

April 28, 2011

# Now is the Time for the Third Nation Building

By YUSHITA Hiroyuki

The catastrophic earthquakes and the ensuing great tsunamis that erupted in the eastern part of Japan, as well as the nuclear accidents, not only shook the whole nation but also had a huge impact on the entire world. I send my deepest condolences and sympathy to all those who fell victim to and were affected by the grave disaster. As even now the aftershocks continue, and the trouble at the nuclear power plants continues to keep us in a state of anxiety, the most crucial matter at the moment is for the whole nation to put forth our best effort in providing supports to the victims, as well as the containment of the nuclear accidents.

That being said, it is necessary, at the same time, to formulate the will of the nation, on how to revive and recuperate the nation from this point on. And there have already been made proposals on this matter, I think that the idea of "the Third Nation Building" is essential. Up till now, the importance of "a Third Opening of the Country" has been advocated--- and I am one of the advocates--- but when reflecting on the various problems that arose from this great disaster, it is apparent that it is not sufficient to merely have "a Third Opening of the Country", but that it is imperative to call for "the Third Nation Building." I am positive that the opportunity has risen to realize this.

The reason why I call for "the Third Nation Building" is that after "the First Nation Building" taking the form of the Meiji Restoration and the opening of Japan triggered by the arrival of the "Black Ships" in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and "the Second Nation Building" in the restructuring of the country after the defeat in WWII, it turned out that much of the post-war system that realized the successful economic recovery has now suffers institutional fatigues causing many problems, and that it was realized that major reforms needed to be made. Besides, there was a huge shift in the international system, from that of the Cold War to that of the multi-polarization, and such problems in Japan as an ageing population and low birth rate arose. In view of these facts changes in the way of thinking and the system on the whole is badly in need in order to solve these problems. It is clear that a "Making of a New Nation" is requisite.

Thus, Japan's road to recovery after this great disaster should not be as simple as just "restoration" and "revival." We must seriously consider the idea of a new structuring of this

country taking into consideration the problems that have sprung up.

Some may argue that, while the “Black Ships” that urged Japan to open up the country and the defeat of WWII constituted, respectively, huge impacts of a national scale, the current disastrous earthquakes and tsunamis are, though extensive, not of a national scale and the “recovery” and “revival” would be local issues, but this argument falls wide of a mark.

Because massive earthquakes and catastrophic tsunamis could happen practically anywhere in Japan, and the issue of nuclear radiation is definitely one that the whole country suffers, also because the political and administrative approaches to ensure lifeline securities that arose from this disaster are all common problems shared by the whole nation. Furthermore, since the problems and necessities have become clear in concrete form, we need to structure a new country that can overcome and conquer these problems. The making of a new country should not be limited only to economic or “hard” aspects, but also must include “soft” aspects such as the way of thinking and lifestyle. And above all, it is of utmost importance to have national agreement and nationwide efforts.

To set up a concrete design for this purpose requires opinions gathered from experts in various fields and serious discussions. However, if I dare say I believe that, when it comes to Japan’s future energy issues, for example, while development of reusable energy such as solar energy as the long-term policy should be worked out as an all-Japan project, the reinforcement of nuclear power generation is unavoidable for the time being, and all the efforts should seriously be put into securing the safety of it. It was reported that although steps had been taken to ensure safety of the nuclear power plants in the event of an earthquake, the great tsunami was “beyond assumptions” and the nuclear plants were ill-prepared for it.

Nevertheless, since there have actually been such serious problems brought by the great tsunami, we now need to immediately review the “assumptions” we had made, conduct inspections on all the nuclear power plants in the country, and establish effective counter-measures. In reviewing our prior assumptions, we should, needless to say, take into account not only natural disasters but also terrorism and other man-made disasters, including missile attacks from North Korea.

Furthermore, to secure the security of nuclear power plants, it seems necessary to take drastic safety measures on the “soft” aspects as well. It is clear from the reporting that the accident at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power plant and the corresponding actions taken

clearly show that the safety measures taken by the electric companies leave much to be desired.

If the system and the people in nuclear power generation sector should have been captured by arrogance and economically-oriented mode of thought while treating safety issues lightly, they should take this opportunity to be humble and recognize that safety must come first. This should be a common rule nationwide. Apart from safety issues, the problem that arose from the difference in electric frequency between Eastern Japan and Western Japan provides another good opportunity for drastic reforms and measures to be taken.

It will take a vast amount of expense to carry out the above-mentioned measures, and the provision of fund for those expenses would be a big problem. Nonetheless, this was a task already faced during “The First Nation Building” and “The Second Nation Building,” and we Japanese people were able to overcome it and grow out of them. We must not run away. This latest accident has clearly shown that pursuit of economic benefit and cost-cutting while neglecting safety measures would end up losing everything.

Although, in recent time, there is a strong trend of pursuit of economy and efficiency, it seems that the way for Japan to prosper in the world from now on is to build a model country where people can live with a peace of mind, with a system which puts safety on par with economy. What was something good about the great disaster was that the virtues of the Japanese such as perseverance and orderliness as well as the power of their collective actions have been shown. This is the strong point of the Japanese people that has surfaced again. By taking advantage of this strong point, “the Third Nation Building ” should be pursued.

**(This is the English translation of an article written by Mr. YUSHITA Hiroyuki, former Ambassador to the Philippines, which originally appeared on the BBS “Giron-Hyakushutsu” of GFJ on March 30, 2011.)**