

On September-19 denuclearization action in Japan - 2 -

Tuesday 20 September 2011, by [KAMATA Satoshi](#), [LEUSSINK Daniel](#), [NAGATA Kazuaki](#) (Date first published: 20 September 2011).

We already posted online a number of articles on the September 19 demonstration. See on ESSF (article 22901): [On September-19 denuclearization action in Japan - 1 -](#)

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Tokyo rally drew 60,000: organizers — Masses turn out to protest nuclear power

Tens of thousands of people including musicians, a Nobel laureate and Fukushima residents converged on Meiji Park in Tokyo Monday to vent their anger about the Fukushima No. 1 nuclear plant crisis and demand the abolition of atomic power.

Despite the unseasonably hot and humid weather, the turnout for the Goodbye Nuclear Power Plants rally was impressive in scale and one of the largest antinuclear rallies so far.

“As six months passed, we are starting to see things a bit clearer now,” said Ruiko Muto, a member of a Fukushima citizens’ group, told the crowd as she took the stage at the rally point in Shibuya Ward.

“We now know that the facts (about the crisis) have not been revealed, the government does not protect the people, the Fukushima accident is still ongoing . . . but there are people who still promote nuclear power,” she said.

The rally’s organizers put the turnout at around 60,000. The Metropolitan Police Department said it doesn’t provide crowd figures.

Protesters were armed with colorful signs, banners and outfits to express their opposition, while well-known figures involved in the event made speeches to spur them on.

Nobel laureate and author Kenzaburo Oe, who was among the organizers, said that while Italy held a

national referendum on nuclear power and the people voted it down, Japan still has forces that want to promote it.

In order to stop them, “what we can do is to have democratic public meetings and demonstrations,” Oe said.

The event also drew hundreds of participants from Fukushima Prefecture.

Muto, whose group is studying the prefecture’s future after the Fukushima No. 1 plant is finally decommissioned, told the crowd that since March 11, the people in Fukushima have had to make decisions every day on matters ranging from whether to evacuate and force children to wear masks to such mundane tasks as drying laundry outside and plowing their fields.

The participants took to the streets at around 2:30 p.m. and marched through the Aoyama and Omotesando districts as they made their way to Yoyogi Park, chanting slogans like “We don’t need nuclear power plants!” and “Tokyo Electric Power Co. must pay compensation to the victims!”

Passersby curiously scrutinized the long lines of protesters, which included children and senior citizens.

The huge turnout even surprised the participants, hinting that the crisis had finally stirred something in the nation’s normally passive psyche.

Kayo Nimura, a Tokyo resident in her 40s, said she had participated in an antinuclear demonstration before but was shocked by Monday’s massive turnout, admitting she had never truly had an interest in nuclear power until March 11.

“Because of what happened, I did some study and found out that many things appear skeptical, such as Tepco’s management, how electricity prices are decided and their plans for nuclear waste,” said Nimura, who came with her parents, who are originally from Fukushima.

In addition to Oe, several other antinuclear celebrities also had a hand in the event, including musician Ryuichi Sakamoto, journalist Satoshi Kamata and author Keiko Ochiai.

According to their website (sayonara-nukes.org/english/), the organizers announced two plans for action in June. One was Monday’s rally and the other a drive to collect 10 million signatures from those who favor cutting Japan’s dependence on nuclear power by not building new atomic plants and by decommissioning existing ones in a planned manner.

By KAZUAKI NAGATA, *Japan Times* Staff writer, September 20, 2011
<http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20110920a1.html>

Protesters voice distrust, concern in huge anti-nuclear rally in Tokyo

When tens of thousands of people marched through central Tokyo on Sept. 19 in the country’s largest anti-nuclear demonstration since the Fukushima nuclear catastrophe, there were a variety of reasons for people to be there — fear, anger, loneliness, longing for home, and distrust just a few of them.

“I want to see everyone involved in this — even people outside of Fukushima,” said Kenichi Yamazaki, 65, a former teacher from the city of Minamisoma, Fukushima Prefecture.

Following the explosions at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant operated by Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO), Yamazaki evacuated to Kawasaki in Kanagawa Prefecture together with his wife, daughter and grandchild. His son-in-law, a firefighter, is still working in the prefecture. “We want to return,” he says, “but thinking of my 1-year-old grandchild, we can’t live there until the city is decontaminated.”

“I never thought that at this age I’d be away from home,” Yamazaki added as he made his way to the demonstration parade. “I’m concerned and sad, but unless we get involved in action, nothing will ever change.”

A 40-year-old woman from Iitate, Fukushima Prefecture, whose name has been withheld, rode a bus all the way from the city of Fukushima — where she currently lives in a temporary housing unit — to join the Sept. 19 rally.

After the power-plant disaster, she and her husband left the company where they were both employed.

“I’m here today partially because I want to criticize myself for having been so indifferent (to nuclear-related issues) up till now,” she said, recalling that as a child she once visited a nuclear power plant in Fukushima Prefecture as part of a class assignment, but she never thought about the issue in her daily life.

“There is no place to address my frustration, but at least today, I can shout ‘We don’t need nuclear power anymore’ as loud as I wish,” she said.

Also participating was a 72-year-old woman from the city of Koriyama, Fukushima Prefecture, who joined together with friends from the same city.

“All the children have left,” the 72-year-old said. “I want the city to be reinstated so that we can hear the cheerful voices of in the parks and school yards again. I can’t trust TEPCO or the government,” she added, “I think they are still hiding something inconvenient for them. The sole fact that so many people have gathered here today shows everyone’s distrust.”

A Tokyo resident, Miki Ogawa, 40, was also among the protestors.

“I believe the worst thing to do is just to sit, watch and do nothing,” she said, admitting it was her first time to join an anti-nuclear demonstration. Her parents’ house is located near the Hamaoka nuclear power plant in Shizuoka Prefecture, and ever since the Fukushima disaster, she has lived in constant fear.

“I realized that the government was lying when they told us nuclear power plants were safe,” she said.

Ogawa’s younger sister, who lives in Toda, Saitama Prefecture, gave birth to a baby girl in June this year, but is refraining from taking her outside in fear of radiation leaking from the crippled Fukushima plant.

“I want the government to abolish all nuclear power plants for the sake of our children’s futures,” Ogawa said. “Seeing so many people who share my thoughts today, I believe we can make it happen.”

Mainichi Shimbun , September 20, 2011

<http://mdn.mainichi.jp/mdnnews/national/archive/news/2011/09/20/20110920p2a00m0na015000c.html>

Japanese anti-nuclear citizens groups stage rally at Capitol Hill

WASHINGTON, Sept. 19, Kyodo — Members of Japanese citizens groups staged a rally at Capitol Hill in Washington on Monday, urging U.S. citizens to learn lessons from the ongoing nuclear crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi power plant.

They plan to stage similar events later in New York where leaders from around the world are scheduled to attend the United Nations General Assembly session this week.

At the Washington event attended by several U.S. lawmakers, Sachiko Sato, a member of the Fukushima Network for Saving Children from Radiation, said Japan urged residents only of areas where the amount of annual radiation might exceed 20 millisieverts to evacuate, despite the government-set upper limit of radiation for the general public of 1 millisieverts per year.

Kyodo, September 19, 2011

<http://english.kyodonews.jp/news/2011/09/115771.html>

Pressure builds in Japan's nuclear divide

TOKYO - Following the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant six months ago, nine prominent Japanese intellectuals have launched a popular movement that seeks to abolish nuclear power and the closure of all nuclear power plants in Japan.

The group, which includes Nobel literature prize laureate Kenzaburo Oe and musician Ryuichi Sakamoto, plans to collect 10 million signatures in support of their proposal for a nuclear-free Japan. On Monday, the group organized a colorful demonstration followed by three vocal protest marches through Tokyo, attracting about 60,000 people.

The theme of the demonstration was "Sayonara genpatsu," "Goodbye nuclear power plants."

Satoshi Kamata is one of the intellectuals behind the movement. The 73-year-old author and freelance journalist covered Japan's nuclear industry for over four decades, also publishing articles and books on Toyota and the citizens' movement against the construction of Narita airport, Japan's primary international airport. He was a speaker at the event on Monday.

Kamata spoke with *Asia Times Online* about the historical significance of the demonstration in a coffee shop near Kiyose station, a 25-minute train ride from central Tokyo, on Sunday. That was a day before the demonstration took place.

Asia Times Online: What are your expectations of tomorrow's demonstration?

Satoshi Kamata: Demonstrations in Japan are a little bit different from demonstrations in the United States or Europe, where hundreds of thousands protesters might protest against nuclear energy. In Japan, nationwide demonstrations attracted 10,000 or 20,000 protesters in total so far. This time, we hope 50,000 protesters will come.

We are collecting 10 million signatures against nuclear energy and have invited many well-known writers and thinkers to take part in this protest. There are around 100 supporting figures including Yoji Yamada [a famous filmmaker] and Masazumi Harada [a doctor known for his treatment of sufferers from the industrial Minamata disease] who back our movement in addition to the nine of us who called out publicly.

On March 24 next year, we will hold a follow-up rally in Hibiya Park. That rally will be held to present the 10-million signature petition against nuclear energy to the national government. We'll also hold other demonstrations and cultural events, such as concerts, before then.

ATol: What are the main issues against which the demonstration is directed?

SK: Japan should stop the nuclear power plants it already has, refrain from building new plants and shift to renewable energy. Earlier this year, [then prime minister Naoto] Kan decided that the Hamaoka nuclear power plant [in Shizuoka prefecture] would be stopped. But all nuclear plants should be stopped.

And if this happens, the order through which it happens is very important because there are many types of nuclear power plants and some plants are older than others. The Monju fast breeder reactor [a temporarily-suspended MOX fuel plant in Fukui prefecture] and the Rokkasho reprocessing plant [in Aomori prefecture, undergoing test operations] should be disabled.

The government should make a schedule to decide the month and year by which nuclear power plants will be stopped.

ATol: Could you indicate some of the crucial issues that nuclear energy in Japan faces at this stage, half a year after the magnitude 9.0 earthquake struck off the coast of Tohoku?

SK: The new government of [Prime Minister Yoshihiko] Noda said that the nuclear power plants will be restarted after conducting safety checks on them.

But in August, only 12 out of 54 reactors were running normally. All of them will go offline for regular maintenance checks before May next year. If the current situation continues, all nuclear reactors in Japan may be offline before then. [Before the Fukushima accident, Japan depended on nuclear for about a third of its power supply, but the government has now abandoned plans to increase that to 50%.]

Eighty percent of the Japanese public opposes nuclear energy. The people will have to raise their voice in order to stop the operation of these nuclear power plants.

ATol: Some critics say that Japan would face a severe energy shortage if every reactor in each nuclear power plant will be stopped. What are your thoughts on this?

SK: Only 12 out of 54 reactors are operating normally at the moment, 42 reactors are not running. But Japan has avoided an energy shortage so far.

In addition to that, Japan has a reserve of thermal power plants and other types of plants such as natural gas plants and coal plants. These could provide a solution for the time being, as long as the

move to renewable energy will go faster, even if it is only a little bit. But the government and power companies have not invested enough in renewable energy so far.

A crucial point will be to find out if [outside] experts could become more involved in enlarging the role of renewable energy.

ATol: Shifting away from nuclear power completely might also lead to higher electricity rates?

SK: If electricity becomes a little bit more expensive there is nothing we can do about it. But if nuclear power plants continue to be operated like they are operated now, radioactive nuclear waste will be created and the problem of what to do with that will be thrown on future generations. The moral problem is whether that is good or not.

If you only think about cheap energy, radioactive waste will gradually build up. The question is whether or not that should be allowed.

ATol: How did Japan historically come to rely on nuclear energy as the only nation on earth to suffer atomic bomb attacks?

SK: The nuclear energy policy started under the influence of [then minister of Science] Yasuhiro Nakasone after he returned from the United States in around 1960. [Nakasone served as prime minister from 1982-1987.] After the introduction of technology, the government came to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and made it look very different from the atomic bomb. It was viewed as a clean energy. A bright image of prosperity was promoted with it.

The atomic bomb victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki never came together with those who opposed nuclear energy. But that changed as a result of the disaster in Fukushima. The suffering from the atomic bombs and the development of nuclear power were two things that were opposed until now.

ATol: What is your view of the nuclear energy industry?

SK: The government promoted nuclear energy as a favorable thing and local communities received financial benefits for accepting nuclear power plants.

The nuclear industry is like the big bad wolf from the fairy tale. [Little Red Riding Hood] Grandma won't open the door to let him in the house. But when she looks under it, she thinks it is not the wolf but her granddaughter. So she opens the door and the wolf eats her. The house is Japan and grandma the local communities.

It might be hard for foreigners to understand, but there is not a single organization in Japan that judges nuclear power objectively.

Eisaku Sato [former governor of Fukushima prefecture] said that police and the thieves are the same people. He was made into a scapegoat over illegal financial dealings of his brother's company. He gave up his post. I say that the Ministry of Economics, Trade and Industry [responsible for developing nuclear energy] and the Nuclear Safety Commission work together like the pitcher and umpire in baseball.

ATol: What is the long-term relevance of the demonstration of September 19?

SK: There won't be the same number of protesters as at demonstrations opposing nuclear energy in Germany or France, but it is a start. For Japanese citizens, it is very uncommon to express their

private views in public. Many citizens are hesitant to comment on politics openly. And we don't have a history of demonstrations, so we have to build a new history of joining them. Tomorrow is a start.

When South Korea was ruled by a military dictatorship, many citizens resisted it. Some of them were given the death penalty as a result of their resistance and of course that was not good. But eventually the actions of these protesters changed the government.

By Daniel Leussink, *Asia Times Online*, September 21, 2011

<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Japan/MI21Dh01.htm>

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