The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus
n-depth critical analysis of the forces shaping the Asia-Pacific...and the world.

Japan's Earthquake-Tsunami-Nuclear Disaster Syndrome: An Unprecedented Form of Catastrophe　日本の地震津波原発事故症候群––未曽有の惨事

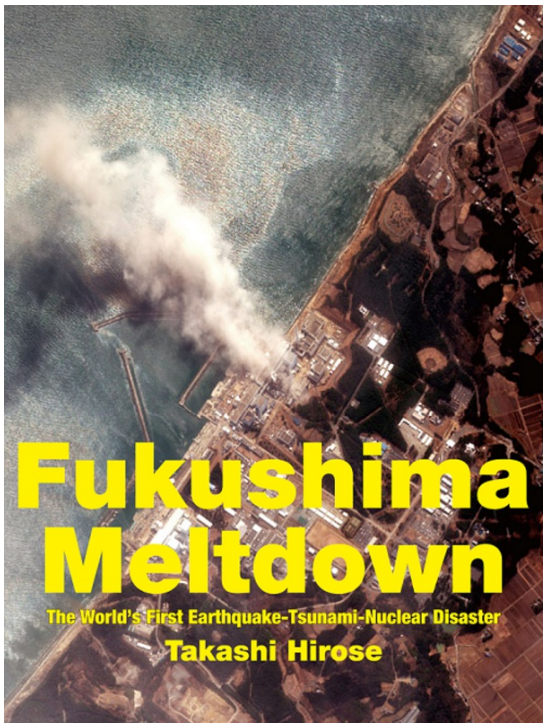
Hirose Takashi

Japan's Earthquake-Tsunami-Nuclear Disaster Syndrome: An Unprecedented Form of Catastrophe　Updated with book review on October 22, 2011

Hirose Takashi

Translated by C. Douglas Lummis

The seismologist Ishibashi Katsuhiko (presently Emeritus Professor at Kobe University) predicted that a nuclear power plant accident like the present one was possible, and issued warnings from the late '90s. People had been warning of the danger of earthquake-caused nuclear accidents since the 1970s, but Ishibashi, from the specialized standpoint of seismology, proposed a new concept, which he called *genpatsu shinsai* [Translator's note: this expression literally means Nuclear-Power-Plant-Earthquake Disaster. As there is no English expression for this (the phenomenon itself is new) in this work we will render it as genpatsu shinsai syndrome.]. By this he meant a situation in which, as the damage from the earthquake widens, the situation is made doubly worse by nuclear radiation damage. It was in the hope of preventing this that he was issuing warnings. Ishibashi wrote many books on this, including *Daichidouran no Jidai (The Age of Shifting Earth)* (Iwanami Shinsho) and he is a very well-known scholar, so it is impossible that his warnings were unknown to the officials of the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO).



I myself published in August of last year (2010) *Genshiro Jigen Bakudan – Daijishin ni Obieru Nihonretto (Nuclear Reactor Time Bomb – The Japanese Archipelago under the Danger of Great Earthquakes)* (Diamond) in which I tried to give the warnings of Ishibashi and others a wider audience, and to call for preventive measures to be taken against a genpatsu shinsai syndrome. Though as for earthquakes and tsunamis I am no more than a layman, I forecast the possibility of such a catastrophe, and wrote about nuclear contamination. It is a terrifying subject. Nevertheless, on the possibility of a genpatsu shinsai syndrome I wrote as follows.

> "If you ask, "Will Japan still be here in ten years?" I have the evil foreboding that the answer might be, "There is a very strong chance that it will not" . . . . In the future there awaits an unknowable, vast dark age. I don't want to contemplate its form, but it is the fear of a genpatsu shinsai syndrome brought about by movements of the earth that no human knowledge can control."

Today this evil foreboding has become a reality, and is getting worse day by day. If I, neither a scholar nor a specialist, was able to foresee this, and the nuclear power specialists from TEPCO and from the government's nuclear-related agencies were not, then for what do they exist?

A Mass Media that Reports Neither Facts nor Predictions

When I finished writing *Nuclear Power Plant Time Bomb*, I was hoping deep inside that my assertion that a genpatsu shinsai syndrome was possible would prove to be a mistake. I was praying that nuclear power would be abolished, and the things that I had written would not come to pass. At the same time I resolved within myself that if things did occur as I had described, I would say nothing further.

However, even though now that the genpatsu shinsai syndrome has actually occurred, the people of Japan seem not to have grasped the nature of the crisis. Unbelievably, though anyone who looks can see that the situation is getting worse day by day, television and the other media keep repeating "there is no crisis", "There's nothing to worry about" over and over, and show no inclination to report the critical nature of what is happening at Fukushima Daiichi. The obfuscations such as those I mentioned above, "The tsunami was beyond our expectation", "Such small amounts of radiation have no effect on health", and other statements by government people that obscure the dangers of exposure to radiation step outside the realm of the permissible.

In the past, on television only scholars who are proponents of nuclear power have given commentary as "experts". We listened to them telling their fantastic lies and offering their impossibly optimistic predictions, and as a result the people, having been given none of the facts, have gone on living as normal right up to the edge of the collapse. Now everything the "experts" told us has proved wrong, and the worst has happened. What is remarkable is that these people who failed to predict the genpatsu shinsai syndrome are shameless enough to put on their "expert" masks, reappear on television, and give their commentaries on the accident. The people responsible for the horror of this nuclear accident are the people who promoted nuclear power. The people in the TV stations who brought in this criminal gang and put them on the air day after day are equally responsible. Has there ever been even once that a television station warned the public that a nuclear power plant might be destroyed by an earthquake? Or a station that warned of the danger of a tsunami? After it has happened, even a child can do it.

Their ignorance and incompetence is proved day by day. I will treat this in more detail in Chapter 1, but on 12 March, 2011, when the No. 2 reactor at Fukushima Daiichi underwent a hydrogen explosion and it was clear that the worst had happened and a large amount of radioactive material had escaped outside, the commentators were at pains to persuade us that the crisis was very slight. The mainstream media not only did not warn the people about the danger of a genpatsu shinsai syndrome before it happened, but even after it had, went on broadcasting as if it hadn't. This is going on right now. This is as

terrifying as what is happening at the actual site.

Then a month after the accident, on 11 April, the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC, the Government agency that oversees the nuclear power industry) announced that the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant "in the first hours after the accident, was emitting as much as 10,000 terabecquerels of radiation per hour (one terabcquerel = one trillion becquerels – bq)", and the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA, an agency of Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry – METI) acknowledged that the accident was at the same level as Chernobyl. According to data taken between 11 March, the day of the disaster, and April 5 the total amount of radioactive iodine 131 and cesium 137 released into the atmosphere, as of 23 March, was more than 100,000 terabecquerels, several tens of thousands of terabecquerels above the standard for a Level 7 accident. From the first days after the earthquake I had been saying that huge amounts of radiation were sure to be escaping, but people only pointed their fingers at me as a rumor monger. A month later, the government acknowledged that the "rumor" was true. From day one the situation had reached the highest level for nuclear accidents, Level 7, and from day one the government knew this, but it concealed that information from the people, thus causing far more people to be irradiated than otherwise would have been the case. Or if they were unable to know this from the beginning, this only proves that they have neither competence at measurement nor sound judgment, which is more serious still.

Next, the television stations that announced the news about Level 7 all followed that with repetitions of the NISA statement that still, "the amount of radiation released at Fukushima was only one tenth of that released at Chernobyl".

If Fukushima released one tenth of the radiation released at Chernobyl, what would happen? How many people know how many radiation victims there have been in the three countries that resulted after the demise of the Soviet Union – Russia, the Ukraine, and Belarus? In 2004, 18 years after the accident, the Welfare Ministry of the Ukraine released documents indicating that the Chernobyl accident produced 3,200,000 radiation victims, and that 2,300,000, including 450,000 children, were under government care. The following year the Russian Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development announced that there were in Russia more than 1,450,000 people whose health had been damaged by the Chernobyl accident and 226,000 children born after the accident, and thus under 18, whose health had been damaged by the accident. Among the victims, 46,000 had been certified as physically disabled. In March, 2006, 20 years after the accident, the people whose health had been damaged in Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus numbered 7,000,000. On 26 April, 2009 a memorial was held for the Chernobyl victims in the Ukraine, where more than 2,300,000 people have been officially recognized as radiation victims, and 4,400 who were children or youths at the time of the accident, were irradiated by radioactive iodine, and have been operated on for thyroid cancer. From this we can understand what is going to happen in Japan, whose population density is far greater than that of Russia, the Ukraine and Belarus.

It is people like these, who are unaware of these historical facts, and who remain unabashedly ignorant of the dangers of radiation, who control Japan's mass media. To say that "the radiation released is only one tenth that of Chernobyl", which means that hundreds of thousands of people have been exposed to serious levels of radiation, is to take the shameful position that you are not interested in learning what is going to happen, but only in protecting yourself. This is not easy to forgive.

In the event, I find I am not able to remain silent. When Asahi Shinsho contacted me, I decided that I did have to write one more book. I realized that, to try to save our children and young people, I must make known to as many people as possible, and as soon as possible, the things that the television "experts" refuse to deal with, even though the crisis is upon us: the essential, common-sense facts about nuclear power plants, and the likely form that the next genpatsu shinsai syndrome will take.

If we do not understand the seriousness of the Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant accident, we will certainly be hit by the #2 and #3 genpatsu shinsai syndrome before long. I am positive of this. We absolutely must prevent that from happening. If a genpatsu shinsai syndrome surpassing Fukushima does occur – then I will surely fall silent. I will write no more books about nuclear power. Writing such books will no longer have any meaning.

Excerpted from Chapter One of Hirose Takashi's newly translated e-book, *Fukushima Meltdown: The World's First Earthquake-Tsunami Nuclear Disaster* (Kindle Books). Translated by a team headed by C. Douglas Lummis. The e-book is available from Amazon at $9.99.

In Japan, one of the loudest, most persistent and best informed of the voices with common sense questions about nuclear power has been that of Hirose Takashi. Mr. Hirose first came into public view with a Swiftean satire he published in 1981, *Tokyo e, Genpatsu wo! (Nuclear Power Plants to Tokyo!)* (Shueisha). In that work, he made the argument that, if it is really true that these plants are perfectly safe ("accidents never happen") then why not build them in downtown Tokyo rather than in far-off places? By putting them so far away you lose half the electricity in the wires, and waste all that hot water by pumping it into the ocean instead of delivering it to people's homes where it could be used for baths and cooking. The book outraged a lot of people – especially in Tokyo – and revealed the hypocrisy of the safety argument.

In the years since then he has published volume after volume on the nuclear power issue – particularly focusing on the absurdity of building a facility that requires absolutely no accidents whatsoever, on an archipelago famous as the earthquake capital of the world. Again and again he made frightening predictions which (as he writes in *Fukushima Meltdown*, he was always praying would prove wrong. Tragically, they did not.

A review of the book by Roger Pulvers is available here.

C. Douglas Lummis is the author of Radical Democracy *and other books in Japanese and English. A Japan Focus associate, he formerly taught at Tsuda College.*

Recommended citation: Hirose Takashi, 'Japan's Earthquake-Tsunami-Nuclear Disaster Syndrome: An Unprecedented Form of Catastrophe,' The Asia-Pacific Journal *Vol 9, Issue 39 No 1, September 26, 2011.*

See in addition, Hirose Takashi, The Nuclear Disaster That Could Destroy Japan – On the danger of a killer earthquake in the Japanese Archipelago

Articles on related subjects

• Winifred A. Bird and Elizabeth Grossman, Chemical Contamination, Cleanup and Longterm Consequences of Japan'sEarthquake and Tsunami

• Kodama Tatsuhiko, Radiation Effects on Health: Protect the Children of Fukushima

• David McNeill and Jake Adelstein, What happened at Fukushima?

• Koide Hiroaki, The Truth About Nuclear Power: Japanese Nuclear Engineer Calls for Abolition

• Chris Busby, Norimatsu Satoko and Narusawa Muneo, Fukushima is Worse than Chernobyl – on Global Contamination

• Yuki Tanaka and Peter Kuznick, Japan, the Atomic Bomb, and the "Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Power"

• Paul Jobin, Dying for TEPCO? Fukushima's Nuclear Contract Workers

• Say-Peace Project and Norimatsu Satoko, Protecting Children Against Radiation: Japanese Citizens Take Radiation Protection into Their Own Hands

See other articles on Fukushima in the What's Hot section of the Asia-Pacific Journal and a complete list of articles on 3.11 Earthquake, Tsunami and Atomic Meltdown.

Created by Datamomentum