

巻頭言

“PREFACE”

所感 ‘激動の時代に’

What I have in Mind “In a Time of Upheaval”



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今、世界は100年に一度と言われる経済危機の中にある。サブプライムローンに端を発した米国の金融危機は2008年9月のリーマンブラザーズ証券の破綻をきっかけに一瞬にして社会主義国を含めた全世界に伝播、ここ数年にわたって成長してきた金融資産は一挙に消失し資本主義の崩壊とまで言われている。全世界の消費や工業生産は激減し10数年前の経済状態に戻ってしまった感さえある。まさしく世界のバブル崩壊である。

最近のグローバル化とIT技術の進歩は一方において全世界の際限のないマネーゲームを可能にしたが、一旦破綻が生じればそのスピードと影響は圧倒的である。私が子供の頃、人類がコンピューターに支配されるSF小説を読んだ記憶があるが、このような人のコントロールのきかないマネーゲームはその一つの現象かもしれない。

2008年前半の我が国は原油をはじめとする諸資源、食料などの高騰はあったものの鉄鋼は

Currently the world is in the midst of global economic turmoil which is said to occur once every hundred years. The U.S. financial crisis having been triggered by the subprime loan problem instantly spread to the whole world including communist countries in the wake of Lehman Brothers bankruptcy in September 2008. Financial assets which had accumulated in recent years disappeared all at once. It is even said to be the downfall of capitalism. Worldwide consumption and industrial output sharply declined. It seems we have gone back to the economic situations a decade ago. It truly is the bursting of the global economic bubble.

Recent globalization and improvement in information technology enabled limitless speculation called the “money game” in the world. Once it starts to fail, however, its collapsing speed and influence are overwhelming. When I was a child, I read science-fiction novels in which mankind is controlled by computers. This uncontrollable money game may be one of the examples of realizing those stories.

In the first half of 2008, many Japanese companies were said to post record sales and profits, keeping a high level of industrial production including steel, although they were facing soaring prices of various resources including crude oil and

か高水準の生産活動が継続，多くの企業で売上高や利益の記録更新と言われてきた。少なくとも北京五輪の頃までは……。それが9月のリーマンショックを境に株価は急落，最優良企業であったトヨタやキャノンまでも含むあらゆる工業生産は激減し，12月には社会問題になるような雇用調整が起きることなど誰が予想しえただろうか。2008年はまさしく‘変’と言うべき激動の年であった。

その中にあって10月に一挙に4人もの科学分野での日本人ノーベル受賞者が出たことは私のような技術屋の端くれにとってもこの上ない喜びであり，日本の進むべき道を示唆している感がある。日本と同じような資源のない欧州の島国は金融立国を目指したが，前述の金融危機で破綻し国家は危機的状況に陥っている。実体のないような金融経済ではなく，地道な研究と物作りに基づいた発展こそ日本の姿であり世界をリードできることと考える。世界の人口増加や途上国の生活水準向上を考えれば，いずれまた世界経済は大きく成長していくことは疑いもない。2009年が経済減退から成長へ，金融から技術重視への転換‘Change’の年になることを期待したい。

当社‘品川白煉瓦’は1875年の創業以来135年の歴史の中で，世界恐慌や2度の大戦など幾度となく企業存続の危機を乗り越え発展してきた。偉大な諸先輩方の尽力とともに常に技術を大事にする企業風土が会社の発展を支えてきた。今，世界は環境，エネルギー問題が大きな課題となっている。本報でもその一端が紹介されているが，断熱材を含め全ての耐火材料と設計，施工，サービスを提供できる当社グループのますますの発展が期待される。現物，現場，現実を重視した研究開発と生産技術をもとに‘技術の品川’として世界に貢献していきたい。その象徴であるこの品川技報がますます発展し，世界に新しい耐火物技術を発信し続けることを願うものである。

food. At least it had been true until the time when the Beijing Olympics were held…。However, the Lehman shock in September became a turning point. After this shock, share prices plummeted and all industrial production including that of blue-chip companies such as Toyota and Canon sharply decreased; in December corporate employment adjustment, which became a big social problem, started. Who could have ever predicted that? The year 2008 was really a tumultuous year which should be called “change”.

Under these circumstances, the Nobel Prize was awarded to as many as four Japanese in October. It was a real pleasure for me too as one of many so-called engineers. I feel that it shows the way Japan should go. One European island country, which is not as well blessed with natural resources as Japan, aimed to be a nation built on finance, however, it has failed owing to the said financial crisis and is in a critical condition. What Japan should aim for, I believe, is a country of which development is based on steady research and making things, not on financial economy which seems to have no real substance. By doing so, Japan would be able to lead the world. Considering population growth and improvement in living standards in the developing countries, there is no doubt that the world economy will eventually grow further. It is our hope that 2009 will be the year of “change” in which the economic depression will turn into growth and emphasis will be shifted from finance to technology.

Since our establishment in 1875, we at Shinagawa Refractories Co., Ltd. have developed over 135 years, overcoming a number of fatal crises such as the Great Depression and the two world wars. Growth of our company had been supported by not only the efforts made by our great predecessors but also by the corporate culture which respects technology all the time. The world is facing big challenges such as environmental or energy problems at present. This technical report also shows a part of our efforts to solve them. Our group, which can provide all sorts of refractory materials including insulating materials as well as design, installation and services, is expected to grow stronger. We would like to contribute to the world as a technology-oriented company, based on research and development along with manufacturing technology, placing emphasis on products, production sites and actual conditions. I hope that this technical report, which is a symbol of our technology, will develop further and continue to disseminate new refractory technology to the world.