

August 5, 1957

**Record of Conversation of N.S. Khrushchev with
Vice President of the “Japan-USSR” Friendship
Society Kazami Akira**

Citation:

"Record of Conversation of N.S. Khrushchev with Vice President of the “Japan-USSR” Friendship Society Kazami Akira", August 5, 1957, Wilson Center Digital Archive, RGANI, f. 52, op.1, d. 596, ll. 74-91. Contributed by Sergey Radchenko and translated by Allison Smith. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/300263>

Summary:

Kazami and Khrushchev discuss the development of Soviet-Japanese relations and Japanese independence. Kazami inquires about the possible participation of Japanese specialist in the industrial development of Siberia. He also asks about the potential transfer of the Kuril Islands to Japan.

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Blavatnik Family Foundation

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Record of Conversation
of N.S. Khrushchev with Vice President of the "Japan-USSR" Friendship Society
Kazami Akira

August 5, 1957

Mr. Kazami Akira was received by N.S. Khrushchev on August 5 of this year at his request. Beforehand, Mr. Kazami gave N.S. Khrushchev a personal message that he brought from the President of the Society Ichiro Hatoyama.

Mr. Kazami was accompanied by Mr. Kawada who arrived with him as the secretary. Below follows the memorandum of conversation.

Mr. Kazami: I am very grateful that you agreed to meet us despite all of your work.

N.S. Khrushchev: I am glad that you expressed a desire to visit our country and exchange views with Soviet leaders. These kinds of meetings and exchanges of views help improve relations between the peoples.

Mr. Kazami: Not long ago the Japan-USSR Friendship Society was created in Japan, and the former Premier Minister Ichiro Hatoyama was chosen as the chairman. I brought a personal message to you from him.

N.S. Khrushchev: I ask that you relay my gratitude to Mr. Hatoyama for his greeting. I carefully reviewed Mr. Hatoyama's message and believe it is very good. The reasonings contained in this letter are interesting. I should add that we are left with the very best memories of the meetings and conversations with Mr. Hatoyama. This patriot of his country correctly understands relations between our countries and is concerned about these relations being friendly and beneficial for both peoples.

We have great respect for the Japanese people, and value the ability of the Japanese people. Japanese are good organizers, persistent, and hardworking people. Your country is small, there are a lot of people in it, and we understand the difficulties that come from this. But the resolution of these difficulties should not be sought by resorting to war, like the leading figures of Japan did before. This is a dangerous path and it brings much disaster to the Japanese people and to our people.

We believe that your people, like ours, are interested in strengthening the friendship between Japan and the USSR. Strengthening this friendship would permit the use of natural resources in both countries for the common good.

One matter, war, is blood and lives; the other, friendly relations, opens the way to cooperation.

The Soviet Union possesses great natural wealth. China and Korea also possess great natural wealth, and they are interested in establishing friendly relations [illegible], they will speak for themselves, and we will speak for ourselves - we [illegible] to cooperate with Japan. If we achieve this, lasting peace will be ensured. We need our relations to develop on the basis of peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation in economics and trade.

Mr. Kazami: I completely agree with you and share everything that you said. Even before joining the socialist party, I fought for the peaceful development of Japan. I fight for this now as a member of the socialist party. Together with two other members I initiated the creation of a parliamentary commission for the defense of our constitution, which we call the "Peace Constitution." As you know, this constitution prohibits Japan from resorting to war as a means for resolving disputed international issues. The right tried to change the Constitution, but they were not successful in obtaining 2/3 of the seats in parliament in elections, which is required to change the Constitution. Right now, the struggle for the preservation of the Constitution continues. When I agreed to become one of the deputies of the president for the Friendship Society of Japan and the USSR, I was guided, in part, by concern for preserving the Peace Constitution. Our Society intends to fight for Japan's peaceful development. What wishes would you like to express to the Society?

N.S. Khrushchev: We are very glad that your Society was created and that it is chaired by such prominent public figures, like Ichiro Hatoyama and Kazami Akira, who are strong advocates of strengthening the friendship of the USSR and Japan. This is

most important. The direction of the Society's activities depends on who chairs it.

I should say that work will not be easy for you as there are certain forces in Japan that do not want peace and friendship with us. They, of course, will oppose your work. But truth is stronger than everything, and truth is on your side.

We hope that your Society is developed so that the idea that it is beneficial for the people's future to establish good relations with the Soviet Union, the great people of China and Korea is strengthened in the consciousness of the Japanese people.

The main issue is to ensure Japan's actual independence. As long as American soldiers are located on Japanese islands, the independence of Japan remains rather conditional. If we speak about the constitution on a legal basis, Japan remains an independent country. But actually, Japan is not in a condition to take the steps it would like to take in the interests of its people and state.

You should know that your opponents will do everything to discredit you. They will probably declare you almost communist agents, since you stand for peace and friendship with the Soviet Union.

I should tell you that complicated internal political issues can in certain circumstances lead some inexperienced politicians astray. After all, there are communists everywhere, whether they want this or not, they [communists] still appear on the earth. I will not explain our point of view regarding this issue to you. You probably know it. So here: it is important to be able to figure out where the internal political issues are, and where the nationwide governmental problems are, which needs to be decided independent of ideological issues and independent of issues regarding the Japanese and Soviet communist parties. This is a complicated issue and not everything about it can be figured out reasonably well. It can be a stumbling block for you. But if you overcome it, everything will be fine.

It is important for you to understand one thing: our policies are built on the noninterference in other countries' internal affairs. A political system is a matter for every nation, and it should freely choose its own path.

Our common cause is securing peaceful economic and cultural cooperation on the basis of peaceful coexistence and competition.

Mr. Kazami

I understood you very well. Since our conversation is being prolonged, I would like to raise key questions that interests me. I should say that our relations with China, despite the Government's official position of not recognizing it, are developing better than with the Soviet Union. Our leaders go to China more often than to the Soviet Union and they are more familiar with the situation in China than the situation in the Soviet Union. It would be desirable for representatives of Japan to arrive to the USSR not simply as tourists. It is important that their trips have a practical and business-like nature, so that the Japanese can see the Soviet Union with their own eyes and have the opportunity to assess the real chances of economic rapprochement of the Soviet Union and Japan.

The Japanese leaders are especially interested in taking part in Siberia's economic development. We give high priority to this issue.

What steps could be taken for the further development of Soviet-Japanese relations? In particular, how can it be organized so that Japanese leaders are familiar with the situation in Siberia? How can the chances of Japanese industry taking part in Siberia's development be clarified?

N.S. Khrushchev

Of course, this issue has great importance for the development of Soviet-Japanese economic relations. We agree to begin the exchange of delegations of business people. Let leaders of Japanese industry, economists, and statesmen come to us and with pleasure we will open the doors before them and show them what interests them. And show them Siberia.

Mr. Kazami.

Yesterday a correspondent from the Japanese agency Kyodo contacted me. He asked me to help him visit Siberia. I myself would like to go to Siberia with Japanese journalists.

N.S. Khrushchev

Such a trip will be beneficial for you. As for journalists, I cannot say anything about that now – such questions are decided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in compliance with the established order. You should know that we need to regulate such visits so that there is no discrimination in relation to other countries' correspondents. Such discrimination could emerge if some country is given special preference. But I think that deciding this question will not be difficult.

As for your trip, I am going to suggest that you are given the opportunity to complete it and given all the necessary accommodations. I think that your desire to be accompanied by Japanese correspondents will be taken into account. But this is a question for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As for the question that interests you about the development of industry in Siberia, for this, of course, there would be a certain value in establishing good contacts with Japan. I should say that we do not know enough about the Japanese market. We do not know what kinds of goods Japan could buy from us. We know that Japan could sell us manufactured goods. We would be ready to provide it with large orders. But you understand that for this to happen, it is necessary to secure a reciprocal supply of goods from the Soviet Union to Japan. We are not planning on paying in gold, and we do not have dollars. This means that we can only build economic relations on reciprocal orders.

Mr. Kazami

As a Japanese politician, I think, that the industrial development of Siberia and China presents a huge problem and the fate of the world depends on its resolution. If this problem is successfully resolved, then peace through the whole world will be ensured. On the other hand, if Japan were to be engaged to the economic development of Siberia and China, then it would draw them onto the path of peaceful development.

N.S. Khrushchev

Right.

Mr. Kazami

Japanese industry could provide appropriate assistance in the economic development of Siberia. In Japan there are difficulties – we do not have, for example, our own iron. But Japan has mastered the production of such complicated commodities, like every kind of device, optics, etc. These branches of industry are highly advanced in Japan. By the way, we produce beautiful cameras and we want to gift you a sample of our product.

N.S. Khrushchev

Thank you.

Mr. Kazami

In Japan, a lot of young people do not find an application for their energies. Our young people would, therefore, like to contribute to the development of Siberia's economy. This could facilitate the development of right relations between our countries. Moreover, this would push Japan onto the path of peaceful development. In this way, I see two paths for Japan's participation in resolving Siberia's economic problems. On one hand, Japanese industry could supply you with necessary equipment and instruments, and on the other hand, Japan could make its surplus work force available to you.

N.S. Khrushchev

I understand Mr. Kazami's concerns. We are talking about issues that Japan has confronted for a long time already. I am sure that the development of our friendly relations would facilitate a resolution for the issues that worry you.

I know that you have gained extensive experience in matters of machine building, instrument-making, optical industries, artificial fiber industries, and chemicals; and your supply of similar goods would be very beneficial for us. On the other hand, you have little raw material – no coal or iron. In Siberia we possess rich reserves of coal and iron. If we had had the required contact, we could have planned for the fulfillment of the interests of Japanese industry earlier, which needs raw material. This would be beneficial: we would give Japan, let's say, ore and coal, and Japan would pay

us with its products in electrical, machine-building, and optical industries, etc.

I should remind you that in the past we learned a lot from Japan. You advised us in constructing steam engines, and we ordered ships and machines from you.

Presenting all these issues, you reason correctly. But you should know that the Japanese Government's willingness and a correct understanding by Japan's business circles is necessary for the resolution of such tasks. I think that the Japanese business circles correctly understand these issues as they are motivated by profit considerations, and trade with the USSR would of course be profitable. As for the Japanese Government, it obviously understands Soviet-Japanese trade interests, but it should be kept in mind that your government is affected by strong foreign pressure and is not always free in making decisions. Thus, this is why we still do not have the necessary economic ties: America does not want to allow this. Apparently, there is a persistent internal struggle ahead for Japan to be able to make such decisions freely, decisions that are in the best interests of the Japanese people and Government.

Mr. Kazami

As for the internal struggle that you are talking about, Japan has the conditions for this. In particular, we have the conditions for establishing a united front between the socialist and communist parties. I will give an example. During the recent elections for leaders of the High Chamber, the communists and socialists launched a united front, and this is a very significant fact. Originally, the communists and socialists had different standpoints, but when their leaders met, they reached a consensus. This shows that it is possible to create an untapped united front in Japan. A second example. The communists and socialists during the election put up a joint candidate together against a certain anticommunist and anti-Soviet, Yoshida Shigeru, and successfully conducted a campaign through joint efforts. The recent convergence of the socialists and communists is becoming a real fact.

N.S. Khrushchev

What you are talking about is of course interesting, but this is your internal issue. As a communist, I of course can say that I sympathize with the revolutionary forces. However, so that we are not blamed for interfering in the matters of other nations, I again remind you that we take a known position in this issue, a position of non-interference in the internal matters of other countries. We hope you find common ground in your desire to reach a progressive resolution for the interests of the Japanese people.

Mr. Kazami

I gave this example only to explain that there are real forces in Japan, capable of fighting for closer Japanese-Soviet cooperation in the interests of peace and prosperity.

N.S. Khrushchev

We welcome these efforts. Our sympathy is on their side. I think Japan's statesmen understand that the Soviet Union's economic development does not counteract Japan's economic development at all. We are not your competitors. Our country is extensive and such that we can consume inside the country everything that our growing industry produces. As for Japan, it lives and will continue to live through exports as it does not have enough of its own raw material and food. Japan is interested in trade with the Soviet Union and China. We can consume a large amount of Japanese industrial products. China, in the course of many years, will be able to consume a truly unbelievable quantity of products from Japanese plants and factories. But America is your competitor. Therefore, it is not interested in the development of Japanese industry. West Germany and England are also your competitors, the opposition emerges here. As for the relationship between us, the road is clear if only there is a proper understanding of our nations' interests. Here, there is no stumbling block that hinders developing our relations for the well-being of the peoples of the USSR and Japan.

Mr. Kazami

I completely agree with this. Allow me to present another question. What would the Soviet Government's position be in relation to the Kurile Islands if we were completely successful in returning the island of Okinawa and if Japan did not enter

into any military alliances? In this case, would the USSR agree to return the Kuriles to Japan?

N.S. Khrushchev

Mr. Kazami presents an interesting question. We would of course welcome the return of the island of Okinawa to Japan, which is Japanese ancestral territory. But why should we lose the Kurile Islands that belong to the USSR? I do not understand this. On the economic side, the Kurile Islands do not mean anything. As far as I know, Japan received little on the Kurile Islands during the period that it controlled them. It seems that on one of the islands a little sulfur was being produced, fishermen had their bases somewhere. For us, the Kurile Islands also do not have great economic importance, but they have great strategic importance. They play a large role in the Soviet Union's defense against external [crossed out] the *possibility* [handwritten] of aggression on the part of the USA.

Mr. Kazami

I understood. But if the time comes when these islands no longer play a strategic role, how would this issue turn out?

N.S. Khrushchev

Let's work on making such a time come, and then we will meet and talk about the issues that interest you.

Mr. Kazami

We will strive toward this direction.

Won't the Kurile Islands lose their strategic importance when Okinawa is returned to Japan? Since, in that case the USA will pull back from the Pacific region.

N.S. Khrushchev

Of course, if it were no longer necessary for strategic points in the East, as well as in the West, then the issue of the Kurile Islands would not be the subject of sharp dispute. The Kurile Islands would be worth freeing from the fear of war. But there is still a lot of work that is needed for this. This does not just depend on the Soviet Union and Japan, but on the USA, Britain, and France. To be free from the fear of war means to reach a situation wherein war would be excluded as a means for resolving disputed international issues.

Mr. Kazami

I agree with you. I am not looking at this whole issue from a legal point of view. Your clarifications gave me great satisfaction, and I am glad that this issue was cleared up again as a result of an exchange of views. I will be glad to visit the Soviet Union when peace is guaranteed and when the Kurile Islands do not have such strategic importance for the Soviet Union.

N.S. Khrushchev

We will be happy to welcome you and earlier than that.

Mr. Kazami

I would like to touch on the issue regarding the testing of atomic and hydrogen weapons. You know that Japan was the first victim of the atomic bomb. I am an advisor of the socialist party and active in organizations that are involved in fighting for the prohibition of atomic and hydrogen weapons. While our government makes no effort in the resolution of this matter, the movement for the prohibition of atomic and hydrogen bombs, contrary to its [the government's] desires, is widely developed in Japan. I should say that nothing makes the Japanese nervous like the testing of atomic and hydrogen weapons. Not long ago, in the region of Niigata, across from the port of Nakhodka, there were four clouds containing a lot of radioactive particles. And this alarmed our people. Japanese do not believe that the USSR should unilaterally stop the testing of its atomic and hydrogen bombs. But here one important issue is raised. When America and England test their bombs, they announce when and where this will be done. The Soviet Union does not do this. This situation allows anti-Soviet elements to lead the public into alarm, attributing radioactive fallout in the region of Niigata, for example, to explosions that allegedly took place in the Soviet Union. This harms the development of friendly relations between our countries. Can you offer some way to resolve this issue?

N.S. Khrushchev

We could not have exploded atomic and hydrogen bombs in the vicinity of the Japanese islands for understandable reasons: this region is abundant with large communities both on your side and our side. Therefore, you have no basis for such alarm in this regard.

I already explained that the British and the Americans need to announce the time and place of their test explosives for the simple reason that they do not explode their bombs on their territory, but in neutral zones, on small islands that lay on sea and air traffic routes. If they do not announce their explosions beforehand, they could endanger ships and airplanes, and this would cause an international scandal. We conduct test explosives on our territory, where there are no people and where airplanes do not fly. The test explosives that we conduct do not damage our neighbors, even though, of course, the testing of nuclear weapons facilitates the pollution of the atmosphere. Several times we proposed prohibiting the testing of atomic and hydrogen bombs. But these proposals were not accepted by our partners and we need to conduct testing because other countries are exploding their bombs.

Mr. Kazami

Everyone in Japan understands the Soviet Union's commitment, but the population became concerned due to the fact that in the zone of Niigata there appeared black radioactive clouds. It would be desirable that if in such instances the Soviet Embassy in Tokyo announced that performing the testing of nuclear weapons in the USSR does not have dangerous repercussions for the people of other countries.

N.S. Khrushchev

We perform testing very far from the Japanese islands, perhaps closer to Moscow than to Tokyo.

Mr. Kazami

I would like to raise another question. How do you feel about the Friendship Society of Japan-USSR organizing a delegation of representatives from business circles, economists, journalists and sending it for familiarization with the regions of Siberia?

N.S. Khrushchev

We will discuss this question if it is initiated from your side.

I would like to return to the question you touched upon about prohibiting the testing of atomic weapons. We proposed and propose to quickly prohibit the testing of nuclear weapons and establish checkpoints possessing the necessary equipment on the territories of countries making these weapons. This control would eliminate the possibility of conducting secret tests in violation of the agreement. The termination of testing would end the pollution of the atmosphere with radioactive elements.

Mr. Kazami

The Japanese press widely reported on the Soviet's position on this issue. However, I would like to return to the question of sending our delegation to Siberia. How can this best be done?

N.S. Khrushchev

It is necessary that you show initiative and communicate to us your plans for the composition of the delegation. We would discuss this issue and state our position to your proposal.

Mr. Kazami: In particular, we would like for the large Japanese industrialist Kano, advisor of the Friendship Society of Japan-USSR, to be part of the delegation.

N.S. Khrushchev: Comrade Zhukov will think on these questions and we will discuss your proposal.

Mr. Kazami: I myself would like to see Siberia.

N.S. Khrushchev: We will give you the opportunity to do this.

Mr. Kazami: It would be important for economists and journalists to accompany the representatives of the business circles. The representatives of the business circles themselves do not write articles, and if journalists were to go with them, they would publish articles to prepare the public opinion for the development of extensive trade relations with the Soviet Union. Not long ago, editor-in-chief of "Asahi" Hiorka met

with you. He presented some great articles in his newspaper, which have great importance for the establishment of friendly relations between our countries. A correspondent of "Asahi" Aiba Shiosaku, who went to Siberia not long ago, similarly published a great article, which resulted in a broad response. The Japanese delegation's trip to Siberia would facilitate closer cultural relations between our countries. I want to add that if you allow me to visit Siberia, I would present a number of articles in newspapers and journals.

N.S. Khrushchev: Good.

Mr. Kazami: I apologize that I dragged out our conversation. What should I tell Mr. Hatoyama?

N.S. Khrushchev: Give Mr. Hatoyama my hello and good wishes. If it does not make it difficult for you, I would have you give him an answer to his message, for which I am very thankful to him.

Mr. Kazami: Thank you. I will do this; I will give him your answer. The conversation with you has made a great impression and was very casual. I again ask you for the opportunity to visit Siberia.

N.S. Khrushchev: I always receive great satisfaction from conversations with Japanese leaders. They understand well the necessity of developing friendly relations between our countries.

In ending the meeting, Mr. Kazami gifted N.S. Khrushchev a new camera, in doing so emphasizing that this is the latest novelty of the Japanese optical industry.

The conversation lasted 1 hour 45 minutes.

Comrade Zhukov recorded the conversation.

[Zhukov's signature]

August 6, 1958