



What happened on Friday, 27 July 2018, in Gießen?

Gießen, Germany, July 27, 2018

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1 975 was the year in which eighty very young men and women set out to convey to the whole world the joyful news about the return of Christ. Most of them were between 18 and 21 years of age - and still very young in the German movement with only three to six months of familiarity with the 'Divine Principle'.

Some of these young men and women could speak only very basic school English, and some not even that, but they were full of faith in their desire and ability to spread this message.

In those days before the internet, it was very hard to find information about unknown countries such as Nepal or Burkina Faso. Since they were not considered normal holiday destinations and for example, safari in Africa was not yet popular, some missionaries were surprised, after take-off from Frankfurt airport and transfer into a smaller aircraft, to find that the landing strip felt as if it was right in the middle of the jungle and the terminal more like a shack than a reception building.

For the first night they all headed for a hotel or the YMCA. It was the end of

April 1975; sunset in Germany was somewhat. But in countries much closer to the equator, it was suddenly pitch dark at 6 in the evening and the streets were not well lit.

In the absence of pre-booked accommodation (after all no one knew how or where to book), a white person in Africa ended up first in a hotel that was much too expensive and thus then had to look for cheaper accommodation. Because 'colleagues' from the USA and Japan were expected, the next step was to visit the American and Japanese embassies to leave an address, in the case of enquiries. Also, a visit was paid to the German embassy for the same reason. Since it was not unusual to move many times, visits were frequent, and the missionaries became well known in the embassy. The employees must have wondered about the reason for all the constant enquiries, and surely had their own suspicions.

Each missionary was given 1000 US dollars (and a ticket for a return flight in the case of emergency). So that the money would last as long as possible, it had to be spent very economically. One person re-called that he wished to spend one dollar a day, regardless of

what for. Some stories related extreme frugality and a standard of living the same as that of the native people.

Depending on the possibilities, some started to study the local language at university, others simply learnt by picking up words from the locals in the shops and streets.

In the South American countries, they learned Spanish and Portuguese; in Africa, English or French as well as local languages and dialects.

The goal was to become financially independent as quickly as possible. This was realized sometimes by a job at the German school, German embassy or a small business such as cake baking, manufacturing sausages, or other in ways. Later schools were established, including some for girls whose education was much neglected in some countries.

Cultural differences:

When the American, the Japanese and the German came together with the task of working on an equal footing, there were of course in some cases difficulties caused by cultural and character differences. Some Japanese men could not understand why a

German woman should suddenly think she could tell him anything! On the other hand, some of the trinities got along well from the beginning and were able to work harmoniously together.

Visa problems:

In many countries there were visa problems such that residency was not possible in a given country. Every three months, another visa application had to be made from a neighboring country. Only after establishing a stable financial foundation was it possible to stay longer in any country.

But because not everybody was able to obtain a permanent residency visa - for example because of political revolution - several missionaries had to frequently change countries, so that a single missionary could accrue a whole list of countries.

It was moving to hear that many came to love their country and after 21 years realized with joy that the movement there could stand on its own feet and they were no longer needed. The foundation had been laid.

Some established a family with their partner and have children who were born in exotic countries, but most

returned to their native country, to continue there to actively support our movement.

For some of the participants, this was the first time in 43 years to again meet with their 'colleagues' - brothers and sisters in faith with whom they were sent out on their mission in April 1975. It was very good for everyone to be able to exchange about their experiences, successes and difficulties. The wish was expressed to meet again next year.

