

December 15, 1955

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

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Summary:

Proposal of Japanese Justice Ministry on the conditions regarding release of Korean detainees

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REPUBLIC OF KOREA

KOREAN MISSION IN JAPAN

Tokyo, December 15, 1955

Excellency:

I received Your Excellency's letter of December 12 with appreciation. As I carefully studied the letter, I felt that with regard to the problem of the detainees issue the following points must be clarified:

I. As has already been reported, the Japanese Justice Ministry on October 14 proposed that Japan would release the pre-war Korean detainees on condition that Korea accept a few number of Korean detainees who have records of seven or more previous convictions. Japan also wanted us to return to Japan those Japanese fishermen who completed their respective prison terms. As this proposal was not entirely in line with our insistence, I told my subordinates in charge of these negotiations to refuse it, thus the detainee problem has since been deadlocked.

Along with the above-mentioned talks Counselor Yiu has been meeting Japanese Foreign Ministry's Asian Affairs Bureau Director Nakagawa to talk on this matter. According to Yiu's report to me after his meetings with Nakagawa the latter declined to release all the Korean detainees of pre-war category. The Japanese side also insisted that Korea recognize the fact that there were a few number of undesirable elements among the pre-war Korean detainees who have seven or more previous convictions.

From the result of the negotiations with the Japs as stated above, I strongly felt that some pressure must be given to the Japanese side to avoid Japan's dragging on tactics which would, in turn, increase sufferings of our detainees. The Japanese side appealed to the

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His Excellency
President Syngman Rhee

28

2.

International Red Cross, as Your Excellency may be well aware. I directed my subordinate in charge to tell the Japanese side to discontinue the acceptance of deportation of illegal entrants, because Japan attempted to deport Korean detainees who entered Japan prior to the end of World War II together with other groups of simple illegal entrants after the War.

Mr. Yiu once told me that Japan would not release the pre-war Korean detainees who have records of seven or more previous convictions. I told him that our policy was that unless Japan released all those detainees unconditionally, we would not agree to the return of Japanese detainees in Pusan. Yiu then told me that in that case there would be no agreement with the Japs. Mr. Yiu has never reported to me anything about proposing to the Japanese side for the deportation of political refugees to Korea and this fact is confirmed by the confidential report reaching me from other source.

After determining that negotiations between Japanese Justice Ministry officials and my subordinates were not successful I met the Japanese Justice Minister myself and exerted myself to talk him into accepting our terms. This meeting with Justice Minister Hanamura took place three times, as already reported.

After hot arguments between the two sides, I made it clear to him that our Government would never accept the deportation of any Koreans who entered Japan prior to 1945. I also told the Japanese Justice Minister that our Government would not release Japanese fishermen as long as such an attitude was taken by the Japanese side. Apparently he felt some pressure at this point, because expenses necessary for the detention of some 1,500 Koreans (simple illegal entrants) and plus 400 pre-war detainees were not at all negligible, in case the case remained unsettled for some time.

After deep consideration, Mr. Hanamura finally stated that Japan would release all the pre-war detainees from Omura on condition that Korea accept deportation of illegal entrants who entered Japan after 1945 and also return to Japan those Japanese who served their terms already. After obtaining approval of the Government, I agreed to his proposal.

It was quite obvious from the beginning that the Japanese Foreign Ministry and Justice Ministry's

immigration/

29

3.

immigration officials would not be happy about Hanamura's action, because it meant a certain concession on the part of Japan. With this in mind I released to the press a story announcing that the above-mentioned three-point agreement had been reached between the Japanese Justice Minister and myself, in order to pin down Hanamura in this regard. Such action was necessary in view of the fact that the Japanese have often played acts of duplicity in the past in relations to negotiations with our side. As I anticipated, only two hours after the said agreement was reached, Japanese immigration officials raised their objection to the arrangement made by the Justice Minister and announced to the public that such arrangement was merely a talk between him and myself and the case itself still remained pending.

In order to blast out Japan's duplicity I continued to expose the intent of the Jap side together with the full fact concerning the case, stressing the point that Japan failed to carry out her commitment made by one of her Cabinet Ministers. Thus, the Japanese Government was placed in a difficult position. In the recent session of the Japanese Cabinet Deliberative Council this issue was taken up. Foreign Minister Shigemitsu also expressed his dissatisfaction with Hanamura's action, according to the confidential report. It seems that the Jap side is seeking some concession from our side, however, if we stick to our original stand, Japan after all will have no choice but to carry out its commitment to our side.

The US Embassy here is informed of development of the detainee issue through its contact with the Japanese Government as well as this office. As far as this issue is concerned, the Embassy is aware that the Japanese are to blame because they failed to put their commitment into practice (please refer to my report under separate cover). Local diplomatic circles also expressed their deep concern over the matter the generally blame Japan for not carrying out her commitment.

Before my meeting with the former Justice Minister the public believed that the Korean side took unreasonable attitude in connection with the detention of the Japanese fishermen, however, now they are beginning to realize that the Japanese side failed to live up to their commitment to the Korean side. Therefore, I honestly believe that as far as this issue is concerned, we have cornered the Japs quite successfully.

After I returned from my last meeting with Mr.

Hanamura/

30

4.

Hanamura on November 16 Mr. Yiu, referring to the three-point agreement reached at our meeting, stated that the said arrangement was the best we could get under the circumstances. Yiu then said that he wished that he could accompany me on my last visit to Hanamura. I told Mr. Yiu that I thought it was a concession on the part of Japan and in order not to let her change her mind, I issued a public statement that the arrangement was made on the detainees issue between the two sides. After this meeting Mr. Yiu left on his visit to Seoul.

The reason why I did not take him on my meeting with Minister Hanamura is that the Japanese Justice Minister always met me alone and, therefore, I did not feel any necessity for having anyone else accompany me. Also, from my past experience I thought that in order to counter the shrewdness of the Japanese side, high skill of diplomacy and tactful reasoning were essential.

Your Excellency's letter read: "He (Yiu) had proposed to the said Japanese authorities in addition to the above, that Japan must deport some of the Korean political refugees who are connected with treason trials and that he was hoping that they will agree to the proposal, etc." Yesterday (Dec. 14) I asked him if he had actually made such a proposal to the Japanese side, because it was something entirely new to me. Mr. Yiu replied that about one year ago he had met Japanese Immigration Bureau Chief Uchida whom he asked something of the said nature, including the deportation of a Korean national, Sunwu, from Japan.

According to Yiu's explanation Uchida then told him that it was technically difficult to comply with his request, since Sunwu was admitted entry into Japan in accordance with the Japanese Immigration Law. Yiu told me distinctly that he had never made such a request in his meeting with Japanese Foreign Office officials recently in regard to the detainee issue.

Originally, the question of extradition was brought up by myself when the talks with Japan were opened in 1953. Such an issue could be pressed hard upon Japan, when the talks are resumed with Japan in future at the conference table.

What I would like to report to Your Excellency is that Mr. Yiu had not recently proposed to the Japanese side on the deportation of political refugees to Korea,

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31

5.

when he met the Japanese Asian Affairs Bureau Chief in connection with the detainee problem and the confidential report also confirms this fact.

II. Our diplomatic negotiations with the Japanese are of serious nature in view of the shrewdness of the Japanese. Therefore, my mind is always on how to counter their attitude most effectively. Such a situation makes it all the more necessary for me to receive factual report from any of my subordinates in this office. Otherwise it is impossible to face the Japanese with our concerted efforts. In this spirit I told Mr. Yiu that our policy in connection with the recent Joint Chiefs of Staff announcement was to ignore the Japanese request for clarification and keep them anxious as to whether we would really fire upon Japanese vessels.

Nevertheless, according to the press report Mr. Yiu met Nakagawa following his return from Seoul early this month and told him that our side would not use force on Japanese fishing vessels, etc. When I demanded Mr. Yiu for an explanation in this regard he said that the press report was twisted, because he had never made such a statement at his meeting with Nakagawa. I told Mr. Yiu to be more cautious about the Japanese press inasmuch as we are well aware of such attitude of the press.

Regarding the Asahi report covering an interview with Mr. Yiu in Seoul also, Yiu told me that he had already reported on it to Kyung Mu Dae while he was in Seoul. When the story appeared in the Asahi here, a number of local residents came to this office, protesting that such an insulting word as "magnanimity of elder brother to younger one, etc." only served to help Japanese superiority complex held toward Koreans. I explained to these residents that the press report often twist the fact. After Mr. Yiu came back here from his trip to Seoul, I firmly told him that he should not have made such remarks.

Mr. Yiu often gives the outsiders the impression as if he had been authorized by the Government to talk with the Japanese Government directly. In view of the necessity for countering the Japanese tactics with concerted efforts I recommend that the Government instruct Mr. Yiu to obtain prior consent from me, whenever he goes to meet Japanese Government officials in future, excepting when he gets some information from them. I also recommend that the Government exercise sufficient discretion in judging the

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6.

information sent by Mr. Yiu, because I have often
encountered such instances in the past.

With sentiments of loyalty and esteem, I remain,

Most respectfully,

Syngman Rhee