

## **PROK E-NEWS**

### **April 2006**

#### **1. Consultation on PROK social mission policy**

On March 27-28 of this year, under the theme "Globalization, local autonomy and the church," a consultation on the social mission policy of the PROK was held by the Church and Society Committee of the PROK General Assembly to articulate the PROK vision and role in Korean society and church. About 60 ministers and lay leaders participated in the consultation and shared their views and ideas to develop a comprehensive mission policy to be presented to the upcoming 91<sup>st</sup> General Assembly in September 2006. The participants reached a common understanding that it is a significant and urgent task for the PROK to respond theologically and practically to the issue of economic justice and local autonomy in Korean society.

The consultation participants spelled out their conviction that "as economic globalization is widening the gap between the rich and the poor, one of the most urgent tasks facing the churches is to address the economic justice issue from the perspective of the marginalized sectors of Korean society." Participants also agreed that the PROK mission policy on the economy should be in line with the biblical perspective of 'sharing resources with and serving the marginalized people in society.' Furthermore, the participants mandated the PROK General Assembly Office to set up a nation-wide mechanism that can work to lessen the economic gap between urban and rural churches of the PROK. They also suggested that PROK ministers should pay income tax as a first step toward achieving transparency in church finances.

The participants anticipated that the upcoming May 31 local elections would be a critical turning point to boost participatory democracy at the grass-roots level and initiate sustainable development at the local level. They consequently strongly recommended that PROK member churches urge their members to play a monitoring role to minimize unnecessary influence from the central government and parliament.

#### **2. Police violence against PROK minister**

On April 7th of this year Rev. Cho Hun-Jung, senior minister of Hyangrin Church of PROK Seoul Presbytery and a leading peace activist, and 30 other protesters were arrested by Pyeongtaek police when, together with local farmers they tried to block the police from cutting off waterways leading to the rice fields. The police action was seen as a step to thwart the local farmers' rice-planting in the Pyeongtaek area where the current US military base will be hugely expanded as front-line bases are relocated there. Pyeongtaek residents and many peace activists have been holding candlelight protests for over 500 days against the forced eviction of farmers from their homeland and the expansion of the US military base in Pyeongtaek. (See

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Rev. Cho Hun-Jung was detained for three days at the Kwangju (Kyungkee Province) police station for interrogation. During the police investigation, the police officers forcibly took his finger-print by twisting his arms and fingers and pushing him face-down to the floor. His arrest came during the time of his Lenten fast.

The PROK Church and Society Committee issued a statement on April 9 demanding that the head of the Korean National Police:

- 1) make an official apology for the violation of Rev. Cho's human rights;
- 2) discharge the chief of the Pyeongtaek police station;
- 3) immediately release two farmers facing trial.

### **3. PROK challenges Japan Prime Minister**

On April 3<sup>rd</sup> of this year the Church and Society Committee of the PROK General Assembly issued a "Statement on Proposed Amendments to Japan's Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act" which the PROK then sent to Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in a cover letter from the PROK General Secretary. Specifying its concerns about and urging that the amendments not be passed into law, the PROK declared:

"These amendments which make fingerprinting and face-configuration-scanning mandatory for non-Japanese for the purpose of efficient identification, are a gross violation of the human rights of immigrants and foreigners living in Japan. Individual persons' unique genetic identity will be threatened, and surely information about persons will be used against them or can be the source of racial discrimination. This will further aggravate the social status of immigrants and foreigners in Japan because they will find themselves unwanted and marginalized in Japanese society. Wittingly or unwittingly genetic data of individual persons will be used for surveillance purpose and for tracking down suspected enemies of the state or those who are considered potential terrorists.

The PROK urges the Japanese government to immediately withdraw the amendments to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act in order to protect the rights of immigrants and foreigners. Human dignity and unique individual genetic identity must be protected. Persons are beings and not things. They are God's unique and creative handiwork which no law or regulations of any state in the world should violate.

Furthermore, we anticipate that not only will these amendments have a drastic impact on Japan's internal social life, but that they will also open the floodgate of racial hatred and xenophobia. These will intensify and widen the social and political enmity between the Japanese people and foreigners, particularly the Asian neighbors who wish to learn and integrate into Japanese society.

The Japanese government must learn from its history, that when the alien registration law was passed requiring fingerprint registration, it aroused strong antagonism from the international community. The law was eventually abolished in April 2000 because it violates the basic rights, freedom and dignity of persons. The insistence of the Japanese government to implement the proposed amendments to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act

is unthinkable in light of the promotion of and work for peace and justice in the world. A nation will never find peace and harmony by discriminating against its neighbors. The real threats to national security are the stiff laws and narrow nationalism that lead states to genocidal acts. Once again, we urge the withdrawal of the proposed amendments to the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act."

#### **4. PROK Partners' Consultation**

On May 1 of this year, one day prior to the International Ecumenical Consultation on Peace in the East-Asia Region (see note below), the PROK will hold a Partners' Consultation under the theme "New Vision and Challenges to Partnership in the Changing Global Context". About 20 representatives of PROK partner churches, together with PROK ministers and lay leaders will attend the consultation to share their vision and to articulate the meaning of partnership in more visible ways. In the morning, four representatives from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Uniting Church in Australia, United Church of Canada, and mission 21 evangelisches missionswerk basel, will speak on the theme from the perspectives of Asia, the Pacific, North America and Europe respectively. In the afternoon, PROK General Secretary Rev. Yoon Kil-Soo will deliver a presentation, "Towards Transformation: The Vision and Mission of the PROK," to which three representatives from the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan; Global Ministries, United Church of Christ USA/Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and Evangelisches Missionswerk in Sudwestdeutschland (EMS) will respond. The PROK believes this consultation will be a milestone event to deepen its vision on partnership and to build more solid relations with its partners around the world.

*(The International Ecumenical Consultation on Peace in the East-Asia Region referred to above will be included in the next issue of E-News.)*

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