

Church leader: U.S. must act to halt North Korean famine

On Sept. 9, the following statement was released to the Schiller Institute for international distribution by Dr. Syngman Rhee, a leader of the U.S. Presbyterian Church. (It will be issued officially by the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.) Dr. Rhee's family is from Pyongyang; he emigrated to the United States in 1959.

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President, National Association of Korean Americans
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I would like to appeal personally to President Clinton, the U.S. Congress, and the entire American people to take dramatic steps to halt the disaster in North Korea, where otherwise millions of human souls will die this year, in a famine of Biblical proportions.

America, as the moral light of the world, must now mount a "Berlin Air Lift" food relief effort, or over 5 million people will die—half of them children under six. North Korea's grain deficit is almost 2 million tons, according to the UN World Food Program (UNWFP), yet only some 500,000 tons of aid has been found. The U.S.A., pledging 177,000 tons, has done the most.

But our action is still "inadequate," as Senator Joseph

Biden said July 31, and so "the world, following our restrained lead, has been slow to meet the genuine emergency need." We must also insist, as the senator added, that it is "unethical" to "use starvation as a weapon" against North Korea.

Australian Member of Parliament Mrs. Pauline Hanson on Aug. 14 called for massive food shipments, noting that most of this fall's crop has been lost, including 70% of the corn crop, from a horrific new drought, compounding the problem beyond internal repair. German officials travelling in North Korea recently saw "pictures that were not to be seen since Ethiopia," she said.

U.S. United Nations Ambassador Bill Richardson has also insisted that the situation is dire and "getting worse." Yet State Department officials insisted on Sept. 3 that they will "wait for the next UNWFP appeal"—after UNWFP Director Catherine Bertini has repeatedly explained that her small agency cannot physically handle any more grain than it already has.

In Pyongyang, in my sister's city of Hamhung, and in coastal areas, I observed first-hand on Aug. 25-30 the utter desperation of the North Korean people. Rice distribution has stopped, and the population grows weaker by the day. Typhoon Winnie has just flooded away 100,000 hectares of farmland. We traveled there to deliver 350 tons of corn we bought in China, with \$200,000 raised by Korean-American church members—only a drop in the bucket.

Our American tradition demands mass action by the full resources and leadership of the United States government. This is the way to win the hearts and minds of the entire Korean people, and put a Christian end to the Cold War for good. Today, our enemies are hunger, poverty, and those who would perpetuate them. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, we must act "with malice toward none, with charity for all." Anything less could mean genocide, which might lead to a new Korean War.



Korean-American clergyman Dr. Syngman Rhee, shown with his four sisters during a reunion in Pyongyang, North Korea.