

# Korea and Japan

The scars of war in North-East Asia are slow to heal. Japan and Russia have not yet been able to agree on a peace treaty. The Iron Curtain between North and South Korea is still there. Controversy over wartime atrocities still strain relations between China and Japan.

The June 13–15 meeting of President Kim Dae-Jung of South Korea and Chairman Kim Jong-Il of North Korea lit a hope that reunification of the peninsula might come about.

In Caux, the Secretary General of Japan's Democratic Party, Tsutomu Hata, MP and former Prime Minister, addressed the bitterness and mistrust left by Japan's 40 years occupation of Korea: "It is my sincere hope that the two Koreas will succeed in peaceful reunification. I accept that the main reason why the unfortunate situation exists on the Korean peninsula is due to Japan's action prior to and during the Second World War. I apologise for this from my heart to the people of both countries. As a politician I promise that Japan will assist in peaceful re-unification and reconciliation."

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Among the Koreans listening to him were the former Korean Ambassador to Japan, Kim Tae-Zhee, and a leader of Korea's Buddhists, the Venerable Mother Park Chung-Soo, Director of the Won Buddhist Temple at Kangnam in Seoul and also of the Won Buddhist Parish of Pyongyang in the North. Her story helped



Mother Park Chung-Soo, Korea

the conference participants understand the depth of feeling characterising many Koreans' attitude to Japan: "Korea was oppressed by Japan for 36 years. I experienced the agony of it in my childhood. Koreans worked hard in the fields and harvested the products. Yet our

people were not able to eat rice. Sometimes we got over our hunger by eating the inner smooth part of the pine tree. I came to hate the Japanese unconditionally.

"When she came to Caux in 1987 she met Japanese who were different to the kind of people she experienced in her childhood. "They were humble and would regret the past. One day, when I was going on a picnic, a young Japanese woman made the packed lunch for me. Changes began to take place in my heart and gradually I was able to give up my hatred completely. Mountain House, Caux, was a smelting furnace to melt away my hatred, anger and resentment. I greatly appreciated Mr Hata's sincere apology at the opening of this session."

Mother Park Chung-Soo has initiated and supported humanitarian aid projects in 44 countries, raising some 20 million US dollars in South Korea. Her latest venture is to help the orphans and malnourished people in North Korea. "I believe that my efforts to help my brothers and sisters in North Korea will contribute to the peaceful unification of a divided Korea."



Tsutomu Hata, MP, former Prime Minister of Japan

## Sri Lanka

A workshop on Sri Lanka portrayed life and work for reconciliation amidst war and conflict. Rohini De Mel and engineer Roshan Dodanwela, who is now working with AfR, gave the historical background and outlined the current situation in the country.

Constance Chabrière from France, who has worked for UNICEF in Sri Lanka during the last two years, described projects to support children affected by the war. Amidst the booming guns, parents hope and strive for a safer tomorrow.



Rabbi Gopin (left) and Rajmohan Gandhi

**“H**ealing History and Reconciling Adversaries: A Multi-Faith Conversation” was the theme of a panel discussion between Rabbi Dr Marc Gopin, Adjunct Professor of Diplomacy at the Fletcher School for Law and Diplomacy, Boston, USA, Professor Mustafa Abu Sway, Professor of Islamic Thought, Al-Quds University, Jerusalem and Dr Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, Professor of Theology, Bremen, Germany. Journalist and author Professor Rajmohan Gandhi, India, a grandson of the Mahatma, introduced the panellists as “scholar-activists who belong to the faiths of the family of Abraham; faiths originating in the spiritually charged air, soil and waters of the Middle East.” The following are extracts of what they said:

**Rabbi Marc Gopin:**

“In Jewish tradition forgiveness is part of repentance, recognition of one’s guilt, the detailed mentioning of what one has done, the asking for forgiveness, restitution, addressing injustice.”

“I have tried to do certain things towards reconciling the Jewish and the Palestinian people. The most senior person amongst the Palestinians present here is Mr Tawfiq Abu Ghazaleh. I want to say to you that I am sorry that it has taken me so long to say what had to be

**Collective sense of guilt?**

In response to a question from the floor by a young German, Rabbi Gopin answered, “I am not happy that the younger generation of German people feel a collective sense of guilt. I would much rather have a civilisation that in a very healthy way had confronted the past and was determined to give their children a set of ethics so clear and unambiguous and so courageous that Nazism could never rise again in Germany.

I cannot ask forgiveness for what someone else has done. But I do believe that I can be responsible for the small things I did or did not do.”



Members of the panel discussion

said, write what had to be written, to do what had to be done. I hope it is not too late. I swear to you that I will leave no stone unturned to find the path towards the apologies that need to be expressed between our peoples. I have a vision before my mind, that before long our peoples will have the wisdom to find the way to apologise to each other, to live in two homes side by side in dignity and even in companionship.”

**Professor Mustafa Abu Sway:**

“The notion of forgiveness is mentioned more than 140 times in the Qur’an. In the overwhelming majority of these, forgiveness is mentioned in relationship to God; it is He who forgives and it is He who deprives people of forgiveness if they choose to reject His messages to them. God will forgive the human being not once, but as many times as he or she



Professor Abu Sway

repents and seeks forgiveness. Repentance is a prerequisite for forgiveness. Conditions for forgiveness to be valid include: to stop doing the sins one is committing and, if these sins include material damage, then restitution is a must.

Prof. Abu Sway recounted some of the many injustices which Palestinians suffer

# Conflict or compassion



...s the meaning of forgiveness

today, such as land confiscation, house demolition, restrictions in freedom of movement and minimal access to water resources. “When I thought about ‘healing the past’, I wish it were past for me, for us. However, it is not past. It is something that still continues practically every day.”

**"God will forgive the human being not once, but as many times as he or she repents and seeks forgiveness. Repentance is a pre-requisite for forgiveness."**

## **Dr Geiko Müller-Fahrenheit:**

Dr Müller-Fahrenheit told a story of a group of elderly German war veterans, who were visiting Belarus to build a home for children who were suffering from the nuclear fallout after the Chernobyl-disaster. They had all been there 50 years before with Hitler's army. During a dinner with their Belarus hosts one of them stood up and said how deeply sorry he was for what he himself and the German people had done. He broke down in tears. An old Belarus woman got to her feet and hugged and kissed the old man. Professor Müller-Fahrenheit drew some lessons from this story:

- “Guilt must be named. This one man struggles to find the right words. It is a disarming confession, a



Dr Müller-Fahrenheit

giving up of the attempt to deny the evil deeds of the past. It does not require the entire community, group or nation, to speak up, but it does need a few to face the horrors.

- The Belarus woman comes and kisses him. Remember that the German army did atrocious things to the people of Belarus. Yet when she sees the man struggling, breaking down and weeping, he is no longer the enemy, he becomes a fellow human being in need of forgiveness.

- There is the lasting impact of guilt on the perpetrator's side and there is the lasting impact of hurt on the victim's side. The German man and the Belarus woman liberate each other from these bondages of guilt and hurt.

- The emphasis cannot be on repairing the past, it needs to be on preparing a more just and equitable future. It involves questions of burden sharing and compensation.

- The grinding mills of retaliation consume new generations. How can young people respond to the challenges of their time if they continue to react and are made to react to their parents' and grandparents' wounds? Forgiveness has to do with setting the coming generations free. Forgiveness is a gift of grace entrusted by God to all human beings irrespective of race, gender, class, creed or religion.”

**“Auschwitz prohibits the reduction of guilt and shame to the individual level. Human beings act and fail to act also as members of families, associations, ethnic groups and nations. Forgiveness can never replace justice... At the same time, it must be emphasized that forgiveness goes beyond justice.”**

Dr Geiko Müller-Fahrenheit in his book *The Art of Forgiveness*, 1997, WWC Publications.



Mammo Wudneh (left), President of the Writers' Association of Ethiopia, in conversation with Yehuda Wachsman, Israel

## Israel and Palestine

**Yehuda Wachsman, Israel:** Activist in 'Bereaved Parents', an organisation uniting those on the Israeli and Palestinian side who have lost their sons or daughters in the conflict. In 1994 his soldier son was kidnapped and held hostage for six days by people of the Hamas movement. He and three of the kidnapers died in the course of a rescue attempt by the Israeli Army. He decided to turn his pain into a mourning for peace and reconciliation and has since met with relatives of his son's kidnapers.



Lawyer Tawfiq Abu-Ghazaleh interviewed by Radio France Internationale

**Lawyer Tawfiq Abu-Ghazaleh, Gaza, Palestine:** "I have seen here in the past few days the courage of individuals and leaders to apologise for injustice. Leaders all over the world must have the courage to stop injustice. Remember what Martin Luther King jr. said: "Violation of justice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." I hope for a real, just, long-lasting peace in the Middle East."



Young participants from Croatia and Serbia: "We have discovered that our concerns are the same. We have a desperate task of freeing our countries from hatred."



Paul van Tongeren, Executive Director of the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, the Netherlands, gave a workshop on international networking for the prevention of conflicts.



Three law students from the Ametistov Foundation, Moscow



Delegation from Oregon, USA