Swiss Peace Road 2016 Honors Peace Cyclist Ron McGerity

Heiner Handschin
July 16, 2016

Geneva, Switzerland—The 2016 Peace Road urged the UN to open an office in Korea and honored the memory of a well-known peace bicyclist.

This year's event took place on July 16 in the western part of Switzerland centering on Geneva, in contrast to last year's event which took place in the east centering on Zurich.

Several separate groups of participants supported the 2016 event, which was organized jointly by the Swiss chapters of UPF and Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), an affiliated organization. Cyclists in the city of Biel/Bienne gathered at the Central Square in a symbolic effort. In Bern, the nation's capital, cyclists and supporters gathered in front of the Federal Parliament building.

The main Peace Road tour in Switzerland this year began at 10 a.m. at the UPF Peace Embassy in Belmont, a suburb of Lausanne. The cyclists followed the main road alongside Lake Geneva all the way to the Place des Nations in front of the UN offices in Geneva.

The cyclists had to challenge a distance of 75 kilometers (more than 46 miles), passing through the towns of Rolle, Nyon and Versoix, and were scheduled to arrive in front of the UN compound at 4 p.m.

Experienced cyclist Jonah Gindroz, a young member of FFWPU, took on the job of leader and coach of the cyclists, making sure that all the participants arrived well at the final destination.

For the last 10 kilometers (over 6 miles), from Versoix to Geneva, the cyclists were joined by a team of cyclists from Geneva under the leadership of Mr. Michel Reymond, the local leader of UPF and FFWPU. They passed the last part at a very fast pace and arrived 30 minutes before the expected time at the Place des Nations.

They were well received by a gathering of supporters, and the whole group came together for a picture and some refreshments in front of the UN offices before the closing ceremony. The ceremony included a short presentation introducing the Peace Road, which this year in Switzerland emphasized the International Peace Highway. The International Peace Highway was launched by the founders of UPF and FFWPU, Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, in 1982 at an annual conference on the Unity of Sciences (ICUS) and ever since has gained more and more interest in various parts of the world. The project was envisaged as a way to bring unity and harmony beyond cultures, races, religions and nationalities.

Breaking down barriers, particularly in Asia through the establishment of a fifth UN office at the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on the Korean Peninsula, was another important topic emphasized this year.

The gathering displayed a large banner promoting the creation of the fifth UN Office at the DMZ as well as a strengthening of efforts for reconciliation and reunification of the two Koreas, putting an end to the painful history of division of over 70 years.

The final emphasis of Peace Road 2016 in Switzerland was a tribute to a forerunner of the Peace Road project, Mr. Ron McGerity, a US citizen and resident of Geneva who became an Ambassador for Peace in 2012. His efforts for peace through cycling around the world, promoting the message of the Geneva Spiritual Appeal, are widely recognized in Geneva to this day. The local director of FFWPU and UPF, Mr. Michel Reymond, a personal friend and sponsor of his attempt to cross the DMZ from South Korea to the North in 2012, spoke briefly about his life and his unique efforts for world peace. Unfortunately his efforts for Korean reunification were not successful, but he seemed to have left a great inspiration in Korea that finally resulted in the launching of the Peace Road project in South Korea.

Mr. Ron McGerity died in 2014 in a road accident while bicycling through Russia. His memory will certainly live on through the Peace Road project that is conducted throughout the world.

In support of the small rally in front of the UN offices, various religious leaders and peace activists gathered, among them Mr. Hafid Ouardiri of the Fondation de l'entre-connaissance (Inter-Knowing Foundation), who paid tribute to the great ideals of Peace Road 2016.