

Memories and testimonies from a Peace Mission, Korea 1953 – 2013, a ceasefire which is lasting too long

Lugano, Switzerland, 16. October 2013

UPF-Ticino held a conference on October 16th 2013 in Lugano, about the Korean Armistice, with testimonies and a slide-show of historical pictures.

This year is the 60th anniversary of the Armistice in the war between the two Koreas.

There is a cease-fire in Korea, which never resulted in peace. During a period of decades, some Swiss soldiers kept watch over the demilitarized zone of Panmunjom. On June 13th 1953, the Swiss Federal Council decided to deploy a Swiss delegation to the neutral missions in Korea. On the web-page below you can find a short description of NNSC, the Swiss peace support by military observers, sent to Korea.

<http://www.vtg.admin.ch/internet/vtg/en/home/themen/einsaetze/peace/korea.html>

Among the officers from Ticino, south Switzerland, were Marco Bagutti who served in 1954 and Giovanni Foletti in 1978. UPF-Ticino invited them as our guest speakers of the evening.

Mr. Giuseppe Termine, President of UPF-Ticino, introduced the evening with a short welcome address about the founding and purpose of the Universal Peace Federation.

Mr. Mauro Sarasso, President AAIK, Friendship Association Italy-Korea, conducted the program, beginning with an illustrated presentation about the Korean geographical location, history and culture.

Mr. Marco Bagutti, Lieutenant Colonel, told about being called to Korea by the Swiss Army. Leaving behind his wife and newborn baby, he departed for Korea, a devastated and divided nation, just shortly after the end of the Korean War. At that time the exchange of political prisoners was still taking place, and the pictures he showed us of general poverty and desolate landscapes, made a deep impression on our hearts and minds. During his 9 months of mission he was located in 10 different cities around North and South Korea. His wife told us that she could receive only one phone call from him at



Interested audience of the conference

Christmas through the diplomatic services in Bern, but the couple still keeps a box full of personal letters from that time.

Mr. Giovanni Foletti, Major, who was in Korea during a year of great diplomatic challenge, went with the first delegation into the third newly-discovered tunnel, which was excavated by North Korea below the 38° parallel. From his pictures we could ascertain that Korean dress, lifestyle and agriculture methods hardly changed over a span of 24 years, namely a whole generation. The only difference was that many years after the war the hills were green back. While a nightly curfew was imposed in South Korea by the Park government, the Swiss soldiers travelling through North Korea could even enter quite easily into China. After his presentation, Mr. Foletti also kindly answered some interesting questions from the audience.

Afterwards, Mr. Heiner Handschin, President of UPF Switzerland, presented a Peace Ambassador's certificate to both speakers. Mrs. Dak Nim Sarasso, beautifully dressed in a festive Korean costume, gave an artistic touch to our program by concluding with a Korean song.

Thanks to everyone who contributed to this memorable event! - *Seraina Termine*



Mr. Bagutti, decorated as Peace Ambassador - Mrs. Bagutti's testimony



Mr. Foletti, receiving the Peace Ambassador's certificate - The Bridge of no return, where political prisoners were exchanged after the Korean War