

MESSAGE FOR UCC - USA

Prepared by Mr. PARK Young Sook

I was pleased to have an opportunity to tell you about our country and Church, and I am very disappointed--and sorry for your disappointment--that I cannot bring it to you in person. Perhaps this method will be more helpful than no contact with you direct from Korea. My message will be largely from the standpoint of women, and about the activities of women.

First, however, you need some background on the political situation which is behind all that I will tell you.

Korea has suffered under dictatorships since the end of World War II, and of course, before that we suffered under Japanese occupation of our country. Too many times we have had hope for a better situation, and each time we are disappointed.

Liberation from Japan did not bring us independence to develop our own nation in our own way. We exchanged Japan's imperialism for what we thought was to be the friendly help of the United States. There was a Korean nationalistic provisional government waiting in China to take over when the war ended, but instead of installing them, the U.S. put in power the U.S. educated Syngman Rhee as president, and under him used people who co-operated with Japan for U.S. advantage. We can now see that the U.S. did not consider that Koreans had any ability. Our next terrible disappointment, of course, was the division of our country at the 38th parallel which has brought about so much of the tragedy of the past 40 years of our history, including the Korean war of 1950-53, which devastated our country.

Rhee's dictatorship was finally overthrown by the Student Revolution in 1960 and our hopes for democracy rose again. But the military again destroyed any chance of our only freely-elected government achieving success, by overthrowing it in less than a year after it was elected. When PARK Chung Hee was assassinated after 18 years of oppressive dictatorship, again we hoped for a restoration of democracy, but once more our hopes were dashed to the ground by the bloody Kwangju Massacre, which brought the present dictator to power. Chun Doo-hwan's rule has never had any legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

Hopes rose again in 1985 when a real opposition party was elected, and it seemed that the Constitution would be changed at least before the

end of Chun's 7-year term. Of course, we never believed he would voluntarily step down and allow power to pass out of his hands. Lack of a free press helps him retain power by making the people believe the opposition party is torn with inner strife. Much of the strife there has been deliberately brought about by the government. Some members have been bribed, and others threatened into collaborating with the ruling party. To overcome the government interference in its affairs, a new opposition party was recently formed, thereby getting out of its ranks those who have been co-operating against it with the government party.

We have known for a long time that some way would be found for the promises of turning over the power to be broken. If the students had been demonstrating and "causing unrest", that would have been a good excuse for declaring martial law and holding onto power, but the students have been quiet all spring. The formation of the new Party was thus used as the excuse. On April 13, the president announced that the Constitution will not be amended until after the '88 Olympics, and of course, incidentally, after the next president is chosen under the present Constitution--by an electoral college, to all intents and purposes, chosen by Chun himself, thus assuring his continued control. So again, hopes for change are again destroyed. It is disappointing, but quite expected. We just did not know what would be used for the excuse.

Over this background, let me turn to some of the events and issues which have taken our interest, concern and time. One of the areas in which we have become deeply involved is that of labour. Because it is an area of deep concern, it is one where university students and graduates have become involved in one way or another. Companies are pressured not to hire a person with post high school education to work in a factory as a labourer. Yet, in order to understand the situation of those who work at that level, many university students desire to have that experience. To do so they have to falsify their identification papers, or use someone else's. If caught, of course, they are charged with a criminal offense.

I want to tell you the story of Ms. KWON, who is one of such people. She began work May 20, 1986. She was not a very strong or brave person, and after a week of the strenuous factory life she quit her job. On June 4, she was arrested for falsifying her registration papers. The investigation

was quickly completed because she admitted the charge. But then the police investigators tried to force her to reveal the names of people who were involved in the May 3rd riots in Inchon, and when she insisted she did not know, was tortured sexually. It took great courage on the part of Ms. Kwon to make known that she had been sexually abused. In Korean culture this ruins a woman's reputation and makes her ineligible for marriage. She is disgraced for life. But Ms. Kwon decided to make the facts known so as to protect other women from suffering the same disgrace. It was clear to her that her experience was not an isolated case.

Women's groups learned of her sex torture on June 26 and on July 3rd Ms. Kwon laid a charge against the policeman who had sexually abused her. She obtained a human rights lawyer and told the whole story. The outcome was that nine lawyers volunteered to take up her case and laid an accusation against the police officer. This was the first time ever for lawyers to lay such a charge. Ms. Kwon's parents did not want the case publicized. They insisted that to do so would be to cause their daughter a "second death", and requested newspapers and government officials to keep it quiet so it could be forgotten. But when this was discussed with Ms. Kwon, she said that she understood her parents' attitude and their concern for her, but that it would be like a second death to her if it were covered up at this point.

This case brought forth another first. Joint action was taken by various groups--Buddhists, Roman Catholic priests and nuns, Protestant groups, and various other women's organizations. The joint action started quickly and spread throughout the country. In spite of all these efforts, the District Court sentenced Ms. Kwon to 1½ years in prison, down from the prosecution's demand of three years.

Ms. Kwon expressed regret at the pain and suffering the case had caused her parents, but said she felt proud that she had made the facts of her case known. If this kind of thing is kept quiet it is certain it will continue. Police count on women not making their shame public. Publicity goes a long way toward stopping the practice.

A 1½ year sentence for falsifying a document was such a miscarriage of justice that 167 lawyers volunteered their services and demanded a new trial. The courts turned it down. Furthermore, on March 28 the Appeals

Court confirmed the 1½ year sentence, so Ms. Kwon will not be released until December this year. Ms. Kwon's only regret is that she did not make a greater fuss, so that not only sex torture, but any torture would have to have been stopped, and perhaps the life of PARK Jong Chul might have been saved.

(PARK Jong Chul was a 23 year old Seoul National University student who died under police torture in January this year. His death was a tragic loss, but it aroused the people to even stronger solidarity and action to demand an end of torture in our country.)

Ms. Kwon's case is not yet closed. A nationwide signature campaign is being conducted for her unconditional release from prison. The signatures will be sent to the Ministry of Justice along with an appeal for her release on the anniversary of her torture, June 26. The same committee is also raising money to give her for use while in prison.

Ms. Kwon's case is only one of many examples of people offering their bodies as a living sacrifice on behalf of others. Numbers of university students, whose total effort has been directed to the almost impossible goal of university entrance, have in their junior or senior year given it all up on behalf of those who are victims of injustice and oppression, and on behalf of democracy and freedom. Professors have lost their jobs, teachers have been fired, religious leaders and politicians have gone to prison. All of these have sacrificed their future for a cause, without hesitation. Students face brutality and violence of police and other agencies without fear, feeling remorse only on account of the disappointment and suffering of their parents.

Let us look at the field of labour. World statistics show that Korean factory workers work the longest hours and for the lowest pay. Stranger still is that women work longer hours than men, and of course, at lower wages. Women suffer double exploitation, with the discrimination against women in general being added to the bad situation of labourers.

Many factories employ far more women than men, and all overseers are men. It is often reported that male workers are bribed by management (men are more susceptible because of their feeling of responsibility for providing for their family) to control women who try to organize to im-

prove conditions for all. The women may be beaten up, or even sexually abused.

Possibly in even worse situation are the farmers. Government policy, which makes it impossible to make a decent living from farming, forces young people to leave the farm to swell the urban work force. This leaves fewer people to do the farm work. As usual, women have the hardest part. After sharing in the long hours on the land, they must also manage all the housework--and without any modern conveniences we take for granted. The price of farm produce is kept so low that it is impossible to make a living, which leads to people going deeper and deeper into debt. Farm prices are deliberately kept low so that people can manage to live on low wages, to keep Korea attractive to overseas investments. It keeps Korean products competitive on the world market, but also assures factory owners of high profits. Added to the hardship of farmers trying to make a living from the land is the pressure from the U.S. for Korea to import their excess farm produce. This leads to anti-American feelings by students, especially, but worse, it causes many farmers to commit suicide in their despair of ever getting out of debt and making a decent living.

Church women are largely from the middle class, and display a middle class mentality. They are rather conservative, yet wanting reforms. They always want to improve their situation, attain a higher status, and they want all available conveniences, and are very consumer-oriented. In general, women are afraid of taking action to bring about change. Unlike men, who are likely to try to fight against problems and suffering, women are more likely to accept whatever suffering comes to them as their fate, assuming they must just make the best of it.

Women have a weak sense of identity. They live in their husbands' lives, and usually consider their place is in the home--keeping things pleasant and convenient for their husband and family.

If this is true for women in general, it is doubly true for Church women. Besides their cultural orientation, they are further trained by the minister (a male) to be obedient, believe what they are taught without thinking through their faith or its implications. If a Church Women's Association decides to hold a lecture, only 30% of groups would make their

is using sure for its own benefit--educationally, economically, politically.

own decision as to the theme, while 63% would defer to the minister's suggestion. In choosing the speaker, we find that 18% might make their own choice, while 71% would leave the decision to the minister.

How can such self-centred, weak-willed and submissive women take on the suffering and pain of their poor neighbours?! It is our experience that one of the most common causes for them to change is through the awareness of their sons and daughters. Especially if the young people take part in a demonstration and are arrested, the mothers' awareness of the political reality grows rapidly. This often puts them in a situation where they also hear the personal experience of others' suffering, and often they take this on them as their own. For example, when women heard about the sex torture suffered by Ms. Kwon, they all came to think of Ms. Kwon as their own daughter, and were willing, even eager, to do whatever they could to see that sex-abuse by police of young women taken to police stations be stopped. They hope they may save their own daughters from suffering a similar fate.

In the same way, PARK Jong Chul, who died under torture, as mentioned earlier, became the son of all the women, and they shared the pain of his own mother, and determined to fight against the use of torture.

It was these two cases, more than anything else, which made the various women's action groups form a coalition. It is called the Korean Association of Women's Organizations, and includes 21 different organizations from a broad spectrum of society--Church groups, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, Buddhist groups, and social action groups unrelated to Christianity. Groups like Y.W.C.A are noticeably not included in the coalition.

As those who call ourselves by the name of Jesus Christ, we must all have a common concern for the weak, the poor and the marginalized. If we really knew Christ, we would inevitably work together for the common concern of peace and justice for all God's children. This is our common concern, and one which we cannot do without you, and I believe you cannot do without us. We have to work together and pray together. The destiny of our country is tied up with your country. In so many ways your country is using ours for its own benefit--militarily, economically, politically.

Especially our educated youth have become more and more aware of this fact, and if you study what is happening, I am sure you will readily understand the growing feelings of anti-Americanism. It is a serious crime in Korea to express feelings of anti-Americanism. It is also a serious crime to oppose the storing of nuclear weapons in Korea, although we are well aware that if they were used, our country as well as North Korea would be destroyed. We have come to realize that the nuclear weapons are here, not for our protection, but because America wants them here. We are a pawn in the hands of the superpowers--America, Japan, China, Russia. We have no freedom to speak out about any of this, but you do have that freedom.

The people of both North and South Korea desire unification of our divided country, but it is to the advantage of the U.S. and Russia, and to the advantage of the powerful dictators on both sides to keep the division. We need your help, your understanding, your prayers, and your pressure on your government. There was a Korean nationalistic provisional government waiting in China to take over when the war ended, but instead of installing them, the U.S. put in power the U.S.-selected Syngman Rhee as president, and under his rule people did co-operate with Japan for U.S. advantage. We can now see that the U.S. did not consider that Koreans had any ability. Our next terrible disappointment, of course, was the division of our country at the 38th parallel which has brought about so much of the tragedy of the past 25 years of our history, including the Korean War of 1950-53, which devastated our country.

Rhee's dictatorship was finally overthrown by the Student Revolution in 1960 and our hopes for democracy were again. But the military again destroyed any chance of our only freely-elected government achieving success, by overthrowing it in less than a year after it was elected. And PARK Chung Hee was proclaimed after 18 years of oppressed dictatorship, again we hoped for a restoration of democracy, but once more our hopes were dashed to the ground by the bloody Jungju Massacre, which brought the present dictator to power. Even now Park's rule has never had any legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

Hopes rose again in 1971 when a real opposition party was elected, and it seemed that the Constitution would be changed at least before the

MESSAGE FOR UCC - USA

Prepared by Ms. PARK Young Sook

I was pleased to have an opportunity to tell you about our country and Church, and I am very disappointed--and sorry for your disappointment--that I cannot bring it to you in person. Perhaps this method will be more helpful than no contact with you direct from Korea. My message will be largely from the standpoint of women, and about the activities of women.

First, however, you need some background on the political situation which is behind all that I will tell you.

Korea has suffered under dictatorships since the end of World War II, and of course, before that we suffered under Japanese occupation of our country. Too many times we have had hope for a better situation, and each time we are disappointed.

Liberation from Japan did not bring us independence to develop our own nation in our own way. We exchanged Japan's imperialism for what we thought was to be the friendly help of the United States. There was a Korean nationalistic provisional government waiting in China to take over when the war ended, but instead of installing them, the U.S. put in power the U.S. educated Syngman Rhee as president, and under him used people who co-operated with Japan for U.S. advantage. We can now see that the U.S. did not consider that Koreans had any ability. Our next terrible disappointment, of course, was the division of our country at the 38th parallel which has brought about so much of the tragedy of the past 40 years of our history, including the Korean war of 1950-53, which devastated our country.

Rhee's dictatorship was finally overthrown by the Student Revolution in 1960 and our hopes for democracy rose again. But the military again destroyed any chance of our only freely-elected government achieving success, by overthrowing it in less than a year after it was elected. When PARK Chung Hee was assassinated after 18 years of oppressive dictatorship, again we hoped for a restoration of democracy, but once more our hopes were dashed to the ground by the bloody Kwangju Massacre, which brought the present dictator to power. Chun Doo whan's rule has never had any legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

Hopes rose again in 1985 when a real opposition party was elected, and it seemed that the Constitution would be changed at least before the

end of Chun's 7-year term. Of course, we never believed he would voluntarily step down and allow power to pass out of his hands. Lack of a free press helps him retain power by making the people believe the opposition party is torn with inner strife. Much of the strife there has been deliberately brought about by the government. Some members have been bribed, and others threatened into collaborating with the ruling party. To overcome the government interference in its affairs, a new opposition party was recently formed, thereby getting out of its ranks those who have been co-operating against it with the government party.

We have known for a long time that some way would be found for the promises of turning over the power to be broken. If the students had been demonstrating and "causing unrest", that would have been a good excuse for declaring martial law and holding onto power, but the students have been quiet all spring. The formation of the new Party was thus used as the excuse. On April 13, the president announced that the Constitution will not be amended until after the '88 Olympics, and of course, incidentally, after the next president is chosen under the present Constitution--by an electoral college, to all intents and purposes, chosen by Chun himself, thus assuring his continued control. So again, hopes for change are again destroyed. It is disappointing, but quite expected. We just did not know what would be used for the excuse.

Over this background, let me turn to some of the events and issues which have taken our interest, concern and time. One of the areas in which we have become deeply involved is that of labour. Because it is an area of deep concern, it is one where university students and graduates have become involved in one way or another. Companies are pressured not to hire a person with post high school education to work in a factory as a labourer. Yet, in order to understand the situation of those who work at that level, many university students desire to have that experience. To do so they have to falsify their identification papers, or use someone else's. If caught, of course, they are charged with a criminal offense.

I want to tell you the story of Ms. KWON, who is one of such people. She began work May 20, 1986. She was not a very strong or brave person, and after a week of the strenuous factory life she quit her job. On June 4 she was arrested for falsifying her registration papers. The investigation

was quickly completed because she admitted the charge. But then the police investigators tried to force her to reveal the names of people who were involved in the May 3rd riots in Inchon, and when she insisted she did not know, was tortured sexually. It took great courage on the part of Ms. Kwon to make known that she had been sexually abused. In Korean culture this ruins a woman's reputation and makes her ineligible for marriage. She is disgraced for life. But Ms. Kwon decided to make the facts known so as to protect other women from suffering the same disgrace. It was clear to her that her experience was not an isolated case.

Women's groups learned of her sex torture on June 26 and on July 3rd Ms. Kwon laid a charge against the policeman who had sexually abused her. She obtained a human rights lawyer and told the whole story. The outcome was that nine lawyers volunteered to take up her case and laid an accusation against the police officer. This was the first time ever for lawyers to lay such a charge. Ms. Kwon's parents did not want the case publicized. They insisted that to do so would be to cause their daughter a "second death", and requested newspapers and government officials to keep it quiet so it could be forgotten. But when this was discussed with Ms. Kwon, she said that she understood her parents' attitude and their concern for her, but that it would be like a second death to her if it were covered up at this point.

This case brought forth another first. Joint action was taken by various groups--Buddhists, Roman Catholic priests and nuns, Protestant groups, and various other women's organizations. The joint action started quickly and spread throughout the country. In spite of all these efforts, the District Court sentenced Ms. Kwon to 1½ years in prison, down from the prosecution's demand of three years.

Ms. Kwon expressed regret at the pain and suffering the case had caused her parents, but said she felt proud that she had made the facts of her case known. If this kind of thing is kept quiet it is certain it will continue. Police count on women not making their shame public. Publicity goes a long way toward stopping the practice.

A 1½ year sentence for falsifying a document was such a miscarriage of justice that 167 lawyers volunteered their services and demanded a new trial. The courts turned it down. Furthermore, on March 28 the Appeals

Court confirmed the 1½ year sentence, so Ms. Kwon will not be released until December this year. Ms. Kwon's only regret is that she did not make a greater fuss, so that not only sex torture, but any torture would have to have been stopped, and perhaps the life of PARK Jong Chul might have been saved.

(PARK Jong Chul was a 23 year old Seoul National University student who died under police torture in January this year. His death was a tragic loss, but it aroused the people to even stronger solidarity and action to demand an end of torture in our country.)

Ms. Kwon's case is not yet closed. A nationwide signature campaign is being conducted for her unconditional release from prison. The signatures will be sent to the Ministry of Justice along with an appeal for her release on the anniversary of her torture, June 26. The same committee is also raising money to give her for use while in prison.

Ms. Kwon's case is only one of many examples of people offering their bodies as a living sacrifice on behalf of others. Numbers of university students, whose total effort has been directed to the almost impossible goal of university entrance, have in their junior or senior year given it all up on behalf of those who are victims of injustice and oppression, and on behalf of democracy and freedom. Professors have lost their jobs, teachers have been fired, religious leaders and politicians have gone to prison. All of these have sacrificed their future for a cause, without hesitation. Students face brutality and violence of police and other agencies without fear, feeling remorse only on account of the disappointment and suffering of their parents.

Let us look at the field of labour. World statistics show that Korean factory workers work the longest hours and for the lowest pay. Stranger still is that women work longer hours than men, and of course, at lower wages. Women suffer double exploitation, with the discrimination against women in general being added to the bad situation of labourers.

Many factories employ far more women than men, and all overseers are men. It is often reported that male workers are bribed by management (men are more susceptible because of their feeling of responsibility for providing for their family) to control women who try to organize to im-

prove conditions for all. The women may be beaten up, or even sexually abused.

Possibly in even worse situation are the farmers. Government policy, which makes it impossible to make a decent living from farming, forces young people to leave the farm to swell the urban work force. This leaves fewer people to do the farm work. As usual, women have the hardest part. After sharing in the long hours on the land, they must also manage all the housework--and without any modern conveniences we take for granted. The price of farm produce is kept so low that it is impossible to make a living, which leads to people going deeper and deeper into debt. Farm prices are deliberately kept low so that people can manage to live on low wages, to keep Korea attractive to overseas investments. It keeps Korean products competitive on the world market, but also assures factory owners of high profits. Added to the hardship of farmers trying to make a living from the land is the pressure from the U.S. for Korea to import their excess farm produce. This leads to anti-American feelings by students, especially, but worse, it causes many farmers to commit suicide in their despair of ever getting out of debt and making a decent living.

Church women are largely from the middle class, and display a middle class mentality. They are rather conservative, yet wanting reforms. They always want to improve their situation, attain a higher status, and they want all available conveniences, and are very consumer-oriented. In general, women are afraid of taking action to bring about change. Unlike men, who are likely to try to fight against problems and suffering, women are more likely to accept whatever suffering comes to them as their fate, assuming they must just make the best of it.

Women have a weak sense of identity. They live in their husbands' lives, and usually consider their place is in the home--keeping things pleasant and convenient for their husband and family.

If this is true for women in general, it is doubly true for Church women. Besides their cultural orientation, they are further trained by the minister (a male) to be obedient, believe what they are taught without thinking through their faith or its implications. If a Church Women's Association decides to hold a lecture, only 10% of groups would make their

own decision as to the theme, while 63% would defer to the minister's suggestion. In choosing the speaker, we find that 18% might make their own choice, while 71% would leave the decision to the minister.

How can such self-centred, weak-willed and submissive women take on the suffering and pain of their poor neighbours?! It is our experience that one of the most common causes for them to change is through the awareness of their sons and daughters. Especially if the young people take part in a demonstration and are arrested, the mothers' awareness of the political reality grows rapidly. This often puts them in a situation where they also hear the personal experience of others' suffering, and often they take this on them as their own. For example, when women heard about the sex torture suffered by Ms. Kwon, they all came to think of Ms. Kwon as their own daughter, and were willing, even eager, to do whatever they could to see that sex-abuse by police of young women taken to police stations be stopped. They hope they may save their own daughters from suffering a similar fate.

In the same way, PARK Jong Chul, who died under torture, as mentioned earlier, became the son of all the women, and they shared the pain of his own mother, and determined to fight against the use of torture.

It was these two cases, more than anything else, which made the various women's action groups form a coalition. It is called the Korean Association of Women's Organizations, and includes 21 different organizations from a broad spectrum of society--Church groups, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, Buddhist groups, and social action groups unrelated to Christianity. Groups like YWCA are noticeably not included in the coalition.

As those who call ourselves by the name of Jesus Christ, we must all have a common concern for the weak, the poor and the marginalized. If we really knew Christ, we would inevitably work together for the common concern of peace and justice for all God's children. This is our common concern, and one which we cannot do without you, and I believe you cannot do without us. We have to work together and pray together. The destiny of our country is tied up with your country. In so many ways your country is using ours for its own benefit--militarily, economically, politically.

Especially our educated youth have become more and more aware of this fact, and if you study what is happening, I am sure you will readily understand the growing feelings of anti-Americanism. It is a serious crime in Korea to express feelings of anti-Americanism. It is also a serious crime to oppose the storing of nuclear weapons in Korea, although we are well aware that if they were used, our country as well as North Korea would be destroyed. We have come to realize that the nuclear weapons are here, not for our protection, but because America wants them here. We are a pawn in the hands of the superpowers--America, Japan, China, Russia. We have no freedom to speak out about any of this, but you do have that freedom.

The people of both North and South Korea desire unification of our divided country, but it is to the advantage of the U.S. and Russia, and to the advantage of the powerful dictators on both sides to keep the division. We need your help, your understanding, your prayers, and your pressure on your government.

MESSAGE FOR NCC - USA

Prepared by Ms. PARK Young Sook

I was pleased to have an opportunity to tell you about our country and Church, and I am very disappointed--and sorry for your disappointment--that I cannot bring it to you in person. Perhaps this method will be more helpful than no contact with you direct from Korea. My message will be largely from the standpoint of women, and about the activities of women.

First, however, you need some background on the political situation which is behind all that I will tell you.

Korea has suffered under dictatorships since the end of World War II, and of course, before that we suffered under Japanese occupation of our country. Too many times we have had hope for a better situation, and each time we are disappointed.

Liberation from Japan did not bring us independence to develop our own nation in our own way. We exchanged Japan's imperialism for what we thought was to be the friendly help of the United States. There was a Korean nationalistic provisional government waiting in China to take over when the war ended, but instead of installing them, the U.S. put in power the U.S. educated Syngman Rhee as president, and under him used people who co-operated with Japan for U.S. advantage. We can now see that the U.S. did not consider that Koreans had any ability. Our next terrible disappointment, of course, was the division of our country at the 38th parallel which has brought about so much of the tragedy of the past 40 years of our history, including the Korean war of 1950-53, which devastated our country.

Rhee's dictatorship was finally overthrown by the Student Revolution in 1960 and our hopes for democracy rose again. But the military again destroyed any chance of our only freely-elected government achieving success, by overthrowing it in less than a year after it was elected. When PARK Chung Hee was assassinated after 18 years of oppressive dictatorship, again we hoped for a restoration of democracy, but once more our hopes were dashed to the ground by the bloody Kwangju Massacre, which brought the present dictator to power. Chun Doo-hwan's rule has never had any legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

Hopes rose again in 1985 when a real opposition party was elected, and it seemed that the Constitution would be changed at least before the

end of Chun's 7-year term. Of course, we never believed he would voluntarily step down and allow power to pass out of his hands. Lack of a free press helps him retain power by making the people believe the opposition party is torn with inner strife. Much of the strife there has been deliberately brought about by the government. Some members have been bribed, and others threatened into collaborating with the ruling party. To overcome the government interference in its affairs, a new opposition party was recently formed, thereby getting out of its ranks those who have been co-operating against it with the government party.

We have known for a long time that some way would be found for the promises of turning over the power to be broken. If the students had been demonstrating and "causing unrest", that would have been a good excuse for declaring martial law and holding onto power, but the students have been quiet all spring. The formation of the new Party was thus used as the excuse. On April 13, the president announced that the Constitution will not be amended until after the '88 Olympics, and of course, incidentally, after the next president is chosen under the present Constitution--by an electoral college, to all intents and purposes, chosen by Chun himself, thus assuring his continued control. So again, hopes for change are again destroyed. It is disappointing, but quite expected. We just did not know what would be used for the excuse.

Over this background, let me turn to some of the events and issues which have taken our interest, concern and time. One of the areas in which we have become deeply involved is that of labour. Because it is an area of deep concern, it is one where university students and graduates have become involved in one way or another. Companies are pressured not to hire a person with post high school education to work in a factory as a labourer. Yet, in order to understand the situation of those who work at that level, many university students desire to have that experience. To do so they have to falsify their identification papers, or use someone else's. If caught, of course, they are charged with a criminal offense.

I want to tell you the story of Ms. KWON, who is one of such people. She began work May 20, 1986. She was not a very strong or brave person, and after a week of the strenuous factory life she quit her job. On June 4 she was arrested for falsifying her registration papers. The investigation

was quickly completed because she admitted the charge. But then the police investigators tried to force her to reveal the names of people who were involved in the May 3rd riots in Inchon, and when she insisted she did not know, was tortured sexually. It took great courage on the part of Ms. Kwon to make known that she had been sexually abused. In Korean culture this ruins a woman's reputation and makes her ineligible for marriage. She is disgraced for life. But Ms. Kwon decided to make the facts known so as to protect other women from suffering the same disgrace. It was clear to her that her experience was not an isolated case.

Women's groups learned of her sex torture on June 26 and on July 3rd Ms. Kwon laid a charge against the policeman who had sexually abused her. She obtained a human rights lawyer and told the whole story. The outcome was that nine lawyers volunteered to take up her case and laid an accusation against the police officer. This was the first time ever for lawyers to lay such a charge. Ms. Kwon's parents did not want the case publicized. They insisted that to do so would be to cause their daughter a "second death", and requested newspapers and government officials to keep it quiet so it could be forgotten. But when this was discussed with Ms. Kwon, she said that she understood her parents' attitude and their concern for her, but that it would be like a second death to her if it were covered up at this point.

This case brought forth another first. Joint action was taken by various groups—Buddhists, Roman Catholic priests and nuns, Protestant groups, and various other women's organizations. The joint action started quickly and spread throughout the country. In spite of all these efforts, the District Court sentenced Ms. Kwon to 1½ years in prison, down from the prosecution's demand of three years.

Ms. Kwon expressed regret at the pain and suffering the case had caused her parents, but said she felt proud that she had made the facts of her case known. If this kind of thing is kept quiet it is certain it will continue. Police count on women not making their shame public. Publicity goes a long way toward stopping the practice.

A 1½ year sentence for falsifying a document was such a miscarriage of justice that 167 lawyers volunteered their services and demanded a new trial. The courts turned it down. Furthermore, on March 28 the Appeals

Court confirmed the 1½ year sentence, so Ms. Kwon will not be released until December this year. Ms. Kwon's only regret is that she did not make a greater fuss, so that not only sex torture, but any torture would have to have been stopped, and perhaps the life of PARK Jong Chul might have been saved.

(PARK Jong Chul was a 23 year old Seoul National University student who died under police torture in January this year. His death was a tragic loss, but it aroused the people to even stronger solidarity and action to demand an end of torture in our country.)

Ms. Kwon's case is not yet closed. A nationwide signature campaign is being conducted for her unconditional release from prison. The signatures will be sent to the Ministry of Justice along with an appeal for her release on the anniversary of her torture, June 26. The same committee is also raising money to give her for use while in prison.

Ms. Kwon's case is only one of many examples of people offering their bodies as a living sacrifice on behalf of others. Numbers of university students, whose total effort has been directed to the almost impossible goal of university entrance, have in their junior or senior year given it all up on behalf of those who are victims of injustice and oppression, and on behalf of democracy and freedom. Professors have lost their jobs, teachers have been fired, religious leaders and politicians have gone to prison. All of these have sacrificed their future for a cause, without hesitation. Students face brutality and violence of police and other agencies without fear, feeling remorse only on account of the disappointment and suffering of their parents.

Let us look at the field of labour. World statistics show that Korean factory workers work the longest hours and for the lowest pay. Stranger still is that women work longer hours than men, and of course, at lower wages. Women suffer double exploitation, with the discrimination against women in general being added to the bad situation of labourers.

Many factories employ far more women than men, and all overseers are men. It is often reported that male workers are bribed by management (men are more susceptible because of their feeling of responsibility for providing for their family) to control women who try to organize to im-

prove conditions for all. The women may be beaten up, or even sexually abused.

Possibly in even worse situation are the farmers. Government policy, which makes it impossible to make a decent living from farming, forces young people to leave the farm to swell the urban work force. This leaves fewer people to do the farm work. As usual, women have the hardest part. After sharing in the long hours on the land, they must also manage all the housework--and without any modern conveniences we take for granted. The price of farm produce is kept so low that it is impossible to make a living, which leads to people going deeper and deeper into debt. Farm prices are deliberately kept low so that people can manage to live on low wages, to keep Korea attractive to overseas investments. It keeps Korean products competitive on the world market, but also assures factory owners of high profits. Added to the hardship of farmers trying to make a living from the land is the pressure from the U.S. for Korea to import their excess farm produce. This leads to anti-American feelings by students, especially, but worse, it causes many farmers to commit suicide in their despair of ever getting out of debt and making a decent living.

Church women are largely from the middle class, and display a middle class mentality. They are rather conservative, yet wanting reforms. They always want to improve their situation, attain a higher status, and they want all available conveniences, and are very consumer-oriented. In general, women are afraid of taking action to bring about change. Unlike men, who are likely to try to fight against problems and suffering, women are more likely to accept whatever suffering comes to them as their fate, assuming they must just make the best of it.

women have a weak sense of identity. They live in their husbands' lives, and usually consider their place is in the home--keeping things pleasant and convenient for their husband and family.

If this is true for women in general, it is doubly true for Church women. Besides their cultural orientation, they are further trained by the minister (a male) to be obedient, believe what they are taught without thinking through their faith or its implications. If a Church Women's Association decides to hold a lecture, only 30% of groups would make their

is using more for its own benefit--materially, economically, politically.

own decision as to the theme, while 63% would defer to the minister's suggestion. In choosing the speaker, we find that 18% might make their own choice, while 71% would leave the decision to the minister.

How can such self-centred, weak-willed and submissive women take on the suffering and pain of their poor neighbours?! It is our experience that one of the most common causes for them to change is through the awareness of their sons and daughters. Especially if the young people take part in a demonstration and are arrested, the mothers' awareness of the political reality grows rapidly. This often puts them in a situation where they also hear the personal experience of others' suffering, and often they take this on them as their own. For example, when women heard about the sex torture suffered by Ms. Kwon, they all came to think of Ms. Kwon as their own daughter, and were willing, even eager, to do whatever they could to see that sex-abuse by police of young women taken to police stations be stopped. They hope they may save their own daughters from suffering a similar fate.

In the same way, PARK Jong Chul, who died under torture, as mentioned earlier, became the son of all the women, and they shared the pain of his own mother, and determined to fight against the use of torture.

It was these two cases, more than anything else, which made the various women's action groups form a coalition. It is called the Korean Association of Women's Organizations, and includes 21 different organizations from a broad spectrum of society--Church groups, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, Buddhist groups, and social action groups unrelated to Christianity. Groups like YWCA are noticeably not included in the coalition.

As those who call ourselves by the name of Jesus Christ, we must all have a common concern for the weak, the poor and the marginalized. If we really knew Christ, we would inevitably work together for the common concern of peace and justice for all God's children. This is our common concern, and one which we cannot do without you, and I believe you cannot do without us. We have to work together and pray together. The destiny of our country is tied up with your country. In so many ways your country is using ours for its own benefit--militarily, economically, politically.

Especially our educated youth have become more and more aware of this fact, and if you study what is happening, I am sure you will readily understand the growing feelings of anti-Americanism. It is a serious crime in Korea to express feelings of anti-Americanism. It is also a serious crime to oppose the storing of nuclear weapons in Korea, although we are well aware that if they were used, our country as well as North Korea would be destroyed. We have come to realize that the nuclear weapons are here, not for our protection, but because America wants them here. We are a pawn in the hands of the superpowers--America, Japan, China, Russia. We have no freedom to speak out about any of this, but you do have that freedom.

The people of both North and South Korea desire unification of our divided country, but it is to the advantage of the U.S. and Russia, and to the advantage of the powerful dictators on both sides to keep the division. We need your help, your understanding, your prayers, and your pressure on your government. The United States. There was a Korean republican provisional government sitting in China to take over when the war ended, but instead of installing them, the U.S. put in power the U.S.-created Syngman Rhee as president, and under his heel people who co-operated with Japan for U.S. advantage. We can now see that the U.S. did not consider that Koreans had any ability. Our next terrible disappointment, of course, was the division of our country at the 38th parallel which has brought about as much of the tragedy of the past 17 years as our history, including the Korean war of 1950-53, which devastated our country.

Rhee's dictatorship was finally overthrown by the Silent Revolution in 1960 and our hopes for democracy rose again. But the military again destroyed any chance of our only freely-elected government achieving success, by overthrowing it in less than a year after it was elected. When PARK Chung-hee was assassinated after 12 years of oppressive dictatorship, again we hoped for a restoration of democracy, but once more our hopes were dashed to the ground by the bloody struggle between, which brought the present dictator to power. Chun Doo-hwan's rule has never had any legitimacy in the eyes of the people.

Hope rose again in 1980 when a small opposition party was elected, and it seemed that the Constitution would be changed or least before the

MESSAGE FOR UCC - USA

Prepared by Rev. KIM Sang Keun

General Secretary of The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea

First, I extend my sincere apology and deep disappointment that I cannot be with you in person. In the hope that it will help, I am sending the message that I would bring you if I could be there. The fact that I am not with you speaks for itself of the situation of my country. It is very difficult for me to obtain a passport, and when I get one it is for just one trip. Last year I obtained one and then was not allowed to use it, so hoped it might be possible to go to the U.S. this time. But although the passport is issued for a year, according to the law it must be used within six months. I realize this does not make sense—neither do many of the things I will tell you.

For those of you who are not acquainted with the situation, let me tell you a little about our political situation. We have had dictatorships ever since the end of World War II when we were "liberated" from Japan. Since the early 1960s it has been a military dictatorship. The present military dictator came into power in 1980, over the background of the Kwangju incident, in which hundreds of our people were killed. And since that time we have been ruled under a Constitution formed by a group of people appointed for the job by President Chun Doo Khan. Besides its great inadequacies, it has no legitimacy in the eyes of the people. It must be revised, and since the 1985 elections, even the government party has agreed that it be revised. But that doesn't mean the problem is solved. To be legitimate the revision must take place in the National Assembly, but the government keeps this from coming about by keeping the opposition party in a state of turmoil. No doubt you wonder how that could be, but I assure you there are ways, and they are being used—where members cannot be bribed, perhaps they can be threatened into causing trouble or co-operating with the ruling party. Lack of press freedom, of course, plays an important role in all of this. The two opposition leaders (advisors to the main opposition party) are in fact acting in close co-operation, but to read newspapers or hear newscasts, you would be convinced that they are antagonistic. It is unfortunate that the main opposition party had to split, but under the circumstances, it was the only way. It leaves the small group of those who were collaborating with the government outside their ranks and thus unable to harm the party so seriously.

The people's great desire is for democracy--a transfer of power, something which has never happened in our history--and a civil government. When we speak of democracy, we mean freedom of the press and freedom of speech. News reporters would be able to learn facts and print or report them, and people would not be afraid of being overheard when they speak their minds, or that they might be arrested for expressing their opinion. Ministers would not fear arrest because of the content of their sermons and even their prayers. Democracy would mean the release of prisoners of conscience, all of whom are in prison for speaking or acting on behalf of human rights, freedom and democracy. People would not fear illegal arrest on the street because of their opposition to government policies. There would be no torture or violence used against political detainees. There would be freedom of assembly. People could gather to demonstrate their opposition to a policy or to make known their desires. There would be freedom of education. University professors would be free to encourage their students to think and analyse the situation. There would not be informers in every class reporting opinions unfavourable to the government. The curriculum, and even the time-table of schools would not be handed down by the ministry, but there would be freedom for teachers or schools to set their own schedules and not have to fear arrest, or at least losing their job, if they express a personal opinion different from the party line.

All of these dreams are just that--dreams--with no hope of being realized in the present system because every segment of society is under a government structure which dictates every facet. To allow any of these freedoms would lessen the government's power, and so the present structure will not allow it. The only hope for change is a change in the power structures and those in positions of power. This can only happen if there is

direct presidential election. Of course, the present government has no intention of allowing such a thing to happen. The opposition party has taken as its role the job of seeing that the people's desire for a real change of government takes place. The people have not voted for president since the 1971 election, and they are determined that this time there be a direct election. They are well aware that the suggestion by the government party of a cabinet system is nothing more than a new way for the same people to retain power.

This is closely linked with the people's longing for reunification. The only hope for unification is through democracy. It is the division which has made possible the successive dictatorships in the south, and one long dictatorship in the north. The division of the country is the excuse for the dictatorship, and it is also the excuse for the oppression of freedoms and human rights. In the south we have had 10 years of rabid anti-communist education. Anything that the government doesn't like is labelled communist and anything done in the name of anti-communism is acceptable--even torture and death. Unification can only come about if we have democracy, yet the only hope for democracy is unification.

There is a difference between the situation now and what it was in the 70s. The Church now has a possibility of playing a role in the struggle. This is a sign of the awakening of the people to the political realities, and to the fact that politics is not only related to politicians but is also the responsibility of the people. The 80s have seen a tremendous change in the awareness of the people in general as to the situation of our country. They are tired of the military dictatorship's oppression of the poor. During the 70s ~~there were~~

there were individuals who struggled for certain issues, and intellectuals and religious leaders who struggled on behalf of the poor and oppressed. But during the 80s the poor, themselves, have begun a struggle for their right to a decent livelihood and for their human rights. The educated have struggled for freedom of speech and press. Teachers have struggled for freedom and autonomy in education. Religious leaders and students have struggled on behalf of unification. In other words, there is an on-going struggle against the powers that be in every segment of society.

Not surprisingly, as the consciousness of the people is awakened, and their movements for change increase, oppression of people's movements by the government is also stepped up. This oppression in turn increases the people's opposition to and struggle against the government. The people have become more united in their common struggle.

Recently we have become aware of God's intervention in our situation. The government, in its attempt to maintain the status quo, tries to divide those who struggle for change by the use of fabrication and manipulation. The use of torture to fabricate communists has been a common practice. The Church was outraged at the cruel torture in the case of KIM Keun Tae, who headed a group known as Youth for Democracy, but did not take up the issue in any kind of overall joint action. When God gave Ms. KWON the courage to expose the sex torture she had endured under questioning, it was strongly taken up, especially by women's action groups. Ms. Kwon was a university graduate who joined the factory work force. This is impossible, legally, so she falsified identification papers in order to get a job. She had already quit her job when she was arrested and charged with forging official documents. Because of her sexual abuse--of which there was not the least

doubt--scores of lawyers offered their services free of charge, and the case became widely known. Ms. Kwon was still sentenced on the grounds that the sex torture claim had nothing to do with the case. It had the effect, however, of making known that there is wide use of sexual abuse as a police tactic, and of arousing women's groups to taking strong joint action, and led eventually to their forming a coalition for taking action whenever the need arises.

But it was only when a death by torture became known that the people as a whole were roused to action. There is no doubt that there have been other deaths by torture, but the case of PARK Jong Chul, a 23 year old Seoul National University student, tortured in an effort to force him to reveal names or whereabouts of people in hiding, was the first to be made known in such a way that it was impossible for the government to cover it up. This is where I believe we see God at work. The joint women's groups held an effective demonstration in front of the building where the torture death took place, and NOCK set up a Special Committee Against Torture, which planned a People's Memorial Service. I chaired the committee and was responsible for details of the Memorial Service. On February 7, the day of the Memorial Service, according to prior warning, the government mobilized some 70,000 riot control troops, heavily armed with teargas guns, which successfully prevented the planned mass memorial service. From the day before, all those active in the plans were held under house arrest. (I was one of several who managed to escape, and took part in the street rally.) The show of force was unable to prevent the people's clear demonstration of their fury against an administration which has legalized torture, and even murder. The Roman Catholic Cathedral was the site chosen for the memorial service, and so as not to be accused of preventing a worship service,

some 500 priests and nuns were allowed to go in. But crowds of people of every religion and no religion filled the streets.

The people's solidarity was seen in their involvement in the Memorial Service. Not only were they on the street, but hundreds contributed W1,000 each for the Service in spite of the danger to them of taking such a stand.

The government controls the people through the oppressive force of police and riot squads; it uses the Anti-Communist (or National Security) Law to control any attempt by the people to bring about change or even express their opposition; or it has people detained and sentenced by Summary Court to short periods of imprisonment. This latter happened to me in connection with another appeal made to the NCKC Committee Against Torture.

A Peace March and service was planned for the 19th day after Park's death--a Buddhist custom. Again, of course, riot police with teargas made participation a miserable experience, and no service was possible at the end. I was kept from taking part in that event!

A few days before, in late March, NCKC Special Committee Against Torture received an appeal from the mother of a young soldier attached to the U.S. Army (called KATUSA), that there be an investigation into the death of her son, KIM Yong Kwon, whose body had been found on the U.S. base, and she did not believe the report that it had been suicide. So we sent a Statement, together with a letter, demanding an investigation, to the U.S. Army Command Headquarters and the U.S. Embassy, knowing it was futile to get a reliable investigation from Korean army authorities. Since the letter and statement went out in my name, I was ordered to appear at a Police Station for questioning. After two days of interrogation, I was sentenced by Summary Court to 7 days detention--the charge, "spreading

groundless rumours". The people were still up in arms over the death of PARK Jong Chul when KIM Yong Kwon's mother reported that he had been tortured by Korean military authorities previously, and she found many suspicious points related to his death which made her suspect it was caused by torture. The people were only too ready to believe this, which of course, upset the government authorities.

It was because of my position on the NCC Committee that I was detained, but my position as General Secretary of the PROK involved that denomination totally. Since the committee had responded to an appeal, our involvement was seen as our Christian responsibility, and thus my arrest was condemned as interference in the Freedom of Mission. Rallies were held for "Protection of the Freedom of Mission" and for the "Eradication of Torture and Violence".

My experience in detention brought me in close contact (for a short time crowded into a cell with ten or so others) with the real minjung. My cell mates were people who had been picked up for drunken brawls and street fights and such. I was obviously from a different part of society and they soon learned I was a minister and why I was there. Immediately they asked me to help them obtain their human rights. This showed me that the minjung do see the Church as a source of hope. The Church has a responsibility to work for justice for the weak, the marginalized, the poverty-stricken.

Indeed, the Church is out in front in the struggle for the poor and oppressed. Especially NCC and its six member Churches--PROK, PCK, Methodist, Anglican, Salvation Army and Evangelical Churches--which make up about half the protestant membership--play an important role.

The study of Minjung Theology has helped to make the Church become more and more aware of its responsibility for such people. Of course, even in

these Churches, while there are some liberals, with concern for social justice, there are also conservatives who consider Minjung Theology to be heretical. The government uses them to try to divide NCC and the denominations which make it up. In spite of the opposition to Minjung Theology even within our own Church, it has influenced our Church to work with and for the poor. Many young pastors have started new small churches in slum or worker areas, even though they know by so doing they will have a hard time making a livelihood, as well as suffering hardship through harassment by police.

The PROK is a small Church, only 300,000 members out of a total Christian population of about 8 million. But our Church has taken a strong leadership role in the area of human rights and mission among the poor. The PROK was the first denomination to take up the issue of Reunification of our divided country. At present we have 50 of our members in prison, including two ministers, Revs. MOON Ik Hwan and KANG Hee Nam, and two unordained Church leaders, KIM Hyun Soo and PARK Sang Hyun.

Because of our stand for unification and other issues, we are the target for government harassment in many ways. One example is the Cheil Church situation. The pastor, Rev. PARK Hyung Kyu, is an outspoken critic and strong defender of human rights. He has spent several terms in prison since 1973. A few years ago trouble broke out in his church. At first it seemed like an internal problem--two of the four elders and a small minority of the congregation demanded the minister's resignation. Their tactics moved from disruption of Sunday service to violence against the minister and his supporters. Soon outsiders were identified among the dissident group, and eventually the minister's opponents forcibly took possession of the building and by violence kept the congregation out. Police refused

to respond to appeals for protection of the congregation from the gangsters. For the past 28 months the services have been held on the street outside a Police Station, where violence against them would be too obvious even to by-passers for the police to ignore. At least now they need not fear being beaten up during service.

Another example was an incident during last year's General Assembly. An item appeared in the local newspaper where the Assembly took place, and was distributed to each delegate, throwing suspicion on the handling of money from abroad by the Assembly office. It seemed to be an attempt to divide our members with a view to preventing me being elected to a second term as General Secretary. Another aim was undoubtedly to give the PROK a bad image in the eyes of people unrelated to the Church.

Before closing, I would like to say a little about the future of the PROK. We need to improve our record in the area of service to society. Efforts in political issues cannot be avoided, but we must not stop there. We need to broaden our concerns to go beyond the walls of the Church and recognize our responsibility to the poor and marginalized. We talk a lot about Minjung Theology, but we must move beyond just studying it intellectually and begin living it.

An important and urgent task is bringing our people closer together in theology and practice. There is too great a gap between the liberals out in front, the conservatives who oppose the activists and their activities, and the large majority somewhere between.

For the past 30 years the Church has been guided by the General Assembly. It is now time for the initiative to be centred in the presbyteries, thus placing the responsibility for the life and witness of the Church on many leaders throughout the Church, making for a healthier Church.

The PROK came into being as a separate Church in 1953, which means we will celebrate our 50th Anniversary in 2003. Scripture sets the 50th year as the Year of Jubilee. We should set that as the target time for us to realize our potential in social service appropriate to our faith statement. Our weak point is that all of our members do not subscribe to the same faith confession. Our task is to realize our vision of a community of peace with justice, with all our members involved in bringing it about.

* * * * *