

IYCP MOBILIZATION IN UK AND USA

I personally took responsibility for the mobilization in the United Kingdom and the United States for the International Year for the Culture of Peace. As the US was not a member of UNESCO, there was no National Commission to undertake the responsibility of national focal point, while in the UK, having recently rejoined UNESCO, there was not yet a functional National Commission. Therefore, in both countries, I tried to engage the United Nations Association to take this role.

As for the UK, following up on an earlier mission of 11-12 March 1994, I made three missions in early 1999 (20-27 January, 27 March and 3 April) at the invitation of the United Nations Association and its President, Malcolm Harper in order to involve their membership in preparation for the International Year for the Culture of Peace. In the first instance, I made a tour and addressed their organizations throughout much of England, in the second instance a plenary session of their annual conference and in the third instance a workshop held in association with the National Union of Teachers. As a result, later that year on 27 October, the UNA/UK signed an agreement to be the national focal point for the International Year. An account of their activities is provided under that date, as well in the newsletter articles on the IYCP Website (see 6 April 2001).

In the United States, a partnership was developed for CPNN with the 35 million member American Association of Retired Persons (following a mission of 5 June 1998 and the subsequent mission of Zeynep Varoglu of 31 August 1999). They were not in a position to undertake the responsibility of national focal point for the International Year for the Culture of Peace, but on 20 March 2000 they did distribute information about the IYCP to their members in the National Retired Teachers Association. Looking for a focal point, I tried to convince the United Nations Association of the US to undertake this task, similar to what was done in the United Kingdom. I undertook a series of meetings and correspondence with key Board members of the UNA-USA, including with Rosemary van der Laan as described in my mission report from the Hague Conference of 9-15 May 1999, as well as with Irving Stolberg, when I was at home in the US for vacation. Unfortunately, the motion to undertake this responsibility was not voted on during their National Board meeting that took place on 27 June 1999. Instead, the UNA-USA made the culture of peace the theme for their school essay contest that year. Looking for another organization to undertake the role of national focal point, I took my vacation time in August 1999 to meet with a number of members of the Executive Board of an organization named Promoting Enduring Peace, as well as their temporary Executive Secretary (see e-mails filed under the date 6 October 1999). Again, as in the case of the UNA, the plan did not come to fruition.

Still lacking a national focal point, I tried to engage other major national organizations. The two largest teachers unions of the US, the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, with millions of members between them, are both members of Education International (EI) and, as such, had received copies of the manuals prepared by EI for the International Year for the Culture of Peace (January 2000). Unfortunately, the person whom I tried to engage in Washington to see them did not have the time to carry this out. The National Council of Churches, with 50 million members, undertook to distribute information about the International Year, and I met with the department concerned during my vacation in August (see partnership agreement and brochure of 26 April 2000) but there was no full-time staff in the department concerned and no follow-up was undertaken. Mobilizations did take place in a few cities. In Chicago, thanks to the efforts of Barry Weisberg, long associated with the culture of peace, the Manifesto 2000 was distributed to schools and featured in the annual Peace Day event. In Connecticut, thanks to the efforts of the New Haven Peace Commission, which I had helped to establish during the 1980s, the Governor issued a special proclamation for the IYCP (see 18 December 1999). And in Southern California, thanks to the efforts of Paul Kimmel with whom I had worked during my mission of 9-17 November 1996, schoolchildren in the Los Angeles area were invited to take part in a contest for the International Year. In the end, however, the United States was never engaged in the International Year to the extent of most other countries and the final total of signatures on the Manifesto 2000 was only 36,000.

Information concerning the mobilization in other countries is available here in the form of newsletter reports filed from one hundred countries as of 6 April 2001. In addition, archived reports are available on the Website corresponding to the material provided here from the launch of the IYCP on 14 September 1999. See also the report on the IYCP in France made by the National Commission at the meeting held in UNESCO on 24 November 2000.