

SUMMARY REPORT OF A VISIT TO JAPAN (1937)

At the instigation of various Christian groups in Nanking and Shanghai, during March of this year I went to Japan with an excellent Chinese colleague, in order to continue contacts with Christian and other liberal groups in that country, to inquire into the conditions that influence Japanese policy toward China, and to give information concerning the situation as seen from this side. The visit comprised meetings and interviews in six cities, including nine full days in Tokyo. Most hearty cooperation and assistance were made available. Interviews were held with professors of three of the Imperial universities and with other educational leaders, with several members of both houses of the Diet, with Christian leaders in various professional positions, with influential newspaper correspondents and eight or ten editors representing some of the greatest papers of the country. In some fifteen gatherings, ranging from small groups to two hundred and fifty persons, discussions of China and the international issue were frankly carried on. The response was on the whole encouraging, and the effort has contributed to a number of useful enterprises looking both ways.

At the risk of deformation by brevity (further information is available upon request), we report summarily concerning some aspects of Japan today. Militarism is basically unchanged, but it lost prestige in the Mutiny of February 1936 and in the interference with General Ugaki's attempt to form a moderate cabinet under Imperial request in December last. Moreover, the Army is tortured by internal conflicts of means and policies, by anxiety over Russian armaments, and by its cloudy realization of economic inadequacy. The Diet has not had the moral or political strength to control budgets and policy but it has taken on new life as a critic of the more vulnerable phases of military control. The grosser attempts at reorganization of national polity on fascist lines have failed ignominiously, and there is a marked rally of moderate and even conservative civilian elements to maintain the constitutional and parliamentary system against reckless hands. Nevertheless, the Army presses dominantly for concentration of political and industrial control in order to increase military power.

Aside from the privileged Diet and related newspaper criticism, management of information and of education proceeds on more and more narrowly nationalistic lines. Christians suffer in some quarters from ultra-patriotic pressure upon an interest felt to be wider than national. The economic system is driven at high power toward development of heavy industry for the sake of armament but the tremendous jumps in prices and in the money value of imports merely reiterate the dependence of Japan upon world materials and therefore upon world trade. Of what use is 50% increase in military budgets, if you actually get fewer guns and ships than before?

There is growing recognition of progress and order in China, with consequent need for reconsidering Japanese policy toward this country. It may be ventured that the immediate prospect is for an urgent insistence upon free economic opportunity in North China, laying aside more general aims as bad tactics. Generally speaking, Japan does not consider the effects upon China of diverting this

nation's modest and greatly-needed resources to Japanese uses; nor does she adequately realize the inevitable opposition of China to further losses or extended exploitation.

In fine, the problem is whether Japan will be capable of moderating her ambitions before they bring about a dangerous clash; and that is closely related with the quality of men who will direct policy in both countries. Firm and patient wisdom by the best men can make an adjustment. But there is too much danger from others.

M.S. Bates

A DELEGATION OF JAPANESE CHRISTIANS IN CHINA

An important link in the weak but lengthy chain of organized efforts on the part of Christian groups in China and Japan to meet through the month of May to helpfully consider the problems between the two nations. After careful preparation, the National Christian Council of Japan sent four of its own leaders to attend the Biennial Meeting of the National Christian Council of China, followed by a retreat in which ten Chinese Christian leaders met intimately with the Japanese delegation. The friends from Tokyo were excellent representatives of the best in Japanese Christianity: Dr. Y. Chiba, Chairman of the National Christian Council and Professor of the Aoyama (Union) Seminary; Rev. A. Ebisawa, Executive Secretary of the NCC; Miss M. Kawai, former General Secretary of the Y.W.C.A. and now head of a distinguished girls' school; Rev. M. Kozaki, leading pastor and Chairman of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (Japan). They were accompanied by Mr. T. Matsuyama, an experienced member of the Diet and an active Christian layman.

The frank exchange of views and the cooperative preparation of Christian programs for continuous sharing of information, attitudes, and church and school materials in a far-seeing educational purpose, were solidly encouraging. No one can expect miracles of achievement. But those familiar with the critical international pressures, or with the ignorance and hatred in which they work, will recognize that such a beginning is in itself a miracle and a stumbling-block to the non-Christian world. To be honest, we must admit that these excellent leaders are almost equally astounding and suspect to the mass of their nominal followers. That emphasizes the unusual faith, the courage, the Christian wisdom, of this group of pioneers.

The five Japanese delegates came to Nanking for a crowded two days. No one recalls open speaking by a Japanese in this city, certainly not in these years of tension. Yet faith was justified in the holding of two general meetings for which invitations were sent to churches and to Christian schools; besides speaking in the chapels of the University of Nanking, Ginling College, Nanking Theological Seminary, an enlarged F.O.K. meeting, and a big group of university teachers. The Japanese friends had long talks with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with a powerful member of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuomintang, with a high officer of the Ministry of Education (who, incidentally, is known as strongly anti-Japanese in

manifold activities), and with a group of professors educated in Japan, besides miscellaneous contacts. They saw something of the New China in its capital city, and secured a great deal of printed information to support their individual impressions of the situation.

The difficulties and the measure of success in the enterprise are suggested in the matter-of-fact items. The school auditorium which we desired for the semi-public meetings, was withheld for fear of disturbances. But the University, Ginling College, the Nanking Church Council, and the Y.M.C.A. all agreed to the use of their buildings. The offer from the University was particularly creditable to the Chinese administration, since only two weeks previously a purely Chinese Christian gathering in that place had suffered interruption by ultra-nationalistic speeches from military men. No difficulty was actually experienced in any of the meetings, barring a temporary misunderstanding with the police in the first gathering. Moreover, the visitors were accommodated in a Chinese hotel under Christian management, and met with no embarrassment in that or other matters of travel.

Many Chinese, acting upon their general experience of organized Japanese activities, suspected that the Japanese delegates were sent by their Government. Others felt that Japanese citizens are helpless to do anything about the policy of their Army, and therefore the whole business was a futile waste of time and energy. Most educated persons consider that individual gestures of friendliness are desirable for Japanese political purposes, but smack of insincerity in face of the facts in Manchuria and North China (a common Japanese attitude seems to the Chinese something like this: "Since there is no possibility of your recovering Manchuria, it's more pleasant for us both to talk of a lasting peace"). Yet the most common expression among the Christians who attended the meetings was that they appreciated the chance to see and hear Japanese of high character--a totally new experience. As one Chinese administrator declared: "All these years I've tried to tell the church people that not all the Japanese are bad, and they are God's children like ourselves. Now at last we can see them and know it is true." (Obviously, Japanese sailors, diplomats, journalists, all of whom are fairly common in Nanking, had not counted on this score). Similarly a non-Christian teacher came to ask for a further chance to hear the visitors, saying: "I didn't know there were Japanese like that." (Think over the implications on both sides, and the possibilities as well!).

From Nanking, three of the Japanese delegates went to Peiping, and back to Tokyo by the overland route, in order to see a little of the most troubled areas. We have no details at hand, except that they spoke in Churches in Peiping and Mukden, and even over the Christian broadcast from the former city. A Mukden pastor and a Tokyo friend have given statements of strong satisfaction with the results of the visit in the minds of the delegates themselves.

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