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Record of Soviet-Japanese Talks, 9 October 1973

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Summary:

Brezhnev and Tanaka discuss the dispute over the Kuril Islands as well as opportunities for Japan-Soviet economic cooperation.

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RECORD OF SOVIET-JAPANESE TALKS

9 October 1973[1]

The talks were conducted:

From the Soviet side - L.I. Brezhnev, A.N. Kosygin, A.A. Gromyko

From the Japanese side - Prime Minister K. Tanaka, Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Ohira

[...][2]

K. TANAKA. Before turning to the discussion of the next question, I would like to convey to you, Mr. Brezhnev, and to you, Mr. Kosygin, an invitation to visit Japan.

L.I. BREZHNEV. Thank you. We accept this invitation with gratitude. Your country is interesting, and it will be interesting to visit it.

K. TANAKA. The entire Japanese people will welcome you from their hearts.

L.I. BREZHNEV. I sometimes read the magazine "Japan" with interest. It is well designed and contains a lot of useful materials. Recently I read there, for instance, a substantial article about the Japanese automobile industry, and also about the organization of the transport system in Tokyo. At times I got to see cinematographic recordings, which recounts life in Japan, the peculiar customs of your country, but of course it would be more valuable to see all of this with one's own eyes.

If Mr. Prime Minister has something to tell us, we are attentively listening.

K. TANAKA. Yesterday I told my Soviet interlocutors about certain requests and wishes of the Japanese side. They touched on the safety of fishing and the visits by relatives of the Japanese burials in the Soviet Union. I also mentioned the repatriation of Japanese citizens who remained on the island of Sakhalin after the war, and also about the requests of people of the Korean ethnicity to return to Korea from Sakhalin. I also spoke about the question of the study of the problem of restoring the fish stocks in the seas between Japan and the Soviet Union. All of these are questions, on which we would like to exchange opinions. But before all, I would like to have the quickest conclusion of the peace treaty between Japan and the Soviet Union. Then all other questions would be resolved quickly. Therefore I raise the question of returning to Japan the four islands - Habomai, Shikotan, Kunashir, and Iturup.

L.I. BREZHNEV. For some reason I do not quite get why the Koreans have come up.

K. TANAKA. I am talking about giving them the assistance in repatriation to South Korea.

L.I. BREZHNEV. But the North Koreans might have their own opinion on this question.

A.A. GROMYKO. We have not yet found people from this category wishing to leave the USSR.

A.N. KOSYGIN. Do you have some kind of applications from them? We don't have such applications.

A.A. GROMYKO. We looked into this question but up to now we have not found people

who would like to leave.

K. TANAKA. We speak about this because we, the Japanese, brought these Koreans before the war, and the Japanese government feels a certain responsibility for their fate. There are about 1500 of them, and they turn to us with repatriation requests.

A.N. KOSYGIN. We don't have applications from them.

K. TANAKA. Perhaps they think that the Japanese government is responsible for them, and that therefore it must negotiate with the Soviet Union about their fates. Perhaps, this is why they are turning to us. Besides, they await compensation from us for the way the Japanese once treated them.

L.I. BREZHNEV. To be honest, I have no information on this question.

A.A. GROMYKO. We checked. We don't have such applications. I don't know where you get this information.

A.N. KOSYGIN. If applications come in, they will be considered by the relevant Soviet organs through the normal process.

L.I. BREZHNEV. We do not have a law about forcible removal of citizens from [our] country, and so we cannot remove those who do not make such requests to us. It's another matter when the people themselves make applications. In these cases, they are not, as a rule, rejected. We do not forcibly detain people. Even at the time of a war in the Middle East we give persons of Jewish nationality the permission to leave for Israel, when they request this. If there are applications from the people to whom you have referred, they will be looked into.

K. TANAKA. Then, perhaps, let us have our MFAs exchange information on these questions.

L.I. BREZHNEV and A.A. GROMYKO. Agreed.

K. TANAKA. Regarding the Japanese who lived in the USSR. There are still 105 persons among them who have expressed the wish to return to Japan, and with family members - this is 408 people. They want to return to Japan.

A.A. GROMYKO. How is this known? Do you have applications from them, or are these rumours?

L.I. BREZHNEV. There is a certain procedure. If a person wants to leave the Soviet Union for Japan or some other country, he submits an application to this end to the relevant organs of power. We can promise one thing to you: if such applications come, they will be considered, and these people will be able to leave with the exception, of course, of some special cases, when this is impeded by considerations of state security. For example, if a person was involved in some secret work, etc. As for the rest, we will let them go, whether there are 300 or 500 of them, it does not matter. We say this officially. You can tell your government about this.

K. TANAKA. These people turn to our Embassy in Moscow, and it will convey the appropriate information to your authorities.

L.I. BREZHNEV. Good. Please.

A.N. KOSYGIN. There won't be any difficulties here.

K. TANAKA. Now about the visits to grave sites. This is a traditional Japanese custom: at a certain time, especially from August 10 to 20, when all Japanese come to the graves of their relatives. There are also such graves on the territory of the Soviet Union, including in places, which you consider closed zones for foreigners. I would like to ask for your help in obtaining permission for Japanese citizens to visit the graves of their relatives in the Soviet Union, both on the mainland, and on the northern islands. We ask that you give such permission.

L.I. BREZHNEV. We already allowed grave visits to Japanese citizens at a number of sites in the Soviet Union. Until now we have not considered it possible to go beyond that. There are sufficient reasons for this. But in response to the request by the Prime Minister, and striving to further improve the atmosphere of Soviet-Japanese relations, we are prepared, beginning in 1974, to allow Japanese citizens to make additional visits to places of burial of their relatives on two Soviet islands - Habomai and Shikotan. In the future this question will be considered in accordance with the general situation. But for now we will permit the visits of graves on the aforementioned islands. At the same time, of course, the permission to visit other places, which was given previously, stays in force.

A.A. GROMYKO. I would like to stress that we are talking about places, access to which is in principle prohibited for all foreigners, and not just for the Japanese.

K. TANAKA. In the past you also allowed to visit burial sites on all four islands, i.e. including Kunashir, Iturup, but four years ago visits to these four islands were prohibited. We are glad and grateful that you now allow the Japanese to visit burial sites of their relatives on the islands of Habomai and Shikotan. We ask that you consider in the future the question about visiting burials on the islands of Kunashir and Iturup.

I also would like to clarify: did I understand correctly that the agreement, given earlier for visits of other places, remain in force?

L.I. BREZHNEV. Yes. In addition, we agree to the visits of graves on the islands of Habomai and Shikotan. As to what happens later - we'll see.

K. TANAKA. Allow me to turn now to the questions of fishing. We believe that the two sides should determine the quotas of the catch not each year but every two-three years. If you agree to this, one could instruct the appropriate ministers of our countries to discuss this question concretely.

L.I. BREZHNEV. I know that these questions appear every year. But concretely they are considered by the minister of fisheries and the Council of Ministers. As far as I can remember, we always or in most cases meet the requests of the Japanese side and agree. I recently read a memorandum, which suggests that Japan takes out three times the amount of fish than we do. But I do not want to draw any conclusions from this. We are prepared to approach this question politically, to satisfy the request of the Japanese side and agree to negotiate fishing for two-three years. The amount of the catch is another thing. It must be agreed upon between the relevant ministries. We will not now talk about the details of this question in practical terms. We will instruct minister Ishkov to enter into negotiations with your minister and agree as to how to realize this. How do you feel about such a proposal?

K. TANAKA. Agree. Thank you. I will also give a relevant instruction to our minister of agriculture and forestry.

L.I. BREZHNEV. In your statements, Mr. Prime Minister, there were several instances of the phrase "security of fishing." We do not understand this. Do Soviet ships attack Japanese fishermen or do we give such instructions? If there were facts like this, we would severely punish the transgressors. We understand that you are talking about the detention of Japanese fishermen who trespass our territorial waters. But this is a norm that exists for all states. We guarantee the security of fishing, which is being carried out in accordance with the existing agreements. But we would also ask that the Japanese fishermen do not allow infringement of our territorial waters. When one speaks about natural calamities, storms, etc. - this is another matter. In such cases we are always prepared to provide the Japanese fishermen with all kinds of help. But under normal conditions it is necessary to strictly abide by the existing agreements and laws. Therefore, the use of the term "secure fishing" is not understood by me and my colleagues.

K. TANAKA. One could use the term "unimpeded fishing." The main thing is to provide for such a situation that the Japanese fishermen calmly conduct fishing in certain areas without connecting this to the question of territories and territorial waters.

A.N. KOSYGIN. This cannot be understood. Ministers must agree on fishing. But territorial waters exist independently of that. Territorial waters will remain after the signing of the peace treaty.

K. TANAKA. The question of the belonging of the four islands has a close connection with the conclusion of the peace treaty. Therefore, the Japanese side proposes to solve the question of fishing in the waters of the four islands from the humanitarian point of view, separately from the territorial question and the positions of the sides on this question. Up to this point, the Soviet side has detained 1400 ships and 12 thousand people, of whom 83% - in the waters surrounding the four islands. If things are left as they are, Japanese sentiments with regard to the USSR will not improve to such an extent as one would wish. I do not want to go into the details - their discussion can be entrusted to the ministers - but because this question arises in reality, we would like to settle it in principle, as a temporary measure until the conclusion of the peace treaty in the form that does not harm the position of the two sides. Recently the Ministry of Fisheries of the USSR informed about the readiness of the Soviet side to allow Japanese fishing in effect only in the vicinity of Habomai. But this cannot be the basis for the resolution of the question. We ask to consider favourably the question of the possibility of Japanese fishing around the four islands.

L.I. BREZHNEV. We already gave our agreement to consider the wishes of the Japanese sides. Now let us get your and our ministers to talk. I cannot say anything concrete now regarding the four islands. I have to consult on this question.

A.N. KOSYGIN. I think that it is unlikely that we can now agree on which islands to fish around. One needs maps and specialists for this. This question should be entrusted to the appropriate ministries. Our border services express great unhappiness on the account of the infringement of the Soviet sea borders by the Japanese fishermen. Both Japan and the Soviet Union have territorial waters. They have to be respected. Conflicts really do arise but they are not created by our services but by the Japanese fishermen. Our fishermen do not infringe the Japanese territorial waters. The infringement of the Soviet territorial waters by the Japanese fishermen creates unnecessary tension in our relationship. We ask that you make instructions concerning the inadmissibility of infringement of the Soviet territorial waters.

K. TANAKA. Mr. Brezhnev noted that he cannot say anything about the four islands and must consult. The main issue is that the question about the belonging of these islands has not been resolved, and conflicts arise because of that. Therefore

specialists and even ministers cannot solve this question. It has to be solved in principle at the high level. That's why I propose to solve this question on a temporary basis, allowing the Japanese fishermen to fish around the four islands.

A.N. KOSYGIN. I cannot agree with you. We are talking not about the territorial question but about the Japanese fishing in the Soviet territorial waters. We instructed Minister Ishkov to agree on the Japanese fishing in the vicinity of two islands, Habomai and Shikotan.

L.I. BREZHNEV. We talked about the readiness to favourably consider the request of the Japanese side within the limits of the existing laws and norms. We will entrust [omrade] Ishkov to handle this.

K. TANAKA. Then, we probably can consider as agreed the question with regard to the meeting between the relevant ministers of our countries in the near future to agree on the Japanese fishing. I ask that you favourably consider our request about fishing around the four islands. Can we now move to the questions of economic cooperation?

L.I. BREZHNEV. Please.

K. TANAKA. First of all, I would like to remind you that in March of this year I sent you, Mr. General Secretary, a message, in which I stated that if the relevant organizations of the two countries reach an agreement on concrete projects of economic cooperation, the Japanese government will be ready to facilitate their realization and will provide credits. Secondly, I would like to express a wish that those who handle these questions work more effectively. In the interests of speeding things up, we would ask the Soviet side to provide data, on which its calculations are based, concerning, in particular, the side of the credit, etc. If general agreements on credits are concluded, one could conclude intergovernmental agreements in connection with their realization. As you know, the two sides are discussing a number of projects, in some of which third countries may wish to participate.

L.I. BREZHNEV. We already answered this question. We agree that the United States participate in the economic cooperation projects. But we want to deal only with Japan. You can agree with the US on your own, including with regard to the share of their participation in the credits and in the use of the extracted resources.

A.N. KOSYGIN. Do you have in mind the Americans' participation only in the oil project?

K. TANAKA. Also in the gas one. I agree with having the contacts concluded only between Japan and the USSR.

A.N. KOSYGIN. There could be different options with regard to gas. We could take the Yakut gas to Komsomolsk-on-Amur, then from the mainland to Sakhalin, and then through the La Perouse Strait over to Hokkaido. In this case we won't have to liquefy gas, there will be no need for energy expenditure. With this option, as we understand, there will be nothing left for the Americans.

K. TANAKA. We will entrust our specialists to talk to the Americans regarding the gas project.

A.N. KOSYGIN. Will we conclude inter-governmental contacts for the economic cooperation projects? Who will provide the credits?

K. TANAKA. Contracts will be concluded between non-governmental organizations, as was the case in the past with regard to the timber and other projects. However, as in the past, one could conclude inter-governmental agreements regarding the realization of these contracts. Japan has in mind to provide bank credits. These will be given by the export-import bank. 20 percent of the funds will be provided by private banks; 80 percent – by the government. With the American credits, 50 percent will be taken up by private funds, and 50 percent by government funds.

A.N. KOSYGIN. Who will agree on the credits with the US? Will we receive the American credits directly from the US or through Japan?

K.TANAKA. We would like to first conduct talks between the three countries and determine the share of joint participation by the US and Japan. Then Japan and the US will agree on the distribution of shares among themselves.

A.N. KOSYGIN. How much time, in your opinion, will realistically be needed for the talks? When can the talks be begun? Who will conduct them from the Japanese side? Until now we have had discussions but there is nothing concrete.

K. TANAKA. At the present time, it is clear that the US will participate in the Tyumen oil and the Yakut gas projects. Only Japan will participate in the Yakut coal project. To speed up the business, one needs the relevant data from the Soviet side [and] acquaintance with the situation on the ground. Some things have already been done. The Japanese government, for its part, is prepared to take measures to expedite the work. We are also prepared to consult with the US in this regard. The negotiations with the Soviet Union will be conducted by the Japanese-Soviet Committee on Business Cooperation, which has a number of subcommittees.

A.N. KOSYGIN. Could you possibly appoint some commission or delegation for the concrete conduct of negotiations? We could do the same. Up to now, we have had from you different people, we have spoken to different people, but there are no results.

L.I. BREZHNEV. We only have rumours. We don't have anything officially. Sometimes rumours reach us that the Japanese side has allegedly cooled to cooperation with us. Then rumours appear that it allegedly wants to cooperate again.

K. TANAKA. The Japanese-Soviet Committee on Business Cooperation has separate subcommittees on oil, gas, etc. After today's conversation we will try to clarify who will handle these questions from the Japanese side. In the committee I mentioned there is participation of representatives of state agencies of Japan – the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Ministry of Finance, and also the export-import bank. The head of the MFA's Europe and Oceania Department W. Owada, for instance, is a consultant of the Committee. The deputy of the First Eastern European Department of the MDA H. Arai is an observer on the Committee. Although concrete contracts will be concluded by private companies, they can in effect be considered official, government contracts, because 80 percent of the funds will be given by the government. We would like for the Soviet side to create some unified committee and contact the Japanese side. We are not clear whom to deal with on your side. You have 12 ministries dealing with oil alone, and they say different things in each of them. It would be desirable for us to be in liaison with only one organ. As for the Japanese side, we already have one organ, and the results of Japanese-Soviet negotiations on questions of economic cooperation are reported to me on the same day.

A.N. KOSYGIN. Have you determined the amount of credits or is this question still not determined?

K. TANAKA. This is difficult to do for now, because the content of the projects has not been defined. Oil is an example. First you spoke about supplying 24-40 million tons but now you say that you can supply 25 million tons as a maximum. In view of such an uncertainty, it is difficult for us to negotiate with the Americans. Another example - timber. You supplied timber to Japan for five years at one price but during the renewal of the contract proposed to increase the price threefold, at once. If the Soviet side clearly accounts for the content of the projects, we will immediately solve the financial and other questions.

A.N. KOSYGIN. We did not raise the timber prices. This is what the world prices have become.

K. TANAKA. We understand this but until the conditions of the projects are determined, we cannot determine the conditions of the credits. It would be desirable to have greater certainty on your side. It would also be desirable to have one organ on the Soviet side, which would handle questions of economic cooperation with Japan, with which we could liaise.

A.N. KOSYGIN. We will do this. There is another project - to build a large paper pulp factory near the coast for 500,000 - 1,000,000 tons of pulp. We could bring and equipment and installations from Japan, and then pay for them with the final product. We could also take your blueprints. The construction of such a factory could be carried out fairly quickly and it would be profitable for both countries.

K. TANAKA. One could conduct talks on such questions with the committee, which I had mentioned. If you raise this question at the Japanese-Soviet economic meeting, it could be discussed.

A.N. KOSYGIN. We will raise this question [only] in case you have interest in it.

K. TANAKA. There is such interest.

L.I. BREZHNEV. The Americans are themselves offering us to build a paper pulp factory on the compensatory basis.

K. TANAKA. It is your business which country to prefer. We have several questions remaining. The most difficult one is the question of the peace treaty. When can we continue discussing them?

A.N. KOSYGIN. Perhaps, now one should take up the negotiations on the communique and try to agree on it before going to the theatre. This is a very important questions because the communique must reflect the results of our talks.

K. TANAKA. We have one important question that has not been discussed - about the peace treaty. Without including this question, the communique will be meaningless. The results of the negotiations on the question of the peace treaty will determine and content and the form of the communique.

L.I. BREZHNEV. Yesterday we already expressed our considerations on this question. Perhaps you did not pay sufficient attention to them, so I will repeat them. We are not refusing to conduct negotiations and consultations on the question of the peace treaty. Up to now there was only one meeting between Foreign Minister [omrade] Gromyko and the Japanese Foreign Minister Mr. Ohira. The two sides have agreed to continue the consultations. This is fairly correct because one could not determine all the conditions of the treaty in one sitting. Besides, yesterday we proposed, without

leaving the question of the peace treaty, continuing the negotiations on this question, to conclude a treaty on peaceful cooperation and good neighbourly relations. This could be a positive half-way solution in the direction of a peace treaty and would not harm Japan's relations with other countries.

K. TANAKA. We have been conducting negotiations. If we now talk just about the continuation of the negotiations, there will be nothing new in this. I would like that as a result of my current visit one could come to an agreement that the two sides agree to conduct negotiations on the peace treaty, including the discussion of the question of the four islands - Habomai, Shikotan, Kunashir, Iturup. The approximate formulation in the communique could sound like this: in the interests of establishing friendly relations for eternity, the two sides have agreed to continue the negotiations on the soonest conclusion of the peace treaty, including the question of the four islands.

L.I. BREZHNEV. At the present stage this is impossible. You want to decide a priori the question of the four islands without the discussion of all the other details of the peace treaty.

K. TANAKA. I am talking not about deciding on the question of the islands but only about the agreement of the two sides to sincerely continue the discussion of this question.

L.I. BREZHNEV. We cannot include such a point in the communique. We agree to continue the negotiations and we do not understand how you can claim that this is meaningless. This is not an entirely friendly tone and not an entirely friendly attitude towards our proposals.

K. TANAKA. I noted yesterday that the entire Japanese people hope that during my visit we will frankly discuss the question of the belonging of the four islands, and that ways will be found to achieve an agreement. Therefore it would be desirable if this point found its reflection in the communique. 25 years have passed since the war, and the Japanese-Soviet peace treaty, which includes the territorial question, has been discussed for 20 years. There is still no solution. Perhaps there will not be one for many years. But in the interests of developing friendly relations between the two countries it would be desirable if the two sides discussed this question and that the agreement in this regard was stated in the communique.

L.I. BREZHNEV. I repeated twice that we cannot allow the inclusion of such a point and we propose a well-known formulation. If you refer to the Japanese people, then I must say that we have our own people, and we also must take our people into account.

A.N. KOSYGIN. Your statement that peace treaty negotiations have been going on for 25 years does not correspond to reality. No negotiations were conducted. Everything was in a frozen state. As for the substance of the matter, we propose to state that the negotiations on the peace treaty will be continued. You will also take back with you the solution of a number of large economic questions. You will have the agreement on the fisheries. All these are steps in the search for the good in our relations. Therefore, the assessment you have expressed is a mistake on your part, and we ask that you review it.

K. TANAKA. If you were so offended by the words "will be meaningless," then I am prepared to take them back. Perhaps I spoke too forthrightly. There is a saying in Japan: "to draw the pupil in the dragon's eye." This means to draw the last line, without which the picture will not be complete. This is what I had in mind.

L.I. BREZHNEV. We are proposing a formulation, which would allow you, upon returning to Japan, to tell the Japanese people that the negotiations on the peace treaty with the Soviet Union will be continued. If this is not there, what will you tell your people?

K. TANAKA. If it is unacceptable for you to mention the four islands, cannot we not say that the two sides agreed to continue the negotiations on the peace treaty, including the territorial question?

L.I. BREZHNEV. This is impossible. This is an even broader formulation. At one time, as a result of a war, Japan took possession of half [the island of] Sakhalin. This is also a territorial question, although at the time we did not raise it.

I would like to note that for two days our negotiations were characterized by the spirit of good neighbourliness and good will. If you want to cross this out, say so directly.

K. TANAKA. No, I don't want that.

L.I. BREZHNEV. We approach the fact that you raised this question with understanding but this does not mean that we can agree with your position.

The conversation was recorded by the first secretary of MFA USSR L.A. Chizhov

[\[1\]](#) The record of conversation has not been reviewed by the participants [note in the original - SR].

[\[2\]](#) Omitted here is the list of other participants.