation for the purpose of consolidating their stand and would endeavor to push their bill for constitutional amendment at an early stage. (It has been the consistent policy of the defunct Democrats of Japan to nullify the war-renunciation clause of the Constitution, to make active rearmament possible.)

In the beginning the Japanese Foreign Office, on the basis of the following evaluation of the situation, took a stiff attitude; such as

- a. The United States would not support the Korean position in the fishery issue, and
- b. If Japanese fishing vessels are actually fired upon, Japan can use the issue in anti-Korean campaign by appealing to the United Nations.

However, they seem to have realized that to take a stiff attitude would only inflame the Korean side and would not help the settlement of the fishery issue itself.

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Further, Hatoyama thought it unwise to make the situation tense any further by taking such an attitude and, therefore, he told the press after the formation of his third Cabinet as follows:

Though he had been hoping for an early settlement of the problems pending between Korea and Japan, the Korean side had not responded. He was still of the opinion that every possible effort should be made toward the normalization of the relations, by finding solution to the pending problems one by one.

When the press asked him whether he meant 'tougher policy' when he said 'such a time was imminent', Hatoyama replied in the negative, adding that he merely meant that in view of such announcement of the Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff, time had come to settle all the pending problems, such as the property claims, etc.

According to the information reaching me, Hatoyama has not yet conferred with Shigemitsu on this issue. It can be summed up that Japan has not yet reached any final decision on how to react to the statement of our Joint Chiefs of Staff. However, it is obvious that in the event Japanese fishing vessels are fired upon and sunk the situation would be entirely different.

With all the above-mentioned points in mind, in my opinion the policy of our Government toward the current issue should be formulated along the following line:

1. We simply ignore the Japanese request for clarification of our Joint Chiefs of Staff statement, since we have in the past sufficiently explained to the Jap side on the nature of the Peace Line and our determination to continue its enforcement. In this case, the Jap side will be kept anxious about whether their fishing vessels will actually be fired upon by our navy.
2. The alternative would be that we give the full explanation to the Jap side; in this case, the following factors should be taken into account:

As I studied Your Excellency's letter dated Nov. 17, it is noted: "We are going to capture any Japanese fishing vessels found even in the northern waters and fire at Japanese naval vessels which protect Japanese fishing vessels deliberately violating the Peace Line.."

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The Joint Chiefs of Staff announcement, on the other hand, reads: "We will fire at Japanese fishing vessels which violate the Peace Line and sink, if necessary..." Therefore, it is deemed necessary to clarify to the Japs that we will capture all the Japanese fishing vessels, if Jap naval vessels give threats to the law-enforcement authorities of the Republic of Korea, by interfering with performance of their official duties, to protect those fishing vessels, we will be obliged to fire upon such Japanese naval vessels, etc....

In communicating the above clarification to the Jap side, it is considered advisable to remind the Japanese of the fact that under the terms of the San Francisco Peace Treaty (Article 9 and 21) Japan is obligated to conclude a fishery agreement with the Republic of Korea, however, has not responded to our proposal made in 1951. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to enforce the Peace Line from the standpoint of protecting our own interest.

If the above recommendations meet with Your Excellency's approval, I will prepare a brief statement incorporating these points and will release it to the press as well as notify the Japanese Government. Your Excellency's urgent instructions in this regard would be highly appreciated.

With sentiments of loyalty and esteem, I remain,

Most respectfully,

cc. Foreign Minister

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