

Korea trip from September 27 - October 20,

by Jae-Sook Schmid

For over 20 years I have been active in the Korean association, in the area of our Hometown. This is the greater Augsburg, Landsberg, Ammersee area and the Allgäu (60 families). Many years I was second board member and since this year I was unanimously elected as 1st board member. Already 35 years ago I tried to get actively involved in the association, but was always rejected, mobbed and persecuted because of my faith. But I never stopped serving the Koreans and being positive, moreover my whole family always supported me strongly. I founded a women's choir in the association, a Samulnori folk percussion group, kimchi festivals, a library with over 400 Korean books, and cultural exchange gatherings.

This year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of South Korea has invited all active 1st Association Directors to Korea for an exchange, seminar and honors. Since our association had never participated in these invitations until now, I felt a strong urge to attend, despite strict and arduous requirements and corona rules. I even had a direct Zoom meeting and rehearsal with a high official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs once.

There are 350 Korean associations in 68 countries. 750,000 Koreans live abroad. This time 105 1st board members were selected to come to Korea. 80% of the board members are businessmen. There were 25 people from Europe. Worldwide, only two people are association board members who also belong to the FFWPU. These are Yoo Jae-Hyon from Frankfurt and me. Mr. Yoo is also 1st board member of Korean Associations of Europe and was appointed Vice President of Korean Associations Worldwide at this year's meeting in Seoul.

The seminar was held from October 04 - 07 at the 5 Star Grand Walker Hill Hotel in Seoul.

The title of the event was "One Korean, the strong Korea!"

Among other things, it was also a bit about the reunification of North and South Korea.

On October 05, even the current President of Korea Mr. Moon Jae-In came.

I had the great honor to meet him and stand with him on the official photo.

At the big banquet, Moon Jae-In distributed a noble watch and a big joint photo to each participant.

From the Ministry of Foreign Affairs we got a nice travel backpack, a small and big Korean flag, the seminar costs and the exclusive hotel stay sponsored.

Two statements by President Moon moved me a lot: "When I see and experience you overseas Koreans, I get energy and strength." And he said, "When you are in great trouble, please don't forget that your motherland Korea is always there for you."

At the banquet, I sat next to professor and government advisor Kim Bong-Seop, who was so impressed by my biography and stories that he immediately commissioned national broadcaster KBS to do an interview with me.

The 40-minute interview actually took place on October 19, 2021, at 9:45 a.m. local time, at the KBS Broadcasting House on Yoido.

Broadcaster and writer: Ms. Lee Un-Kyong

Question No. 1: What do you think about Korea in the current period?

I think Korea is economically very well positioned and I am proud of Korean achievements.

I think the Korean heart and the Korean culture are very good.

Negative I find many political things. e.g. not honest, too much position thinking, politics is in many ways still in the styles of the Chosun Dynasty.

We overseas Koreans are often ashamed of many high-ranking politicians. Many have studied abroad but still fall back into the old Korean structures. Socio-politically, they have not adopted so much abroad.

Question No. 2: What do young people with Korean roots living abroad think about the current Korea?

The younger generation growing up abroad with Korean roots are very proud because they have realized that they have good hardworking parents, with high morals and impart great educational aspirations.

They are very interested in Korean culture and they also convey this culture to their circle of friends.

Question No. 3: What do Germans think about Korea?

They have a similar fate as us, the division of the country.

Koreans are very hardworking and warm-hearted people and they like to sing.

Koreans living in Germany integrate well into the culture and also do not cause problems to German society such as demos, crime or outlandish government demands.

The Germans are enthusiastic about many Korean culinary delicacies such as kimchi, bibimbab, mandu and bulgogi.

Question No. 4: What do you personally want from Korea?

I wish for the reunification, the unity of North and South Korea!

Even the German spouses and their children of Koreans living in Germany sincerely wish for early reunification.

Also desirable is the retention of the strong family values that God has instilled in Koreans over many thousands of years. This is a very precious treasure that Korea possesses.

I also wish that former Korean nurses and miners living in Germany receive travel benefits, free admissions, accommodation allowances, etc. when they visit their old homeland.

KBS would very much like to do more interviews with me when I am back in Korea. The professor and government advisor told me when we parted that he would like to stay in touch and that I should please give him news about our association activities. I also gave him pictures of the Peace Road event at the border triangle of Germany-Czech Republic-Austria and the film of our Tongil singing for Korean reunification at Neuschwanstein the Cinderella Castle in the Allgäu Alps.



President Moon Jae-In (center, red tie) Yoo Jae-Hyon (2nd from right) Jae-Sook Schmid (1st from right)

