

The image features a series of vertical bars of varying heights and widths, alternating between black and red. The bars are set against a white background. The text is overlaid on these bars, with some bars being black and others red, creating a high-contrast, graphic effect.

Rebecca Harms

**A Day in Fukushima**  
**A Week in Japan**

Notes from a Journey

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## Preface

One year after Fukushima my colleague Rebecca Harms travelled through Japan. She accompanied activists of the Japanese anti-nuclear movement, who since have won a lot of support throughout the country.

Over the week she noted in her diary what people told her, what she saw, what confused her, what questions she asked and what has touched her.

You think it will be just another boring politician's diary? Sounds like anti-nuclear movement propaganda? Think again. The book tries to show how things have changed in Japan after the experience of the threefold catastrophe, earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear accident. Today 80% of the Japanese population are in favour of phasing out the use of nuclear energy. Rebecca's protocols of conversations with farmers, parents, scientists and inhabitants of the region of Fukushima show what caused this change of opinion. What seemed politically a pipedream a while ago has come within reach after Fukushima.

It is worthwhile listening to Rebecca, especially when it comes to nuclear power. This little book should be read also by those who still today think we cannot do without nuclear.

Daniel Cohn-Bendit  
Brussels, March 2012



Fujiyama

## The Stress Test and the Journey to Japan

I cannot remember when the big excitement about Fukushima had ebbed away. I think first the news agencies dropped the issue. Then breakfast TV stopped reporting live from Japan. Finally the subject disappeared from the evening news. In the summer, Fukushima became a subject for page 3, background or Other News from Elsewhere. Current reporting was only done by that time by the Japanese agency Kyodo. When I returned from my holidays in September 2011 to Brussels, Japanese journalists asked me for a meeting. They looked for an explanation for the fact that Fukushima had impressed the German Chancellor to such an extent that she had half of all German nuclear power stations closed down. And they wanted to know what I thought about the European stress test for nuclear power stations. This test is one of Europe's answers to Fukushima. Rather than pressing ahead with phasing out the nuclear industry, the European



Fujiyama

commission assembled a questionnaire on the robustness of nuclear power stations in the case of earthquakes or floods, which the operators of nuclear power stations were meant to answer. The idea for the stress test was born immediately after the Japanese catastrophe in Brussels. In my view, the European commission continues with these tests its strategy of shoring up the acceptance of nuclear power by any means. The stress tests serve after Fukushima the stress release of the supporters of the nuclear industry in politics rather than the security of the power stations. The meeting with the Japanese journalists in Brussels brought it home to me that also the Japanese government had adopted this strategy of stress release. In Japan, too, the belief in the security of nuclear power stations had to be re-constituted. After Fukushima, European testing of Japan's nuclear power stations was meant to serve as a seal of quality.

During the summer I pushed to one side all requests and proposals for a journey to Japan.

6 What could I achieve there? In the end, it was the



Tokyo

issue of the stress tests that challenged me. The conversation with the Japanese journalists became the starting point for the journey to Japan which I undertook roughly one year after the great earthquake, the tsunami and the meltdown in Fukushima. I brought with me a study on the weaknesses of the European stress tests. It had been compiled, on behalf of the Green Group in the European Parliament, by the former director of the Department for Reactor Oversight in the German Ministry for the Environment, Wolfgang Renneberg, together with European experts. The study had been translated into Japanese. My assistant Silke Malorny and the expert for nuclear safety, Gueorgui Kastchiev, accompanied me. He had been the head of the Bulgarian Nuclear Safety Authority. Today he is a lecturer at the University of Vienna.

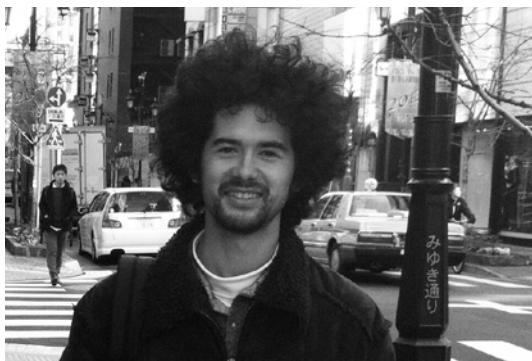
Two NGOs had invited us to Japan. *Green Action* had been founded at the beginning of the 1990s as a small but very efficient group in order to fight the Japanese plutonium program. Today, *Green Action* brings together under its roof

Tokyo



a whole network of numerous regional groups that work against the Japanese nuclear policy. The other organization, *Peaceboat*, emerged in the early 1980s out of the peace movement. It is a large organization that promotes peace, human rights, equal rights, sustainable development and a respectful relationship to the environment. They travel around the world in a chartered passenger boat and in the ports offer a space for dialogue and cooperation that transcends borders and boundaries.





Kai Sawyer

January 8, 2012

## Lost in Tokyo

After an endless flight we are not allowed to enter our rooms as we are five hours early at the hotel. I walk through Tokyo and wonder, who am I, where do I go and with whom? Is this the Bill Murray feeling? Different from the film “Lost in translation”, there are three of us: Gueorgui Kastchiev and I were met by a friendly young man at the airport Narita. His name is Kai Sawyer. Secretly I ponder whether to call him Tom or Huck. He says his father is American and his mother Japanese. Until Fukushima he had worked on a permaculture farm in Washington State. He had lived on next to nothing, in harmony with nature, as he says. After the disaster in Japan he became restless: how can he lead a life with no troubles while the world is falling apart? Now he is involved as a volunteer in the preparations of the large antinuclear conference in Yokohama. Also I am invited to the

9 *Global Conference for a Nuclear Free World*. This



Park

conference in Yokohama will form the last leg of our journey through Japan. Sawyer becomes our cicerone. It was at the airport, too, that I first met Gueorgui the friendly Bulgarian. For five hours we follow Sawyer who looks like a visitor from the planet of the hippies who fell onto the wealthy shopping streets of the city. In a park we see a packed crowd of old men behind tripods. They have giant lenses all of which are trained, all in parallel, at a pond. What are they doing, Kai? They are waiting. For what? For the right moment. The right moment comes; it is the Kingfisher. We can tell it's the right moment as fifty old men run to their tripods and one hundred cats flock together. More cats sit under the benches in Tokyo's gardens than people sit on them. Perhaps they belong to the homeless, says Kai.

Coincidence, or Kai, leads us to a gallery in one of the shopping malls where a charity exhibition for the victims of the earthquake of the Fukushima region is being shown. Works of art and handicraft are on sale in order to raise funds



Footbath

for the reconstruction. Kai tells us that also the farmers from the prefecture of Fukushima try to sell their products at charity events like this one. Time and again there are market stalls, which offer products from the disaster area: help us! Buy rice from Fukushima!

Gueorgui brought a Geiger counter from Vienna. He plans to conduct measurements everywhere throughout the journey. Problem is, his batteries are gone. We spend hours walking through the centre of Tokyo. One can buy anything here, with one exception, it seems: only batteries for the Geiger counter we cannot find.

I ask Kai whether the people who wear a mouthguard do this because of Fukushima? Mouthguards are worn because of the flu, though: whoever has the flu is obliged to wear one. Only a few people wear it because of radioactivity.

We are allowed into the hotel. Kai Huckleberry Sawyer leaves us after we have comforted us in a fast food soup place. When I buy him



Tokyo

makes me embarrassed. This young man says he wants to save the world, and right now I believe he may well do so. I am confused by jetlag, the ideas of young Sawyer and our attempted Japanese-Bulgarian-German arrival. When I finally crash out in the hotel I can see the design for my Japan tour but dimly anymore. What seemed certain has now turned to uncertainty – not actually such a bed feeling. I wait for sleep that fails to come. I know I will need to get up early the next morning. Aileen Mioko Smith, Toshiki Mashimo, Gueorgui Kastchiev, Silke Malorny and I will be inseparable for one week. In Osaka, Matsuyama City and Tokyo, Gueorgui and I will demystify the Stress Test for nuclear power stations. We surely will. Then we will travel on to Fukushima and at the end of the week we will tell it all in Yokohama. A good plan, I think, and I fall asleep.

Georgui Kastchiev,  
Aileen Mioko Smith,  
Toshiki Mashimo



January 9, 2012

## On to Osaka

The next day we meet another guide, Toshiki Mashimo. He is not only our cicerone and interpreter but also the translator of the study on the stress tests. He used to live with his French wife in Paris. After Chernobyl and the French information blockade they moved to Japan, and now are thinking about going back.

We travel in the Shinkansen, the superlative Japanese express train. I keep admiring the locomotives whose design must have been lifted from Gyro Gearloose.

In Kyoto we are joined by Aileen Mioko Smith. She is involved in *Green Action*, or rather: she is *Green Action*. A friend told us that this Japanese anti-nuclear initiative entirely depends on her involvement.

During the journey she explains what she expects from us. My part during the presentations will be to talk about the political fallout of the



Osaka

cially Germany. Gueorgui will explain why the stress test is bad. Our contributions have been allotted precise time slots. Toshi will interpret. Aileen and Toshi are convinced that every minute of our English presentations will take up two minutes in translation. She has calculated that each of us will be able to talk for 17 minutes and 30 seconds. During the train journey Toshi tries to get out of Gueorgui and myself with which words we will talk about which subject matters. I have rarely met an interpreter who engaged so deeply with the ideas of my presentations.

Although we arrive at Osaka on a public holiday, the meeting room in the City Hall is crowded beyond capacity. Who came to listen to a nuclear expert from Bulgaria and a member of the European Parliament from Germany? I think I am facing an audience that is similar to one I would face in Hannover or Vienna: old and young, men and women. The stylish young, Japanese style, but also the classic drop-outs. Aileen and Toshi introduce us to some scientists and engineers. They are glad to see that also

Osaka



some journalists came. In the first row of seats there is a timekeeper who will indicate to us how many minutes we have got left.

Gueorgui Kastchiev opens the meeting with an anecdote. He and other nuclear experts had been commissioned by me to write a report on incidents that had occurred after Chernobyl and that had come close to actual nuclear disasters. The initial working title that I had proposed for the study had been ‘On the Edge of Disaster’. This had been too emotional for the experts. We compromised on ‘Residual Risk’ as the title. Gueorgui argues that Fukushima has shown excitement about accidents and incidents has never been big enough, in Japan as elsewhere. Then he goes through the stress test in very systematic fashion. He shows that it fails to cover many risks and weaknesses of the technology and the operation of the nuclear installations. Human failures, ageing materials, leakages, power cuts or scenarios in which several problems occur simultaneously are ignored. The stress test also fails

15 to take into account plane crashes and terror-

Osaka



ist attacks. Gueorgui Kastchiev lays out in sober and systematic manner his indignation about the design and the threadbare purpose of the stress tests.

The Japanese nuclear expert Dr. Hiromitsu Ino criticizes the Japanese approach as irresponsible and scientifically dubious. The tests are done in order to prevent any repetition of the Fukushima scenario. The analysis of the accident is far from having been concluded convincingly, though. Ino demands that no conclusions be drawn from the meltdown until the events have been reconstructed plausibly. And as long as TEPCO, the Tokyo Electric Power Corporation, and the Japanese nuclear regulation authorities broadcast lies about the details of the accident, today's situation, the weaknesses of the reactor and their own mistakes, no one can and indeed should be allowed to take responsibility for the continued operation of nuclear power plants.

The questions that are directed at Gueorgui and Dr. Ino in Osaka show the great worries  
16 about safety in the region of Fukushima. Near



Osaka



Osaka lies the nuclear power plant Oi that had been taken off the grid, like all others, in order to allow safety checks. It is anticipated to be the first Japanese nuclear power plant to go back into operation after safety checks and stress tests. The people we meet here live near Oi and, thanks to Fukushima, have a good idea what the worst case means. The atmosphere is like in Germany after Chernobyl. The Great Meltdown is no longer a political concept or the fixed idea of technophobes. As one woman in the audience says, we live now with the nuclear disaster as our reality. And anyone who is honest admits fearing for their future or that of their children and another Fukushima. In Osaka Gueorgui presents for the first time his calculation that the Fukushima meltdown has released something like hundred and sixty times more radioactive caesium than the Hiroshima bomb. The problems Japan faces are similar to those a country faces after a nuclear attack.

17 I try to explain the reactions in society and politics in Europe. People in Osaka have heard



Osaka

about the German decision to phase out the use of nuclear power. The resounding No in Italy was only known to insiders of debates on nuclear power. And nobody had heard or read about the fact that in France, which is in the grip of nuclear fanaticism, because of Fukushima not only the Greens but also the Socialists led an election campaign that is critical of nuclear power.

I sketch out the shift in European public opinion since Chernobyl and debunk the claim that there is a nuclear renaissance in Europe. The audience is surprised to hear that throughout the twenty-five years since Chernobyl, the building of only two new nuclear power stations was begun in the European Union. I am in danger of becoming a bit too schoolmasterly when I conclude by hammering it home that there is a big difference between the era of Chernobyl and that of Fukushima: a quarter century later, we now have the knowledge and the technology to realize the Energy Turnaround.

18 People in Osaka and generally in Japan are well informed about Chernobyl. Nobody, though,



On our way

was prepared to imagine that a nuclear incident could occur in their own country or even city. Now people think about how to do without nuclear energy. Audience members know that the reactors in Oi are off the grid for safety checks. A strong movement in Osaka opposes the continuation of its operation. Most of those present in the audience only found out through our presentation, though, that but four of the fifty-four reactors in their country are currently on the grid. I am astonished that people don't know about what is in fact a temporary closing down of the Japanese nuclear power industry. The Japanese in the audience are surprised to find that their city and industries nevertheless are functioning.



Kyoto

January 10, 2012

## From Osaka to Matsuyama City

At dawn I flee from sleeplessness into the swimming pool. Even that is not easy without an interpreter. I get it all wrong. Wrong kimono, wrong flip-flops, wrong entrance, wrong lane in the pool. The list of my mistakes has grown enormous before the third day in Japan has even begun. The pool attendant sweetens his many reprimands concerning my mistakes through multiple bows. And he is not alone in doing so. Whether I pour soy sauce on my rice, complain about the scoring heat in the hotel room, or ask for the electrified toilet to be switched off: one bows, sometimes even as if choreographed. I begin joining in the habit, although I feel like I always bow my head in the wrong moment. Over breakfast, Silke and I compile a list of our mistakes. We are too tall for the chairs in the dining room. We are strangers. And indeed, Toshi finds us strange.

20 While I work my way through the buffet, I think about the radioactivity of the foodstuffs.

On our way



How many Becquerel per head per day will one accrue in Japan? Where is the rice from, where were the fruit picked, the fish caught? So far none of our guides advised us better not to eat this or that. Toshi says we should not worry about the fish as the sea around Japan had been dead and emptied of fish already before Fukushima. This remark gets us started on a discussion on the concept of gallows humour.

For breakfast we meet Shuji Imamoto in the hotel. I know him since my visits to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and have met him a few times since. He leads a network of Greens in Japan. He has so far never seen a chance for a Green Party in Japan to have any success at national elections. Today he talks about discussions between NGOs and Greens in the regions. It seems now less than impossible to get opponents of nuclear energy elected to national parliament, but should this be attempted under the roof of an existing party or through a new Green party? And what about the costs for candidacies? Several ten thousand Euro need to be raised per candidacy. Imamoto is a



Matsuyama City

careful man. He asks for my advice, but I have to pass; this country and its politics are too much unknown to me.

The Shinkansen is now becoming already something of a home to us. The light is spring-like and the closer we get to Shikoku Island the more mediterranean the landscape appears. Here and there it seems work on the fields has begun.

The sight of the passing fields reanimates our conversation on radioactivity and food. Toshi explains that the Japanese government rejects labelling foodstuffs in relation to radioactive contamination. In the first instance the permitted maximum levels of contamination of foodstuffs were increased. It has been announced they would be lowered again. Japanese consumer rights organizations demand that this should be combined with labelling foodstuffs as well as animal feed. They fear controls so far have been inconsistent. There is a deep mistrust in the Japanese authorities. Fear of contamination has increased also because Japan has increased the permitted annual dose for the general pop-



Matsuyama City

ulation. In the context of radiation protection general population and radiation workers are distinguished. In Japan an annual dose of twenty milli-Sievert is now permitted for the general population. This is twenty times above the permitted level for workers in nuclear installations. In the past such high radiation levels were permitted only for work in the very hot areas of the nuclear plant. Anyway, permitted maximum levels never mean that lesser contamination cannot result in health defects. These have until now always been levels that follow from the calculation of costs, benefits and risks. How much does it cost to maintain low levels? How much does it cost to accept a certain number of cancer cases and other illnesses? It is wrong to assume that remaining below any permitted maximum levels means staying out of danger, and that only their transgression results in negative impacts on humans and their environment. The discourse on radiation protection assumes that any increased dose results in an increased number of cancer cases. This includes that long-

Advertising  
rickshaws



term low-level radioactive contamination is seen as particularly risky. People in towns and villages outside the prohibited areas in sometimes very highly contaminated regions will be very badly affected.

Toshi explains that officials in government and radiation safety authorities obviously rely on ignorance, obliviousness and customization. I tell her about the great food destruction actions in Germany after Chernobyl and how some of my friends and acquaintances emigrated back then to Portugal and the Canaries in order to protect their children. In Japan, too, many families left the contaminated regions, says Toshi. There are no statistics on this.

At Matsuyama City train station we are met by Etsuko Abe. She impresses me through her thoughtfulness and elegance. She explains our programme in a most friendly manner. She regrets we will not have enough time to visit Japan's oldest spa. We do some sightseeing from within the car. Last year she has been elected into the National Parliament for Matsuyama





Souvenirs

City. She ran as an independent candidate but belongs to the Green network. The elections had taken place just after the earthquake and Fukushima. Her campaign had been focused entirely on the issue of the Nuclear Exit. Other candidates who are also close to the Greens or see themselves as belonging to them had avoided the issue because of the continuing catastrophe and out of sympathy for the victims and their families. Etsuko is the only 'Green' candidate who made it into parliament in Matsuyama City and the region. The reason is Ikata, she says. The nuclear power plant Ikata is located close to the city and threatens Shikoku Island.

For a brief hour I manage to roam the streets around our hotel on my own. I abandon the idea of visiting the spa. It is an old and beautiful building. The place is quiet. Everything is much smaller than in Osaka or in any of the other places on our route. There are as many bicycles as cars. At a street corner old ladies take a footbath in one of the hot fountains. I have to resist the desire to join them and to forget about Ikata and Oi and Kashi-



Matsuyama City

wasaki and all the other nuclear power plants and to continue my trip as a tourist.

Also this event takes place in a city hall. The place is even more packed than in Osaka. Like there, the audience constitutes a representative sample of the city's population. Aileen, Toshi and Etsuko Abe are ecstatic because also television will report about the event. Even after Fukushima it has remained the exception rather than the rule for Japanese media to report on the anti-nuclear movement. Gueorgui, Toshi and I are by now a nearly perfect team. The timekeeper is stricter than in Osaka. Also in Matsuyama City not everybody knows that not only Ikata but all but four Japanese reactors are off the grid. When we argue that the effects of the Fukushima disaster can be compared to those of nuclear warfare, everybody goes very quiet again. At Ikata the stress test was being conducted at the time. And while initially Oi was meant to be the first nuclear power station to go back into operation, it is being said now that Ikata may be decided upon first. There are rumours that the local governor was more easily



At the hotel

persuaded because he was promised better train connections for the whole region.

Like in Osaka, in Matsuyama we meet citizen initiatives against the resumption of the plant's operation. They want lessons from Fukushima to be drawn and have stopped believing in a safe life in the vicinity of Ikata. They want to change Japan. We receive a news item from Germany this night that had not yet been officially confirmed in Japan: within Japanese government circles it is being admitted that in the first days after the meltdown in Fukushima all preparations for the voluntary evacuation of Tokyo had been undertaken. We had thought so, says Aileen, but it had always been denied. Evacuate Tokyo? The very idea changes Japan.

Ginkgo Avenue  
Tokyo



January 11, 2012  
**Back in Tokyo**

During the flight to Tokyo Aileen asks me if I had a wish. I reply, a good Japanese meal. Done deal, she says. We end up in a Starbucks located between the train station and the tower block that houses in Tokyo the Foreign Correspondents' Club. It is the fourth day of the journey, the fourth day of fast food.

In Tokyo, for one day we enter another world. All started with a press conference. On top of the obligatory evening event in a city hall, we are scheduled to take part in a working meeting with critical nuclear experts. Exactly twenty-five minutes are earmarked for a chat with a State Secretary from the Ministry for the Environment. We also meet the German and the EU ambassador and their respective specialists. Finally, there will be a hearing in Parliament. Again, there will be no time for boredom in these one and a half days. Already in the Starbucks I decide to accept all offers from

Ginkgo trees



the embassy to chauffeur and accompany us through the city.

The Foreign Correspondents' Club overlooks the city from high above. We have a chance for a while to peek from above into the Imperial Gardens. The press room is packed. The press conference was planned at short notice. We are asked to try and plug the anti-nuclear conference of *Peace Boat* in Yokohama. And Aileen wants that people in Asia know about the repercussions of Fukushima in Europe. It is immediately evident that many journalists know the subject well and are interested in our impressions and views. Correspondents from Europe tell us after the press conference that reporting about the Japanese anti-nuclear movement is problematic not only in Japan: also their employers throughout the world are interested in Fukushima but little or not at all in the development of the anti-nuclear movement. They think this may change when the anniversary comes round.

29 Later at the round table of the Japanese engineers and physicists Gueorgui gets a real grilling.

Votive offerings



He has to work hard to explain to them patiently the European debate on safety after Fukushima. The Japanese give their assessments of the implementation of the stress tests in Japan and how they deal with it. The government has installed a national scientific committee to examine the course of the disaster of Fukushima. They look into the radiological effects of the disaster, the causes of the meltdown and the unfolding of the accident in the reactors as well as the seismological conditions and much more. The committee is expected to present its findings at the end of 2012. Some of the best-known nuclear-critical specialists are involved in it. Although they fear that their involvement could be used as an alibi they would find it irresponsible not to contribute their expertise. This is a kind of deliberation they do not need to explain to Gueorgui. He wishes to have more insights in and more transparency about the Japanese debate on nuclear safety. The men discuss for a long time a series of critical incidents that occurred in Japan over the last decades. I am tired. The image of the Impe-



A menu

rial Gardens emerges from my mind and hovers over their transparencies of analyses of accidents. When will we visit Japan again carefree, as travellers?

Gueorgui Kastchiev,  
Aileen Mioko Smith,  
Toshiki Mashimo



January 12, 2012

## In Tokyo's governmental District

The German ambassador receives us early in the morning and with all the bells and whistles. I couldn't tell whether what he wears is a cut or a cocktail jacket. I look so puzzled that we receive immediate clarification. What the ambassador is wearing is also in Japan not your ordinary workaday suit. And it is not for us that this suit was taken out of the wardrobe, but for the Emperor: His slot on the daily schedule is just after mine. We have cake, baked by the Head of Office, accompanied by a crash course on the current state of the Japanese post-Fukushima debate on energy policy as seen by the embassy. A collection of opinion polls since spring 2011 allows us to understand when and to what extent attitudes towards nuclear power have shifted. The shift is not marked by the moment of the meltdown in Fukushima: most Japanese came to reject nuclear energy when they realized that the energy provider TEPCO failed to act adequately and





In the Metro

responsibly. It was only when it became evident that the Japanese government was not up to the job of handling the disaster that the decade-old consensus on the indispensability of nuclear energy broke up.

When it became clear that the people near Fukushima were not supported but left alone, the Japanese belief in nuclear power disintegrated. In Japan, even a whole year after Fukushima people still suffer from ignorance, incompetence, dissimulation and lies.

In this early morning hour in the German embassy, the information, impressions and intimations of the previous days come into perspective. Further conversations with the EU ambassador and the German and European energy experts of both parliaments demonstrate how high the stakes are in the political conflict on nuclear power in Japan. I learn that the former prime minister Naoto Kan made a law on the promotion of renewable energies a condition of his resignation. People say he was one of the

Silke Malorny and  
Akiko Yoshida



of nuclear energy. His successor and the latter's supporters continue an unreconstructed nuclear policy. Since Kan's resignation the continued operation of the nuclear power plants and the extension of their operation for 60 years are being prepared consistently. What the Japanese call the *Nuclear Village* is alive and kicking. The innocent notion of the village is a metaphor here for the tight fabric of nuclear industry, economy and politics. A large number of Japanese politicians is being supported within this Nuclear Village. Dependencies are multi-layered. Money is important. The Japanese press, too, is not actually independent from the fortunes of the powerful in the Nuclear Village. Ignorance and disinformation, which we have encountered repeatedly in the last days, are a result of inconsistent reporting. Even after Fukushima the anti-nuclear movement finds it difficult to get a hearing. That is no coincidence. It has nothing to do with journalistic deliberation either, but rather with the fear of editors that the newspaper or station might lose important advertising clients.



On our way

Later in the day during the hearing in parliament, the Kokkai-gijidō, the conflict about the future of the Japanese nuclear power stations becomes clearer. The strength of popular protest is a new phenomenon for Japanese politics. For the first time governors and mayors hesitate to consent to the continued operation of the nuclear power plants. And this is not only about power and re-election. Fukushima has shocked the Japanese. The imagery of nuclear catastrophe has now become Japanese, and the catastrophe continuous. One year on, one cannot but project the images of the smouldering ruins of Fukushima onto the reactors near Osaka, Kyoto and Matsuyama when deliberating their discontinuation or continuation. And the anti-nuclear movement has prominent supporters. The successful businessman and richest man of Japan, Matsuyoshi Son, has created a foundation for the Energy Turnaround. The noble laureate for literature, Kenzaburo Oë, blames himself and his compatriots. The great Japanese promise that a catastrophe like those at Hiroshima and Naga-



On our way

saki should never happen again had been violated already through the operation of nuclear plants. He had declared this already weeks after Fukushima. Kenzaburo Oë leads the Japanese campaign for the Nuclear Exit. On 3 March 2012, the anniversary of Fukushima, he will hand in to the government a petition on this issue. Five million signatures have already been collected.

The State Secretary for the Ministry for the Environment who has agreed to meet us is young and new in office. He receives us very politely but emphasizes that he will surely not be able to answer all questions. One part of his brief is the decontamination of the affected regions bordering on the prohibited zone. According to the official plan it should be possible to rehabilitate completely very large areas within a few years. Radioactive materials are to be dumped in newly erected transitory and permanent disposal sites within the twenty km prohibited zone. Work on this project is already under way. He explains how



Fukushima City

particular periods of time. He takes note of our sceptical questions and promises to answer them later in writing. Twenty-five minutes are allotted for the conversation. It takes exactly twenty-five minutes. I will hand in a catalogue of questions later. The short conversation with this young Secretary of State demonstrates the big difference between the old and the new thinking in Japan.

We say goodbye to our good fairies in the embassies and leave the government district by Metro. The small caravan under Aileen's leadership grows. We are joined by visitors from Korea when in the evening we leave Tokyo train station for Fukushima. Once more I try to make sense of my notes and thoughts and discover that the next day is not only a Friday but Friday the 13th.

On the train Aileen explains already one station before Fukushima that we now enter the contaminated area. It is dark and our surroundings are unremarkable, as is Fukushima city where we leave the train.

Are mouth-guards worn by more people  
37 here? Or less even than in Tokyo? On the train I

Fukushima City



saw a man wearing a dosimeter on his workman's jacket. Like on any train station, on the Shinkansen platform in Fukushima one can buy those pretty boxes with sushi and picturesque multi-coloured fast food. These boxes seem to be the Japanese life-support system. Only a large mural of a Japanese anti-alien-fighter in extra-terrestrial armour gestures towards the existence of any particular danger.

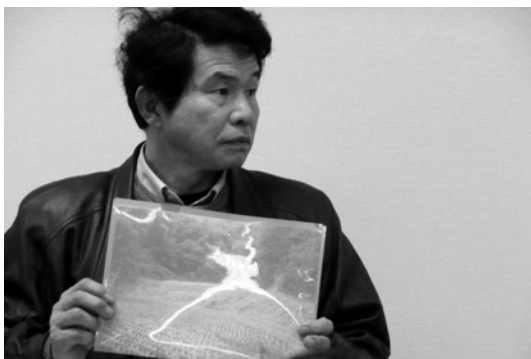
There is a large meeting in the Fukushima View Hotel in the evening of January 12. *Peace Boat* has invited a select number of people from politics and the environmental movement all over the world to a trip to Fukushima and Minamisoma. This visit is meant as a preparation for the Global Conference for a Nuclear Free World in Yokohama. The largest delegation is from Korea. I know some people from the large commemorative events in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There are a few Europeans who mostly know each other from the anti-nuclear movement. This meeting turns into a huge chinwag. I cannot remember how many times I spoke about



Fukushima City

the political fallout of the Japanese disaster in Europe. The story about Geiger counters selling out in France after Fukushima sounds bizarre here. The Koreans laugh most. They urge me to visit them. After Fukushima the Nuclear Exit seems feasible, also in Korea. Only five years ago I had been told in a similar gathering one night in Hiroshima that nuclear weapons can be fought but not nuclear power plants.

During my time in Japan I have tried again and again to imagine this place: Fukushima. Still tonight in Fukushima View Hotel I wonder what am I doing here? Do I really want to be here? I think of my 1988 journey into the area around Chernobyl. But I know that I will not enter the areas that people had to leave. I know I will come to towns and villages in which people continue to live and work. The disaster happens, life goes on.



Seijo Sugeno

January 13, 2012

## The Journey through the Prefecture of Fukushima

Unfortunately we are not able to meet official representatives of the prefecture of Fukushima as I had hoped to do. *Peace Boat* prepared for our international group three large information meetings with citizens' initiatives, farmers' associations and Fukushima University. We will visit Fukushima City, Date and Minamisoma. The long coach journeys in between will be used, too. We will be joined by members of the various citizens' initiatives who will talk about their aims, their work, their problems and successes. Like everything on this trip to Japan, this tour is planned perfectly. I try to maintain some emotional distance as the movement's travelling group hits the road. Already the first presentation in Fukushima City Hall dumbfounds me.



Launch of a documentation  
on life after the catastrophe  
on its first anniversary



## First Stop: Fukushima City Hall

In Fukushima City we listen to Fuminori Tamba, the founder of the *Institute for Fukushima Recovery* at Fukushima University. Speaking in a concise and detached manner, he states that almost a year after the meltdown in the Dai-ichi plant the mistakes and incompetencies of the disaster management continue. Measures for the protection of humans and environment are inconsistent and belated. This is how it was at the beginning of the catastrophe; this is how it is today. The nuclear plant Fukushima Daiichi was destroyed by the big earthquake on 11 March 2011. The meltdown happened on March 12. Only March 15 this fact was officially acknowledged. This delay caused by the energy provider TEPCO and the Japanese government remains inexcusable, Fuminori Tamba says. It has contributed significantly to the damage to people in the region. People living within the radius of two hundred and fifty km around the nuclear plant of Fukushima are particularly affected and

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permanently threatened by the fallout. In many places people spent a whole month after the catastrophe only indoors. Fuminori Tamba says contamination in the region is particularly high in specific places. To help our imagination we should think of a leopard: the map of radioactive contamination in the prefecture of Fukushima looks like the skin of a leopard. Even after the presentation I cannot comprehend the logic of the decisions on evacuations. Who decides, how and where outside the twenty km zone evacuations are recommended? What does a recommendation of 'voluntary evacuation' mean? Who will be compensated and who will not?

Those who left the region after earthquake, tsunami and meltdown are dispersed all over Japan. Only some twenty per cent of the evacuees live in purpose-built but improvised provisional settlements. Fukushima University tries to do systematic research on circa thirty thousand people. Fuminori Tamba mentions that especially children are in need of protection. Many parents

42 have sent their children away. Life in Fukushima

Abandoned?



is dangerous for children. And it is a restricted life. Staying indoors counts as healthy here, playground, playing field, park and pool are banned.

Fuminori Tamba reports that many parents organize self-help groups. They are left alone with their great worries about their children's health. And on top of that they also need to protect their children against discrimination. This is illustrated with a story about a baseball game. The members of the losing team ganged up after the game against their player from Fukushima: the sick weakling! Like the survivors of the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, people from Fukushima are now referred to as *hibakusha*, says Mrs. Marumori who had told the baseball story. And they share with the original *hibakusha* not only the moniker: like their's, their fate is to be repressed.

Aya Marumori who is involved with the *Citizens Radioactivity Measuring Station* talks of the feelings of fear, frustration, anger which torment people in Fukushima. There are still no answers to their questions. Everything is in the air. In-

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Fukushima



creasingly the people from the Fukushima area undertake their own research, measurements and examinations. Some organizations from abroad support them in this. Close to tears, she thanks for any help. And she accuses: for many decades all Japan has benefited from nuclear electricity from Fukushima. We, the Fukushima residents used only little of it, but suffer all the damage. And the government abandoned us with it. We need help. We need more doctors. More radiation experts. Please help us so we have a future.

The next speaker is Seijo Sugeno and comes from Nihommatsu, another city in the prefecture of Fukushima. He is the spokesperson for the regional network of ecological farmers. He has prepared a slideshow and shows us his beautiful village. The farmers there undertake their own efforts at decontaminating the land. They don't want to give up their farms and their land. They want to remain farmers and continue to produce healthy food. The soil in their village is very loamy. They bring organic materials and rock dust onto their fields. Through this treat-

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ment radioactive ions can be bound in the soil. Seijo Sugeno says they harvested brown rice with a measurement of less than one hundred Becquerel per kilo. This is significantly below the limit value of five hundred Becquerel per kilo. Measurements for rice from the mountains are significantly above the limit value. He shows pictures from rice fields that yielded highly contaminated rice. And he explains that the farmers have just discovered another problem. The water that flows from the mountains into the terraces and onto the plains is highly contaminated. It poisons rivers, canals, soil and groundwater. Seijo Sugeno and his colleagues try now to capture this water, dam it up or redirect it. His organization represents around two hundred farmers who produce ecologically. Additionally, there are hundreds more who produce not ecologically but sustainably. A web-based company for the marketing of their produce has now been launched. Demand is slow, he replies to my question. But that is normal, it is early hours, he adds.

45 He sounds as if he had to console the audience.

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The last presentation in the City Hall is by Hiroyuki Yoshino. He speaks on behalf of one of the large civil society groups who promote the protection of the children of Fukushima. For years he had been a donor and fundraiser for the Japanese branch of *Children of Chernobyl*. Now he has to bring his own children into safety. They have been brought to relatives further away from Fukushima. Like many parents in Fukushima he rarely sees his children. Many families live separate lives since the nuclear accident. He initiated the *Poka Poka Project* for the children who remained in the contaminated region. They allow the children of Fukushima regularly to stay at an uncontaminated old spa town, not very far away. As often as possible, the children are meant to spend a weekend or a day in a clean environment, sometimes with their parents, sometimes without. The hotels of this spa town have lost their old customers because of the vicinity to Fukushima and offer cheap tariffs. Still, they are too expensive for many parents. He asks us to collect funds for his *Poka Poka Project*. The more



On our way

money is collected, the more often more children can leave Fukushima and recover.

I get on the coach with mixed feelings. I can only admire these people to whom I listened a few hours, and their collective struggle for their homestead and safety. The more devastating it is that people in wealthy Japan, just a year after one of the greatest imaginable catastrophes, feel abandoned and betrayed. The journey out of Fukushima and towards the city of Date first leads through suburbs and industrial estates. Residential buildings, supermarkets, gas stations, workshops follow each other and create an impression of busyness. Then the first fields appear. Does Seijo Sugeno live here perhaps? Orchards with artfully trimmed trees are especially conspicuous. The land is carefully cultivated. The closer we get to Date the more rural the scenery becomes. We cross a large river several times and approach the hills in the hinterland. Is this where the dams against the radioactive water from the mountains are needed? I look for signs that point to the radiation. In this country of signs there are

Milk testing in Iitate  
(photo by Kenichi  
Hasegawa)



no signs for radioactivity? Nothing points out the dots of the leopard skin? I discern neither warning signs nor road blocks until we arrive at the evacuation centre.



Transport to the  
slaughterhouse  
(photo by  
Kenichi Hasegawa)



## Second Stop: the Evacuation Centre in Date

A central evacuation centre lies in the eastern part of the city of Date. The community centre that serves as an assembly hall is surrounded by rows of wooden prefab houses. In one of these live Kenichi Hasegawa and his family. He meets us in the community centre. His village had won a prize as one of Japan's most beautiful villages. He raves about the particular culture of his homeplace, famous for its temples. He explains that he is the chief of the Maeda District in Iitate. His village community lives the 'madei spirit'. This means to live with a full heart, politeness, a sense of duty, modesty and humility. Most farmers in Iitate are dairy farmers. Used to be dairy farmers, he corrects. Today a third of the people of Iitate live in the evacuation centre. He happened to be on his field when the catastrophe occurred. The earth around him suddenly made waves. When the earthquake ebbed away he ran to the village. His village, his house and

Suicide note  
(photo by Kenichi  
Hasegawa)



his family were still there. Only the next day he heard about Fukushima. As spokesperson of the district he was invited to a meeting in the community centre. He asked for information about Fukushima and the radiation. When he was given the measurements, he was shocked. He was told to keep silent about them. He returned to Iitate and arranged a village assembly for the next morning. In this meeting he passed on all the information he had. He told people to leave their houses only in emergencies, to switch off ventilation, to change and wash all clothes, not anymore to eat vegetable from the garden and to drink milk. This was on March 15, 2011. That day one hundred micro-Sievert per hour were measured near the village. He knew that from a journalist. At the next official meeting with the authorities in the community centre a map of the distribution of the fallout was shown. He demanded Iitate to be evacuated. His demand was ignored. Later on he managed to bring a professor from Tokyo to the village who examined milk samples. Following his results the farmers

Farmer in Iitate  
(photo by Kenichi  
Hasegawa)



decided themselves to stop milk production at the end of April. Now that an expert from Tokyo had made measurements also the authorities took the situation in Iitate seriously. Two cows were slaughtered and examined. Thereupon the farmers had to slaughter and destroy their herds. One farmer committed suicide subsequently. Kenichi Hasegawa shows us his friend's farewell letter. He swears he takes this man's last will seriously. He will work against any future for nuclear energy. In truth nobody in Japan had believed a large-scale nuclear accident could happen. He says nuclear power plants exist in Japan only because of this mistaken belief.

Today measurements in Iitate are higher than during the meltdown. Kenichi Hasegawa assumes that not all radioactive particles remain bound to the ground but some are blown away. And that the rain still brings radioactivity. He does not believe in a good future for the village. If his land tells him to return he will probably do so but his four grandchildren will not come with him. If he returns he will return alone. If

Kenichi Hasegawa  
in the Evacuation  
Centre



he will die in his village the village will die with him he says.

The testimony from the chief of the farmers of Iitate still makes me sad while I write this down. But there is consolation in his story, too. Kenichi Hasegawa is a man of sorrow. How could he not be? But he also seems energetic when he says that he travels a lot through Japan now, gives talks and discusses a lot – also with foreign visitors.

He has two goals. A catastrophe like this one shall never happen again. Japan must therefore abandon nuclear energy. And he wants to struggle against the discrimination of the people of Fukushima. He thinks of the discrimination against the victims and survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as Japan's sin. It must not be continued or repeated, and for that he will give his all.

One travels to Minamisoma through the mountains. Now I see a Japan that I had not yet encountered this week. Small settlements, solitary farms, fields surrounded by forests. It

Evacuation  
Centre



snows. A thin blanket of snow covers the bleakness of the day. No dust. The snow lights up the country and makes me take a deep breath. I remember Chernobyl and the first expeditions to the deserted villages which always took place when there was snow. Here the snow makes red fruit glow on the bald wintery trees. They are kaki trees. The area is famous for its dried fruit I am told. There was no harvest last year. In one valley monkeys frolic through the kaki plantations. Have they already assumed power here?

In passing we see a small group of workers in radiation protection suits on a yard fenced off by simple wire mesh. They handle black bin bags near a container. What are we seeing here? Are they putting into practice the great decontamination plan that the State Secretary of the Ministry for the Environment in Tokyo had spoken about? Or is this yard one of the highly radiating spots on the leopard skin?

We pass an abandoned shopping centre. A  
53 nearby school is closed. Is this Iitate? Were Ken-

Evacuation  
Centre



ichi Hasegawa's cows driven to the slaughterhouse along this road? It is hard to tell which houses and farms are inhabited and which are not. Sometimes we see tire tracks in the snow. Our guide, the spokesperson of the *Organic Farmer's Union*, says that some farmers and their families left the area. During the day the old people return to keep their places in order. Seijo Sugeno and his farmers want to hold on to their villages at any price. Although this had been incomprehensible to me in the morning, I begin to understand. I read it in the landscape.

Entrance  
to the zone



### Third Stop: the Gateway to the Zone

Before reaching the road blocks that mark the entry into the twenty kilometre prohibited zone we can glimpse the sea at the horizon. Some kilometres of flat land separate us from the strand. We can tell how far the tsunami fell onto land. A white house marks the borderline of the devastation by water.

Our coaches stop at the parking area of a service station a stone's throw from the prohibited zone. A place for resting, buying gas, eating; a perfectly normal resting place. It is not full. Two policemen in protective suits stand by their car on the almost empty parking area. We cannot see what they are doing.

All day our travel group has followed obediently the instructions of the Japanese guides. The groups stayed strictly together as they were allocated to the three coaches. Changing coaches was only welcome with permission. When the gate to the zone comes into view, though, most

Checkpoint  
at the zone



passengers start running. I am sure banners will be unfolded in a minute. Also the police at the road block wear protective suits and mouthguards. There is some excitement amongst them while we slowly walk towards them but they seem mostly concerned with our safety. I think they are afraid one of the foreigners could be run over by a car.

There is heavy traffic. Lorries and cars pass the control point mostly without stopping. People in most vehicles wear protective suits. The lorries are loaded with full black bin backs. The Japanese explain that they carry soil from the decontamination programme. Soil from contaminated regions is removed and transported to a central depot for nuclear waste in the prohibited area. I think of Chernobyl 1988. Also then the road into the zone was busy. There was an unending row of mostly military vehicles bringing soldiers, workers and material. We constantly encountered tank lorries that cleaned the roads with water. All vehicles that left the prohibited zone were washed and measured. No such thing





Minamisoma

happens at the gate to the zone of Fukushima. Perhaps this takes place further inside the zone, out of sight.

The policemen in their protective suits and masks swing their blinking staffs at the roadblock in a seemingly choreographed manner. They appear like jugglers at this control point between the worlds, this border between inhabited and uninhabited, between safety and danger. Do they think about this borderline? Do they question it? The police ballet at almost any intersection in Tokyo had impressed me already days ago. But at least twice as many uniformed men are employed in Tokyo to regulate the entering of a car park than we see here at the gate of the zone.



## Fourth Stop: the Tourist Information Centre in Minamisoma

It is getting dark when we meet citizens of Minamisoma in the tourist information centre. Mikaki Takahashi welcomes us. She has volunteered to explain to us the situation in her city. Since the catastrophe Minamisoma is divided into three areas. One area falls within the 20 km zone around the nuclear plant and is completely evacuated. The twenty km zone is prohibited and cannot be entered. Because of high radiation levels, a temporary evacuation recommendation has been issued for the area of Minamisoma that lies twenty to thirty km away from the destroyed nuclear plant. This recommendation has been cancelled since August 2011. Many but by no means all inhabitants have returned since. A third area of the city is more than thirty km away from the nuclear plant and has never been evacuated.

The city used to be a popular Japanese tourist destination. It was visited also by foreign tourists because of its wonderful location by



Minamisoma

the seaside. Most people who hear the word Minamisoma think of bathing, diving and surfing. Mikako Takahashi also enthusiastically mentions ancient horse riding traditions, horse breeding, annual festivals and horse races. When she states, almost incantatory, that the people of Minamisoma will not allow their city to turn into a ghost city, her voice breaks. She cries at the end of this day of sad stories. She is not alone. She straightens herself for her concluding comment: we have always known that the nuclear plant is there. Throughout forty years we have nursed the belief that science and technology evolve in such a way that all's well that ends well. Now we pay for this mistaken belief with our children.

She welcomes the Japanese poet Jotaro Wakamatsu and says that he has found the words to express what the people of Minamisoma feel. Wakamatsu had written on Chernobyl in the 1990s. His texts now read like prophecies. He had also written about the well-known earlier nuclear incidents at Fukushima.



Minamisoma

This night Wakamatsu reads from a volume of poetry that will be published on the first anniversary of the catastrophe. The big questions that drive him are: what are we about? What makes us human? These are his post-Fukushima questions.

The *Minamisoma Institute for Decontamination* aims to advise citizens on the decontamination of buildings, open spaces and soil. Mr. Hakuwaza talks about the difficulties of raising consciousness of the dangerousness of life in Minamisoma. People don't know what it means day in day out to live with high radioactivity levels. Micro-Sievert per hour are even more difficult to assess than cholesterol or sugar. The government claims that radioactivity is at acceptable levels and that after decontamination everything will be fine. Nevertheless every day, continuously, people in Minamisoma need to ask again: how do we clean the houses, how do we clean the fields, how do we clean the people, the animals, the rivers, the mountains, the

Spokespersons of  
the citizens' groups  
in Minamisoma



beaches and the sea? In their citizens' initiative they have drafted a plan for health checks and provisions. And they make their own plans for the struggle against radiation. They lend free Geiger counters and dosimeters. People in Minamisoma are enabled thus to measure the levels of radiation in their houses and gardens or at their workplaces. The government does not provide systematic advice says Hakuzawa. The decontamination of all affected areas has been announced. But the money for decontamination goes to large national enterprises and the energy providers. Only the remainder goes to the local authorities.

In spite of all difficulties and dangers the future of the city is being planned. Minamisoma is meant to become a model city for alternative energy. And this is more than just a phrase.

Finally we are introduced to the group *The Frontier Minamisoma*. Ryota Kusano looks young but seems to be ageing while he presents his memories. In the catastrophe everything disintegrates, he begins. Nothing remains as it used



Mrs. Takahashi

to be. Everything changes. We learned about the evacuation of our neighbourhood from the news. Even before we heard about the destruction of the nuclear plant Daiichi, we had hardly been able to cope. Ryota Kusano has meanwhile returned to Minamisoma, but without his wife and children. He was able to afford sending away his family. Not everybody can. Those who stayed behind or had returned wondered what they could do to bring the city back to life, so that not only the old would stay but also the young. First of all they distributed aid. Then there was a big tree planting event. The operator of the nuclear power plants donated the plants. The event was called the *Plant to Plant project*. During the planting event and afterwards there was a lot of discussion. Both sides gave their views. They talk and discuss about the interests of the energy providers and those of the farmers. Also that is our city, says Ryota Kusano. *Frontier Minamisoma* wants to do more for the children. Even a full year after the catastrophe the children of Minamisoma are all the time indoors.

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Fukushima



They long to be out. Since the catastrophe there has only been one sporting event. Finally, Kusano asks us to look at the *Recovery Department Store* of Minamisoma on the Internet. This is the latest project. We offer products and services out of and for Minamisoma and demonstrate that we are still alive and that we won't give up.

It is dark, and our big coach is a good hiding place. I would love to flee into the darkness of the night in the hills beyond Minamisoma. But I cannot escape the young woman who accompanies us back to the train station to Fukushima. She talks about the day she fled. She talks about how difficult the decision had been. Stay or go? She is a single mother with one daughter. What is best for the child? The answer is simple. But how and from what and, anyway, where to live, after you leave? There is no one to ask, no one to answer, to help with your decision. No expert, no mayor, no doctor, to say: leave! You are as alone as never before in your life. This is how you have to imagine the flight, she says. When she decided to leave, the road that we are now

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travelling was the road of the flight. Cars were bumper to bumper. Whoever wanted to get out, had to take this road, had to get into this lane. When she had made up her mind, there was already this endless flow of cars. More than a decision, there was a suction. She joined the exodus. No goal. No plan. On the fugitives' road there was but one orientation, but one direction. Away from the nuclear plant.

Today her daughter lives with relatives. She returned on her own. She must earn a living. She can see her daughter every fortnight. It is sad but healthy, she says. Together with other parents she has an idea of doing more for the children of Fukushima than regular trips to clean places. Many parents now wish to enrol their children with boarding schools. She asks whether these exist in our countries and, most of all, how expensive they are, and whether the state finances boarding schools.

When we say goodbye at Fukushima train station there is no time for many words. We have a train to catch. The next morning in Yokohama





On the  
fugitives' road

the big anti-nuclear conference will begin. To-  
day was our preparation for it.



Yokohama

January 14, 2012

## Yokohama, last Stop of the Journey

I have become accustomed to the strict time-keeping during events. I don't want to become accustomed, though, to the pushers who squeeze hesitant passengers into overcrowded cars in Tokyo's underground. The day in Fukushima not only felt like the longest day of the journey, it actually was. Only after midnight, Silke and I come to sit in the bar of the last hotel of our Japan trip. We have Yokohama Bay cocktails and share a helpless, slightly hysterical mood. Neither of us can remember what we had expected. We are both impressed by the narrations of the day, by the people who allowed us a glimpse into their lives. Do they feel our fear that their struggle against the loss of their homeplace is too dangerous and perhaps even pointless? The next morning I am supposed to open the conference. What should I say? Which of the ideas that I put together in Germany seem still valid at the end of the journey?

Conference poster



A fantastically illuminated giant wheel turns outside the window of my room on the seventeenth floor of the hotel. Are there Japanese cities without illuminated giant wheels? I pointed out cases of energy waste in every presentation of the last days. In this Yokohama night I stand on my balcony and observe the play of lights and many colours. In the centre of the fascinating glamour of the giant wheel a clock is ticking away. Seconds, minutes, hours pass. People around Fukushima have now lived for a whole year with the catastrophe. Still they don't know what else it will bring. But they sense that the day will never come on which they will say it's over.

With Aileen Mioko Smith on the anti-nuclear demonstration in Yokohama



## The Conference

I am being reminded three times on the morning of the conference that I have to meet my interpreter in time. I promise everything and fight the feeling that it's all a bit much. When I finally and not without hesitation talk to the man two hours before the event this turns out to be the best decision of the day. He wants to do a good job and have a deep enough understanding of what I will say. The questions of the interpreter help my concentration. What I fail to explain to him, I cut. It is not the first time that he translates critics of nuclear energy into Japanese. He knows his stuff. But even he finds out only in our conversation that but four of the 54 Japanese nuclear plants are currently in operation. Also he startles when we come to the passage in which we describe the situation of Japan with that after a nuclear war. What? Where did you get that from? Are you sure the radioactive fallout of Fukushima can be compared to 160 Hiroshima bombs?



Yokohama

Akira Kawasaki and Aileen who belong to the initiators of the conference are even more excited than I am. Several thousand participants are registered. Admission is rather slow. I tease my Japanese friends and suggest placing a timekeeper by the entrance. The week-long common journey through Japan has been marked by the tension over the conference. A lot of work has been invested in it, and a lot of the new Japanese will for change. I know the glow in Aileen's eyes: it is that David against Goliath glow that shows when David thinks he will win. All speakers assemble backstage. Eisaku Sato, the former governor of the region of Fukushima, speaks first. From all sides he and I are continuously reminded to stick to the allotted time. The timekeeper sits in the first row. On this occasion, the timekeeper is a young girl. I think of the clock and the ceaseless turning of the giant wheel. Thirteen minutes is what I am given at the end of the journey through Japan. The interpreter winks.

There is a real buzz after the opening of the conference. So much praise is rare. But I would



Yokohama

love to sneak away now. A few hours, uncontrolled, without timekeeper, without schedule, without interpreter, without guide, walking alone through Yokohama! As if she sensed something, Aileen asks whether I am happy. I say yes. Only, I still would like to see Japan. Next time, says Aileen. And the rapid rhythm of the journey continues. In town a demonstration for the Nuclear Exit has been organized. I am scheduled there with six minutes. A rather loud entertainer leads through the program. The tone of the speeches recalls revolutionary oratory. My interpreter claims though this is not about the storming of the TEPCO headquarter but about solar energy. And at the end of this week in Japan, after travelling the province of Fukushima and just before taking the microphone for the last time here, I believe in the Japanese solar revolution. Just as I believe that Kai Huckleberry Sawyer will change the world. The wind is still chilly but it smells of sea and spring. Tomorrow I will fly back to Europe. I will take many questions  
70 back with me. Different from after my first visit



Yokohama

five years ago I leave behind promises. I don't know whether we will be able to deliver. I know that Japan is different and that I don't understand a lot. But earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima have stirred up people in Japan more thoroughly than has been perceived especially by us in Europe. The mistaken belief that nuclear catastrophes cannot happen in Japan, this Japanese myth of safety, is broken. This will change Japan.

Yokohama



#### Appendix

### Excerpts from the speech by Rebecca Harms in Yokohama at the Opening of the Global Conference for a Nuclear Free World

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends of *Peace Boat* and *Green Action*, dear friends all over the world, most honoured fellow deputies from parliaments all over the world,

it is a great honour for me to be invited to speak at the opening of the international conference on the consequences of the nuclear catastrophe of Fukushima. It is a special honour to be allowed to address the citizens of Fukushima, of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Five years ago I have met some representatives of the hibakusha, the survivors of the nuclear attacks. I was invited to the commemorative ceremonies in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Those days in Japan have moved me very much. This was



With Eisaku Sato  
in Brussels



the nuclear power plant of Kashiwasaki, without causing the big catastrophe. Every night I saw TV footage of the multiple damage the reactors of the largest nuclear power plant of the world had suffered. Looking back now, these pictures can be read as a final warning. When I sat then in the plane back to Europe, I was full of questions and contradictions after many discussions on the ideas of the peace and anti-nuclear weapons movements in Japan. I could not understand that such a large movement that was also rooted in the trade unions fought for nuclear disarmament but would not challenge the use of nuclear energy. Even the nightly images of the destroyed plant in Kashiwasaki did not change this deliberate short-sightedness.

Now I am back in Japan. I travelled for one week and have given talks in Osaka, Matsuyama City and Tokyo on the repercussions of Fukushima in Europe, on the Nuclear Exit in Germany and on European stress tests. I have learned much. I have found new friends. Together we

73 have perhaps contributed to the strengthening

of the civic movement against nuclear energy in Japan. Tomorrow I will again leave Japan with open questions and in bewilderment and in sorrow.

Are we humans able to learn from catastrophes? Will we collectively learn from Fukushima?

A good year after Fukushima but far away from Japan, consequences are being drawn from the nuclear catastrophe. In Europe, the nuclear industry is facing its demise. In my home place Germany eight reactors were taken off the grid. The Nuclear Exit is technologically feasible because the use of renewable energies, sun, wind and biomass has been started a decade ago. Abandoning nuclear energy is politically compelling because after Fukushima the Germans have demonstrated in parliamentary elections that after Fukushima, pro-nuclear parties lose elections. In Europe, not only Germany was changed by Fukushima. In an Italian referendum 90% of the electorate voted against entering the use of nuclear energy. Switzerland and Belgium have confirmed earlier decisions to exit nuclear energy. In France, the nation of nuclear power and the nuclear bomb, not only the Greens but also the Socialists fought presidential elections on a Nuclear Exit platform. More than half of the states of the European Union either never used nuclear energy or have decided to abandon it.

And Japan? It is nothing less than sensational: the unthinkable has become reality. Here in Japan but four of the fifty-four reactors are operat-

ing today! It is expensive. But Japanese industry and Japanese megacities work without nuclear energy. I knew about the non-operation of the reactors. And I expected to visit a country suffering from a lack of electric power. But I visited a country that still wastes energy to the full extent. With only four reactors on the grid!

I was explained the Japanese opinion polls. They are impressive and contradict media reports in Europe on public opinion concerning nuclear power in Japan. Not only a majority, but a large majority in Japan opposes today a future built on nuclear power. I was asked what matters most now taking into account experiences made in Germany?

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends, your mayors, your governors, your deputies, your governments, they all need to understand now that either they will have to organize the Nuclear Exit or they will have to fear for their power. A few days ago 50,000 signatures were handed over to the city council of Osaka. People in Osaka do not want the nuclear power plant in Oi to go back into operation. Change takes place also in Japan. Europe should support Japan's energy turnaround as much as possible. We should share with Japan our expertise in strategies of sustainable energy rather than the European stress test for nuclear power plants which also in Japan serves nothing other than the manipulation of public opinion.

I would like to use the second part of my  
75 talk for thanking the women and men whom I

met yesterday in Fukushima, Iitate and Minamisoma. They granted me a glimpse into their lives a year after Fukushima. What did I see? What did I understand? It is difficult to speak about in the country of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Japan's situation is not the same as that after a nuclear attack. But some of the problems are similar. The caesium content of the fallout of Fukushima is the equivalent of more than one hundred and sixty Hiroshima bombs. What I have learned about life in the regions that are most affected by the fallout is evidence of an embarrassingly poor performance by the Japanese government, parliament, the nuclear industry and the media.

They have lived a whole year with Fukushima but the people are still on their own with the torment of their questions and doubts concerning their lives and their children's lives. Health controls and provisions are insufficient in the contaminated regions. Decisions on which areas to evacuate and which not, are not transparent. People's deep-rooted wish not to lose their home places is taken advantage of by those who want to avoid the immense costs and difficulties of resettlement. In spite of wishing to leave, many stay because they would not find work elsewhere. All those who can afford the money send their children away from a life with continuous radiation. According to Japanese consumer protection groups, food, too, is anything but safe. The government's promise to decontaminate the area around Fukushima is so far just that, a promise, and a promise at that that for large regions seems impossible to fulfil.

The reports about the ways in which the people of Fukushima are discriminated against and their worries are ignored are particularly disheartening. The hibakusha of Fukushima, the survivors of Fukushima, are denigrated just like the hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were, and society refuses in this manner to assume its responsibility for their fortune. This has to end.

Quite literally, beneath the reports about lives turned upside down smoulder the ruins of what used to be the nuclear plant of Fukushima. Nothing of what I was told suggests that the ruins of the reactors are under control today. Nobody is able or willing to say precisely what state the hot remains of the nuclear reactors are in, how much nuclear mass is still there after the explosions. The ruins were merely stabilized with individual pillars. One does not dare to imagine the potential consequences of another earthquake. The Japanese Nuclear Regulation Authority and the energy provider TEPCO describe the current state as Cold Shutdown. This formula is severely misleading. It is a scandal that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEO) covers up this manipulation and that the international community remains silent on it.

Finally I would like to address the Japanese government directly: listen to the people of the province of Fukushima. They are citizens for whom you are responsible. And they need far more support and help than they have received so far.

77 I know that Japan has lived through a year of immense catastrophes and was confronted by

With the  
Japanese  
delegation in  
Brussels



unimaginable difficulties and tasks after earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima. I think other governments would have failed similarly in similar situations. There is nothing specifically Japanese about this failure in the face of disaster. But we must not continue to sit and watch passively the continuing failure concerning the nuclear catastrophe that has only just begun and that threatens generations of Japanese.

I dare the Japanese government to give up its isolation. Japan needs to be supported in the efforts to fully analyse the accident, better to fight its consequences and to provide the best protection to the affected people and especially the children. It is not enough to invite IAEA delegations to Fukushima. Driven as it is by the mission to spread the use of nuclear energy throughout the world, the IAEA declared twenty-five years ago Chernobyl was a problem of Soviet technology and mentality. Today the nuclear fanatics of the IAEA try to make Fukushima a typically Japanese failure. The Japanese government must finally invite an international

Task Force. Experiences made after Chernobyl in the Ukraine and White Russia can save lives. Independent experts from the fields of science, technology and medicine have a lot to contribute to improving the safety of the people of Fukushima. Japan cannot and does not have to achieve this on its own.

At the end of my journey through Japan I thank all those who have invited me. I promise I will support you to the full extent of my possibilities.

## Afterword

In spite of decades of studying nuclear energy and the destructive powers that are connected to it, what I heard from the people I met in Japan has worried and disturbed me. I believe also in Europe we must pay their stories more attention. I was very happy therefore when a few weeks after my visit to Japan the former governor of Fukushima, Eisaku Sato, the farmer Ken-ichi Hasegawa and Aileen Mioko Smith came to Brussels. They spoke about Fukushima and its repercussions in the European Parliament, in Antwerp, Paris and Vienna to give us in Europe an idea of what the disaster looks like that lurks in every nuclear power plant, no matter who operates it or where. And they have voiced again their call for international help. To give their call for help more resonance we have to make sure the people of Fukushima and the anti-nuclear movement in Japan receive a better hearing.





## The author

Rebecca Harms is today parliamentary group leader of the Greens in the European Parliament. She lives in Lower Saxony in the county of Lüchow-Dannenberg. Her involvement with the struggle against nuclear power began when in 1977 the salt stock Gorleben in this county was chosen as a permanent disposal site for nuclear waste. She was a founding member of the citizens' initiative Lüchow-Dannenberg and was involved henceforth in the German and international anti-nuclear movements. In 1988 she was one of the first representatives of an NGO to visit the prohibited area of Chernobyl. Before being elected to the European Parliament she had been for more than a decade a Green Member of Parliament in Lower Saxony. Her work is widely acknowledged in the political sphere and in the global anti-nuclear movement.