

### **President Kim Il Sung in Rinser's View**

German writer Luise Rinser personally experienced or witnessed many of the global events since World War I. Based in Rome, Italy, she travelled every nook and corner of the world, meeting not a few heads of state and other politicians and pouring her dissatisfied and even lashing criticism, earning the nickname of "migratory bird with a ferocious beak."

She visited the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (north Korea) 11 times from 1980 to 1992 and had the honour of meeting President Kim Il Sung (1912-1994) 45 times.

Then what kind of person was the Korean leader in Rinser's view?

#### **First Impression: Honest and Modest**

Getting aboard to visit Korea, Rinser was feeling rather nervous. Before her departure she had felt a strong urge to have a first-hand confirmation of what she had learnt about President Kim Il Sung reading his biography. Although she knew what she wanted to do, she was not sure if he would receive her as she was neither a famous politician nor a guest of honour to Korea. Her anxiety got all the better founded when she remembered her membership of the advisory group of the then West German "Committee for Solidarity with South Korea" when the relation between West Germany and north Korea was hostile. Still worse, she had been to south Korea at the invitation of the south Korean government years before.

Neutralizing all her worries, however, President Kim Il Sung received her.

Still dubious about her honour, Rinser sat silent for a while, when the President asked her how she liked her visit, how she was and what she had seen in Korea.

The German was surprised to hear him making so modest words. A great gratitude flowed out of her heart for his creating such an atmosphere of talking open-heartedly like old friends without any distrust or doubt.

Now she got easy and found courage to ask the questions she had wanted to ask one by one.

The Korean leader considered every question of hers before giving explicit answers.

An impression that he was a greater person than he was described in his biography, settled in her mind.

### **Making Instant Friends**

President Kim Il Sung said, "I think you are an old comrade of mine because we both fought against fascism. I know you lost your husband to the fascists, and you were put in prison and even sentenced to death. That's why I respect you and regard you as my comrade."

Hearing him, Rinser could hardly keep back her tears. It was more than 40 years before that she used to hear the word "comrade" among the anti-fascist fighters with whom she worked together when she was young.

In his words she saw a new world of affection and obligation that ensures trust over all barriers of nationality, class, political view and religious belief.

Now it seemed she understood how it was that all the Koreans, young and old, men and women, were united behind the national leader with one mind and purpose—which had been a mystery to the world outside Korea.

As a sign of her wish to entrust her destiny to him, Rinser presented Kim Il Sung with a jewel ring, a symbol of her heart that she had kept for a good time.

### **First Comment of Praise**

On returning to Europe after meeting the Korean President the German got to writing, and it took her less than a month to finish *North Korean Travelogue* that consisted of 15 chapters.

Saying that all the victories and achievements in Korea were attributed to Kim Il Song's efforts, the note wrote he was a "great practical man who advances not works for the writing's sake but writings of practical importance that are of immense help in transforming man and reshaping society through his ingenious thought."

In the last chapter *Kim Il Sung*, Rinser noted that, although she was not a socialist she had recognized socialism both theoretically and practically after she met the President, and appealed to the international community, "President Kim Il Sung's thinking and practice are what the Third World should choose. The West had better have contact with him positively."

Many doubted it was what the famous Western critic had written.

### **Poetic and Philosophical Remarks**

Visiting Korea almost every year Rinser toured many places together with Kim Il Sung. The itinerary included historic sites where Kim Il Sung and his men had fought battles during the 15-year-long warfare against the Japanese aggressors.

Once when strolling in the wood at a battle site, the President, pointing to a birch tree,

said that its leaves are green though the bark is gray, and that so it is beautiful and attracts birds. Rinser noticed the meaning of his words - that he wanted her to live a youthful life all the time and write a lot of things that would make people's mentality clean and clear. Now she thought she found a poem in his remarks that could purge a human being.

When she said happily to the President that nature is really beautiful, he answered that it is beautiful because the human is beautiful.

From his simple words she keenly felt the philosophical truth of his Juche idea that regards man as the most valuable and powerful being in the world.

### **Heavenly Being Whether He Wanted Himself to Be or Not**

Rinser was a believer. She always had wished to achieve Christ's charity in practice, maintaining that "we worship God in spirit and truth instead of at the church."

Now a new belief settled in her mind that "Kim Il Sung is to be believed as a heavenly being whether he wants himself to be or not."

In one of her notes, she wrote, "Korean atheists, you live in the bosom of Kim Il Sung who, as a human being, loves human beings as God, and you call it socialism."

She picked beautiful flowers herself and presented them to the President, saying, "I have never given a bouquet to God although I have prayed to God as a faithful believer. Now I would like to offer you this bouquet. I'm sure you deserve it since you have built a community of universal equality that has been impossible for God."