Reading and Translating

Mr. Yamaguchi’s Memoir

MATSUO Mari

When my friend Sakaoka-san asked me if I was interested in participating in this project as a voluntary translator, I said right away I was. I was born and brought up in Nagasaki, but never had been involved in any peacekeeping or anti-nuclear activities. That was not because I had been indifferent or against such activities, but being born in Nagasaki, the city full of movements against nuclear weapons, I was just accustomed to listening and watching them passively as a small part of the big movement. Reading Mr. Yamaguchi’s memoir brought me back to my childhood when my teachers used to tell their stories in the auditorium in August and when the booklets full of stories about the victims of the bombing were given to the students to read. All those stories were dreadful and scary and I used to picture mothers and children in the devastation. I was so scared and thought war is bad. As an adult, I knew that just thinking was not enough, but didn’t know what a person like me could do. So I was very glad to be a part of this project.

Learning what happened in the summer of 1945 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki through Mr. Yamaguchi’s memoir was unique experience for me. What he went through was with no doubt extraordinary. Being a victim of atomic-bombing twice, he talks about the terror and pain by precisely describing the happenings and the people he knew at that time. However, in this memoir he maintains a serene tone. He recalls the
destruction calmly and objectively and that makes the story so real and scary. I felt like I was there too. I hope many people in the world will have a chance to read it and learn about his extraordinary life.

The world has been full of conflicts and violence since it was created. “Hiroshima and Nagasaki” was definitely one of the worst cases in the history. I will do what Mr. Yamaguchi asks the world in this memoir. He says, “Please don’t forget and learn what happened, think about world peace and preciousness of human life.” I will remember this and try to be part of a cause.