

Peace Road Austria, Czech Republic, and Germany hiked to where their nations converge

Maria Pammer and Juraj Lajda
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Central Europe - Peace Road participants from Austria, Czech Republic, and Germany hiked to the top of a hill where their nations' borders converge.

To commemorate the United Nations' Day of Refugees, the UPF chapters of the three nations organized the Peace Road event on Sunday, June 20, 2021. Germans, Austrians and Czechs joined in a common meeting at the place in the Bohemian Forest - called Dreieckmark in German and Trojmezí in Czech - where the nations have a common border.



The meeting point, on top of the 1,321-meter hill, was marked by a two-meter-high three-sided border stone. Due to the cooperation of the three UPF chapters, this Peace Road became a deep experience for almost 100 participants. The oldest participant was 80 years old, and the youngest was 2 years old.

The participants passed through a beautiful landscape that was described by the great Austrian poet Adalbert Stifter, a native of this region.

We met hikers who asked us what initiative we were representing, when they saw our T-shirts with the Peace Road logo. When we explained our cause to them, they were very taken with it, as they still knew the time when the Iron Curtain separated our countries and a meeting at this interesting piece of nature was not possible.

Although the ascent was difficult in different ways - the friends from Germany reached the top after one hour, while those from the Czech Republic needed more than three hours - we still met almost on time at 1 pm for the joint celebration.

At the top of the hill, the participants brought their national flags to the monument marking the meeting point of the three borders. To start the program, they sang the "Anthem of Europe" (based on Ludwig van Beethoven's "Ode to Joy").



Dr. Juraj Lajda, president of the Czech chapter of UPF, in his welcoming speech emphasized that the Germans and Czechs have lived next to each other for almost 1,000 years. In their history there were sometimes times of suffering and pain. World War II was unprecedented in history. After the war the people of German origin were forced to leave what was then Czechoslovakia. The way they were treated was not smooth and created resentment on both sides. Now we need reconciliation, Dr. Lajda said.

Following the war, the ideologies of communism and democracy separated our nations for 40 years. In 1989 communism collapsed and a new era in Europe started. Enmities were more or less overcome, and all these countries started anew.

Still there is one nation in the world that is still divided by ideology. It is Korea. The 38th parallel still divides the country and is a borderline between communism and democracy, Dr. Lajda said.

He concluded by expressing the hope that one day the Korean people can meet and unite as the peoples of three nations were meeting at the border triangle.

Maria Pammer, who represents UPF in the Austrian state of Upper Austria, explained the background of this Peace Road.

Over the last four years, UPF of Upper Austria has focused its Peace Road activities on retracing the 1945 death march of Hungarian Jews to the Mauthausen concentration camp in Upper Austria. Then the wish arose to meet this year at the border triangle with friends from Germany and the Czech Republic.

Europe has a long history of conflicts, she said, including those between our three countries.

The founders of UPF and the Peace Road initiative, Rev. and Mrs. Sun Myung Moon, had to flee North Korea and have invested their whole lives for world peace and the unification of their homeland, Korea. Because June 20 is World Refugee Day, the organizers of this Peace Road event wanted to show an example of a world in freedom and peace, where there is no need for a World Refugee Day in the future, Mrs. Pammer said.

Mayors of adjacent municipalities in the Czech Republic and Austria sent greetings and requested that they be sent a picture report afterward.

Dr. Dieter Schmidt, the UPF president for Central Europe, spoke of a hopeful future. He pointed to the many dead trees at the top of the hill, which had been destroyed by bark beetles, and said he sees them as symbolic of the conflict-ridden past. Indicating the many young trees that were growing in between the dead ones, Dr. Schmidt said they symbolize a hopeful future in which we all will become aware again of

our common origin, the Heavenly Parent.



After Austrian participant Johann Ledermüller performed Edvard Grieg's well-known "Morning Mood" on the horn, Je-Heon Yoo, the president of the Association of All Koreans Living in Europe, expressed his joy to meet at this special place together with friends from three different countries for the sake of Korean reunification. As the group of Korean residents of Germany who had accompanied Mr. Yoo sang the Korean song "Arirang," the longing for reunification became tangible.

Bishop Christine Mayr-Lumetzberger from Austria gave a blessing based on the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, prepared in three languages that the participants read simultaneously.

With the singing of the well-known Korean song "Tongil" ("Unity"), the celebration came to a conclusion, and the participants spent some time in beautiful personal encounters, which have become rare in recent times due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We felt the need to intensify this Peace Road initiative in each of our countries, to be on the way to peace and understanding.

One participant expressed his feelings like this:

"No, we did not come here for a walk. We had a goal, a mission. It was to show the connection and unity among nations and religions. Among individuals, families, churches, states, continents. We all are of the same spiritual nature, sons and daughters of the Supreme Lord. Personally, I have a very good feeling about the Peace Road. We could get to know new places, new people and could have good sharing. Thanks to all of you."

Stefan Schmid, one of the German organizers, said: "I was most impressed by the Czech delegation. Altogether we were almost 100 participants, and from the Czech Republic there were already more than 50 people, most of them young people. In addition, the Czechs had the longest way to go, three hours. The Austrians had two hours to walk and the Germans one good hour."

Finally, we received a message from the founder and president of the Korean School and Cultural Association of Augsburg in Germany, Chong Sum Paulus:

"The time and the day today passed so quickly because I was with really nice people. I am deeply impressed to have met people who are working for the reunification of my homeland with so much love and dedication. That so many foreigners, from three nations, are praying together and making conditions for the reunification of Korea, I am deeply touched and very grateful. In addition, I am totally surprised that with such a long journey (350 km), hot weather and four hours of arduous mountain hiking, no one scolded, complained or grumbled. In my whole life, I have never experienced anything as special as the UPF movement - I am grateful to God for that.

"Then the wonderful speakers like Mr. Yoo, who talked about how the three countries belong together like love, faith, hope. And during Dr. Schmidt's speech, I thought to myself: How can a non-Korean speak so lovingly about Korea? I have never experienced anything like that. To all the participants and preparation people, I would like to thank you with the deepest heart."

Since 2012 the Universal Peace Federation has initiated Peace Road projects all over the world to connect nations and people based on good will and the desire to create unity. We hope that our gathering of three nations will contribute to these noble goals. We want to send out a signal for reconciliation and unity on the Korean Peninsula.