

JAPAN BARS VISIT OF HIROHITO TO U.S.

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Strong Domestic Opposition
Brings Rebuff to Nixon
Invitation This Year
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TOKYO, April 24—Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira disclosed today that his Government had rejected President Nixon's invitation to Emperor Hirohito to make a state visit to the United States.

Mr. Ohira called in Ambassador Robert S. Ingersoll to inform him of the decision this afternoon. Later Mr. Ohira told Japanese newsmen that "circumstances, including the Imperial Household schedule," did not permit the visit this year. He did not elaborate, but it was clear that political opposition had caused the rejection.

The decision by Premier Ka-keui Tanaka's Government seemed certain to add to the deterioration of relations with the United States, which are already seriously strained by continuing economic frictions and gaps in political communication.

Some Japanese officials involved in American affairs expressed private disappointment. One called the decision a tragedy.

The Japanese move came after an address by Henry A.

Continued on Page 5, Column 3

Continued From Page 1, Col. 2

Kissinger yesterday in New York about relations with Western Europe and evolving relations between Japan and the United States. Mr. Kissinger said that Japan should be a "principal partner" in America's relations with Europe. There was no indication, however, that the announcement today was timed to take the Kissinger address into consideration.

The rejection, although couched in terms of postponement, cast doubt on the possibility that President Nixon would soon visit Japan. Mr. Ohira said, however, that if Mr. Nixon decided to come, Japan would welcome him.

Some officials and politically aware Japanese privately deplored the timing of the announcement. They contended that with Mr. Nixon under fire at home because of the Watergate scandal, this decision would add to his political woes.

Invitation by Nixon

The President invited Emperor Hirohito when they met in Anchorage, Alaska in September, 1971, as the Emperor's plane made a fueling stop on the way to his three-week tour of Europe.

The invitation was repeated by Mr. Nixon when he met Mr. Tanaka in Hawaii last September, when Finance Minister Kiichi Aichi was in Washington in March, and when a group of Japanese governors recently paid a call at the White House. Mr. Kissinger also extended the invitation on his trips to Tokyo.

Mr. Nixon has reportedly been eager to have the Emperor come to the United States to clear the way for him to make a return visit to Japan. Under the former Premier, Eisaku Sato, the Japanese position was that the Emperor should make the first move.

Mr. Sato's Government held to that policy because Japan had been defeated by the United States in World War II, had been subject to a benevolent occupation after the war and had been protected by the United States from the time she regained her sovereignty in 1952.

Japanese officials said today that Premier Tanaka's Government no longer took the position that the Emperor should visit first. But they held out little expectation that President Nixon would visit Japan soon.

Mr. Nixon, with his penchant

for historic firsts, such as his visit to China in February, 1972, reportedly wanted to be the first American President in office to visit Japan. The only American President ever to visit Japan was Ulysses S. Grant, who traveled here in 1879 after he had left the White House.

A visit by President Dwight D. Eisenhower was canceled while he was on the way here in 1960 because the Japanese said they could not guarantee his safety from anti-American rioters.

That cancellation was used by John F. Kennedy in the 1960 Presidential campaign against Mr. Nixon. Mr. Kennedy asserted that American prestige had dropped so low under the Republicans that the President could not even visit such an ally as Japan.

Mr. Nixon's public invitations to the Emperor aroused protests from the Opposition parties here, led by the Socialists and Communists. They charged that the visit would involve the Emperor in politics at a time when there were issues outstanding between the United States and Japan.

In the Japanese system, the Emperor is a "symbol" of the state and is supposed to be above politics. The anti-American Socialist and Communist parties appeared to have been using this to add to the friction in relations with the United States.

Charges Alarmed Agency

The cautious Imperial Household Agency, a palace guard that controls almost every movement of the Emperor, became alarmed at the charges raised by the Opposition parties. Led by Grand Steward Takeshi Usami, the agency balked at Premier Tanaka's request that the Emperor accept Mr. Nixon's invitation.

Mr. Tanaka, although he has the constitutional authority to overrule the Imperial Household Agency, gave in to the pressure of the Opposition to avoid more domestic political conflict that might further weaken his slipping political position.

The Premier and the Imperial

Household Agency thus overruled the Emperor himself, who has publicly said that he very much wanted to visit the United States. The Emperor and Empress Nagako clearly enjoyed their trip to Europe in 1971, the first a reigning sovereign had ever made outside Japan.

U. S. Still Seeks Visit

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WASHINGTON, April 24—The State Department said today that it was "our hope" that a date could be set next year for the visit of Emperor Hirohito to the United States.

Acknowledging that the Japanese Government had informed the United States—in Tokyo and in a message to Secretary of State William P. Rogers here—of the decision against the Emperor's trip this year, the State Department said that "it goes without saying that the American people and the American Government would welcome a visit from the Emperor and Empress of Japan."

Privately, officials said they were not surprised by the Government's decision. They said it was their understanding that it was caused by Opposition protests that the trip would involve the Emperor in politics.

Move to Ease Strains

The department said that no date had actually been set for the Emperor's visit, but officials agreed that it had been planned for this year as part of an effort to ease strains in relations.

Officials who deal in Japanese affairs have warned for some time that the visit might not take place because of the political issue it had become in Japan. The Administration made it clear that it did not want to make the situation worse for Premier Tanaka's Government by discussing the visit in much detail.

Although Mr. Nixon had indicated publicly that he would like to visit Japan sometime, his schedule for this year is narrowing, and with a "grand tour" of Europe planned for this fall, it does not seem likely that a visit to Japan could take place before 1974.