

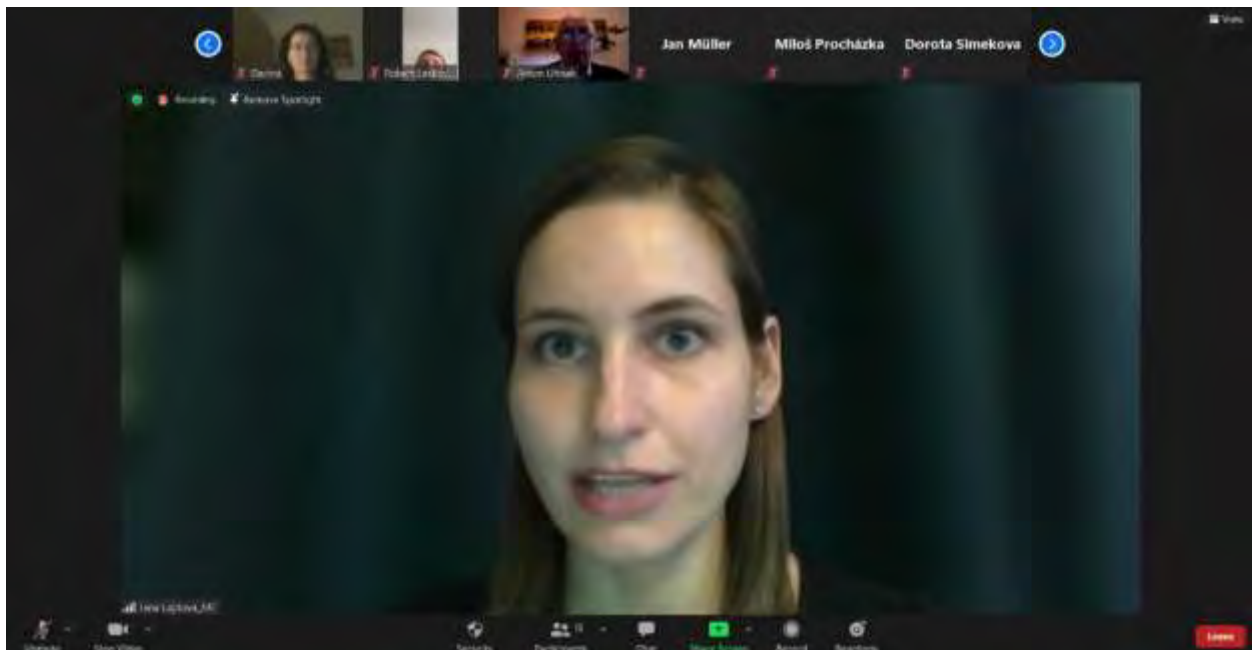
## UPF's Czech and Slovak chapters webinar: Korea in the Light of World History

Juraj Lajda  
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Prague, Czech Republic -- The Czech and Slovak chapters of UPF jointly held a webinar titled "Korea in the Light of World History."

More than 30 participants joined the online conference on March 1, 2021, in which three panelists presented their views.



The first panelist, Dr. Tomáš Horák, an assistant professor in the Department of Korean Studies at Charles University in Prague, gave a profound explanation and overview of the current situation on the Korean Peninsula. As an official interpreter, he visited North Korea twice with the Czech state delegation. The North Korean government is very reluctant to accept something from the West, he said. His speech was instructive and realistic.

In South Korea, reunification is not an agenda anymore, but they prefer cooperation between the two states.

Dr. Horák mentioned that there are arguments for and against the reunification of Korea.

There are many reasons why the two Koreas should unite, he said: The Koreans form one nation, one ethnic group, with one common history and one language. Nevertheless, in reality there are many differences.

There are two systems of language: chosono and hangugo. The historical narrative differs. The North Koreans derive their origin from the founder of the Koguryo dynasty, Ko Chumong, whereas the South

Koreans speak about Tangun and the Kingdom of Shilla.

There are differences in the culture. The people in the North read different books and listen to different music than those in the South. Young people in South Korea are closer to young people in the West than to those in North Korea.



The model of one country with two systems seems to be unrealistic and ineffective. It will be difficult to realize this system as long as North Korea does not accept globally shared values.

Political reunification would bring new challenges: how to cope with the totalitarian past of the North Korean leadership? Can the crimes against humanity be pardoned?

There are very big discrepancies in the economy, infrastructure and standards of living as well.

For the reunification of Korea it is important to share common values, culture, religion, etc., Dr. Horák concluded.

The second panelist was Alex Švamberk, a journalist and publicist, author of the book *Deployed in Korea, The Forgotten War and the Czechoslovakians*, in which he describes the mission of the former nation of Czechoslovakia as a member of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission at the Demilitarized Zone after the end of the Korean War. His father was working in this commission in the years 1954 and 1955.

Mr. Švamberk mentioned that in South Korea, the younger the generation, the less their interest in reunification. The older generation have stronger ties to the concept of one Korea, based on their memories, and are interested in unification, but the younger generation are focused more on their own lives and the development of capitalism. Only an abrupt change of the regime in North Korea could give some chance for reunification, he said.

Mr. Švamberk spoke about the history of the relationships between North Korea and the former nation of Czechoslovakia after World War II. Czechoslovakia was one of the first nations in the world to accept the existence of North Korea, but in reality the government was very reluctant to send its ambassador to North Korea and open an embassy in Pyongyang. It was more an act of solidarity with the Soviet bloc states to have some influence in North Korea and eliminate the influence of China.

Nowadays the Czech Republic keeps ties with both North Korea and South Korea. There has been no interruption of the relationship with North Korea, even after the collapse of communism. This is very good because we have the chance to communicate with both sides, Mr. Švamberk said. There is a Czech embassy in Pyongyang.

There are obstacles to the reunification of Korea, but these obstacles can be overcome. We should abandon the Western perspective on Korean reunification as the only one that is correct, he said. There is a need to embrace the viewpoints of the other side, the speaker suggested.

The last panelist, Dr. Juraj Lajda, president of the Czech chapter of UPF, gave a short overview of 20th century Korean history, reminding the audience that the day the webinar was taking place, March 1, was the 102nd anniversary of the Korean uprising in 1919 against the Japanese occupation.

The Korean War, which started over 70 years ago, ended not with a peace treaty but with an armistice,

which makes the situation unstable and creates tension until today. It is time to change this situation, Dr. Lajda said.



After World War II, Korea gained independence, but this did not last too long. In 1948, because of the geopolitics of the superpowers, the country was divided into North and South. The animosity continued and culminated in the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, when the communist North unexpectedly attacked the South. Over 3 million people died, and some historians call it the strangest war in human history.

Many nations became involved in the Korean War, either on the side of the North or the South. It was a prolongation of the Cold War in the Far East.

Efforts to unite Korea in the last 70 years have not brought the desired result, Dr. Lajda said. In spite of many common factors, such as the common history, language, culture, still the way for reunification is open.

Some experts claim that the reunification of Germany could serve as a good model for Korean reunification. But Dr. Lajda pointed out some fundamental differences. In contrast to the situation in North Korea, the people of East Germany had the chance to travel, at least within the Soviet bloc countries, and could receive information from the West. Also there was communication between the divided German families.

In order to support the process of reunification on the Korean Peninsula, the Universal Peace Federation has initiated a series of webinars worldwide with experts from politics, religion, media, academics, economics, etc., not only to collect different viewpoints but also to find solutions.

Dr. Lajda mentioned that in 2021 we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the historic visit of UPF founders Rev. and Mrs. Moon to North Korea. Their meeting with North Korean President Kim Il Sung gave some hope for launching a process of respect, cooperation and reconciliation. Reverend Moon proclaimed that Korea can be united not by Juche ideology but by a philosophy that overcomes left-wing and right-wing views. Reverend Moon called this the "Headwing" philosophy, which can overcome egoism, selfishness and greed.

Several questions were presented to the panelists in the second part of the webinar.

The webinar was moderated by Jana Lajdová, a UPF volunteer, and the question-and-answer session was led by Miloš Klas, the president of UPF in Slovakia.

Link to the recording: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBQIdAgkMRQ&dt=594s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBQIdAgkMRQ&dt=594s)