

The Canceled Visit and the Shaky

NYTimes APR 28 1973

By RICHARD HALLORAN

Special to The New York Times

TOKYO, April 27—The Japanese Government's decision this week to cancel Emperor Horohito's projected visit to the United States provides insights into the weakness of Premier Kakuei Tanaka's Government, the lack of Japanese sophistication in international affairs and the decay of the American-Japanese alliance. Contributing to the decision was the fact that the Japanese have gradually attached less and less importance to their alliance with the United States despite the assertion by Henry A. Kissinger, President Nixon's adviser on national security, in a speech Monday that "Japan must be a principal partner in our common enterprise" with Western Europe.

When President Nixon flew to Anchorage, Alaska, in September, 1971, to meet the Emperor and Empress Nagako on their way to Europe, he invited them to visit the United States. Since then the President has repeated the invitation to Mr. Tanaka, to Finance Minister Kiichi Aichi and to a group of Japanese governors visiting Washington. Mr. Kissinger repeated it twice during visits to Tokyo.

Emperor Wanted to Come

The Emperor and Empress—who obviously enjoyed themselves on their three-week trip to Europe in the fall of 1971, the first trip a reigning Emperor had taken outside Japan—had publicly expressed a desire to see America. For the Emperor, who will be 72 years old on Sunday, that is not likely to happen.

Mr. Tanaka's Government had accepted the invitation on behalf of the Emperor, a constitutional monarch, and suggested that the visit take place in October. But as plans moved ahead, the Japan Socialist party and Japan Communist party protested that the Emperor would be involved in politics, which they said would violate his constitutional role as "symbol of the state."

Both parties, strongly anti-American, wished to embarrass Mr. Tanaka and to disrupt Japan's relations with the United States, which were already tense as a result of unresolved trade and monetary issues. Their ultimate objective

was to destroy the Japanese-American mutual security treaty.

The opposition parties found an unlikely ally in the Imperial Household agency, the palace guard that governs every movement of the imperial family. Those conservative bureaucrats, frightened by the charges of political involvement, balked at the visit.

As a result, Mr. Tanaka gave in to the pressure and canceled the trip. The reaction from Washington appeared frigid from here. The White House declined to comment and referred inquiries to the State Department, which tried to put the best face on it by saying that the invitation was still open. The Administration also told Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira, who had asked to come to Washington to "explain" the cancellation, not to bother.

Meanwhile, plans for Premier Tanaka to visit the United States were reported to be going ahead.

What Might Have Been

To consider what might have been is to see the opportunity that was lost. The Emperor is known to have wanted to express his personal regrets over World War II, his gratitude for the benevolent postwar American occupation and his appreciation for American friendship over the last quarter of a century.

More important, perhaps, the trip would have exposed to the American people the shy, emi-

E NEW YORK TIMES, SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 1973

Alliance With Tokyo

nently human Emperor whom Gen. of the Army Douglas MacArthur once called "the first gentleman of Japan."

In return, the plan called for Mr. Nixon to pay a state visit to Japan in 1974—the first American President in office to make such a trip. That would have helped to erase the bad feelings at Japan's cancellation of President Eisenhower's visit in 1960 in the face of anti-American riots. At week's end the chances for such a Presidential visit soon seemed remote.

The exchange of goodwill visits, in which political matters and economic frictions would have been avoided, was to have set the tone, to have generated a mood that would have helped American and Japanese officials re-establish political communication, resolve economic issues and coordinate security decisions.

But Premier Tanaka, who had the constitutional authority to override the objections that were raised, was apparently unwilling to make such a controversial decision, although it would probably have received the support of the vast majority of Japanese.

With Mr. Tanaka's popularity having steadily dropped since his Liberal-Democratic party received a setback in elections in December, politicians in the party had begun maneuvering against him. He evidently wanted to avoid more conflict with the opposition parties at the same time.

The decision to cancel the Emperor's visit was made public here about five hours after Mr. Kissinger said that Mr. Nixon would propose a new Atlantic charter and that "we

ask our friends in Europe, Canada and ultimately Japan to join us in this effort."

The Japanese response, beyond calling off the Emperor's visit, was perfunctory. A spokesman for the Foreign Ministry said later in the week that it was "not a concrete proposal," but that Japan appreciated the references to it and would cooperate.

To some, this was new evidence that the Japanese have little sense of international public relations even though a major Establishment group here has called for drastic action to reverse Japan's deteriorating image overseas. For a primary value of the visit would have been the goodwill gained; the dignified Emperor and his gracious Empress are probably Japan's best—and least used—public-relations assets.

The Japanese attitude underlying that response, the cancellation of the Emperor's trip and most other foreign-policy actions has more and more become one of taking the United States for granted as Japan moves into an increasingly independent posture.

The United States, too, has acted independently—the most significant instance coming in July, 1971, when President Nixon, without notifying the Japanese, announced plans to visit mainland China.

American officials here say that they are happy to see the Japanese strike off on their own, although they hope it will be in conjunction with American moves. But the Japanese do not seem to have realized yet that they will have to do things—not just say things—to win and keep American friendship.