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Encountering Bangkok Bombing

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Just before 7 p.m., Monday, August 17, a powerful bomb exploded in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, killing 20 and injuring 128 people including one Japanese person. I happened to be in Bangkok on a business trip, staying at a hotel a block away from the blast site, the Erawan Shrine. The night before, after arriving in Bangkok, I was strolling around one of the large shopping malls nearby containing a popular Japanese department store. Narrow sidewalks were filled with foreign tourists and locals looking for a place to eat out. Streets were congested with brand new Japanese cars and motorcycles, making it difficult for people to cross. It was hot even after the sunset as if the city itself was radiating heat. Feeling such dynamism of Asia, I was at the same time feeling something nostalgic. Japan during the time of rapid growth must have been filled with the same vivid air.

The explosion was dry and loud. “Bomb!?” Anxiety was beginning to creep in, but the next moment I reasoned it away as the sound of a blast of a gas cylinder at one of the street stalls. At that time I was inside a building, and it was about one hour later when I learned that it was really a bomb explosion.

The next day, I decided to move around by car, not by foot, as a precaution. Thais say the smoother traffic that day may have been due to the bombing. So, I did not experience the famous Bangkok traffic congestion. However, on my way back from the suburb, it was a bit difficult to catch a taxi back to the city center. Some drivers feared the next bomb. The second bomb did go off on that day, but nobody was hurt.

As I saw it, in spite of the horrendous terror attack, Thais preserved their calm and even their smiles. The bustle of the city quickly returned as if nothing had happened.

It is said that in developing countries, unthinkable things do happen sometimes, and that is why they stay developing countries. Not to be labeled as such, it is hoped that the Thai authorities solve this case as soon as possible.