

December 8, 1955

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

Citation:

"Letter, Kim Yong-shik of the Korean Mission in Japan to President Syngman Rhee", December 8, 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, B-308-021, The Korean Diplomatic Mission in Japan, Reports from the Korean Mission to the United Nations and Republic of Korea Embassies and Legations, Syngman Rhee Institute, Yonsei University.

<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/123701>

Summary:

Report on the Japanese public opinion regarding Joint Chief Statement and the recent trend of Japanese politics regarding fishery issue in Korea

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Syngman Rhee Institute, Yonsei University

Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

V
REPUBLIC OF KOREA

KOREAN MISSION IN JAPAN

Tokyo, December 8, 1955

Excellency:

I beg to acknowledge with appreciation the receipt of Your Excellency's letter dated December 1.

Public opinion of Japan is being aroused in connection with the recent Joint Chiefs of Staff statement. In the Japanese Diet now in session interpellations center on the same issue with intepellators asking Government officials as to what the latter intend to do to settle the current issue, etc. Representatives of civilian fishery circles are also holding their own meetings to discuss this problem among themselves and this week some 600 fishermen and their families came toTokyo to petition the Jap Government, Diet, US Embassy and this office. This group, supported by fishery associations in Western Japan and extreme rightist elements of Japan, staged demonstrations in the above-mentioned places and about 400 of them staged 2½-hour demonstration in front of the entrance of this office, carrying placards and singing old military march.

Wednesday, Representative Hachiya Obama of the Japan-Korea Fishery Deliberation Headquarters told the press in a threatening manner that unless the US took some mediating action in the current issue in Japan's favor, anti-American sentiments might be flared up, etc. Foreign Minister Shigemitsu told the Lower House Budget Committee the same day that he was preparing ground work for the mediation by a third power and also that the Japanese Government was unofficially sounding out the possibility of resuming the talks with Korea.

On the whole the JapaneseGovernment seems to have realized the futility of such measures as severance of economic ties with Korea or any similar action for the real settlement of the problems with Korea and decided to form

a Cabinet/

His Excellency
President Syngman Rhee

50



2.

a Cabinet Deliberative Council for finding out ways and means for settlement of the fishery issue between Korea and Japan by some other methods. There are also indications that the Japanese Government will take up the detainee case along with the deliberation of the fishery issue and, if possible, resume the talks with us. Some confidential information reveals that the property claims problem is being studied by Finance Ministry officials at present. However, it is premature to judge that the Japanese Government has become sincere enough to settle the pending problems with Korea, but rather the truth is that they believe something must be done at least in order to quiet down the aroused public opinion.

It appears that the Japanese side contacted the US side frequently since the JCS statement was reported, not only to keep the latter informed of the development but to persuade her to influence us. There has not been any official comment by the US Embassy in Tokyo in this regard. Meanwhile, a UP dispatch reports on the meeting between Assistant Secretary of State Walter Robertson and Ambassador Yang in Washington on Wednesday in regard to the Korea-Japan relations. The US stand appears to me to be that she would not do anything to mediate until both countries so request. She is fully aware that it is not likely for the two countries to reach agreement so easily.

Some Japanese Diet members urged their government to send armed patrol vessels to protect Japanese fishermen in the disputed area. However, the Japanese Government says that it prefers to settle the problem peacefully at the present stage and, therefore, does not intend to use such armed craft. They also calculate that by using radar-equipped vessels approaching Korean vessels can be detected from eight miles or so away, thus enabling Japanese fishing boats to engage in operations without being captured.

According to information Japanese Defense Board Director-General, Naka Funada, requested General Lemnitzer orally to watch the activities of our naval vessels and aircraft lest they should fire upon Japanese fishing boats. The real intent of the Japanese Government originally was to leave the settlement of the pending problems with Korea until such time as Japan gained strength. However, it seems that Japan is now forced to do something, such as the establishment of the Cabinet Deliberative Council, etc., in order to escape public criticism. Therefore, their purposes are rather to satisfy the public opinion than for

real/ 51

3.

real settlement of the pending problems.

After my receipt of Your Excellency's instructions to ignore the Japanese request for clarification, I think I have been successful in keeping the Japanese anxious as to whether we will really fire upon Japanese fishing vessels violating the Peace Line. In summing up the situation here the following conclusion can be drawn:

- a. Japan definitely realized that there is no way to settle the current fishery issue other than talking between the two parties concerned and the only alternative is to seek the US mediation.
- b. If Korea takes a stiff attitude continuously, the Japanese will feel all the more that something should be done to reach agreement with Korea. It is recalled that in my report earlier this year on the talks with Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Tani I mentioned of advisability of intensifying the enforcement of the Peace Line as an effective measure of giving the Japanese pressure. In this manner Japan will be constantly reminded of the necessity for an early settlement of the pending problems.
- c. If the Korea-Japan relations were further aggravated, the US might be compelled to step in at the last minute.
- d. Since Japanese vessels are usually faster than ours, there is an urgent necessity for faster boats in order to insure effective patrolling of the Peace Line area.
- e. Careful appraisal of the situation up to now indicates that unless our naval vessels fire upon unarmed Japanese vessels, there will not be any legal ground for Japan to appeal to any world organization on this issue. I believe, therefore, it is a good opportunity to persuade the Japs to show sincerity in dealing with us for their own interest.

According to the latest report the Japanese sources interpret the Yang-Robertson meeting on Wednesday as meaning that the US is trying to sound out the Korean attitude, in case she offers mediation officially.

This afternoon the Japanese Government called the first meeting of the Cabinet Deliberative Council. At this

meeting/

52

4.

meeting the following decisions are reported to have reached:

1. Japan will seek the US mediation for the settlement of the pending problems with Korea.
2. Political consideration will be given in the settlement of the issue concerning the Omura case and Japanese fishermen in Korea.
3. Steps will be taken to enter into negotiations with the Korean side for the settlement of the pending problems (in case we agree to it).

Foreign Minister Shigemitsu told the said meeting that he had already asked Ambassador Allison for US mediation in the Korea-Japan dispute and that as favorable response was obtained from the US side as a result of his Deputy Tani's informal approach, the Japanese Government would make a formal request for US mediation, etc.

I am now carefully watching this move of the Japanese. There has not been any word to this office from the US Embassy in this regard, so far. It is believed that the Embassy is studying the situation with caution at present. I will report to Your Excellency promptly on any future development on this matter.

With sentiments of loyalty and esteem, I remain,

Most respectfully,

Gyong-suk Kim