

December 1, 1955

Letter, President Syngman Rhee to Yong Shik Kim

Citation:

"Letter, President Syngman Rhee to Yong Shik Kim", December 1, 1955, Wilson Center Digital Archive, B-308-039, 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://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/123699>

Summary:

Directions and recommended actions regarding Japanese and American policies and actions regarding fishery line issue

Credits:

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Original Language:

English

Contents:

Original Scan

1 December 1955

To Minister Yong Shik Kim

From the President

I have perused your letters of 24 November, and think you have properly dealt with the matters you outline.

The formula suggested by you is correct. In the first place we want to ignore Japan's request for clarification. It is necessary to capture all the Japanese fishing vessels violating our fishery line. Japan has always been the aggressor and deliberately intruded on the rights of its neighbours. We have been urging Japan to come to agreement with us, even temporarily, by agreeing to the fishing line, which is drawn exactly between our two nations; first for the purpose of maintaining peace between us and secondly to keep the Communists from infiltrating and smuggling into Korea, and thirdly to preserve the fishery interests of both countries. However, they refused and insist on coming beyond the line. In order to enforce the line limits and maintain the peace we have had to capture the fishermen violating such line, which was originally declared by General MacArthur and later General Clark.

The Japanese Government has declared it will protect its fishermen and vessels with its navy. That means the Japanese are going to use force against the Koreans encouraging and protecting those who violate the line. Our Joint Chiefs of Staff, whose duty it is to protect their nation and its interests issued a warning that if the Japanese continued to violate the line they would defend it, as the aggressive intentions of the Japanese could not be met by diplomatic negotiations. The Japanese wish us to surrender our marine and other resources to them, and threaten us when we protest.

Furthermore, Japan has recently lined up with the Soviets and the Chinese Reds and the north Korean puppet regime with the intention of infiltrating into the south. The Japanese fishermen will come from the north with their aggressive motives. We are fighting against Communism and the war is not over. The Communists are the belligerents of this war and any nation which lines up with them cannot be considered a friendly nation; Korea is fighting for its survival and also in defence of democratic principals and the Japanese are taking sides with our enemies under the pretext of commercial and fishery interests, in an attempt to carry out its secret design to fulfill its

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eighty five per cents claim to the Korean peninsula. Korea has fought for its ideals and will not quietly allow Japan to come into Korea once again as it did forty years ago.

So long as Japan is determined to ignore all our peaceful and friendly approaches there is no hope of establishing friendly relations. We only hope that Japan will abandon her former aggressive policy to conquer and control all of Asia and also the United States, (which was proven by Pearl Harbour). The world knows its secret designs and its past military aggression. If Japan has any desire to live in peace with its neighbours it is strongly advised to abandon its idea of conquering and dominating Asiatic countries and prove its sincerity and change of heart; falsehoods, propaganda and secret manoeuvring will never profit Japan.

This is my rough idea, and if you get these points into some newspaper it will show what we are after and what the Japanese are after. In our writings we must show calm and dignity, and always explain why we take steps such as these. The Japanese are aggressors and want to take Korea in violation of the Peace Treaty and we are not going to let any nation or nations take advantage of our weakness. We may be materially weak, but the determination of the whole nation is fixed and known, and cunning and propaganda falsehoods will not get Japan anywhere with us.

When mediation by the United States is suggested, you can tell them that the United States is tied up with Japan. As you say, the Japanese Foreign Office stated, "The United States would not support the Korean position in the fishery issue". You should make this public because the Japanese and the United States obviously do have an understanding.

You also state the Chairman Suzuki 'blamed the United States side for not exerting sufficient effort toward the settlement of the problems between Korea and Japan'. On our part, we feel much the same. The United States set up the terms of the Japanese Peace Treaty, yet while the Japanese violate that Treaty by claiming eighty five per cent of all Korea property, they keep silent.

I understand our fishermen are holding a mass meeting in protest against the Japanese attitude and we are glad that the Korean fishermen are taking this stand. The Japanese all this time have stated it was the Republic of Korea Government agitating against Japan; now they will see that this is not so.

You may have read the news report that the Japanese went over to Alaskan waters, depleting their fishery grounds by catching nearly all their salmon. The Americans are vigorously protesting.

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If the Japanese want to refer to international practices we may also do the same, and Japan will be forced to pay huge indemnities to Korea for what they did the last forty years in making our private citizens serve them without compensation. It is the determination of this Government to defend our territory and the Japanese must show a change of heart. They may wait until their military forces are stronger to settle their problems with Korea, but in the meantime we will condone no action which suggests aggressive intentions to a friendly and peaceful neighbor.

