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National



"Pyongyang Filled with Well-Dressed People and Many Vehicles," Says Dr. Colin Duerkop

Representative of Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS)

"Pyongyang is filled with people well-dressed, and I was surprised by the large amount of vehicles on the streets," says Dr. Colin Duerkop, representative of Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS)'s Korea Office. As KAS representative he is in charge of South Korea, North Korea, and Japan.

Dr. Duerkop visited North Korea from April 5 to April 9, 2011 at the invitation of North Korea's Workers' Party, and met with The Seoul Times in his office in Seoul's Hannam-dong.

The following is the full text of the interview with Dr. Duerkop

Q1: What is the political situation in North Korea now?

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Dr. Colin Duerkop, representative of Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS)'s Korea Office

A1: North Korea is a country in the midst of political transition. As we know from other countries such periods can carry the risk of sudden change and unforeseen developments. However, North Korea might also be a very special case in this respect. The system appears to be very much in command and in control. Consequently, any "implosion" from within seems rather unlikely at the moment.

Q2: *Did you see or meet with ordinary North Korean people in the street of its capital of Pyongyang? How did they look? What were their reactions to you?*

A2: It is not easy to speak to ordinary North Korean people in the street. First of all, you are not supposed to walk around on your own. You will always be accompanied by your official hosts. And secondly Koreans are not accustomed to engage in conversations with strange foreigners anyway.

Even in South Korea this is not the habit.

Nevertheless, the streets of Pyongyang are filled with people, generally quite well dressed. We were also surprised about the large amount of vehicles in the streets. Compared to other parts of the country it is said that the capital is better endowed. The rural areas might look different but we had no chance to see much about the countryside during this particular visit.



Dr. Colin Duerkop (seen in lower right area) is about to ride subway in Pyongyang, capital of N. Korea.

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Q3: How would you assess the economic situation in North Korea from what you saw there?

A3: The economy is suffering ever since the collapse of the East Block and this state of affairs is aggravated by the present sanctions regime. We did not see any factories but were told that industrial production is down, partly due to lack of steel production and financial as well as material shortcomings.

It is virtually impossible to make an informed judgment about the prevailing food supply situation due to the lack of data and inconsistent information from different sources.



Dr. Colin Duerkop (center) and Mr. Oliver Beckmann (right) from KAS Headquarters Berlin pose with members of N. Korean Workers' Party in front of People's Palace of Culture in Pyongyang during his visit to the Communist nation on April 5-9, 2011. *The photos were taken by Mr. Oliver Beckmann.*

Apparently rural areas where farmers are allowed to cultivate a certain amount of land for their own purposes are less vulnerable than urban areas (with the exception of Pyongyang perhaps).

Q4: When did you visit North Korea in detail? Were you scared or worried about your visit to North Korea? What was the purpose?

A4: The visit took place from April 5 to April 9, 2011. It was our first time ever to visit the northern part of the Korean peninsula. Thus, this stay was an exploratory one in order to find out what concrete projects the Konrad Adenauer Foundation might or might not carry out in North Korea or how North Korean participants could be integrated into programmes in Germany or in the Region. In previous years the Foundations had given scholarships to North Korean newspaper journalists and radio reporters as well as cameramen in Germany.

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Dr. Colin Duerkop (left) tours Mangyongdae, birthplace of N. Korea's late President Kim Il-Sung (1912-94), who ruled the north half of Korean Peninsula from 1948 till his death in 1994.

Q5: *What did you do there?*

A5: The nature of the visit was a fact finding mission to assess possibilities of cooperation with various North Korean agencies. Konrad Adenauer Foundation had previously also invited senior lecturers from Kim Il Sung University to attend a regional conference on legal issues.

As an outcome of that visit, two students from that university received a scholarship to study law at Humboldt University in Berlin. They are now back in Pyongyang and we had a very interesting meeting with them and their professor as well.

Q6: *What kind of people did you meet?*



Dr. Colin Duerkop (2nd from right) talks with a North Korean man during his visit to a middle school in Pyongyang.

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A6: Our host was the Workers Party of DPRK. They organized a visit program which comprised both some cultural as well as professional meetings with a number of institutions. We also visited a school and a church in Pyongyang. Furthermore we met with some project staff of agricultural development projects, the representative of the German Academic Exchange Service and the German Ambassador and his deputy.

Q7: *Were you treated well? Who treated you there? Where did you stay? Did you like the North Korean food there? What kind of food did you have there?*

A7: We were treated extremely well, polite and courteous in line with the traditional Korean hospitality. We were booked into the Koryo Hotel in downtown Pyongyang. - a hotel with all customary amenities. We even had BBC, NHK and Chinese programs in our room. Food was good - not as opulent and abundant perhaps as in South Korea, but local beer and soju was excellent and cheap.



Dr. Colin Duerkop (2nd from right) poses with members of N. Korean Workers' Party in front of Bongsu Church in Pyongyang during his visit to the Communist nation on April 5-9, 2011. The Bongsu Church is North Korea's first church set up since the establishment of North Korean regime in 1948. It was renovated with the help of South Korean churches several years ago.

Q8: *Was it your first time to visit North Korea? How many times did you visit North Korea?*

A8: It was in fact our first visit to North Korea. It coincided with the tenth anniversary of the start of diplomatic relations between Germany and the DPRK.

Q9: *What are KAS relations with North Korea or its role there? What has KAS been doing there since when?*

A9: KAS relations to North Korea has been very limited so far. The other German political foundations have been engaging with contacts and activities much longer including carrying out EU funded projects in the field of forestry and fisheries development projects.

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Dr. Colin Duerkop (left in suit) poses with performers in Pyongyang during his visit to N. Korea on April 5-9, 2011.

Who Is Dr. Colin Duerkop?

Dr. Colin Dürkop is the regional representative for the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) in Korea and Japan. Before his current posting in Seoul, he was director of the KAS Political Dialogue Programme Asia in Singapore.

Dr. Durkop also served at the Foundation's headquarters in Bonn-Sankt Augustin/Germany as the director of the Asia Department.

Earlier, Dr. Dürkop did stints as KAS country representative in Thailand and was section chief for various regions, including Northeast Asia.

Prior to joining KAS in 1988, Dr. Dürkop headed up a World Bank project in Bangkok/Thailand for the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives.

He went on to consult World Bank projects in Ankara/Turkey and took part in various German Bilateral Aid Consultancy Projects.

He started his career as an economist at the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome/Italy in 1979.

Dr. Dürkop received his PhD in Economic and Social Sciences from the University of Innsbruck, Austria. From 2002 to 2009 he edited the journal "Panorama: Insights into East Asian and European Affairs."

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Dr. Colin Duerkop (center) is on USS Pueblo, American navy intelligence ship, captured by North Korea on Jan. 23, 1968.



A North Korea buddhist temple Dr. Colin Duerkop visited during his visit to N. Korea on April 5-9, 2011.

<http://www.theseoultimes.com/ST/index.html>