

October 18, 1956

Memorandum of Conversation between N.S. Khrushchev and Kono on October 18, 1956

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Summary:

Kono and Khrushchev argue about the text of peace agreement. Khrushchev insists on exclusion of the phrase "territorial question", claiming that the issue will be addressed following the signing of the peace treaty. After some discussion, the Japanese leaders accept the Soviet formulation and ask to sign the agreement as soon as possible.

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Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Memorandum

of conversation between N.S. Khrushchev and Kono on October 18, 1956

The conversation started at 16:15 and ended at 16:55

Kono. The Japanese side thoroughly studied the Soviet draft regarding the territorial question handed to it last night. In sum, we decided to ask you to delete from your draft the reference about the transfer of the islands of Okinawa to Japan by the United States. If the Soviet side does not oppose, then we would propose the following version, which is drafted on the basis of the Soviet draft.

"Japan and the USSR agreed to continue negotiations regarding the conclusion of a Peace Treaty, including the territorial question, after the establishment of normal diplomatic relations between Japan and the USSR.

In doing so, to meet the wishes of Japan and taking into consideration the interests of the Japanese Government, the USSR agreed to transfer the Islands of Habomai and Shikotan to Japan, however, the actual transfer of these islands to Japan will take place after the conclusion of a Peace Treaty between Japan and the USSR."

Khrushchev. In general, the Soviet side agrees with this proposed version. We want to meet Japan's wishes and, therefore, are ready to remove the part of our draft where it talks about the transfer of Okinawa and other territories to Japan.

We have one purely editorial comment: from the first part of the Japanese draft, we request to exclude the phrase "including the territorial question." The reason for our proposal is that if the referenced phrase remains, it is possible to think that there is still some kind of territorial question between Japan and the Soviet Union, besides Habomai and Shikotan. This can lead to a twisted and incorrect understanding of the documents we intend to sign.

Kono. Unfortunately, the Japanese side communicated to Tokyo the draft you submitted yesterday and already received approval from the government. Therefore, any kind of further change, naturally, requires the government's authorization. Practically, this means that we obviously will not be able to sign these documents tomorrow, if we must make a request to Tokyo.

Khrushchev. I congratulate you that you already received your government's approval regarding the signing of the documents. However, we still insist on the exclusion of the referenced phrase. Meanwhile, as you yourselves understand, we are only talking about an editorial improvement, the semantic content of this article remains unchanged.

Kono. I completely agree with you that the Soviet's correction does not change the content of our draft. But as long as it has already been agreed upon and we have received specific approval from Tokyo, it would be very labor-intensive to change something after everything has already been agreed upon.

Khrushchev. I think that you can and do not need to ask your government about this because it is clear to everyone, even your enemies, that the article regarding the territorial question is drawn up in the interests of Japan. Think about it, Mr. Kono. We removed the concluding part of our draft. In this way, we made a large concession for you, and you do not want to agree to a purely editorial clarification.

Kono. I strongly ask you to understand that we are already bound by the Japanese Government's specific decision and it would be difficult for us to change something.

Khrushchev. I repeat again that we request to exclude these several words just to eliminate the possibility of future conflict over the interpretation of the present agreement. We are not dealing with documents that will last for one year. It could be that they will apply for 10 or maybe 100 years. Consequently, they need to be formed so that nothing permits an inaccurate interpretation. You know that some paper-pushers can be found who will try to use any oversight, even editorial, in order to create conflict around the interpretation of our agreement. Let's end further discussion of this issue. You accept our proposal about the exclusion of these couple of words and we will conclude the agreement with you, and in this way, usher in a new era in Japanese-Soviet relations.

Kono. Unfortunately, I should again emphasize that to make any kind of changes will be very difficult for us. Everything has already been agreed on between the Premier and Tokyo. We would need to ask Tokyo again and this would only lead to a delay of the signing dates.

Khrushchev. This is about an editorial correction. We meet you on a whole series of issues and you want to force us to accept that which we believe is inappropriate. I advise you not to postpone, accept our correction, and agree to the signing of the documents.

Kono. Personally, I agree, but allow me to consult with the Prime Minister. If the Prime Minister finds it necessary, then obviously a request will have to be sent to Tokyo.

Khrushchev. Do everything that is necessary, but keep in mind that we will henceforth insist on the exclusion of the phrase "including the territorial question."

Kono. I have a request for you. I received an order from Tokyo to request from you the release of 100 fishermen who are being detained in the Soviet Union. I think that the release of these persons would be significant in connection with the signing of the documents for the normalization of our relations.

Khrushchev. I give you my word that I will support your request in the Government for the release of the referenced fishermen. In addition, you asked that the Soviet authorities conduct a supplemental investigation in determining if there are any persons of Japanese nationality in the territory of the Soviet Union not included on the list given by the Soviets at the time. After verification it was found that we actually have discovered a very small group of Japanese who were not put on that list. If the referred persons wish, I think, they can be returned to Japan.

Kono. I really thank you for your statement. On behalf of Mr. Hatoyama, allow me to entrust to you a letter addressed to Mr. Bulganin. This letter is based on a conversation between Mr. Bulganin and Premier Minister Hatoyama that took place yesterday.

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Follow up conversation of N.S. Khrushchev with I. Kono

Took place at 18:00

Kono. After consulting with Prime Minister I. Hatoyama, we decided to accept Mr. Khrushchev's proposal regarding the exclusion of the words "including the territorial question."

Khrushchev. Very good. Consequently, we can agree to the signing.

Kono. We are very much in a hurry and would like to sign the documents on October 20.

Khrushchev. We could sign everything on the 20th, but it would be desirable to conduct the signing on October 21. The issue is that some of the members of the Government should leave Moscow for some time. Of course, if the Japanese side is really in a hurry, then it could sign the documents in our absence, but we would certainly like to be present during the fulfillment of this historical act.

Kono. We are very much in a hurry. The Government insists on the speedy return of the Premier to Japan. In addition, we are also bound by certain circumstances not dependent on us. I mean we should prebook our planes from Stockholm to Tokyo. However, we would not want the signing to occur in the absence of Mr. Khrushchev, who has made so many efforts for the completion of the negotiations.

Khrushchev. Our entire Government maintains a united point of view on the issue of normalizing relations with Japan.

Kono. I want to consult with the Premier, after which I will definitively communicate to you our proposal regarding the signing date.

A. Rozhetskin recorded [the conversation] on October 18, 1965.