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'Conservatives need to show flexibility'

HERALD INTERVIEW

By Jin Hyun-joo

The conservative party should be able to tune into social and economic changes while preserving timeless values such as family, the former president of the think tank attached to the largest conservative party in Germany told The Korea Herald.

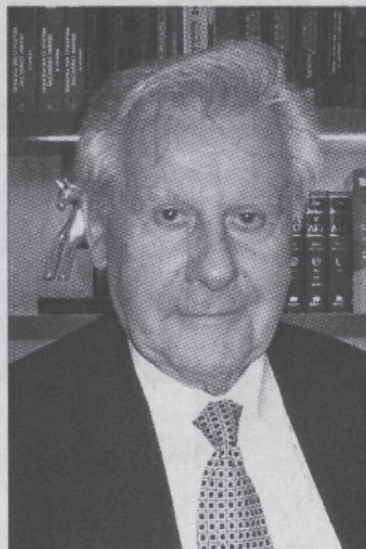
"It (the conservative party) should give shelter to the values which are indispensable, but on the other hand, it should be flexible for new situations, for new problems, for new developments and so on," said Guenter Rinsche, a current member of the board at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, which is affiliated to the Christian Democratic Union.

He said the CDU tries to change and modernize its programs while keeping principles such as subsidiarity, solidarity, democracy and family.

He cited an initiative by Angela Merkel, chairwoman of the CDU and the chancellor of Germany, to reduce burgeoning public debt.

"One difficult problem in Germany is that we have a social oriented policy, not just in the economy, but in every other field. In some respects it's overdoing the capacity to finance it. Some of the public debts are getting bigger and bigger and we won't be able to pay back the debt we personally owe, or as a state, as a country, as a European Union are making today. This is a huge problem. It is a problem of justice, too.

"Therefore, Angela Merkel is trying to reduce the debt, which means she has to reduce public expenditure, to cut the pensions, to cut the money the state gives from



Guenter Rinsche

Medicare and so on."

The interview was conducted during his visit to Seoul, to attend the fourth International Conference of Asian Political Parties between Sept. 7-10.

The ICAPP, aimed at promoting exchanges and cooperation between political parties from different Asian countries, was initiated by the Lakas-Christian Muslim Democratic Party of the Philippines, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and the Hanns Seidel Foundation. Approximately 400 representatives from 90 political parties representing 36 Asian countries were invited to the fourth meeting.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the largest of the politically linked research foundations in Germany, has managed 80 regional offices in Korea and other countries to offer political education and to promote democracy worldwide.

Rinsche was president of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation from 1995 to March 2001, and was president of the European Parliament Delegation for Southeast Asia and South Korea 1979-1999.

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