

Hiroshima and Fukushima

Hiroshima was attacked with an atomic bomb 70 years ago and the people in Hiroshima were exposed to tremendous amount of radiation. Sixty-six years later, Fukushima experienced a big earthquake. A subsequent Tsunami disrupted the electric system of the nuclear power plant and caused hydrogen explosions. As a result, the people in Fukushima were exposed to radioactive substances. The cause of radiation exposure and the received doses are different, but these incidents both generate anxiety about the danger of radiation. Japan has accumulated knowledge on radiation effects from the experiences of Hiroshima, but in Fukushima, people are being exposed to low level of radiation continuously in everyday life. In this respect it is different from what Japan has learned from Hiroshima and no one could provide a clear answer to the question of long-term consequences. Ties between the two cities, however, have developed on different levels over the last four years.

Refugees from the area near the nuclear power plant in Fukushima visited Hiroshima to learn about the influence of radioactive substances on the human body and effective measures to contain the influence as much as possible.

Doctors in Hiroshima who specialize in radiology and crisis intervention went to Fukushima immediately after the disaster. They measured the radiation dosage of each person based on their evacuation course after the explosion of the power plant and suggested to prioritize the decontamination of the refugees whose dosage was higher. The visits of the doctors are continuing.

At a high school class reunion in Hiroshima, a graduate who works as a monk in the area near the nuclear power plant in Fukushima was invited as a guest speaker and talked about his experiences during the last four years since the earthquake. His talk centered on the conditions when the earthquake happened and how he coped with the situation and supported his parishioners as a monk who is usually expected to behave as a spiritual leader in a crisis such as this.

In Japan, third year high school students go on a school excursion to learn about the historical and cultural background of their country. Venues of this trip usually includes such places as Okinawa, Kyoto and Hiroshima, depending on the school's focus. A high school in Hiroshima picked Fukushima as a venue for their school excursion. Some parents supported this idea but there are those who opposed to it, worrying about the radiation influences on their offspring. Thus, the school proposed a different course.

Hiroshima peace media center, the online version of The Chugoku Shimbun, a Hiroshima based

newspaper, published a special column, "Fukushima and Hiroshima", dealing with the situation from May 2011, just two months after the disaster to March 2012, the one year anniversary of the earthquake. The article stated that people in Hiroshima who experienced the atomic bomb 70 years ago will continue to stand close to people in Fukushima who are currently tacking another unfathomable conundrum.

These are anecdotal examples of the bonds between Hiroshima and Fukushima. However, it may not be overgeneralization to say that these stories demonstrate that people in Hiroshima are concerned and care about the situation in Fukushima, keep close attention to it and are determined to continue to support the recovery whose course is yet to be seen. Hiroshima struggled with the aftermath of radiation exposure over the past 70 years. So it must have a special sentiment to Fukushima which currently deals with it. Hiroshima will be a model as well as comrade for Fukushima which has just started a long journey of recovery.

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