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Songs for Fukushima□□福島のための歌数曲

Matthew Penney

Between 2012 and 2014 we posted a number of articles on contemporary affairs without giving them volume and issue numbers or dates. Often the date can be determined from internal evidence in the article, but sometimes not. We have decided retrospectively to list all of them as Volume 10, Issue 54 with a date of 2012 with the understanding that all were published between 2012 and 2014.

Matthew Penney

Popular culture has long been an important tool used by the Japanese government and energy companies to promote nuclear power. In the two months since the 3.11 quake and the beginning of the Fukushima crisis, Japanese netizens have circulated key examples as a reminder of past propaganda. This 1993 video "Our Reliable Friend Pluto" was produced by the Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation, a group associated with the Japanese government. In it, a cute cartoon stand-in for radioactive element plutonium tells children that not a single case of cancer can be traced to him and that he is even safe to drink!

Popular culture has also long been a site of criticism and resistance. Takada Wataru's folk song *Jieitai ni Hairou*（自衛隊に入ろう) was first performed in 1968 at the height of the Vietnam War. The song became famous as an anti-war satire.

Let's Join the Jietai

(Lyrics translated by Kyoko Selden)

Among you people here
who wish to join Jieitai?
who wish to try your chance?
Jieitai's looking for men of ability.

[refrain]
I want to join Jieitai, Jieitai, Jieitai
I want to join Jieitai, it's a place I adore,
the manliest of men without exception
join Jieitai and scatter like blossoms.

Those of you who wish to do sports
please come over to Jieitai any time,
spears, guns, we have everything
anyway the body's your sole capital.
[refrain]

Those of you who take interest
in guns and tanks and planes
please come over to Jieitai any time,
we'll teach you hands on and feet on.
[refrain]

To protect Japan's peace
we need guns and rockets,
we'll also have America to help

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let's beat the evil Soviets and China.
[refrain]

Jieitai's looking for men of ability,
we don't question age or educational background,
we look for those who, for the sake of
the fatherland, stay meek to the very end.
[refrain]

"Let's Join Jieitai," anti-war lyrics by Takada Wataru, 1968-69, set to Pete Seeger's tune (original lyrics by Malvina Reynolds, Andorra, 1962)

Now, in 2011, this anti-establishment classic has been reworked as "Let's Join TEPCO" (東電に入ろう), a dig at the power company responsible for the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant.

A more popular version does not allow embedding.

Let's Join TEPCO / Tōden

[The title, "Tōden ni hairō (東電に入ろう)" in Japanese, puns on "tōden ni hairo (倒電に廃炉)," which means "Tōden overthrow, nuclear decommissioning."]

Among all of you people here

who wish to join Tōkyō Electric?

who wish to try your chance?

Tōden's looking for men of ability.

[refrain]

I want to join Tōden, Tōden, Tōden

I want to join Tōden, it's a place I adore,

the manliest of men all without exception

join Tōden and scatter like blossoms.

Those of you wishing to engage in atomic power

please come over to Tōden any time.

Uranium, Plutonium, we have everything

Just use subcontracting, and all's fine.

[refrain]

Those of you who promote nuclear power generation

please gather beneath a nuclear reactor,

nothing immediately affects your health

fine if you shower and wash it away.

[refrain]

Nuclear power plants mean clean energy

Plutonium isn't such a scary thing

it may emit radioactivity

but its half life is only four and twenty thousand

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years.

[refrain]

To support Japan's energy

we must depend upon nuclear power,

some amount of radiation exposure can't be helped

just drink povidone iodine and you're all fine.

[refrain]

Collect all spent energy rods

and pack them away in drums, and we're safe,

we'll cool them in Rokkasho-mura's pools

all you need is a mere 300 years of patience.

[refrain]

Water's leaking but don't make fuss

smoke is spewing but don't panic

roofs blew away but we're absolutely safe

anyway we're cooling the unit with salt water.

[refrain]

It's not that anything's in imminent danger

let's throw away both milk and vegetables,

government higherups are saying:

let's use taxes to pay for the damages

[refrain]

Geiger counters all sold out

you have no need to own such things,

we'll announce radiation values

believe and thou shalt be saved.

[refain]

Several such examples are circulating, including some from professional musicians. Rocker Saito Kazuyoshi has reworked his 2010 single "I Always Loved You" (ずっと好きだった) into anti-nuclear anthem "It Was Always Lies" (ずっとウソだった) garnering hundreds of thousands of hits on Youtube and other video sites.

The Asahi reports that "While the mainstream media is "voluntarily restraining" from airing the songs, video clips of the songs have gone viral on the Internet, getting play after play on sites such as YouTube."

The Asahi also reports corporate resistance to the online circulation of Saito's song:

Saito's record label, Victor Entertainment Inc., requested the website operator delete the video clip because it was "a video meant for private use that was leaked in a way he did not intend."

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The operator complied. But users who saw the clip made copies and posted them on other sites. It is still widely available in cyberspace.

According to Saito's agency, the musician shot the video himself. After discussions among Saito, his agency and the record company as to whether it should be publicly released, the decision was made not to, so as to avoid opposition from "related companies" and show respect for differences of opinions on the issue.

Details of what they meant by "related companies" have not been not disclosed.

However, Victor Entertainment's parent company is an electronics manufacturer. The original tune was made as a tie-in to an ad campaign for a leading cosmetics maker.

Saito has not publicly commented on the matter.

We are also seeing the online revival of nuclear protest songs written and performed after the 1986 Chernobyl catastrophe. In the late 1980s, rock band RC Succession covered Elivs Presley's Hit "Love Me Tender" and Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues", inserting their own anti-nuclear lyrics.

The song contains lines like: "I don't need radiation/ I just wanna drink milk." This is a reference to the 1986 Chernobyl disaster.

The song contains the lyrics: "When I swam in the middle of nowhere/ I found a nuclear power plant/ For what? I just don't get it/ It's the summertime blues for a small Japan."

The Asahi details how:

Meanwhile, two songs from RC Succession's 1988 album "Covers" are receiving renewed interest: "Summertime Blues" and a cover of Elvis Presley's "Love Me Tender." The latter too has rewritten Japanese lyrics that pointedly criticize the nuclear power industry.

They were written after the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster by Kiyoshiro Imawano, the late frontman of the band. He died of cancer in 2009.

In "Love Me Tender," he croons, "I don't need radiation/ I just wanna drink milk."

In "Summertime Blues," Imawano sings: "When I swam in the middle of nowhere/ I found a nuclear power plant/ For what? I just don't get it/ It's the summertime blues for a small Japan."

In 1988, the band's record label, EMI Music Japan Inc., (then known as Toshiba EMI), canceled release of the album without giving specific reasons. It ran a newspaper ad to announce that the songs were "too great to release."

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The album was later released by another company.

Music critic Peter Barakan, who hosts the InterFM radio program "Barakan Morning," said his show had received the most requests for the two songs in its history.

Barakan felt impelled to play them, and aired "Summertime Blues."

However, after hearing from Inter-Wave Inc., which owns the radio station, he decided not to play "Love Me Tender."

The song mentions milk, and they thought it perhaps wasn't the right time to air it because it could feed rumors regarding milk consumption.

Instead, Barakan asked his listeners: "It is easily available on the Internet, so please tell us how you feel about it."

The radio show received many comments, he added. While one listener said they "should have played" the song, another commented: "If Kiyoshiro were still alive, I think he'd sing something different in a situation like this."

While these songs are not being played on television, the internet offers alternatives, forming links between outrage today and past examples of pop culture protest, doubt, and resistance.

Finally, a Ukrainian amateur group "Rise to the Stars" has posted an anthem of their own, sending their feelings from the region around Chernobyl to Fukushima.

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