



BRITISH EMBASSY,
TOKYO.

No.24

(1639/23/66)

15 July, 1966.

Sir,

I have the honour to report that the Beatles, M.B.E., were in Tokyo from the 29th of June to the 3rd of July. They were a five-days' wonder and a "Beatles mood" gripped the city.

2. The group arrived in Tokyo at dawn, immediately after an exceptionally heavy tropical rainstorm and it was as the "Beatles typhoon" that they swept the youth of Japan off their feet. The popularity of the four young "pop" singers from Liverpool, at its height, was said to be the envy of Cabinet Ministers: and one felicitous cartoon depicted Prime Minister Sato on the hustings in a Beatles' wig appealing to the girls to give him their support. In sober truth, no recent event connected with the United Kingdom, with the sole exception of the British Exhibition in 1965, has made a comparable impact in Tokyo.

3. Nevertheless, successful though the visit proved to be, it had given rise to a few tricky problems. One of these even had political overtones. Under the contract, it had been arranged that the Beatles should give their five performances in the Budôkan, which is the only indoor arena in Tokyo large enough to hold ten thousand spectators.

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The Rt. Honourable
Michael Stewart,
etc., etc., etc.



This imposing "Hall of The Martial Arts" was built two years ago for the Tokyo Olympic Games and it is hallowed as the home of highly-respected traditional Japanese sports such as Judô and Kendô. The Hall has occasionally been used for less lofty purposes, but never for anything so alien to the Japanese martial spirit as an electric-guitar concert. Mutterings about this soon led to a wave of public opposition from nationalists who claimed that the Budôkan was going to be "desecrated" and warned that they would come out in force to protect it.

4. Some time before the event, a representative of the local publicity agents came to discuss the problem with me. He did not seem surprised, however, when I declined to intervene in any way. I explained that the issue, as far as it concerned the contract, seemed to me to be one for the sponsors and the Beatles' manager to decide between them. As for the political aspect, that was a purely Japanese domestic matter. I gave it as my personal opinion that there was no valid reason for all the fuss and expressed my confidence that the police were fully capable of maintaining order.

5. The main financial backers of the Beatles' visit were the Yomiuri newspaper, whose proprietor, Mr. Matsutaro Shôriki, is a leading Buddhist. He, I understand, began to get very cold feet and at one moment, when some members of the Government were said to be feeling misgivings, there was a real possibility that the whole project would have to

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be cancelled. One way out of the dilemma might perhaps have been to transfer the shows from the Budôkan to an outdoor arena, but this was not really practicable during the rainy season and it would, I assume, have been rejected by the Beatles. In the end, the Yomiuri published a letter from the Chairman of the Executive Board of the Budôkan, a leading member of the Government party, who argued that the respectability of the Beatles was beyond any doubt, the proof being that they had all received decorations from Her Majesty The Queen: surely, therefore, there could be no question of denying them the use of the hall. This well-aimed salvo silenced all but the hard core of extremists.

6. The second and more genuine problem was security. In Tokyo the Beatles had to be protected from fan and foe alike. Tens of thousands of young enthusiasts were known to be planning to converge upon the "Bitoruzu" from all over Japan. More menacingly, fanatical opponents of the group and of all they were supposed to stand for had threatened to have them assassinated. The police also had their basic duty of preserving public law and order, in a country where crowds can easily become rioting mobs. In the event, the "Operation Beatles" which the Metropolitan Police mounted was of almost the same order of magnitude as the arrangements for the Tokyo Olympic Games in 1964. No fewer than thirty-five thousand policemen were mobilised or alerted, at a cost of an estimated thirty thousand pounds. All of this, I am assured, has fallen upon the Japanese taxpayer. These mammoth security precautions were completely successful and as far as I am aware there were no untoward incidents. I had paid a precautionary

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call on the Chief of Police beforehand and after the Beatles had got safely away I followed this up with a letter expressing my gratitude for all the police had done.

7. Despite everyone's forebodings, the traffic arrangements were such that ticket-holders had no difficulty about getting to and from the shows. During the performances inside the Budôkan, there was the clamour and the hysteria which the Beatles provoke wherever they go, and little or nothing could be heard of the music, but there was not a trace of disorder. Police had cordoned off the stage and were sitting, with a contingent of firemen, in every aisle. The greatest burden which they had to bear (and this fell mainly on the policewomen) was to comfort sobbing teenage girls who found that the physical presence of John, George, Paul and Ringo was more than they could take.

6. For the Beatles themselves, and for their sponsors, the visit was of course primarily a commercial venture. In this vital respect, success would appear to have been complete. Almost all the fifty thousand seats were sold out months ahead (many, needless to say, finding their way on to the black market). The tickets were sold at two prices, the equivalent of thirty shillings and forty-two shillings, very few being available at the cheaper rate. It is hard to set a figure on the direct benefit which accrued to the British balance of payments, but I estimate that this was probably something of the order of fifty thousand pounds. The performances will also have served to promote the sales of Beatles records - although only about four per cent of these are imported - and also of British magazines such as "Rave" and "The New Musical Express". The Beatles' visit may in addition have given



fresh impetus to the Japanese interest in modern British fashions which has been apparent for some time. Several stores put on special Beatles shows. "Carnaby Street" and the "Mods" look were often mentioned in displays. Admittedly, most of the clothes on show were made in Japan, but it is possible that a modest market for "originals" could be created. Members of two large Japanese textile companies, Teijin and Tôyô Bôseki, whose interest is of course in local manufacturing, were interviewing teenagers at the concerts with the object of discovering reactions to the "Mods" look.

9. According to the police, who now seem to be emerging as the leading Japanese authorities on Beatlemania, this Beatles boom will go on. So many fans were disappointed by the shortness of the performances and by their inability to get close to their idols that a profound feeling of "unfulfilment" is held to exist. Hence the visit is seen not as the peak of a boom, but as one stage in its development.

10. There have been only two local complaints about the Beatles' visit. The first was that there were altogether too many police about. Certainly the fans were kept almost ridiculously out of range; and the luckless Beatles themselves did not even have a chance to see any of the sights of Tokyo. All in all, though, I am sure that the authorities were very wise to have taken no risks. As a result of the security precautions, there were no public disturbances; and the Beatles, I am happy to say, were at no time in any physical danger in Japan.

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11. The second complaint, to which I have already alluded, was that thirty minutes' playing, with no encores, was much too brief. The Beatles were on the stage for exactly half-an-hour at each performance, following an hour or so of indifferent "pop" music by sundry Japanese groups. As value for money, this does not seem to compare at all well, for instance, with a whole evening's recital by Rubinstein which could be heard last week in Tokyo for the same price; but it may be that this is just part of a Beatles' ploy of playing "hard to get".

12. Needless to say, the Beatles' descent on Tokyo received wide coverage in the local press. There were headlines, articles and pictures in publications ranging from the serious dailies and the musical journals to sports newspapers and the glossy weeklies. — On the whole, the press took an amused and slightly cynical attitude, but there was a strong undercurrent of admiration for the Beatles and their achievements. The Communist paper *Akahata* struck a note of its own by describing the quartet as tools of American (sic) imperialism, and there were a few side-swipes against them as manifestations of British decadence, but despite many translation and other difficulties all four had made a most creditable impression at their initial press conference and most commentators accepted them for what indeed they are: agreeable, talented and quick-witted young musicians.

13. Unfortunately, we in the Embassy did not have the pleasure of entertaining the Beatles, but this was only because they felt unable to accept our invitations. Their manager had been at pains to explain to me in correspondence which we



exchanged before their arrival that they had decided, after experiences in Washington, not to go to any more Embassy parties; and once they were here, the tight security precautions made them prisoners in their hotel suites.

14. On the other hand, the Beatles' visit enabled my wife and me to harvest good-will among various highly-placed Japanese and foreign personalities who had seen in us the only hope of obtaining tickets for themselves or their offspring. So it was that at the Beatles' first night at the Budôkan our guests included the wife of the Deputy Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs and her daughter, the two sons of the Director of the European and Oceanic Affairs Bureau, the children of four Ambassadors and a grand-daughter of former Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida, the Grand Old Man of Japan.

15. Our next Very Important Visitors, they tell me, will be the Rolling Stones.

16. I am sending a copy of this despatch to H.M. Consul-General, Osaka.

I have the honour to be,
with the highest respect,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

H. Chaka.