

UPF Pristina, Kosovo's conference to discuss: Skanderbeg, Freedom and Peace

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Pristina, Kosovo -- UPF-Kosovo organized a conference to discuss one of the Albanian people's greatest heroes during the 550th year after his death.

Approximately 100 participants came to the conference "Skanderbeg, Freedom and Peace" to evaluate the legacy of the 15th century Albanian nobleman and military commander known as Skanderbeg (born George Castriot).

The event, held at the Hotel Sirius Conference Center on January 30, 2018, also was the occasion for the election of the Kosovan UPF Peace Council.

Several senior leaders were among the speakers: a former chairman of the Assembly of Kosovo (2007-2014), H.E. Jakup Krasniqi; the Kosovan minister of labor and social welfare, Mr. Skender Reçica; and the ambassador of Albania to Kosovo, H.E. Qemal Minxhozi.

Mr. Jack Corley, the Eastern Europe regional president of the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, an organization affiliated with UPF, also addressed the conference.

Former members of parliament, leaders of NGOs, and representatives of the arts and media were among the attendees.

The first session was moderated by Mr. Daut Demaku, vice chair of the Governing Board of UPF-Kosovo. The first speaker, H.E. Jakup Krasniqi, the former chair of the Assembly of Kosovo, welcomed the participants and wished success to the assembly. Stating that without a doubt Skanderbeg was one of the most glorious figures in our history, he reminded the audience that the military leader was always at the service of his country, not only when he lived but also later. H.E. Krasniqi closed his speech with a quote from Skanderbeg, whom he called the greatest ambassador in history: "Searching for war is madness, but responding to it when others impose it is wisdom."

Mr. Qemal Minxhozi, the ambassador of Albania, said that Skanderbeg, in war and in peace, gave peace messages to all those who lived at that time and for generations after him. We are proud that Albania and Kosovo have declared 2018 as the Year of Skanderbeg, he said. Many European historians call him the second greatest strategist at that time but also the man who brought peace throughout the region in a troubled time, the ambassador said.

Representing the conference organizers, Mr. Jack Corley said he was very honored to be present at the conference. He mentioned that he had heard about Skanderbeg and had seen the statue of our national hero in London.

He spoke about the roots of Universal Peace Federation and brought up the incomparable example of UPF co-founder Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon, who managed to forgive, accept, and love his enemies.

Everywhere we see heroes, we see also enemies for other nations, Mr. Corley said. The philosophy of UPF is that each of us has a common root, God, and we are equal, he said. If we have the love of God within ourselves, we can overcome hatred and love our enemies. In the end he said: "It is easy to love a friend, but the challenge is to love the enemy."



Then Professor Dr. Sabit Sylja, director of the Pristina Institute of History, spoke on the Ottoman invasion period and the period of Skanderbeg. He said that Skanderbeg managed to unite all the Albanian vilayets (administrative divisions) at that time by organizing very well all the resources and contacts. Skanderbeg became a symbol of freedom and independence not only for Albanians but also on the European level, he said.

Mrs. Naxhije Doci recited a poem that she had written about Skanderbeg, titled Memorandum of Pride in Pristina.

Mr. Ali Laçej, the coordinator of the UPF Albanian Peace Council, emphasized that we were led by great figures: Skanderbeg, who confirmed that the number of soldiers does not determine who wins the war; and Mother Teresa, who stated that one doesn't need wealth to build hospitals. They both had a common strategy, the ability to make an assembly, and in the assembly they cultivated honor and educated in peace, Mr. Laçej said, and today we are honoring him. Skanderbeg won because he held the highest values, which he brought to the assembly, and that is also what we are trying to do here today, he said, when we share the values of UPF.

Then Mr. Hydajet Hyseni, the first chair of the UPF Kosovan Peace Council (2008 to 2013), welcomed the participants in the name of peace. We owe our peace to our ancestors, to our children and to future generations, he said, but above all to our friends. In particular Mr. Hyseni thanked Mr. Jack Corley and the UPF friends on the world level who have always supported us. He concluded by quoting former U.S. President Bill Clinton: "We have won the war together; together we should win the peace."

The last speaker of the first session, Mr. Gaqo Apostoli, the chair of UPF-Albania, said that Skanderbeg is not only our national hero: Many other European nations also have recognized him as a heroic figure, he said.

At the end of the session, four participants were awarded the certificate of Ambassador of Peace. Mr. Jack Corley presented the certificates to Mr. Skënder Reçica, Kosovan minister of labor and social welfare; H.E. Qemal Minxhozi, ambassador of Albania in Kosovo; Professor Dr. Sabit Sylja, director of the Pristina Institute of History; and Mr. Avni Nuha, a member of Kosovo's Olympic committee.

The second session focused on the election of the presiding council of UPF-Kosovo. This session was moderated by Mr. Binak Ulaj, a member of the Albanian UPF Council. Panel members were Ms. Hatixhe Hoxha, the chair of UPF-Kosovo; Ms. Nafiye Gas, a member of the Kosovan UPF Council; Imam Rexhep Lushta, a member of the Kosovan UPF Council; and Mrs. Savjola Konja, director of FFWPU in Pristina.

Mrs. Hatixhe Hoxha wholeheartedly welcomed all the participants who had come together for this significant activity for our nation. She also thanked the members of the UPF Council for the great contributions and work they had done together during these three years. Ms. Hoxha gave a presentation with pictures about UPF activities that were held during the last two years.

Ms. Savjola Konja continued with the presentation of other activities, organized with the youth of FFWPU, and she encouraged the participants to actively support peace in small or big things by working together. This is the only way we can achieve peace, she said.

Then Imam Rexhep Lushta presented the assembly with the practical functioning of the UPF Council and invited attendees to vote.

The news media were present during the event and broadcast it directly on two channels.