

# International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence **for the Children of the World**

## HOW THE APPEAL STARTED...

The first person to express the idea that nonviolence should be taught to children at school was Thich Nhat Hanh(1).

Mme Marie-Pierre Bovy, president of IFOR (2) and member of a community founded by Lanza de Vasto, suggested during a community meeting in 1996 that there should be a "Year of Nonviolence."

Mr Pierre Marchand, who founded the humanitarian organisation "Partage avec les Enfants du Monde" 24 years ago, and an IFOR delegate to the UNESCO in the Culture for Peace programme, decided to take up that challenge by launching a world-wide campaign.

Pierre Marchand met with the Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Mairead Corrigan-Maguire, in Belfast and she agreed to lead the campaign. A generous donor, who has asked to remain anonymous, met the cost of these initiatives. Sri Loganathan, one of the leaders of the Gandhian movement and a friend of Vinoba Bhavé, proposed that children should be taught about nonviolence in kindergarten. The text of the appeal was written in a Children's Village in India by Pierre Marchand.

From there, Pierre Marchand went on to Calcutta where Mother Teresa, recovering from her latest operation, signed the appeal in her hospital bed.

The third Nobel Peace Prize laureate to sign was Aung San Suu Kyi during a long discussion with Pierre Marchand in her Rangoon home - under close surveillance.

Mairead Corrigan-Maguire and Pierre Marchand were then received at the UN headquarters in Washington by many dignitaries, including the Dalai Lama, and by Mrs Sorensen -. Mr Federico Mayor - Director General of UNESCO - Mrs Carol Belamy - Director General of UNICEF - and Mrs Hildegard Goss-Mayr - Chairwoman of IFOR - have since signed letters in support of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate's Appeal.

In a word - the consensus was there from the start. Today, all the Nobel Peace Prize Laureates have signed the Appeal (with the exception of two who we were unable to contact.)

At the end of May 1997, a letter was sent to all Heads of State to inform them of the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate's Appeal and their Proposed Resolution (text included below). The General Assembly of the United Nations is due to examine this text during the next session in October 1997.

If, as we hope, this resolution is adopted, we will have made but the first step. Then the real work will begin : to transform the best intentions of the world's governments into concrete measures.

As we stated earlier, education is the key factor. Education nourishes Culture. It is an interactive process which starts during the earliest moments of life.

We already know that we can count on the support of several hundred organisations throughout the world to help us start programmes adapted to the culture and living conditions of children, young people and adults.

Among these organisations ready to help are the Serpaj in Latin America, The Peace People in Ireland, Compartir in Lebanon, ASSEFA in India, The House of Grace in Israël, Milijuli in Nepal and - most of all - IFOR.

Founded in 1915, IFOR was the first organisation for education in Nonviolence. IFOR has branches in over forty countries and brings together thousands of men and women committed to Nonviolence. IFOR's role will

be to help to coordinate the necessary measures with governmental and non-governmental organisations, teachers, artists .. throughout the world.

UNESCO and UNICEF have agreed to integrate the spirit and the objectives of this Appeal into their programmes.

*(1) Ex-president of the World Conference of Religion for Peace, Doyen of Van Anh University, author of seventy-five books, Thich Nhat Hanh was proposed by Martin Luther King for the Nobel Peace Prize.*

*(2) IFOR: The International Fellowship of Reconciliation, (Mouvement international de la réconciliation), has consultative status at the UN.*