

President's Japan Visit: A Case for Postponement

To the Editor:

As an American involved in Christian work in Japan for fourteen years—and deeply concerned about international relations, especially between Japan and America—I have serious doubts about the advisability of President Nixon's planned visit to Japan in 1974. It is my conviction that the visit should be postponed for the time being.

Far from improving the relations between Japan and the United States, such a visit would bring severe harm. While the visit would be supported by some sections of the Japanese public, it would be strongly protested by groups of Japanese students, trade unionists, academic leaders and others. There would also be a small group of extremists who might use the occasion to try to bring on calamity by attempts at assassination.

Twice in recent history, public demonstrations against the United States-Japan Mutual Security Treaty have been severely disruptive to Japanese society. In 1960, President Eisenhower's planned visit to Japan

had to be canceled because the Japanese Government could not guarantee his security in the presence of massive protests against Premier Kishi's Government, with the result that Premier Kishi had to resign. In 1969-70, renewed demonstrations against the treaty caused severe polarizations within Japanese society, many of which have not yet been healed.

At a time when American-Japanese relations seem to be improving, it would be very unwise to subject the Japanese people again to such a massive ordeal. It would involve acute physical danger to public figures as well as to large numbers of police and security personnel. Thus the potential good which might come from such a visit is by far outweighed by its possible harm.

Japanese-American relations should be furthered by cultivating the many channels of friendship and cooperation which now exist. It would be calamitous to proceed with a Presidential visit which would in all likelihood heighten the frictions within Japan, between Japan and the United States and in international relations generally.

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