

The UPF Summit in Albania on Security and Human Development, in Tirana

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The UPF Summit in Albania on Security and Human Development, October 25–27, mainly took place in the Palace of Congresses in Tirana, which was built during Albania's time under a Marxist-Leninist government 1946–1992 to hold the congresses of the Albanian Labor Party. UPF hosted the event, which was in part sponsored by the recently founded (February 2019) Podgorica Club, whose managing board includes five former presidents and two prime ministers of Balkan countries. At least one of those former presidents, Alfred Moisiu (2002–2007) has long been a staunch supporter of True Parents' work. More than two thousand five hundred people attended the conference including ministers, lawmakers and religious leaders.



A stellar career

One of the highlights of the presentations was the keynote address by Dr. Christopher Hill, a deeply

experienced former diplomat whose father was a diplomat. Christopher Hill, who was born in 1952, volunteered for the Peace Corps at the age of twenty-two and served for the Peace Corps in Cameroon for two years. Just to mention a few of his significant postings, his first job as a diplomat was as Secretary for Economic Affairs at the US Embassy in Seoul. He was ambassador to the Republic of Korea 2004–2005. He transitioned in 2005 from ambassador to head of the US delegation to the Six-Party Talks which, sought to find a solution to the North Korean nuclear crisis. The six parties were North Korea, South Korea, Japan, the United States, China and Russia. He was the first US ambassador to serve in Macedonia 1996–1999 and was special envoy to Kosovo 1998–1989 (both in the Balkans). What was remarkable about his address was his description of the psychological and practical steps necessary for what we call "restoration."



The Balkans harsh past

The assassination in 1914 of the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and his wife in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, on the Balkan Peninsula, precipitated World War I. In the aftermath of World War I, with the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bosnia and Herzegovina became one of six republics along with Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia (and two autonomous regions -- Vojvodina and Kosovo) comprising the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, a communist country under the iron hand of Marshall Josip Tito. Yugoslavia covered most of territory of the Balkan Peninsula, which is slightly smaller than Spain.

In the republics which comprised Yugoslavia and are today independent, various worldviews prevail. Croatia (though many Serbs live there) and Slovenia are predominantly Catholic. Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia are overwhelmingly Orthodox Christians, while Bosnia is Muslim, though many Serbs and Croats reside in Bosnia. Under Tito's autocratic rule, Yugoslavians lived side-by-side despite a sometimes a strong grievance among minority groups that they are disadvantaged and sometimes ill-treated. (Isn't this the reality in many nations today?)

Tito died in 1980. When that happened, even some that had struggled and escaped from Yugoslavia, feared for what would happen once Tito's iron grip on society had prevented neighbor from attacking neighbor. According to one online source, when Josef Tito died, "the USSR began reforming and the Yugoslav economy began declining. The IMF agreed to loan Yugoslavia some money but required a series of reforms that worsened unemployment, decentralized the Communist Party and helped fuel nationalism."

Albania's restorative course

The following is from Dr. Hill's keynote address. "Let me join others in saying what a pleasure it is to be at this peace summit. You know, peace has been difficult to achieve. In some ways it's something we all dreamed of, but now we understand that peace isn't just the absence of war. It represents a kind of structure of relations between people, a structure of how one respects different points of view, what one can do to make a more stable and just world and a basis, really a foundation, for the prosperity that we all

seek for our children and beyond.

"It has especially not been easy in the western Balkans. When I came to Albania for the first time in 1991... That's only twenty-eight years ago but it seems like a much longer time. There was a system of governance that existed in many different countries, in which one group thought they had a monopoly on all thoughts and on how humankind should implement all their interests.

"Well, we now know that peace depends on different people coming together and respecting each other. I think dedicating oneself to peace, though, offers no refuge for those in need of instant gratification. After all, it takes a long time to form these structures and to systematize this respect for each other. I have heard many times in the past -- one probably hears it today -- that somehow people say... People in the western Balkans have been fighting for thousands of years. You often hear that. [It implies that] surely they [those in the western Balkans] are not going to be able to rise above that. Well, that is clearly, demonstrably, untrue. The people of the Balkans have risen about that and they have put together a community that I think is the envy of many parts of the world, [the envy of those who are] still unable to put together that sense of community.



"Now what we see in the Balkans is a desire to be part of something even better -- that is, a united Europe, a Europe that is whole, that is free and that is prosperous. I know. I think everyone here knows of the disappointment -- EU succession negotiations [for Eastern European nations] will somehow be postponed. I personally (as someone who worked in this region for many years) feel that disappointment, but I think it's important to realize that although the road forward is clear and continues to be passable, it will have problems. There will be twists and turns and there will be challenges ahead. So, the issue is not to celebrate the challenges but rather to understand that the task ahead is to overcome the challenges and to be neither stopped nor stymied.

"I have a great deal of confidence that the journey that the people of the western Balkans have been on, a journey that has taken them through very difficult times, is a journey that will not stop until the objectives are met. I have no doubt that there cannot be a Europe whole and free unless all the countries of the western Balkans are in that Europe, whole and free. "I am optimistic that this process will continue, and I think the best thing for the people of the region is to act as if the journey has been completed. That is, to act as if you are already European Union members. Don't say, We will begin to observe those standards once we're in the European Union. Start now and observe those standards now.

"I know that this is a mind-set that has worked in terms of NATO. If I had stood in front of an audience in Albania in 1991 and I had said, Well, you will soon be in NATO, I don't think many people would have believed me. And yet, look at the extraordinary progress! How did Albania do that? In fact, how did North Macedonia do that? The answer is that they accepted the reform process through their military, through civilian control of the military, through a certain mind-set that the military achieved and through working together with other NATO countries. I think the fact of the matter is that these countries had become NATO members even before they were conferred as NATO members. The task ahead, I think, is clear and it should not be slowed down by any of the challenges ahead."

Blessings from Heaven through True Mother

The Family Blessing Festival attracted 1,200 people on October 28 to the Palace of Congresses. The moderator asked the couples, many of whom were married, to raise their hands if they had one child. She kept increasing the number to see how large their families were. Many couples had six children. Some had seven; some had eight. One person raised his hand at nine. (Perhaps his was physical world--spiritual world blessing; he was there without his wife,) Mother's Blessing Prayer lasted for five minutes and twenty-five seconds. Bajram Kosumi, prime minister of Kosovo, 2005--2006 and his wife Marina presented flowers to True Mother. A mayor and his wife offered True Mother a gift, inspired by a sunflower. Monika Kryemadhi, first lady of Albania, gave the congratulatory speech. The whole experience overflowed with the sense, Thank God Almighty, we are blessed.