

Forum in Buenos Aires: 'Lay Down Your Arms'

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Buenos Aires, Argentina - "Lay Down Your Arms!" was the title used by Mr. Bernardo del Guercio when referring to the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, Bertha von Suttner (in 1905). At an Oct. 9 meeting at the Peace Embassy in Buenos Aires, Dr. Alicia Berini shared her experiences in an interreligious meeting in September on the theme "Peace is the future" in Antwerp, Belgium. On the occasion, UPF-Argentina received the Universal Peace Flag from Eduardo Borri and Jackeline Giusti. Gaetano Brancati Luigi, who inspired the Peace Monument that is being established in public spaces of the five continents as a symbol of encounter between peoples, cultures, and communities, received a special recognition. Poems by Martha Candiotti and Marina Fagundes Coello closed the event by expressing noble intentions and different expressions to emphasize their commitment for peace.

"Peace is the future"

"Lay Down Your Arms"(1889) (*) is a book used by the pacifist movement, a critical novel about the war and militarism that ruined the Old Continent at the beginning of the 20th century. Its author is Bertha von Suttner (Prague, June 9, 1843 – Vienna, June 21, 1914), whose anti-war advocacy stirred and attempted to wake up the society of that time, when the world was relentlessly advancing towards what would be World War I.

Bernardo del Guercio, Ambassador for Peace and explorer of history and meaning, illustrated with anecdotes the context of this Austrian writer, the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and one of the most prominent people of the international peace movement at that time. Like a prophet, she sought to prevent the conflict that started a month after her death. Bernardo finished his speech showing a shocking picture: a French soldier on his knees carved by an anonymous artist in an underground chapel following the "Great War."

Dr. Alicia Berini, an Ambassador for Peace specializing in international affairs, shared the deep concepts expressed at the interreligious meeting in Antwerp, Sept. 7-9, 2014, on the centenary of the beginning of the war in which all Europe shed blood. Given the broad subject, she focused on two points to highlight some "strong ideas": 100 years since the World War I: The dismantling is possible; and religions and cultures dialoguing about the value of life. She specifically shared expressions from Cardinal Vinko Puljic, archbishop of Bosnia and Herzegovina; Pastor Eugenio Bernardini, moderator of the Waldensians Council in Italy; Mario Marazziti, from the Community of Sant'Egidio in Italy; and Andrea Riccardi, founder of the Community of Sant'Egidio, who said: "We need to resume the capacity of making history, of being actors in the encounter in the spiritual dimension of friendship, and claiming peace as the only possible future."

"Love as a path"

After the expositions, Eduardo Borri and Jackeline Giusti gave UPF-Argentina the Universal Peace Flag, which symbolizes the values of sustaining a coexistence that surpasses frontiers and cultures; it was received with great appreciation by the Peace Council. Both of them explained the significance of this emblem inspired by the skies of Parana city (Entre Ríos). This is the insignia of the members of the boating expedition "Pacis Nuntii," who traveled 5,400 km in the spirit of unifying Brasilia and Buenos Aires in commemoration of the International Year of Youth (1985); the boat was captained Eduardo Borri. This insignia has gone to the most distant places of the world, from the Antarctic's Marambio Base, considered the white continent of peace, to the highest peaks of the Aconcagua and Mt. Everest. It has been given to institutions and outstanding people such as John Paul II, during his Palm Sunday visit to Buenos Aires on April 12, 1987.

On that day, a couple who lives in Santa Fe received a diploma of recognition "For their work and mission for the cause of peace (...) who live and promote, with vocation and service, love to others and the Creation, transcending ethnicities, nationalities, cultures, and religions."

Some "alignment of planets" made it possible for Gaetano Brancati Luigi, inspiration for the Peace Monument, to be in Buenos Aires to attend the event. Here, he received a diploma for the work he has done with passion: "For his work and mission for the cause of peace, his vocation of service and inspiration for the Peace Monuments, which are being erected in public spaces of countries on five continents as a symbol of the commitment to life and values which can promote the welfare of families, comprehensive development, and peace in societies and peoples; transcending ethnicities, nationalities, cultures and religions." Luigi, who survived the World War II and now lives in Sao Paulo, had arrived in the Argentine capital to announce at the Buenos Aires Legislature the next installation of a Peace Monument in "Parque de los Niños" (Núñez). This is a symbol that can inspire and unite men and

women of good will in public spaces, in contrast to the many monuments remembering sad events such as wars and battles.

Art, especially poetry, was the pinnacle of this significant event, which was sponsored by the University of the Merchant Marine and the Permanent Forum for Education, Science and Culture for Peace (FOPAZ). The writer Martha Candiotti, a brilliant Ambassador for Peace and president of the non-profit organization 'Poetic Athenaeum Alfonsina Storni,' recited two of her poems: "Cuando mueren las palabras" and "Veracidad," whose final stanza reads:

Ya hoy liberados
solo podemos tener algo de esperanza
en la consecutiva tarea de la reconstrucción
mirando lo representativo de la paz.

The same was done by the Brazilian poet who visited Argentina, Marina Fagundes Coello, godmother of UPF Argentina's International Poetry Contest, Ambassador for Peace and member of various literary groups. She gave a concluding message with her usual warmth, in a day full of experiences of universal fraternity although confronting a new war context: "Love is the beginning, the middle and the end; and, towards peace, there is no other path."

(*) "From the first page, the author stands against the absurdity of war and appeals to the reason of her neighbors: "If, in this world, there are so many probabilities of catastrophes or deaths, why do men need to willingly search for other ones?" - Alberto de Frutos, Lay Down Your Arms!, Bertha von Suttner, Cátedra Editorial, Madrid (204)

"Only with a sincere heart that gives all can world peace be built."
Sun Myung Moon

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