

December 28, 1955

**Letter, President Syngman Rhee to Minister Yong
Shik Kim [Kim Yong-shik]**

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Summary:

Directions and recommended actions regarding Japanese policies on detainees and evaluations of the related people, including Yiu [Yu] and Kagawa

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December 28, 1955

Chinhae

To: Minister Yong Shik Kim
From: The President

I am in receipt of your 3 letters dated December 22 and enclosures and wish to thank you for them.

In my last letter I told you about the relations between you and Mr. Yiu. Your work and his should be correctly coordinated or else it should be separated.

Your stand in the detainee question seems to be correct. If we stand firm in connection with the Japanese fishermen in Pusan it will put the Japanese in a difficult position, because the families of the Japanese fishermen will get after their government. In that case they may try to take drastic measures against us which could help them, but at the same time might also help us to solve the problem.

The longer we drag along, the harder it will be for the Japanese government. I leave this matter entirely in your hands. I am instructing the Counselor to support you in this. However, in dealing with the Japanese and Americans we must be very careful to use diplomatic language and such words as "unconditionally" should not be mentioned publicly, etc.

Dr. Kagawa is a very influential man; if not so much in Japan, his name rings high in American church circles. I think we have appealed to his sense of international fairness and justice. I wish you and the Counselor to show him an exceptionably friendly attitude and respect which will appeal to his sense of honor. You can appeal to him to use his nationwide influence for he alone can do a lot in creating a conciliatory attitude between Korea and Japan by telling Japan it must eliminate any sign of ulterior motives on Korea. The Japanese officials have already stated that they cannot withdraw the property claim nor can they accept the fishery line and cancellation of treaties. Why? In the first place, because the Japanese government's

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secret policy is to come back to Korea. The Koreans are trying to make Japan completely abandon these ideas. They cannot fool the Koreans any more. As long as the Koreans see that Japan has that secret plan, the Koreans will never regard Japan as a friend.

Take the fishery question. If Japan ever intended to live in peace with Korea and considered the peace between us a great asset they should be willing to sign the fishery agreement as obligated by the Japanese peace treaty and by doing so make peace with Korea and win over the friendship of the Korean people. Koreans believe that the reason Japan will not give up the fishery line is not because of the fish they will get out of the other half of the sea. This is a small matter in comparison to the good will they would create by respecting the line. I think you can convince Dr. Kagawa in that way. In other words we should show him that we are willing to live and let live, but if Japan wants to live at the expense of the Korean people, she cannot succeed because the Koreans are different from what they were forty years ago. If Dr. Kagawa should speak to you about coming to Korea you and Yiu Taiha tell him frankly at present Korean feelings are high against Japan and it would not be an opportune time for him to make a visit. At the present time it would also embarrass me. I suggest that a little later if we cultivate the friendly feelings of the Koreans we may be able to arrange for his visit.

We stand absolutely against Communists and Japan's dealings with them. We are fighting in defense not only of Korea but also for Japan on account of our territorial proximity. We want Japan to choose friendship rather than a communist alliance. They may be stronger and wealthy but you can serve either God or mammon but not both. We want to see Japan solidly on the democratic side in the fight in defense of Asia against communism. However, Japan's commercial dealings with Red China, north Korea and Soviets not only weakens but endangers our position as when Japan goes with the communists. We are isolated and we stand singlehanded. Japanese will come down south through our backdoor by joining hands with north Korean communists and Red Chinese. Japanese communists infiltrate and undermine this government from every side and seem to be threatening our very existence. Therefore, we consider Japan is conspiring against the free nations in general and Korea in particular. Any contacts with north Korea, either through Red Cross, commercial business or fishery groups are considered as a potential invasion of south Korea.

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Regarding the illegal entrants, we had an understanding with the Japanese that they should treat Korean residents in Japan prior to 1945 with special consideration and grant them a legal status without any discrimination. We will accept the illegal entrants provided that Japan takes up the matter with the Mission first and the names are presented. Then the deportees will be examined and if found okay accepted. That understanding still stands, because we always try to keep our agreements. But no Korean, regardless of legal or illegal entrance, should be detained anywhere, without any actual violation of law. They speak so much about the criminals. This is something they have framed up recently to accuse the Koreans as being of a criminal class. If any Koreans or foreigners violate the law it is up to the Japanese to punish them whether or not they have legally or illegally entered. ROKG has nothing to say as long as the law is carried out fairly and justly. So they should not associate this class of people with the Korean entrance cases.

Another thing we asked Japan to do was to agree with us not to allow any Koreans to illegally enter Japan. It is their law. If they do not enforce the law by allowing or encouraging the Korean criminals or traitors to enter Japan with the hope of disrupting Korean security and peace, we will hold the Japanese government responsible for not enforcing the law. By the same token, we demand the Japanese government to deport certain criminals who were involved in treason charges. They should not be protected and harbored as during the old Korean days. Japan must agree to let Korean criminals or law violators of any kind detained in Omura Camp or any other camp see a representative of the Mission. For example: Japanese officials say that some Korean detainees want to return to north Korea. Our representative in Tokyo must be allowed to visit them and if they are really communists we want Japan to turn them over to our Mission together with the illegal entrants. This will show that Japan honestly stands by the free nations, not with the communists.

Mr. Choi in his interview has done very discreetly and well. We want to train some of our young people to deal with foreign nations, particularly Japan.

In connection with the Japanese fishermen in Pusan: If you think it is possible you may insist on their agreement to the fishery line before releasing the fishermen. We can force the Japanese to recognize the fishery line before releasing the Pusan fishermen. You should make a



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very pleasing statement by telling them that the Japanese public is unduly excited over the Joint Chiefs of Staff statement. Japan misinterpreted the meaning of it, and exaggerated our intentions to such an extent that they considered our intentions hostile and belligerent. But the statement merely calmly and clearly gave a warning to the Japanese not to bring Japanese and communists under cover of fishing interests into our waters to carry out underground activities of all kinds. If they do not engage in such activities there will be no such problem at all. We only wish to defend ourselves while the Japanese and communists are trying to invade our territory during this most critical world situation. If the Japanese respect our peaceful desires and cooperate with us, there will be no reason why our two peoples cannot enjoy peaceful relations.

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