

**Breaking the Myth of Nuclear Power Omnipotence  
in the Cold War era:  
Discourse on Nuclear Power and the Movement  
against the Construction of Nuclear Power Plants in  
South Korea in the 1980s and early 1990s**

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**Introduction**

On March 11, 2011, an earthquake and tsunami that occurred in northeast Japan hit four nuclear power plants: the Fukushima Daiichi and Fukushima Daini nuclear power plants, the Onagawa nuclear power plant, and the Tokai nuclear power plant. Between March 12 and March 15, a series of hydrogen explosions occurred at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, causing the reactor bulkhead to collapse and leaking a large amount of radioactive material. The Fukushima nuclear power plant accident was not only a domestic disaster in Japan, but one that transcended borders and had a major impact on the entire East Asia and Pacific region. This disaster shocked those who had argued that “nuclear power plants are clean and do not cause pollution” or that “the Korean peninsula is a safe zone for nuclear power plants.” The Fukushima disaster clearly showed that human beings can get out

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of control in the face of a disaster, and that a nuclear power plant disaster in particular is a problem that transcends national borders. Twelve years have passed since the Fukushima nuclear power plant disaster, but nuclear power policy issues in South Korea are still controversial. While opposing Japan's discharge of contaminated water from Fukushima into the sea, the majority of South Koreans still support nuclear power generation based on economic logic. However, after the Fukushima nuclear disaster, the voices of activists demanding a nuclear power plant policy from an ecological standpoint are gaining sympathy from many people. Sun-jin Yoon explained the Fukushima nuclear disaster as an important opportunity that triggered the transition from the anti-nuclear movement to the nuclear-free movement in Korea, and diagnosed that the nuclear-free movement is progressing in a way that pursues energy alternatives in everyday life.<sup>1</sup>

Even before the Fukushima nuclear disaster, there were movements against the construction of nuclear power plants in Korea. Due to the influence of the Cold War and national division, worship for science and technology, nuclear power, was prevalent in both North and South Korea. Nuclear weapons were the core weapon of security during the Cold War, and the dominant logic was that nuclear weapons were necessary to deter war and maintain peace. Nuclear power has also been worshipped as an energy resource. Until the 1970s, nuclear power in South Korea was in a sanctuary where it could not be criticized. However, in the early 1980s, when the Cold War and national division continued, civil society criticism of the nuclear power plant construction project appeared in Korea as well. Activists campaigned against the construction of nuclear power plants alongside residents living near the plants and conducted various publicity and education campaigns to

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1 Sun-Jin Yun, "Panhaegundongesö t'arhaegundongüro: huk'ushima haekpalchönsago ihu han'guk t'arhaegundongüi pyönhwawa kwaje [From Anti-Nuclear Movements to Post-Nuclear Movements: Changes and Tasks of Korean Post-Nuclear Movements after Fukushima Nuclear Disaster]," *Shiminsahoewa NGO [Civil Society and NGO]* vol.13, no.1 (2015).

raise awareness of the dangers of nuclear power, using the Chernobyl nuclear disaster as an example.

How could this transition have occurred in a situation where the Cold War and national division have not ended? This paper is an attempt to clarify the cause and meaning of this transition. Most of the existing studies have focused on the anti-nuclear movement after the 1990s, when the eco-environmental movement was active in South Korea, while the anti-nuclear movement of the 1980s was only briefly discussed as a background.<sup>2</sup> Do-Wan Ku divided the history of the Korean environmental movement into periods, categorizing the 1960s and 1970s as the 'pre-history period' of the environmental movement, 1980-1987 as the 'period of the anti-pollution movement', and 1988-1991 as the 'period of the anti-pollution movement'.<sup>3</sup> The period after 1992 was defined as the 'period of expansion of the environmental movement'. His research dealt with the history of the Korean environmental move-

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- 2 Jae Mook Park, “Chiyök panhaek undonge issösö ‘t’ül chöngnyöl’üi kwajöng -anmyöndo panhaek undongüi kyöngu [The process of "framing" in local anti-nuclear movements - In the case of the Anmyeon-island anti-nuclear movement],” *Sahoewa yöksa [Journal of Korean Social History]* 41 (1994); Jae Mook Park, “Han’guk panwönjön chuminundongüi chön’gaegwajöng [Development process of anti-nuclear power plant residents movement in Korea],” *Sahoegwahakyöngü [Journal of Social Science Research]* 9 (1998); Chul Kyoo Kim, “Panhaegundonggwa chiyökchumin chöngch’i : Puan pangsasöng p’yegimul ch’öbunjang pandaeundongül chungshimüro [Anti-nuclear Movement and the Politics of Local Residents: the Case of Social Movement Against Nuclear Waste Facility in Buan],” *Han’guksahoe [Journal of Social Research]* 6, no. 2 (2005); Do Wan Ku, “Saeng’aeminjujuüi kwanjömesö pon han’guk panhaegundong [The Anti-Nuclear Movement in South Korea Evaluation in terms of Ecological Democracy],” *T’ongilgwa p’yöngghwa [Journal of Peace and Unification Studies]* 4, no. 2 (2012); Deok Hwa Hong·Dowan Ku, “Minjuhwa ihu han’guk hwan’gyöngundongüi chedohwawa anjöngghwa: chöhangsagönbunsökül chungshimüro [Environmental Movement after Democratization in Korea: A Protest Event Analysis],” *ECO* 18, no. 1 (2014).
- 3 Do Wan Ku, *Han’guk hwan’gyöngundongüi sahoehak [Sociology of the Korean Environmental Movement]* (Seoul: Munhaggwa Jiseongsa, 1996), 144-235.

ment in various dimensions, such as social background, change in environmental awareness, major events, and ideology by period, but the anti-nuclear movement in the 1980s was not analyzed.

Deokhwa Hong submitted a study explaining the formation and change of the Korean nuclear power industry after 1967 in the relationship between technology, institution, and social movement. He interpreted that the anti-nuclear movement in the late 1980s was carried out in connection with the anti-war and peace movement (NL), but in the early 1990s, the anti-war and peace movement virtually disappeared due to the decline of radical social movements and the policy of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. As a result, the organizational and ideological basis of the anti-nuclear movement was reduced to a regional anti-nuclear movement, and the Anmyeon-island struggle in 1990 symbolically showed the localization of the anti-nuclear movement.<sup>4</sup>

Sheila Jasanoff & Sang-Hyun Kim submitted an interesting study comparing Sociotechnical Imaginaries of Nuclear Power in the United States and South Korea, in which they made the interesting argument that even the escalation of democratic action that fueled the anti-nuclear movement in South Korea operated within the imaginary of developmental nationalism, which views science and technology as tools to achieve a strong and wealthy nation.<sup>5</sup>

In this study, while looking at the achievements and limitations of existing research, I will analyze the following topics in detail. First, how the fanaticism for nuclear power that was so strong in South Korea during the Cold War could be critiqued in the 1980s. Second, in the case of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association established in 1988, what was the impact of the Korean democratization movement

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4 Deokhwa Hong, Han'guk wŏnjaryŏkpalchŏn sahoegisulch'eje [Korean *Nuclear Power Plant Social Technology System: Co-organization of technology, system, and social movement*] (Pajoo: Hanul Academy, 2019), 184-196.

5 Sheila Jasanoff and Sang-Hyun Kim, "Containing the Atom: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and Nuclear Power in the United States and South Korea," *Minerva* 47 (2009): 119-146.

on the anti-nuclear movement. Third, despite the achievements of the anti-nuclear movement in Yeonggwang and Anmyeon-island, what is the historical context in which a crack occurred between the environmental movement group and the local residents?

This can be a meaningful work in that it allows us to look back on the dynamics between democracy, ecologism, and nationalism surrounding the anti-nuclear movement in South Korea.

### **The Worship and De-worship of Nuclear Power during the Cold War**

On July 1, 1955, South Korea and the United States signed an agreement "to advance the peaceful use of atomic energy." The agreement centered on the United States lending six kilograms of enriched uranium to South Korea for the construction and operation of an experimental reactor.<sup>6</sup> The signing of the agreement was hailed in the press at the time as "a hundred benefits for us, not a single one." At a time when electricity resources were scarce in the South Korea, nuclear power was represented as a source of hope for "economic prosperity and improved living standards."<sup>7</sup> Although the Korea-U.S. Nuclear Agreement was premised on peaceful use, President Syngman Rhee was more interested in nuclear weapons production.<sup>8</sup>

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6 "Hanmiwŏnjaryŏk'yŏpchŏngsujoin(韓美原子力協定遂調印) [Korea-U.S. Nuclear Agreement Reached]," *Donga Ilbo*, July 3, 1955.

7 "Sasŏl: wŏnjaryŏkshidaee taebihaja [Editorial: Let's Prepare for the Nuclear Era]," *Dong-A Ilbo*, July 2, 1955.

8 Sun-Jin Yun and Eun-Jeong Oh, "Han'guk wŏnjaryŏk palchŏnjŏngch'aegŭi sahoejŏk kusŏng: wŏnjaryŏkkisurŭi toip ch'ogi(1954~1965nyŏn)rŭl chungshimŭro [A Study on the Social Construction of the Nuclear Power Generation Policy in Korea: Focused on the Introduction Processes of Nuclear Technology]," *Hwan'gyŏngjŏngch'aek [Journal of Environmental Policy and Administration]* 14, no. 1 (2006): 57.

As North and South Korea remained in a state of military confrontation after the Korean War, the deployment of nuclear weapons in the South was sometimes discussed as a final solution to the security problem. On July 13, 1955, an editorial writer in the *Chosun Ilbo* argued that the South should have nuclear weapons to deter the aggressive ambitions of the Soviet Union and North Korea, even though the atomic bomb should never actually be used.<sup>9</sup> Under the Cold War and national division, many Koreans thought that having nuclear weapons was necessary for peace.

After Korea's first experimental reactor went into operation in 1962, the Atomic Energy Administration announced plans to begin construction of a nuclear power plant with an output of 150,000KW in 1968. The government had high hopes for this, saying, "When nuclear power generation begins, a revolution will come in Korea's energy resources sector."<sup>10</sup>

In the 1960s, the South Korean media fiercely opposed the Soviet nuclear test based on Cold War perceptions, but praised nuclear power as a technology that would become a hope for the future, saying that if used peacefully, it would become a "magician who can solve any problem."<sup>11</sup> The optimistic outlook for nuclear power worked in tandem with the economic growth theory of developmental nationalism, the perception that nuclear power was the latest technology needed to accelerate the pace of economic development and promote compressive growth.<sup>12</sup>

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9 "Sasöl: haengmugiüi iyulbaebansöng [Editorial: Antinomy of Nuclear Weapons]," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 13, 1955.

10 "Haekpalchönüro palgajil han'guk [Korea Brightened by Nuclear Power]," *Kyungnyang Shinmun*, November 19, 1962; "Shirhyöndoel chesamüi pul [The Third Fire" to be realized]," *Kyungnyang Shinmun*, October 2, 1964.

11 "Wönjaryök shidae: sanöpkisul kaehyöggüi ch'ömbyöng [The Age of Atomic Energy: the Advance Guard of Industrial Technology Reform]," *Kyungnyang Shinmun*, December 27, 1967.

12 "Sasöl: wönjaryök palchönüi chönmang [Editorial: Prospects of Nuclear Power

At the groundbreaking ceremony for the Gori Nuclear Power Plant in 1971, President Park Chung-hee announced that “although nuclear power generation is expensive in the early stages of construction, it is more economical as time goes on and there is no pollution problem, so we will continue to build nuclear power plants in the future.”<sup>13</sup> In 1978, the Korean government announced that it would build eight nuclear power plants by 1986, relying on nuclear power for 31% of its power supply capacity, and plans to build 15 nuclear power plants by 1991.<sup>14</sup> After the oil shock in the 1970s, the issue of securing energy resources was raised worldwide, and in Korea, as an alternative, restructuring of nuclear fuel-centered energy securing policies was discussed. Korean journalists argued that a national effort to develop nuclear power was absolutely necessary, saying that Korea, which lacks energy resources, could not afford to think of anything more than a “peaceful use of nuclear power.”<sup>15</sup> On March 28, 1979, a radioactive leak occurred at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania, USA. In Korea, the news was mainly short, but there were articles about the spread of nuclear fear in the U.S. and the development of anti-nuclear movements in the U.S., Germany, and Japan.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the rise of anti-nuclear movements around the world, the mainstream discourse on nuclear power in Korea in the early 1980s

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Generation],” *Dong-A Ilbo*, January 15, 1968.

- 13 “Han’gukch’oech’o wŏnjaryŏk palchŏnso kigong [Korea’s First Nuclear Power Plant Groundbreaking],” *Dong-A Ilbo* March 19, 1971.
- 14 “Wŏnjaryŏkpalchŏnso 15ki kŏnsŏl, 91nyŏnkkaji [Construction of 15 Nuclear Power Plants, until 1991],” *Maeil Business Newspaper*, June 22, 1978.
- 15 “Sasŏl: wŏnjaryŏkpalchŏnŭi kwagamhan kaebari ch’okkudoenda [Editorial: Bold Development of Nuclear Power Generation Is Urged],” *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, January 27, 1981.
- 16 “Miguk haekkongp’o kalsurok hwaksan [U.S. Nuclear Fear Spreads More and More],” *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 2, 1979; “Miguk tŭrimaŭl sago twi tŭlkkŭllŭn kak-kugŭi panhaegundong [Anti-nuclear Movement in Various Countries Rises After U.S. Three Mile Island Nuclear Disaster],” *Dong-A Ilbo*, April 10, 1979.

was that nuclear power would be the most promising source of energy in the future as fossil fuels were expected to be depleted, and that Korea should strive to develop nuclear technology so that it would not be left behind in the global race to advance nuclear power.<sup>17</sup> There were subtle changes in the mainstream media during this period: one was that the construction of the Kori and Wolsong NPPs has become a source of pride for South Korea, and the other was that the importance of nuclear plant safety issues has been emphasized in the wake of the global anti-nuclear movement.<sup>18</sup> The Chernobyl nuclear disaster in the Soviet Union in April 1986 was a wake-up call to the seriousness of nuclear safety issues. Although the issue of nuclear power plant safety emerged after the Chernobyl disaster, the mainstream discourse in Korea was that nuclear power plant safety could be solved by paying attention to safety in design and operation, and that nuclear power generation could not be abandoned.<sup>19</sup> The editorial writer of the *Dong-A Ilbo* attributed the significance of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster to the realization that "there can be no safe zone from radiation anywhere in the world". He also interpreted the disaster in Cold War terms, saying it "nakedly exposed to the outside world the dysfunction and immorality of Soviet society's closedness and secrecy."<sup>20</sup> South Korean coverage of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster was often framed in terms of the Cold War. The *Chosun Ilbo* treated the problems of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster as if they were unique to the communist state, suggesting that the Soviet Union's bureaucratic state man-

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17 "Kkumüi enöjwön wönjaryökpækkwa, nüröganün haekpalchönso shilt'aewa munjejöm [Dream Energy Source Nuclear Encyclopedia, Current Status and Problems of Increasing Nuclear Power Plants]," *Donga Ilbo*, February 17, 1981.

18 "Sasöl: chesamüi pul kaebalch'okchin [Editorial: Third Fire Development Promotion]," *Kyungghyang Shinmun*, September 10, 1983.

19 "Wönjaryök shidae(12) wönjönsago in'ganüi chaenan mant'a [Nuclear Age (12) Nuclear Disasters Are Often Human Disasters]," *Donga Ilbo*, November 7, 1988.

20 "Sasöl: ch'erünobil p'ajanggwa kyohun [Editorial: Consequences and Lessons from the Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster]," *Dong-A Ilbo*, May 10, 1986.



agement and closed disclosure of information fostered the accident.<sup>21</sup>

However, articles on the Chernobyl disaster quoting major foreign news organizations showed how catastrophic a nuclear disaster could be, and on the first anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, anti-nuclear protests around the world were reported in detail in Korean daily newspapers.<sup>22</sup> South Korea remained silent on the global anti-nuclear movement of this period, but the Chernobyl disaster made many Koreans question the existing nuclear discourse that nuclear power plants could be safely controlled by humans. As the Korean social movement for democratization became active, the voice of the anti-nuclear movement began to gain strength in Korea as well. Poet Kim Ji-ha pointed out nuclear power plants and nuclear weapons of the US military as threatening the destruction of life itself based on the idea of life, and argued that “anti-nuclear is the highest principle of the movement to find a way to live.”<sup>23</sup> Anti-nuclear arguments had been steadily raised by environmentalist civil society organizations in the 1980s, from ‘the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues(한국공해문제연구소)’, founded in 1982, to ‘the Anti-Pollution Movement Association(공해추방운동연합)’, founded in 1988, and the anti-nuclear movement was gradually expanding along with the revitalization of the democratization movement. .

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21 Yong-seok Shin, “Kyōngjiksahoeüi hōjōm [Loopholes in a Rigid Society],” *Chosun Ilbo*, May 29, 1986

22 “Kagonghal haek wihōm, hiroshima wōnp'ok nūngga, so ch'erūnobil wōnjōnsago huyujūng ōdikkaji [Horrible Nuclear Danger, Beyond the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb, How Far the Aftermath of the Soviet Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster],” *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, May 21, 1986; “Segye kotkotsō panhaekshiwi kyōngnyōl [Anti-nuclear Protests Rage around the World],” *Dong-A Ilbo* April 27, 1987.

23 “Panhaekūn sal kil ch'annūn undongūi ch'oego wōlli [Anti-nuclear is the highest principle of the movement to find a way to live],” *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, December 23, 1988.

### **The Nationalist Characteristics of the Anti-nuclear Movement and Its Limitations**

As a result of industrialization, pollution diseases began to be reported in Korea in the early 1970s, and the issue of pollution was raised as a serious social problem. In the 1970s, the perception of pollution as a serious disaster that destroys the ecological environment was formed, and local residents who were suffering from pollution problems began to resist it by filing complaints with administrative agencies.<sup>24</sup> However, in the 1970s, the environmental movement was dominated by the government, and the civil society anti-pollution movement was not organized. In January 1982, the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues was founded by a group of religious figures, professors, and lawyers.<sup>25</sup> Religious figures who participated in the democratization and ecumenical movements of the 1970s, including Father Se-woong Ham, the director, were key figures in the institute. Father Ham said he founded the institute to overcome the reality that "human life" was sacrificed for economic construction and that pollution was justified by industrialization.<sup>26</sup> Although billed as an "Research Institute," the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues was more of an environmentalist organization that "works closely with social organizations that have been paying attention to pollution, helping the people to have a concrete and structured understanding of pollution, and empowering the affected people to banish pollution on their own".<sup>27</sup>

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24 Taewoo Ko, "1970nyöndaeh han'gugüi konghae sanghwanggwa chaenan inshik [Pollution Problems and Disaster Awareness in 1970s South Korea]," *Kaenyömgwa sot'ong [Concept and Communication]*, no. 28 (2021):32-39.

25 "Chonggyoin, kyosu, pöpchoin chuch'uk, konghaemunjeyön'guso palchok [Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues, led by religious figures, professors, and lawyers, launched]," *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, January 16, 1982.

26 Se-woong Ham, "Ch'anggansa: in'gandaun salmüi ijöngp'yoga toegirül [Inaugural Address: May it be a Milestone for Human Life]," *Konghaeyön'gu [Pollution Research]*, no. 1(1982): 3-4.

The Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues was directly influenced by Japanese pollution research and anti-pollution movements.<sup>28</sup> The Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues also produced a resource book, *What is Pollution*, which was translated from the book *Pollution in Japan* by Hikaru Shoji(庄司光) and Kenichi Miyamoto(宮本憲一), and introduced Japan's minamata disease and itai-itai disease.<sup>29</sup> Shortly after its establishment, the institute focused primarily on water pollution, air pollution, soil pollution, and imports from polluting industries, but in 1983 it began to focus on nuclear pollution. The trigger was the publication in the Korean press of a confidential report ("Update Review of Safety Aspects of Nuclear Power Program in the Republic of Korea") submitted to the World Bank and UNDP in April 1982 by U.S. nuclear expert Salomon Levy.<sup>30</sup> In a 1982 confidential report, he reviewed the regulatory aspects and operational safety of South Korea's nuclear power plants, and his main conclusion was that "essential and urgent that there exist in the Republic of Korea a strong, independent and competent nuclear regulatory function as well as associated Korean safety laws, regulation, criteria, codes and standards."

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27 "Han'gukkonghaemunjejön'guso söllipch'wijimun [Statement on the Establishment of the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues]," *Konghaeyön'gu [Pollution Research]*, no. 1 (1982): 27.

28 Yu Kyong Jeong, "1980nyöndae han'guk pan'gonghaeundongüi chön'gaewa ilbon pan'gonghaeundonggwaüi kwan'gye: onsanbyöngül tullössan han'guk konghaemunjejön'gusoüi hwalongül chungshimüro [The Process of Antipollution Movements and Relation with Japanese Antipollution Movements in Korea in the 1980s: Focusing on Activities of Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues over Onsan Disease]," *Ilbonhakpo [Journal of Japanese Studies]*, no. 96 (August 2013).

29 Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues, *Konghaeran müöshin'ga [What is Pollution]* (Seoul: 1983), 2.

30 "Migugüi tu kanhaengmul, han'gugwönjöne anjöngsang kyörham [Two American publications, Korean Nuclear Power Plants Have Stability Flaws]," *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, February 4, 1983; "Han'guk wönjön anjöndaech'aek kyörham [Flaws in Korean Nuclear Power Plant Safety Measures]," *Chosun Ilbo*, February 5, 1983.

Following the publication of this report, the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues began to question the safety of nuclear power plants, including the Kori Nuclear Power Plant Unit 1.<sup>31</sup> Pollution Research No. 4, published on May 4, 1984, contained an article titled "Stop building nuclear power plants." While nuclear power plant construction in the United States was suspended after the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant disaster in 1979, South Korea was planning to order the construction of nuclear power plants 11 and 12, which will cost \$4 billion. The Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues asked the Korean government to completely stop it. The institute pointed out that there was no public hearing on the construction of nuclear power plants in Korea, and there was no system to respect and reflect the opinions of local residents. The institute emphasized that nuclear power plants should be reconsidered from a democratic perspective.<sup>32</sup> Activists of the 'Korean Federation for Environmental Movement(환경운동연합)' emphasized the qualitative difference from the environmental movement in the 1980s, saying that it was only after 1993, when the Anti-Pollution Movement Association was changed to the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement, that economic growth itself could be questioned. However, already from the stage of the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues, activists were arguing that "GNP-oriented economic growth should be avoided."<sup>33</sup>

On June 9, 1986, at Myeongdong Cathedral, an event called "Anti-Pollution Field" was held in commemoration of the 14th World

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31 Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues, *Konghae: konghaemunjeü saeroun inshikkwa chuch'ejök haegyörül wihae* [Pollution: Toward a New Recognition of the Pollution Problem and Its Own Solution] (Seoul: November 1983), 12.

32 Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues, "Wönjaryök palchönso könsörül chungdanhara [Stop Building Nuclear Power Plants]," *Konghaeyön'gu* [Pollution Research], no. 4 (May 1984).

33 Yön'gushil [Research Institute], "Han'gukkyöngjewa konghae [The Korean Economy and Pollution]," *Konghaeyön'gu* [Pollution Research], no. 1 (1982), 8-9.

Environment Day hosted by the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues. A lecture by Professor Young-hee Lee on the theme of 'Nuclear and the Korean Peninsula' was held, there were poetry recitations and song performances against nuclear power, an anti-nuclear photo exhibition and slide screenings, and a mock trial at a nuclear power plant. Young-hee Lee reminded that the Chernobyl nuclear disaster changed the old idea that a country was safe with nuclear weapons and a developed and modernized society with nuclear power plants. He warned that if U.S. nuclear weapons were launched in the name of defending South Korea, they would fall on North Korea in two to three minutes, and similarly, Soviet SS20 intermediate-range missiles with nuclear weapons would devastate Seoul in four to five minutes after launch. He argued that South Koreans were mistaken in advocating US nuclear forces and favoring the establishment of nuclear weapons bases on the Korean Peninsula, even though the US and the Soviet Union pursued their own security at the expense of their subordinate allies.<sup>34</sup> Young-hee Lee directly criticized the existing dominant view that advocated nuclear armament as part of a security enhancement discourse under the Cold War.

After the Chernobyl disaster, the South Korean government launched a campaign on TV and radio to allay citizens' fears about nuclear power, saying, "The nuclear reactors in operation in Korea are different from those of the Soviet Union, and there is no problem because they are introduced from the United States and Canada, which have the best safety management in the world," "Nuclear power produces negligible pollution and unlimited energy," and "The global anti-nuclear movement is a movement for the peaceful use of nuclear energy." On the other hand, the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues reminded that large-scale nuclear accidents have occurred in both the United States and the Soviet Union, and warned that a major explosion at a

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34 Younghee Lee, "Haekwa hanbando [Nuclear and Korean Peninsula]," *Konghaeyŏn'gu [Pollution Research]*, no. 13 (1986): 8-9.

nuclear power plant in Korea would be as catastrophic as the Chernobyl disaster.<sup>35</sup>

On September 13, 1986, the Anti-Pollution Civic Movement Council(공해반대시민운동협의회) was founded. It had the character of a coalition of civic organizations and ran courses on pollution awareness for housewives and young people. In *Pollution and Survival*, the organization's magazine, Joong-Rae Cho argued that economic growth should not be an end in itself, but that development policies that entail increased pollution should be challenged.<sup>36</sup> The Council for Civil Action Against Pollution argued for the suspension of nuclear power plant construction from the same horizon as the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues' discourse against nuclear power plants. While nuclear power was worshiped as a symbol of advanced science and the construction of nuclear power plants was represented as "our way of life" in South Korea, the Council argued that, as the Chernobyl disaster showed, the problem of waste disposal and radioactive leakage from nuclear power plants was a serious issue that directly related to the lives of 40 million Koreans.<sup>37</sup>

The Council for Civil Action Against Pollution provided concrete evidence of the high risk of accidents at nuclear power plants and the devastating consequences of such accidents. The Council also criticized the government's secretive bureaucracy in the construction of nuclear power plants and questioned the undemocratic nature of the process itself.<sup>38</sup>

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35 Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues, "Ch'erūnobil ch'amsanūn i ttang-esōdo irōnal su itta [The Chernobyl Disaster Could Happen Here]," *Konghaeyōn'gu* [*Pollution Research*], no. 13 (1986): 12-15.

36 Chung-Rae Cho, "Kyōngjesōngjanggwa konghae [Economic Growth and Pollution]," *Konghaewa saengjon* [*Pollution and Survival*], no. 1 (November 1986): 4-5.

37 "Chukūmūi wōnjaryōk palchōnso [Nuclear Power Plant of Death]," *Konghaewa saengjon* [*Pollution and Survival*], no. 1 (November 1986): 7.

38 Hong-Sōp Cho, "Haekpalchōnsowa konghae [Nuclear Power Plants and Pollution]," *Konghaewa shimimundong* [*Pollution and Citizens' Movements*] (Seoul: Anti-

In 1984, the Anti-Pollution Movement Council(반공해운동협의회) was founded and formed a close relationship with the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues, which was formed by young people who had participated in the student movement in the 1980s, including Byung-ok Ahn, who had an anti-government attitude and an anti-capitalist orientation.<sup>39</sup> In 1987, the Anti-Pollution Movement Council changed its name to the Anti-Pollution movement Youth Council(공해추방운동청년협의회) and turned into a mass organization. As a mass organization of the student movement, the Anti-Pollution movement Youth Council was characterized by its approach to the nuclear issue from the perspective of the national independence movement. The youth advocated for the withdrawal of nuclear weapons from the Korean Peninsula from the perspective of national autonomy and demanded the abolition of "nuclear power plants that pollute the Motherland's mountains and rivers."<sup>40</sup>

The Anti-Pollution Movement Association, the predecessor of the Korean Federation for Environmental Movement, was established on September 10, 1988 through organizational integration of the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues, the Anti-Pollution Civic Movement Council and the Anti-Pollution movement Youth Council. The founding of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association was prompted by environmentalists' reflections on the fragmentation of the movement after the 1987 presidential election defeat. The rural campaign against the

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Pollution Civic Movement Council, 1987), 60-68.

- 39 "Pimilgirok hwan'gyōngundong 25nyōn, konghae ch'ubang undong ch'ōngnyōn hyōbūihoe (2) haksagundonggwōn core sesang pakkūro [Secret Record 25 years of environmental movement, Youth Association for Anti-pollution Movement (2) Student Movement Core Outside the World]," *Weekly Kyunghyang*, no. 675 (Seoul: May 23, 2006)
- 40 Konghae ch'ubang undong ch'ōngnyōn hyōbūihoe [Anti-Pollution movement Youth Council], "Uriege haekūn muōshin'ga [What is Nuclear for Us]" (August 6, 1987, Minjuhwaundong ginyōmsaōp'oe open archive [Korea Democracy Foundation Open Archive] Registration Number 00179643)

Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant in 1988 was an important event that led to the unification of the Anti-Pollution Civic Movement Council and the Anti-Pollution Movement Youth Council.<sup>41</sup> Questions about nuclear safety, which began to be raised in the early 1980s, were amplified by the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster, and the radicalization of the democratization movement in the 1980s, which led to the June 1987 democratization movement, led to the rapid rise of the 'anti-nuclear movement' within the agenda of the environmental movement. The fact that the core activities of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association were anti-nuclear movements such as campaigns against the expansion of Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant showed this. The defeat of the democratic camp in the presidential election and the fall of the communist bloc gave activists more interest in the environmental movement centered on the anti-nuclear movement. In the 1980s, the myth of nuclear power omnipotence was broken by a complex combination of the fear of radiation leaks from expanding nuclear power plants, press release of the Chernobyl disaster, rise of anti-Americanism, radicalization of the democratization movement, and the collapse of the communist bloc.

In its founding manifesto, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association declared that it would focus on the following projects in order to achieve ideological and organizational unity of the anti-pollution and anti-nuclear movements and to develop more efficient and powerful activities.<sup>42</sup>

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41 "Pimilgirok hwan'gyöngundong 25nyön, konghae ch'ubang undong yönhap (1) yönggwang haekpalchönso t'rkatcha haksäengt' nonghwaltae [Secret Records 25 Years of Environmental Movement, Anti-Pollution Movement Association(1) Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant 'Fake Student' Rural Campaign]," *Weekly Kyunghyang*, no. 677, June 13, 2006

42 Konghae ch'ubang undong yönhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], "Ch'angnip sönönmun [Founding Manifesto]," *Kongminhyöp.kongjönghyöp t'onghaptaehoe mit konghae ch'ubang undong yönhap ch'angnip ch'onghoe pogosö* [Report of the Integration Conference of the Public Citizen's Association and the



- 1) In solidarity with democratic environmentalists and researchers, we will support the people's movement against pollution and organize the dynamics of the victims.
- 2) We will raise public awareness of the social contradictions of the pollution problem and the nuclear crisis against the false logic of monopolies, military dictatorships, foreign powers, and intellectuals who represent their interests.
- 3) We will strengthen the content of our solidarity struggle with democratic forces such as the anti-war and anti-nuclear peace movement and the movement to defend the health of workers and farmers, and faithfully serve the overall task of the national democratic movement.
- 4) We will contribute to the permanent peace and survival of humanity through international solidarity with the people affected by pollution and peace advocates around the world.

As paragraph 3 of the manifesto above indicates, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association identified the anti-pollution movement as a branch of the popular democracy movement. At the time, the popular democracy movement's perception of the environmental movement was that most structural environmental problems would be solved once popular democracy movement was realized.<sup>43</sup> While the leaders of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association did not consider environmental issues to be secondary, they believed that nuclear and pollution issues were central to the agenda of exposing the "oppression of foreign powers and military dictatorships". In its founding manifesto, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association invoked the nuclear issue as a meta-

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*Founding General Assembly of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association*], (1988), 21.

43 Hwan'gyōng undong yōnhap [Korean Federation for Environmental Movement], *Record of 10 Years of Korean Federation for Environmental Movement* (Seoul: Hwan'gyōng undong yōnhap [Korean Federation for Environmental Movement], 2003), 8.

phor for national suffering, stating that "more than 1,000 nuclear weapons have become the sharp claws of foreign powers, stabbing like knives into the broken back of the motherland, while nuclear power plants that have been identified as potential nuclear bombs are everywhere, threatening the survival of the entire nation." This showed that the leaders of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association approached environmental issues from a nationalist perspective.<sup>44</sup> They blamed monopolies, military dictatorships, and the United States as the main culprits in the Korean peninsula's pollution problems.

The Anti-Pollution Movement Association's documentation of the nationalist perspective of the anti-nuclear movement was the monograph *'Anti-Nuclear Movement in This Land'*. In this book, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association sought the genealogy of the anti-nuclear movement in the 1986 anti-war anti-nuclear struggle raised by students of the 'Anti-American Independence Anti-fascist Democratization Struggle Committee'(NL). This anti-war anti-nuclear struggle was part of the anti-American self-reliant struggle to seek the source of all oppression and exploitation from the United States under the recognition that "Korea was a colony of US imperialism." The Anti-Pollution Movement Association developed the logic of the anti-nuclear movement by inheriting the nationalist awareness of the 'Anti-American Independence Anti-fascist Democratization Struggle Committee'.<sup>45</sup> This anti-foreign nationalist anti-nuclear activism had a certain significance in that it propagated the cult of nuclear power based on the anti-communist ideology of the Cold War. However, nationalist anti-nuclear activism had epistemological limitations in that it reduced the problems of the nuclear industry derived from the growth of Korean capitalism to the

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44 Konghae ch'ubang undong yŏnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], "Ch'angnip sŏnŏnmun [Founding Manifesto]," 1988.

45 Konghae ch'ubang undong yŏnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association] *Ittangŭi panhaegundong(chŭngbop'an)* [*Anti-Pollution Movement in This Land (supplemented edition)*], (Seoul: Konghae ch'ubang undong yŏnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], 1989), 82-85.

responsibility of foreign powers and the problem of Korean subordination to the United States. This perception was problematic in that it narrowed the nuclear issue to "the survival of our nation" and relegated the ecological agenda to a means of national liberation.

### **Movement Against the Construction of the Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant and Biopolitics**

According to data submitted by the Ministry of Science and Technology to the National Assembly's audit on October 5, 1988, in August 1988, there was an accident in which heavy water, the coolant of the reactor, leaked at the Wolseong Nuclear Power Plant.<sup>46</sup> This was later reported in the media, raising doubts about the authorities' assurances that the plants were safe. On December 5, 1988, at the Yeonggwang, Kori, and Wolsong nuclear power plants, local residents staged a solidarity sit-in, shouting slogans such as "Shut down the nuclear power plants that threaten the survival of residents." Residents of Yangsan, Gyeongsangnam-do, protested in front of the nuclear power plant by carrying a bier symbolizing death, holding a funeral placard, and performing a traditional funeral performance.<sup>47</sup> The Anti-Pollution Movement Association formed the 'Committee for Stopping the Construction of Nuclear Power Plants and Survival Rights for Victims' and carried out support and solidarity activities for the residents' struggle.<sup>48</sup> The next day, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association

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46 "Orhae 8wöl wölsöngwönjön pangsánung nuch'ul [Radioactive Leak at Wolsong Nuclear Power Plant in August]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, October 8, 1988.

47 "Haekpalchönso pandae chiyökchuminundong [Local Resident Movement Against Nuclear Power Plant]," 1988, Minjuhwaundong ginyömsaöp'oe open archive [Korea Democracy Foundation Open Archive], Registration number 00848827.

48 Konghae ch'ubang undong yönhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], "Haekpalchönso könsöl chöji mit p'ihajumin saengjon'gwöndaech'aegwiwönhoe kongdong kusöngje kwanhan cheansö [Proposal for Joint Formation of 'Committee

produced and distributed a pamphlet called *Anti-Nuclear News*, which included information about the December 5 protests in Yeonggwang, Gori, and Wolsung, as well as related media reports.<sup>49</sup> Two days later, on December 7, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association produced and distributed a fact sheet titled *Movement Against Nuclear Power Plants for 'Survival and Peace'*, which contained information sent by the Anti-Pollution Movement Association to the Ministry of Science and Technology, the Ministry of Energy and Resources, and the Korea Electric Power Corporation. It contained various media articles such as "A Public Question on Nuclear Power Plant Issues" and reasons why nuclear power plants should be dismantled.<sup>50</sup>

On December 10, 1988, it was revealed through a report from residents that about 50 drums of nuclear waste from the Kori Nuclear Power Plant and plastic work clothes and overshoes worn while working in the radiation control area were buried near a private house outside the nuclear waste disposal site.<sup>51</sup> More than 400 residents of the Gori, Wolsung, and Yeonggwang nuclear power plants gathered at the 'Korea Electric Power Corporation'(KEPCO) headquarters in Seoul on

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for Stopping the Construction of Nuclear Power Plants and Survival Rights for Victims],” December 8, 1988, Minjuhwaundong ginyōmsaōp'oe open archive [Korea Democracy Foundation Open Archive], Registration number 00012525.

49 Konghae ch'ubang undong yōnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], “Haekpalchōnso p'ihajumin saengjon'gwōn t'ujaenge nasōda [Nuclear Power Plant Victims Struggle for Survival Rights,” *Anti-Nuclear News*, no. 1, December 6, 1988, Minjuhwaundong ginyōmsaōp'oe open archive [Korea Democracy Foundation Open Archive], Registration number 00172716.

50 Konghae ch'ubang undong yōnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], *Charyojip3 - 'saengjongwa pyōnghwa'rūl wihan haekpalchōnso pandaeundong [Fact Sheet 3 - Movement Against Nuclear Power Plants for 'Survival and Peace']*, December 7, 1988, Minjuhwaundong ginyōmsaōp'oe open archive [Korea Democracy Foundation Open Archive], Registration number 00857518.

51 “Min'gabugūn haekp'yegimul, chuminshin'goro 50tūrōm ch'ajanae [50 Drums of Nuclear Waste Found Near Residential Area],” *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, December 11, 1988.

December 12, demanding “the suspension of operation of the nuclear power plant, the disclosure of all secrets of the nuclear power plant, the guarantee of immigration measures, and the cessation of construction of units 3 and 4 of the Yeonggwang nuclear power plant.”<sup>52</sup> In response to the struggle of the local residents of the nuclear power plant to go to Seoul, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association developed solidarity activities such as financial support, education, publicity, and mobilization of personnel. The KEPCO explained in a newspaper advertisement that what came out of the vicinity of the Kori nuclear power plant was not radioactive waste, but general garbage containing concrete harmless to the human body.<sup>53</sup> In response, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association said that the Korea Electric Power Corporation made an unconvincing explanation to reduce or cover up the illegal landfilling of nuclear waste, and demanded an open reinvestigation of waste drums with the participation of anti-nuclear groups.<sup>54</sup>

In addition, on December 14, 1988, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association's Task Force for the Prevention of Nuclear Power Plant Construction and the Survival Rights of Victims held a Peaceful Citizens' Convention against Nuclear Power Plants. The convention included events such as case presentations by victims, slide shows, lectures, a joint statement, resolution adoption, and a peaceful march. At the lecture, Professor Sang-Ik Hwang(Seoul National University

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52 “Maeripchi hüksō pangsānūngmulchil kōmch’ul [Radioactive material detected in landfill soil,” *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, December 13, 1988.

53 Han’gukchōllyōkkongsa [Korea Electric Power Corporation], “Haemyōngsō: mun-jedoen haekp’yegimurūn ilban ssūregimnida [Clarification: Nuclear waste in question is general waste],” *Chosun Ilbo*, December 13, 1988.

54 Konghae ch’ubang undong yōnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], “Sōngmyōngsō: haekp’yegimul pulbōmmaeribe taehan han’gukchōllyōkkongsa ch’ūgūi haemyōngūl panbak’anda [Statement: Refuting KEPCO’s Explanation of Illegal Nuclear Waste Landfill],” December 14, 1988, Minjuhwaundong gi-nyōmsaöp’oe open archive [Korea Democracy Foundation Open Archive], Registration number 00077463.

College of Medicine) said that “the peaceful use of nuclear energy” was concealing and distorting the destructiveness of nuclear energy, and that no amount of money could make nuclear energy completely safe, and that the only solution was to abolish nuclear power plants.<sup>55</sup> Between October and December 1988, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association appeared to be actively engaged in solidarity with the local people's struggle and responded well. However, according to the Anti-Pollution Movement Association's internal evaluation document, the organization's self-assessment of its solidarity efforts was negative. The evaluator pointed out that the support for the sit-in at KEPCO on December 12 was not based on solidarity with residents, and for the Peaceful Citizens' Assembly on December 14, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association mobilized all of its organizational strength, but showed inexperience in the march guidance. He argued that the Anti-Pollution Movement Association needed to strengthen the leadership of its leaders and strengthen the bonds and unity of its activists as a whole.<sup>56</sup> This evaluation may have reflected the organizational problems of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association to some extent, but it seems to be more related to the evaluator's philosophy of the movement that the organization of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association should strongly guide the local residents and organize the movement in a unified way. In this perspective, like the Leninist theory of party organization, there is no place for the voluntary exercise of

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55 Konghae ch'ubang undong yŏnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], *Panhaekpalchŏnso undongjaryojip 4: haek kwa uriŭi saengjon* [Anti-Nuclear Power Plant Campaign Factsheet 4: Nuclear Power and Our Survival], (Seoul: 1989), 55, Minjuhwaundong ginyŏmsaŏp'oe open archive [Korea Democracy Foundation Open Archive], Registration number 00032923.

56 Konghae ch'ubang undong yŏnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], “H aekpalchŏnso pandaerŭl wihan p'yŏnghwashimindaehoe ch'ongpyŏnggasŏ [General Evaluation of the Peaceful Citizens' Convention Against Nuclear Power Plants],” December 19, 1988, Hwan'gyŏngundong archive p'ulsup [Environmental Archive Grass Forest] No. F-Z-0000215.

local residents and the loose solidarity of environmental groups. However, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association flexibly and actively developed solidarity activities with local residents and related groups during the development of the anti-nuclear power plant construction movement in 1989. In February 1989, the government and the ruling Democratic Justice Party decided to enact legislation to create a fund within a certain percentage (0.3%) of the proceeds from the sale of electricity to provide support to areas around power plants to resolve collective grievances of residents in the vicinity of power plants.<sup>57</sup> This was for the government to respond with economic compensation to the residents of the nuclear power plant area's demand for damage compensation and the movement against the construction of the nuclear power plant. The 'Act on Support for Areas Surrounding Power Plants' was enacted in June 1989 and went into effect on January 1, 1990.

The Anti-Pollution Movement Association declared its main project for 1989 to be "the struggle against the construction of units 11 and 12 of the Yeonggwang nuclear power plant."<sup>58</sup> The Association decided to focus its activities on March 28th, the 10th anniversary of the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant disaster, April 26th, the 3rd anniversary of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster, and June 5th, Environment Day. The Association adopted a flexible solidarity strategy to fight against the construction of units 11 and 12 of the Yeonggwang nuclear power plant. The Anti-Pollution Movement Association organized solidarity by identifying and consulting with voluntary projects by each organization and in each region. The Association

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57 "Palchönso chubyön minwön haegyöl chön'giryö ilbu kigümüro [Partial Funds for Electricity Bills to Solve Civil Complaints around Power Plants]," *Kyungghyang Shinmun* February 1, 1989.

58 Konghae ch'ubang undong yönhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], "89nyön konghae ch'ubang undong yönhap hwaltong irök'e chinhaengdoenda [This is How the Anti-Pollution Movement Association's Activities Proceeded in '89], *Saengjon'gwa p'yöngghwa* [Survival and Peace], no. 3 (March 1989): 5.

played a role in organizing solidarity activities by spreading critical awareness about the construction of nuclear power plants, mobilizing people at demonstrations, and conducting publicity and propaganda projects.<sup>59</sup> The association appealed for the dangers of nuclear power plants by citing the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. It also criticized the Yeonggwang nuclear power plant's units 11 and 12, which were involved in the corruption of Doo-hwan Chun's brothers, making their safety even more questionable.<sup>60</sup> The Anti-Pollution Movement Association in Seoul promoted a solidarity movement in close relationship with local residents' organizations and local environmental movement groups, such as the Yeonggwang Peasant Association, Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant Expulsion Movement Association, Gwangju Environmental Pollution Research Association, and Mokpo Green Research Association.

Yeol Choi, co-chairman of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association, an iconic figure in South Korea's environmental movement, founded the Movement to Stop the Construction of Nuclear Power Plants 11 and 12 and announced on April 26, 1989, the third anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, that he would stop the construction of nuclear power plants by "collecting 1 million signatures, touring the provinces, lecturing, and holding debates for and against nuclear power plants to awaken the public to the dangers of nuclear power."<sup>61</sup> On April 15,

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59 Konghae ch'ubang undong yŏnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], "tchajipki wŏnjaro' 11.12hogi kŏnsŏl chŏji saŏp kyehoeksŏ(shian) [Project Plan to Stop the Construction of the 'Troubled Reactors' Unit 11.12 (Draft)]," March 10, 1989, Minjuhwaundong ginyŏmsaŏp'oe open archive [Korea Democracy Foundation Open Archive], Registration number 00857623.

60 Konghae ch'ubang undong yŏnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], "Sŏngmyŏngsŏ-3.28 Three Mile haekpalchŏnso sago 10chunyŏnŭl majihanŭn kongch'uryŏnŭi ipchang [Statement: Position of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association on the 10th anniversary of the 3.28 Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident]," March 28, 1989.

61 "Wŏnjŏbandae chiyŏkchumin hwan'gyŏngdanch'e yŏndae [Solidarity of Local Environmental Organizations Against Nuclear Power Plant]," *Hankyoreh*



under the leadership of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association, organizations across the country that are campaigning against nuclear power plants united to form the 'Headquarters of the National Campaign to Expel Nuclear Power Plants'(전국핵발전소추방운동본부). The headquarters published the newsletter *Anti-Nuclear Power Plant* and conducted various activities to stop the construction of nuclear power plants 11 and 12.<sup>62</sup>

In June 1989, it was reported that a safety inspection of seven nuclear power plants in South Korea conducted in 1988 by the Nuclear Safety Center of the Korea Energy Research Institute found 106 points and 27 recommendations, raising doubts about the safety of nuclear power plant operations.<sup>63</sup> Yoon-dong Bang, a worker who had worked at the Kori Nuclear Power Plant for four years and three months, died of cancer. His radiation exposure totaled 5,547 mrem, and although a direct relationship with cancer was not revealed, the safety issue of nuclear power plant workers was raised again.<sup>64</sup> Under the pressure of public opinion and resident movements, a meeting was held between local residents and Minister of Science and Technology Sang-hee Lee at the Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant Exhibition Hall on June 23, 1989. At this meeting, residents said that the recent death of fish in the local fish farm was a result of the nuclear power plant. They asked if it had something to do with radioactive materials and demanded that the residents also participate in the investigation of the surrounding en-

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*Newspaper*, March 25, 1989.

- 62 "Ch'ŏn'guk haekpalch'ŏnso ch'ubangundongbonbu ky'ŏls'ŏng [Formation of the Headquarters of the National Campaign to Expel Nuclear Power Plants]," *Panhaekpalch'ŏnso [Anti-Nuclear Power Plant]*, no. 1, April 26, 1989.
- 63 "Kori w'ŏls'ŏng t'ung 7kae w'ŏnj'ŏn anj'ŏn wih'ŏmyoso 106k'ŏn [106 safety risk factors for 7 nuclear power plants including Gori and Wolsong]," *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 13, 1989.
- 64 "Haekpalch'ŏnso nodongja Panyundongssi amsamang [Nuclear Power Plant Worker Yoon-dong Bang Dies of Cancer]," *Panhaekpalch'ŏnso [Anti-Nuclear Power Plant]*, No. 3, June 26, 1989.

vironment to verify whether there was any change in the ecosystem caused by radioactive contamination or warm drainage in the surrounding waters.<sup>65</sup> In July 1989, the so-called "brainless fetus incident" occurred. It was reported in the mainstream media that the wife of Kim, a security guard at the Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant, had twice miscarried deformed babies with no brains by cesarean section, raising suspicions that the cause might be radioactive contamination from the plant's employees.<sup>66</sup> The news of the miscarriages of brainless fetuses was causing anxiety among the residents, and the media was reporting that the radiation scare was becoming a reality. Health and medical organizations in the Gwangju region, including the Gwangju Branch of the 'Association of Physicians for Humanitarian Practice'(인도주의실천의사협의회), conducted a radioactive contamination survey of local residents of the Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant and found that 29 (64%) of the blood of 45 Seongsan-ri residents showed signs of radioactive contamination in the early stages.<sup>67</sup> Although the Association of Physicians for Humanitarian Practice corrected the report, stating that it was not a scientific analysis to conclude that the blood tests showed low white blood cells and anemia as early symptoms of radiation contamination, the issue of whether Yeonggwang residents were radiation contaminated became a national hot topic, with the government dispatching a team of investigators and the opposition forming a commission of inquiry. August 1989 saw an explosion of media coverage of "radiation scares" and doubts about the safety of nuclear power plants. On August 12, 1989, the front page of *Hankyoreh*

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65 "Wŏnjŏnhwan'gyŏngjosa chumin ch'amyŏ yogu [Demand for resident participation in nuclear environmental investigation]," *Dong-A Ilbo*, June 29, 1989.

66 "Noeŏmnŭn t'aeaf' tu ch'arye yusan ['Brainless fetus' miscarried twice]," *Chosun Ilbo*, July 30, 1989.

67 "Yŏnggwang wŏnjŏn chiyŏngmin 45myŏng chung 29myŏng paek'yŏlgu kamsotŭng hyŏraegisang chŭngsang [29 out of 45 Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant residents have blood abnormalities such as low white blood cells]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, August 2, 1989.

newspaper introduced the anti-nuclear activist group's claim that "there should be a national consensus on nuclear power plant construction." The Chosun Ilbo and the Dong-A Ilbo also published a series of articles examining the safety of nuclear power plants in the wake of the Yeonggwang brainless fetus case.<sup>68</sup> In July 1989, a month before this, the Anti-Pollution Movement Association proposed a plan for a 'on-the-ground discussion of pros and cons of nuclear power plants' in front of major daily newspapers, but the media did not accept this proposal during July.<sup>69</sup> The news of the death of a brainless fetus prompted a flurry of stories about the safety issues of nuclear power generation. These issues of life, health, and safety had the strong power to transcend the ideological and economics-oriented thinking surrounding nuclear power. The slogan of the Headquarters of the National Campaign to Expel Nuclear Power Plants, "Expelling Nuclear Power Plants 11 and 12 is our life movement," was also related to the strong power of bio-politics.<sup>70</sup>

On August 18, 1989, the Civilian Investigation Group on Nuclear Power Plants, headed by Yeol Choi, published the *Report on the Investigation of the 'Brainless Fetus Incident' at the Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant*. The group, composed of 40 people from 25 organizations including the Anti-Pollution Movement Association, spent

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68 "Wŏnjŏn kŏnsŏl kungminhabŭi issŏya [There Must Be a National Consensus on Nuclear Power Plant Construction]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, August 12, 1989; "Wŏnjŏn anjŏnhan'ga <1~5> [Is Nuclear Power Safe <1~5>]," *Chosun Ilbo*, August 9-August 19, 1989; "Wŏnjŏn kin'gŭpchindan <sang, chung, ha> [Emergency Diagnosis of Nuclear Power Plants <Upper, Middle, and Lower>]," *Dong-A Ilbo*, August 7-August 14, 1989.

69 "Haekpalchŏnso ch'anban chisang t'oron kihoek ūiroeŭi kŏn [Request for Proposal to Organize a Ground Debate for and Against Nuclear Power Plants]," Anti-Pollution Movement Association, July 10, 1989, Hwan'gyŏngundong archive p'ulsup [Environmental Archive Grass Forest] No. F-Y-0000940.

70 "11.12hogit' ch'ubangŭn chŏn'gungminŭi saengmyŏngundong [Expulsion of 'Unit 11.12' is a National Movement for Life]," *Panhaekpalchŏnso [Anti-Nuclear Power Plant]*, no. 2, May 26, 1989

two days in Yeonggwang, on August 15 and 16, 1989, holding meetings with victims and inspecting the Yeonggwang nuclear power plant before writing this report. The results of the investigation confirmed that the victim, Mr. Kim, along with two of his coworkers, entered the radiation control area without wearing protective clothing to exchange ionic resin, and that KEPCO's management system for radioactive work was very weak at the time.<sup>71</sup>

On September 21, 1989, the Economic Sciences Committee of the National Assembly selected Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant as a supervised institution and conducted a state audit. Officials at the Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant insisted that the stillbirth of anencephaly had nothing to do with working at the nuclear power plant. On the other hand, victim Kim testified that the power plant's answer to the nuclear power plant work was different from "the truth." Members of the National Assembly generally acknowledged the necessity of nuclear power plants, but argued that the construction of nuclear power plants is possible only under the premise that safety related to nuclear power plants must be guaranteed.<sup>72</sup>

The Anti-Pollution Movement Association and the Headquarters of the National Campaign to Expel Nuclear Power Plants modified their campaign strategy from criticizing the Yeonggwang nuclear power plant unit 11 and 12 expansion as an extension of the corruption scandal of Doo-hwan Chun regime to gradually emphasizing the "anti-life nature of nuclear power plants." In a 1986 poll, 48.3 percent of South

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71 "Haekpalchönso shilt'ae min'gan chosadan [Nuclear Power Plant Accident Civilian Investigation Team], "Yönggwang haekpalchönso 'munoea' sagön chinsang chosa pogosö [Report on the Investigation of the 'Brainless Fetus' Incident at Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant," August 18, 1989, Hwan'gyöngundong archive p'ulsup [Environmental Archive Grass Forest] No. F-A-0001627.

72 Kuk'oe kyöngjegwahagwiwönhoe [National Assembly Economic Science Committee], *Kuk'oehoeürok che13tae kuk'oe, che147hoe kukchönggamsa [Minutes of the National Assembly, 13th National Assembly, 147th State Audit]*, September 21, 1989

Koreans said they believed nuclear power was safe, but in a 1989 poll, only 26.1 percent said they believed it was safe. In 1989, 37.6% of respondents to the poll said they did not believe in the safety of nuclear power plants, a significant increase from the 16.4% who said the same in a 1986 poll.<sup>73</sup> The Anti-Pollution Movement Association sent an official letter to all political parties in the National Assembly on September 11, 1989, shortly after the results of the poll were reported, requesting cooperation to “stop the construction of nuclear power plants 11 and 12” and to participate in the struggle within the National Assembly.<sup>74</sup>

On September 26, 1989, 100 representatives from various fields such as culture, law, and social organizations announced the "Declaration of 100 People Concerned about the Construction of Nuclear Power Plants 11 and 12," and the Headquarters of the National Campaign to Expel Nuclear Power Plants launched the "One Million People Signature Campaign Against the Construction of Nuclear Power Plants" on September 29.<sup>75</sup> In the manifesto of the 100 people's declaration, it was written that the anti-nuclear power plant construction movement hoped that “the efforts to protect the lives of ourselves and our descendants and to establish peace on this land will be sublimated into a pan-national movement for the right to life.” This showed that the anti-nuclear movement was being promoted from the perspective of the right to life. In addition, human rights lawyer Seung-heon Han, who headed the one million signature campaign, said, "The nuclear industry

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73 “Wōnjōn kōnsōl pandae moksori nop'a [Voices against nuclear power plant construction are loud],” *Chosun Ilbo*, September 8, 1989

74 Konghae ch'ubang undong yōnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], “Haekpalchōnso 11, 12hogi kōnsōlchōjiwa kwallyōnhan cheōn [Suggestions for stopping the construction of nuclear power plants 11 and 12],” September 11, 1989, Hwan'gyōngundong archive p'ulsup [Environmental Archive Grass Forest] No. F-Y-0000923

75 “Wōnjōn'gōnsōl pandae 100in sōnōn [Declaration of 100 People Against Nuclear Power Plant Construction],” *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, September 27, 1989

was a monster that greatly threatens human life, as shown by the example of Chernobyl," which also showed that the one million signature campaign against the construction of nuclear power plants was promoted in the context of bio-politics.<sup>76</sup> In December 1989, the number of signatories opposing the construction of nuclear power plants exceeded 150,000, but on December 20, 1989, the Nuclear Energy Commission passed a license for the construction of units 11 and 12.<sup>77</sup>

According to the Anti-Pollution Movement Association's internal evaluation documents, the Association focused its organizational capacity on the struggle against the construction of units 11 and 12 of the Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant, but the level of practical capacity and solidarity of the participating organizations in the Headquarters of the National Campaign to Expel Nuclear Power Plants, which was overseeing the struggle, was not high. The Anti-Pollution Movement Association also emphasized that the local residents of Yeonggwang should be at the center of the movement, but they viewed their capacity to fight as very weak.<sup>78</sup> The concern of local residents was mainly on the issue of compensation. The case of Yeonggwang Gamami residents in 1986, who started demanding compensation for damages caused by blasting work to shut down the nuclear power plant site, which was agreed upon in 1987 and compensation of 2.5 billion won was paid in 1988, had a learning effect on the residents of Yeonggwang. In 1988-1989, the Yeonggwang Seongsan Livelihood

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76 "Haekün illyu p'amyörüi chaeangdoelsudo, wŏnjŏn 11, 12hogi kŏnsŏlbandaeundong ponbujang hansŭnghŏn pyŏnhosa [Nuclear could be a Catastrophe for Humanity, Seung-heon Han, Head of the Movement Against the Construction of Nuclear Power Plants 11 and 12]," *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, October 5, 1989

77 "Yŏnggwang 3, 4hogi tŭng sae wŏnjŏn kŏnsŏl ūigyŏl [Yeonggwang voted to build new reactors, including units 3 and 4]," *Donga Ilbo*, December 21, 1989

78 "Yŏnggwang haekpalchŏnso 11.12hogi kŏnsŏlchŏji t'ujaengsaŏbe taehayŏ [About the Struggle against the Construction of Unit 11.12 of the Yeonggwang Nuclear Power Plant]," August 21, 1989, Hwan'gyŏngundong archive p'ulsup [Environmental Archive Grass Forest] No. F-X-0000773

Committee organized protests in conjunction with the Anti-Pollution Movement Association and others, while continuing to negotiate with KEPCO over compensation. On February 27, 1990, an agreement was signed between the head of the Yeonggwang nuclear power plant and representatives of the local residents, and the residents of Seongsan-ri were able to receive a total of 6.285 billion won in compensation.<sup>79</sup> The Anti-Pollution Movement Association pointed out the limitations of the campaign against the construction of nuclear power plants 11 and 12, noting that it was unable to stop the construction of the nuclear power plants and to bring the local people to the forefront of the struggle through awareness and organization. The differences in positions between local residents, who sought economic compensation and a sustainable basis for their livelihoods, and environmental activist groups, who sought to spread the anti-nuclear movement among the public, led to distrust and conflict, despite the committed solidarity of both sides. The Anti-Pollution Movement Association evaluated the project against nuclear power plant construction for its achievements in terms of dramatically raising the public's awareness of opposition to nuclear power plants, dealing a blow to the nuclear power plant proponents and making it somewhat more difficult to build new nuclear power plants, accumulating experience in solidarity struggles on a national scale, and solidifying international solidarity with Japanese anti-nuclear activist organizations.<sup>80</sup>

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79 Nayun Yang, "Wŏnjŏnjubyŏnjjiyŏk chumindŭrŭi wihŏminshikkwa wihŏmŭi sahoejŏk kusŏng [Risk Perception and the Social Construction of Risk among Residents in the Area Around the Nuclear Power Plant]," (PhD diss., Chonnam National University, 2016), 77-78.

80 Sang-Cheol Park, "89nyŏn saŏp ch'onggw'al p'yŏnggawa 90nyŏn saŏp panghyang sŏlchŏng [General Evaluation of the Project in 1989 and Setting the Project Direction in 1990]," Hwan'gyŏngundong archive p'ulsup [Environmental Archive Grass Forest] No. F-Y-0000741

### **Struggle against the Construction of a Nuclear Waste Dump and Conflicts between Local Residents in Anmyeon-Island**

In November 1988, it was reported that the South Korean government was secretly planning to build a nuclear waste dump on the east coast.<sup>81</sup> When Yeongdeok, Yeongil, and Uljin were mentioned as finalists for a nuclear waste dump, local residents were sensitive and fiercely opposed.<sup>82</sup> In particular, when Yeongdeok, North Gyeongsang Province, was mentioned as a possible site for a nuclear waste dump, local residents began to organize a movement to "protect our hometown from nuclear waste."<sup>83</sup> The Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute, which was promoting a site survey for three candidate sites, was unable to properly conduct a site survey due to opposition from residents. In February 1990, the government abandoned its plan to build a permanent nuclear waste repository in one of three locations on the east coast, Yeongdeok, Uljin, or Yeongil, and decided to build a permanent repository on an uninhabited island or continental shelf for low- and intermediate-level waste.<sup>84</sup>

On November 3, 1990, a major newspaper reported that the government was planning to build a permanent nuclear waste repository at Anmyeon-island in Taean, Chungcheongnam-do. According to the article, the government was planning to build a nuclear waste storage facility on more than 3,305,785 square meters of land in Anmyeon-island to collect and dispose of nuclear waste from nuclear power plants

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81 "Haekp'yegimulch'öbunjang tonghaeane könsöl ch'ujin [Nuclear Waste Dump to be Built on East Coast]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, December 26, 1988.

82 "Wönjönbandae chiyökchumin hwan'gyöngdanch'e yöndae [Solidarity of Local Residents and Environmental Organizations Against Nuclear Power Plant]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, March 25, 1989.

83 "Yöngdök p'ogu hwipssünün haekssüregi kongp'o [Nuclear Waste Fear Sweeps Through Yeongdeok]," *Chosun Ilbo*, April 7, 1989.

84 "Haekssüregijang muindoe [Nuclear waste dump on an uninhabited island]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, February 17, 1990.



such as Kori and Yeonggwang, as well as radioactive waste from research institutes, hospitals, and radioactive isotope companies nationwide.<sup>85</sup> The government explained that what it was trying to establish in Anmyeon-island was the West Sea Science Research Complex (Nuclear Research Center 2), not a permanent disposal facility for nuclear waste, but a research facility and interim storage facility for used nuclear fuel. It was defined as a de facto 'permanent disposal site' as a facility to collect and permanently store nuclear waste and radioactive waste from research institutes and hospitals.<sup>86</sup> Anmyeon-island had a beach with a beautiful view, so it was a place where many tourists visit, and at the same time, it was an area close to residents. The government's plan to dispose of nuclear waste by installing facilities in areas close to residents and storing nuclear waste as it was criticized as unprecedented in the world.

The plan to establish a permanent nuclear waste repository at Anmyeon-island was opposed not only by ecologists, but also by developmentists. Joo-wook Yoon, chairman of the development committee of Anmyeon-eup, said, "It is a mockery of the local people to build a nuclear waste repository while claiming to make Anmyeon-island an international comprehensive tourist resort." He vowed to strongly block the construction of the nuclear repository.<sup>87</sup> The Headquarters of the National Campaign to Expel Nuclear Power Plants, comprised of anti-nuclear and environmental activist groups from across the country, demanded in a statement that the government with-

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85 "Anmyŏndoe haekp'yegimul yŏngguch'ŏbunjang [Permanent disposal site for nuclear waste at Anmyeon-island]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, November 3, 1990.

86 Taejŏn ch'unghnam kungminyŏnhap [Daejeon Chungnam National Union], *National Hamkkehanŭn kungminyŏnhap [National Union Together]*, no. 2, December 15, 1990, 7-9.

87 "Anmyŏndo haekp'yegimul yŏngguch'ŏbunjang kŏnsŏl, ch'unghnamdo chumin chŭkkak ch'wiso yogu [Anmyeon-island Nuclear Waste Permanent Disposal Site Construction, Chungnam Province Residents Demand Immediate Cancellation]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, November 4, 1990.

draw its plans to build the Anmyeon-island nuclear waste repository. On November 5, residents of Anmyeon-eup held a "nuclear waste expulsion resolution meeting" and decided to refuse to send their children to school. In addition, 28 Anmyeon-eup village chiefs resigned, saying they could no longer cooperate with the administration.<sup>88</sup> The Anmyeon-island Nuclear Waste Site Fighting Committee expresses its distrust of the administration and declares its opposition to organizing, saying it has "presented us with the death of a nuclear dump on our land, Anmyeon-island."<sup>89</sup> On November 6, 17 elementary, middle, and high school students in Anmyeon-island refused to go to school, and more than 6,000 residents held a rally to stop the construction of a nuclear waste site. On November 7, more than 3,000 middle and high school students participated in the rally, and 150 residents occupied the Anmyeon-eup office. On November 3, Seung-sik Moon, secretary of the Anti-Pollution Movement Association's organizing bureau, went to Anmyeon-island to organize residents, which was one of the factors that allowed the Anmyeon-island Nuclear Waste Site Construction Prevention Task Force to escalate the struggle to an armed uprising in a short period of time. Due to the government's unilateral announcement, distrust of local government officials, and fear of radioactive contamination, the residents of Anmyeon-island quickly united, strongly opposed the construction of the nuclear waste site, and fiercely resisted. The struggle committee took advantage of the face-to-face nature of the society to mobilize the residents by raising the community's oppo-

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88 "Haekp'yegimul ch'öbunjang kwallyön anmyönüp ijang 28myöng sap'yo [28 Village Chiefs Resign Over Nuclear Waste Dump]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, November 6, 1990.

89 Anmyöndo haekp'yegijang sölch'i pandae t'ujaeng wiwönhoe [Anmyeon-island Anti-Nuclear Dumping Site Struggle Committee], "Urinün hanaiöya handa [We Must Be One]," November 5, 1990, in *Anmyöndo panhaek hangjaeng char-yojip: naeril su ömnün panhaegüi kitpal [Anmyeon-island Anti-Nuclear Struggle Sourcebook: The Anti-Nuclear Flag That Cannot Be Lowered, Anmyeon-island Struggle]*, 55.

sition to the nuclear waste disposal site and threatening a fine of 50,000 won for non-participation.

On November 8, more than 17,000 residents gathered at the bus terminal.<sup>90</sup> This was a very high participation rate considering the total population of Anmyeon-island is 24,000. Some of the protesters overturned and burned the car of the newly appointed police chief of Anmyeon, and set fire to the Anmyeon police station and reserve arsenal.<sup>91</sup> Clashes between residents and riot police resulted in several injuries. Residents sang folk songs and chanted slogans, and some protested by writing "Republic of Anmyeon-island" in paint on their clothes. "For a peaceful and livable Anmyeon-island, we must be independent," protesters chanted.<sup>92</sup> The November 8 protests were so radical and violent that the media reported that "there is a security vacuum in Anmyeon-island."<sup>93</sup> Anti-Pollution Movement Association member Jin-man Kim defined the struggle against the Anmyeon-island nuclear waste disposal site the "Anmyeon-island Anti-Nuclear Protest," comparable to the 1980 Gwangju Democracy Movement.<sup>94</sup>

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90 Konghae ch'ubang undong yŏnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association], *Anmyŏndo panhaek hangjaeng charyojip: naeril su ōmnŭn panhaegŭi kitpal* [Anmyeon-island Anti-Nuclear Struggle Sourcebook: The Anti-Nuclear Flag That Cannot Be Lowered, Anmyeon-island Struggle], (1990), 4.

91 "Anmyŏndo ilman chumin t'epanhaekt'e kyŏngnyŏl shiwi, chisŏ, yebigun mugigo panghwa [10,000 residents of Anmyeon-island "anti-nuclear" protest violently, burn police station, reserve arsenal]," *Chosun Ilbo*, November 9, 1990.

92 "Tŭrŏmt'ong pulchillŏ shiga p'okŭm yŏn'gi [Burning drums and smoke in the downtown]," *Chosun Ilbo*, November 9, 1990.

93 "Anmyŏndo ch'ian kongbaek sangt'ae [Anmyeon-island is in a Security Vacuum]," *Kyŏnggyang Shinmun*, November 9, 1990

94 Jin-man Kim, "Naeril su ōmnŭn panhaegŭi kitpal, Anmyŏndo hangjaengiyŏ [The Anti-Nuclear Flag that Cannot Be Lowered, Anmyeon-island Protest!]," *Anmyŏndo panhaek hangjaeng charyojip: naeril su ōmnŭn panhaegŭi kitpal* [Anmyeon-island Anti-Nuclear Struggle Sourcebook: The Anti-Nuclear Flag That Cannot Be Lowered, Anmyeon-island Struggle], (1990, Konghae ch'ubang undong yŏnhap [Anti-Pollution Movement Association]), 12.

As opposition protests by Anmyeon-island residents intensified, Minister Geun-mo Jeong of the Ministry of Science and Technology eventually announced on November 8, 1990, 9:00 pm on TV news that he would withdraw the plan to install a nuclear waste disposal site in Anmyeon-island if the residents did not want it.<sup>95</sup> The next day, on November 9, President Tae-woo Roh sacked Science and Technology Minister Geun-mo Jeong over the Anmyeon-island nuclear waste dump crisis.

In August 1991, the Ministry of Energy and Resources decided to substantially increase the amount of support for areas around power plants, including nuclear power plants, in an effort to resolve the difficulties of locating such plants, which have been plagued by friction between the government and residents.<sup>96</sup> Nuclear experts in favor of nuclear power have argued that the government should take policies to involve, employ, and compensate local residents from the beginning of nuclear power plant construction.<sup>97</sup> The issue of economic compensation was not only a source of conflict between environmentalist organizations and local residents, but also between local residents themselves. Jae-Mook Park, who studied the Anmyeon-island anti-nuclear movement, identified the period between October 2, 1991 and March 25, 1993 as a "period of internal conflict".<sup>98</sup> The Ministry of Science and Technology and the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute attempted to resolve the issue by holding a public recruitment for a nuclear waste

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95 "Anmyŏndo haekp'yegijang paekchihwa [Plans for Nuclear Waste Repository at Anmyeon-island Canceled]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, November 9, 1990.

96 "'Palchŏnso chubyŏnjjiyŏk chiwŏn hwaktae [Expansion of Support for Areas around Power Plants]," *Maeil Business Newspaper*, August 3, 1991.

97 'Pyegihak hwahakch'ŏri palchŏnyong hwaryong ch'ungbun [Waste Nuclear Chemical Processing Sufficient for Power Generation]," *Chosun Ilbo*, October 8, 1991.

98 Jae-Mook Park, "Anmyŏndo chuminŭi panhaegundonge kwanhan sahoehakchŏk yŏn'gu [A Sociological Interpretation on the Anmyeon-islanders' Anti-nuclear Movements]," *Seonggok Nonchong* 25, no. 2 (1994): 19.

repository from early October to November 5, 1991, after the construction of a nuclear waste repository in Anmyeon-island collapsed due to opposition from local residents. When it became known to the Anmyeon-island Struggle Committee that some residents of Konam-myeon, Anmyeon-island, were planning to apply for a nuclear waste repository in order to receive compensation, the committee attempted to persuade and pressure them to withdraw their application. In particular, Nam-young Kim, the leader of the application, received many protest calls from Konam-myeon residents and was assaulted.<sup>99</sup> At the time, the *Hankyoreh newspaper* pointed out the government's public offering system as the cause of the internal conflict among Anmyeon-island residents, saying that the recruitment method for the nuclear waste repository was a method that inevitably caused friction among residents.<sup>100</sup> In November 1991, 72 residents of Konam-myeon, Taean-gun, Chungcheongnam-do, signed an application for the site and submitted it to the Ministry of Science and Technology. The issue of economic compensation eventually divided Anmyeon-island between those who opposed the construction of a nuclear waste dump and those who supported it.<sup>101</sup> The Konam-myeon Struggle Committee publicly distributed the names of the applicants who did not sign the withdrawal and those who led the application, and publicly condemned the four leaders of the application by writing their real names in a newspaper. The conflict reached its peak on December 31, 1991, when the Konam-myeon Struggle Committee organized a convention against the installation of a nuclear waste site in Konam-myeon, and burnings and

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99 Ibid, 24.

100 "Haek ch'öbunjang mojippangshik munje mant'a, anmyöndo chumin 78myöng yuch'ishinch'öngüi hösüil [Problems with Recruiting Residents for a Nuclear Waste Disposal Site, Status of Application for Attracting 78 Residents of Anmyeon-island]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, October 26, 1991.

101 "Anmyöndo haekch'örijang yuch'ishinch'öng 'saeroun purhwa' ['New Conflict' in Anmyeon-island Applying for Nuclear Waste Disposal Facility]," *Dong-A Ilbo*, November 7, 1991.

guillotines were carried out against the principal applicants. On January 7, 1992, about 7,000 citizens participated in a rally against the construction of the Anmyeon-island nuclear waste repository, and public opinion against the bid was raised again by the local community. On May 16, 1992, at an inn in Seosan, Chungcheongnam-do, five Anmyeon-island residents stole documents from employees of the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute who were going to collect applications from residents for the nuclear waste disposal site.<sup>102</sup> This case proved that the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute, which is in charge of attracting nuclear waste disposal sites, conducted an operation to persuade the residents of Anmyeon-island to agree to the nuclear waste disposal facility. The stolen documents included the fact that the applicants stole the seals of their parents who had already died or immigrants for a long time, or illegally forged documents by using the names of children, incurring anger from opponents of the nuclear waste disposal facility.<sup>103</sup> The Konam-myeon General Federation Against the Nuclear Dump, comprised of 12 organizations in Konam-myeon, also voted to impose sanctions on the instigators and applicants for the nuclear dump, including "not to cooperate with them in their mourning, to exclude them from private organizations and all gatherings, and not to engage in any commerce."<sup>104</sup> The local community's internal discipline was strong enough to decide that violators who did not comply with these sanctions were considered the same as the applicants, and conflicts within the local residents penetrated into everyday life. The village headman ordered not to use the village's communal funeral car-

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102 "Haekch'ōrijang sōryu hanttae kangt'al [Documents on Nuclear Waste Disposal Facility Once Robbed]," *Kyunghyang Shinmun*, May 18, 1992.

103 "Konammyōn haekp'yegijang kyōlsabandae ch'ongyōnhap'oe hoeūi kagyōlsahang [Minutes of the meeting of the Konam-myeon General Federation Against the Nuclear Dump]," May 20, 1992, Hwan'gyōngdong archive p'ulsup [Environmental Archive Grass Forest] No. F-W-0003187.

104 "Haekch'ōbunjang ssago chumin tto kaltūng [Conflict with Residents again over Nuclear Waste Disposal Site]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, May 22, 1992.

riage, was assaulted by a nuclear waste disposal site applicant who had lost his mother. They organized groups of women to personally visit the applicants for the nuclear waste repository and actively protested against them, including going to the company where the applicant's son worked and demanding that he be fired. They relentlessly asked applicants why and were baptized in human excrement by them.<sup>105</sup> Nam-young Kim, a key figure in the application for the Anmyeon-island nuclear waste site, made a declaration of conscience at the Democratic Party of Korea on January 18, 1993, after a severe conflict between the anti-nuclear movement and the Korea Atomic Energy Research Institute(KAERI). He confessed that he and several other residents had received large amounts of money, including 5 million won, from the president of a company introduced to him by the KAERI, in exchange for his cooperation in promoting the application for the nuclear waste site.<sup>106</sup> Nam-young Kim's declaration of conscience led to the collapse of the Anmyeon-island nuclear waste repository bid committee after it was revealed that the KAERI had bribed members of the bid committee. In March 1993, Young-sam Kim government's minister of science and technology, stated that Anmyeon-island would not receive a nuclear waste repository unless at least 90 percent of the residents were in favor of it, effectively declaring that the government would not install a nuclear waste repository on Anmyeon-island.

## Conclusion

During the Cold War, local anti-nuclear activists in Britain and West Germany organized their movements as a way to remind people of the

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105 Jae-Mook Park, *Ibid*, 27.

106 "Anmyeondo haekpyegijang shinch'ongsō chojak [Anmyeon-island Nuclear Waste Site Application Manipulation]," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, January 19, 1993.

brutality of World War II and to join them in overcoming the pain of that memory, but also to link them into a transnational movement that transcended local and national frames.<sup>107</sup> In South Korea, the frontline of the Cold War in East Asia, the effects of war, division, and Cold War culture prevented an active anti-nuclear movement from emerging until the 1970s. In the 1970s, youth activists, religious figures, and intellectuals who opposed the military regime became concerned about environmental issues as a reaction to the adverse effects of industrialization pursued by the military regime. Beginning with the establishment of the Korea Research Institute on Pollution Issues in 1982, ecological and environmental issues were raised in earnest in South Korea. The ecological movement of the 1980s led to the anti-nuclear peace movement, which was in direct conflict with the national security militarization that dominated the Cold War. The Korean democratization movement in the 1980s showed an aspect of overturning or transcending the factionalism of the Cold War at the ideological level, and under its influence, anti-nuclear peace activists opposed nuclear armament on the Korean Peninsula and argued for the abolition of nuclear power plant construction. They used a discourse that directly linked individual life, safety, and health rights to national survival and peace, and treated nuclear weapons as a symbol of imperialist oppression.

The Three Mile Island nuclear power plant accident in the United States and the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in the Soviet Union were important events that enabled Korean anti-nuclear activists to make visible the nuclear horrors that threaten the lives and safety of individuals. The transnational development of the anti-nuclear movement began with solidarity actions at international events such as the World Conference on the Prohibition of Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, Moving

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107 Holger Nehring, "The Politics of Security: British and West German Protests against Nuclear Weapons and the Early Cold War," *Asia Review* 5 no. 2 (2016): 311-312.



Toward the 21st Century, and the Asia Pacific Consumer Conference, where countries issued declarations against the construction of units 11 and 12 of the Yeonggwang nuclear power plant in South Korea, supporting anti-nuclear activist organizations such as the Anti-Pollution Movement Association. Also, the knowledge of anti-nuclear peace was transnationally transcending national borders in the 1980s. Examples included a detailed report in the *Hankyoreh newspaper* in April 1989 on the anti-nuclear activities of the Japanese peace activist organization PEACE BOAT, just as the movement against nuclear power plants was beginning to gain momentum in Korea, and the Anti-Pollution Movement Association of Korea inviting Japanese anti-nuclear activist Dr. Jinzaburo Takagi, head of Japan's Nuclear Information Office, to give a special lecture on "Toward a 21st Century of Peace without Nuclear Power Plants" in October 1989.<sup>108</sup> Korean anti-nuclear peace activists developed the anti-nuclear movement with nationalistic passion, but the aspect was transnational and local at the same time. Anti-nuclear movement organizations such as the Anti-Pollution Movement Association actively carried out solidarity activities in response to local residents' anti-nuclear power plant construction and anti-nuclear waste site demonstrations. Residents' demands were often divided between safety and economic rights, which led to the instrumentalization and breakdown of solidarity. As the case of Anmyeon-island shows, conflicts between residents intensified due to monetary appeasement by government agencies, and daily relationships were damaged. Nevertheless, the anti-nuclear movement in Korea from the late 1980s to the early 1990s broke the myth of nuclear omnipotence in the Cold War era, made an important contribution to bringing the ecological agenda to

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108 "Wŏnjŏn'gongp'o shiminyŏndaero p'unda, panhaek yŏlgi sok ilbon sunhang ch'wiji [Relief of nuclear fear through citizen solidarity, the purpose of cruising Japan amid 'anti-nuclear fever']," *Hankyoreh Newspaper*, April 19, 1989; "Konghaech'ubangundongyŏnhap, takkagi paksa ch'och'ŏng kangyŏnhoe hongbo ũiroe kŏn [Anti-Pollution Movement Association, "Request for Publicity for a Lecture by Dr. Takagi]," September 23, 1989.

the fore in Korean society, and laid the foundation for the growth of the ecological movement in the 1990s.

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〈Abstract〉

**Breaking the Myth of Nuclear Power Omnipotence  
in the Cold War era:  
Discourse on Nuclear Power and the Movement  
against the Construction of Nuclear Power Plants in  
South Korea in the 1980s and early 1990s**

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In South Korea, the frontline of the Cold War in East Asia, an active anti-nuclear movement could not emerge until the 1970s due to the effects of Korean War, national division, and the Cold War culture. In the 1970s, youth activists, religious figures, and intellectuals who opposed the military regime became concerned about environmental issues as a reaction to the adverse effects of industrialization pursued by the military. In the 1980s, the ecological movement gave way to the anti-nuclear peace movement, which confronted the security discourse that dominated the Cold War era. The South Korean democratization movement of the 1980s overcame and transcended Cold War factionalism on an ideological level, and as a result, anti-nuclear peace activists opposed the nuclear disarmament of the Korean Peninsula and called for the abolition of nuclear power plants. Based on anti-foreign nationalism, they used a discourse that directly linked individual life, safety, and health rights to national survival and peace, and treated nuclear weapons as a symbol of imperialist oppression.

Environmentalist organizations, such as the 'Anti-Pollution Movement Association', actively engaged in solidarity activities with local resi-

dents' protests against the construction of nuclear power plants and nuclear waste sites. As the case of Yeonggwang-gun, Jeollanam-do shows, the difference in position between the local residents who pursued economic compensation and the establishment of a sustainable basis for livelihood and the environmental movement group that pursued the public spread of the anti-nuclear movement led to distrust and conflict, despite the devoted solidarity of both sides. As the case of Anmyeon-island shows, conflicts between residents were intensified by monetary inducements from government organizations, undermining their everyday relationships. Nevertheless, the anti-nuclear movement in Korea from the late 1980s to the early 1990s contributed greatly to breaking the myth of nuclear power omnipotence in the Cold War era, revealing the ecological agenda to Korean society, and laying the foundation for the growth of the eco-environmental movement in the 1990s.

**Keywords:** anti-nuclear movement, environmental movement, nuclear power plant, Anti-Pollution Movement Association, ecologism

〈국문초록〉

## 냉전시기의 원자력 만능 신화를 깨뜨리기: 1980년대와 1990년대 초 한국에서의 ‘원자력’ 담론과 원자력발전소 건설 반대 운동

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동아시아 지역 냉전의 최전선이었던 한국에서는 전쟁과 분단, 냉전문화의 효과로 인해 1970년대까지 적극적인 반핵운동이 등장할 수 없었다. 1970년대 군사정권에 반대하는 청년활동가들과 종교인, 지식인 등은 군사정권이 추구한 산업화가 낳은 부작용에 대한 반발로 환경문제에 대해 관심을 갖기 시작했다. 1980년대 생태운동은 반핵평화운동으로 이어졌는데, 이는 냉전시기를 지배해온 안보논리와 정면으로 부딪치는 것이었다. 1980년대 한국의 민주화운동은 이념적 차원에서 냉전의 진영론을 극복하고 초월하는 양상을 보였고, 그 영향으로 반핵평화운동가들은 한반도의 핵무장을 반대하고 원자력발전소 건설을 중단할 것을 주장했다. 이들은 반외세 민족주의를 기반으로 개인의 생명, 안전, 건강권 등을 민족의 생존 그리고 평화와 직결시키는 담론을 구사했고, 핵무기를 제국주의적 억압의 상징으로 다루었다.

공해추방운동연합 등 환경운동 단체들은 지역주민들의 원자력발전소 건설 반대운동과 핵폐기장 건립 반대시위에 적극적으로 연대활동을 펼쳐나갔다. 전남 영광의 사례가 보여 주듯이 경제적 보상과 생계의 지속 기반 마련을 추구한 지역주민과 반핵운동의 대중적 확산을 추구한 환경운동단체 사이의 입장 차이는 양측의 헌신적인 연대에도 불구하고 서로에 대한 불신과 갈등으로 이어지기도 했다. 안면도의 사례가 보여 주듯이 정부 기구의 금전적 회유 등에 의해 주민들 사이의 갈등이 격화되어 일상적 관계가 훼손되기도 했다. 그럼에도 불구하고 1980년대 후반부터 1990년대 초반에 전개된 한국의 반핵운동은 냉전시대의 원자력 만능론 신화를 깨뜨리고, 생태주의 의제를 한국사회에서 가시화 시키는데 크게 기여했고, 1990년대 환경운동의 성장의 기반을 마련했다는 점에서 그 의미가 크다.

주제어: 반핵운동, 환경운동, 원자력발전소, 공해추방운동연합, 생태주의

