

Series -Satellite Commentary (11) -



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“ Japanese Satellite Broadcast for Overseas ”

We, Japanese, were strongly impressed with the importance of the communication satellite, when the shocking image of President Kennedy's assassination was transmitted from the U.S. through the satellite “ Echo ” for the first time on 22nd November, 1963. In the next year, Tokyo Olympic Programs were also transmitted to U.S. through the Syncom Satellite, which showed fully the future possibility of the satellite communications. In order to put this plan into realization, Kajima Space Center, CRL, MTT, made a big effort at that time. I learned this technical achievement at the 25th anniversary ceremony of the laboratory.

Since then, most of the international communications have been dependent on the satellites, such as INTELSAT. Development of the optical fiber communication made it possible to compose the submarine optical fiber networks, beginning from TPC-3. Optical fiber gradually got the main position in the information network technology. On the other hand, the satellite broadcasting such as NHK BS or WOWOW, has settled a firm position in wide area broadcasting. When we travel overseas or live in a foreign country, the only source of the information from Japan a decade ago used to be a newspaper, delivered a few days later. Recently in some countries, owing to the satellite, a satellite-edition newspaper can be issued and delivered on the same day. And also in some area, we can watch and listen to the Japanese TV program just at the same time as Japan through a satellite.

As my family stayed in Ankara, Turkey, for her profession, I visited there sometimes. Therefore I had a chance of watching the NHK World TV, broadcast from Japan through BS. When she settled there in 1996, the BS signal was transmitted by analog, but later it was altered to digital systems. In this area, BS program transmitted from PANAMSAT-4 is received via a parabola antenna of 3m diameter, installed on the roof of the house. Time difference between Japan is 7 hours in winter and 6 hours in summer. In the mid-night just before going to bed, we could watch 7 o'clock NHK news and at dawn, see the noon news followed by the series TV drama.

Although staying in a foreign country, we can see the same program as in Japan just on the same time, and we did not have a feeling of segregation. It was a nice experience.

When watching TV program of sports news or international issues, sometimes we got a black screen with an announcement, " Due to copyright reasons the visual images cannot be seen. " NHK can broadcast the images all over Japan, but perhaps it does not have the right of spreading them other than Japan. Especially during Nagano Olympic Game in 1998, the situation was worst. The most of the news consisted of the Olympic Game. During these periods, the news program for NHK World TV were delayed an hour, and re-edited to consist of still images and narrations. I imagined the difficulties the NHK program staffs had. Even now, Ichiro's high performance fine play may not be seen on NHK World TV, I estimate. Watching TV, I felt "technically possible" is different from "practically possible".