

## PEACE EDUCATION: LEARNING TO HATE WAR, LOVE PEACE, AND TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

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**Abstract** – Peace education should not be only general knowledge but conclude with something the students can do – as when health education leads to hygienic practices. For this to happen, our peace concepts have to come closer to the level at which people live, the local level. It is argued that this points to transarmament rather than disarmament; to defence based on local conventional defence, paramilitary units and non-military defence, rather than (or in addition to) negotiations among governments. It is also pointed out that this would lead to the building of less vulnerable societies from the bottom up. Less vulnerable societies would have great capacity for survival even in times of crisis, including warfare in the country itself, being thereby less susceptible to blackmail. The key to national invulnerability is local-level invulnerability. And a society organised with less dependency on national and international centres will also be a society less dependent on offensive weapons, concentrating more on defensive modes of security. Present and dominant modes of defence not only try to combine a high level of vulnerability with offensive weapons, but also operate at a level so far away from the ordinary citizen that he/she feels there is little else to do than just to be informed and perhaps to have strong opinions.

**Zusammenfassung** – Friedenserziehung sollte zu etwas führen, das Lernende tun können – wie die Gesundheitserziehung zur hygienischen Praxis führt; es sollte nicht nur ein Vermitteln von Allgemeinwissen sein. Damit dies geschieht, müssen Konzepte des Friedens der Ebene angenähert werden, auf der die Menschen tatsächlich leben, d.h. der lokalen Ebene. In diesem Artikel wird die Meinung vertreten, daß dies eher auf Überrüstung verweist als auf Abrüstung; Verteidigung beruht eher auf lokaler konventioneller Verteidigung, paramilitärischen Einheiten und nichtmilitärischer Verteidigung als auf (oder zuzüglich zu) Verhandlungen unter Regierungen. Es wird ferner darauf hingewiesen, daß dies von Grund auf zum Aufbau von weniger verwundbaren Gesellschaften führen würde. Weniger verwundbare Gesellschaften hätten eine große Überlebenschance, selbst in Krisenzeiten – einschließlich Krieg im eigenen Land – und dadurch wären sie für Erpressungen weniger anfällig. Der Schlüssel zur nationalen Unverwundbarkeit ist lokale Unverwundbarkeit. Eine Gesellschaft, die weniger auf Abhängigkeit von nationalen und internationalen Zentren aufbaut, wird auch eine Gesellschaft sein, die weniger von offensiven Waffen abhängig ist, und sich mehr auf Defensive einstellt, um ihre Sicherheit zu organisieren. Bestehende und dominante Arten von Verteidigung versuchen nicht nur ein hohes Niveau von Verwundbarkeit mit offensiven Waffen zu vereinen, sondern funktionieren auch auf einem Niveau, das so weit vom Durchschnittsbürger entfernt ist, daß er/sie meint, daß ihm/ihr wenig anderes übrigbleibt, als informiert und nebenher überzeugt zu sein.

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**Résumé** — L'éducation pour la paix devrait déboucher sur quelque chose que les étudiants puissent faire, et ne pas rester seulement une connaissance générale — comme l'éducation sanitaire conduit aux pratiques d'hygiène. Pour y parvenir nos concepts de paix doivent se rapprocher du niveau où vivent les gens, le niveau local. Cet article démontre que ceci vise le transarmement plutôt que le désarmement, la défense fondée sur la défense locale conventionnelle, les unités paramilitaires et la défense non militaire plutôt que (on s'ajoutant aux) négociations entre gouvernements. L'article souligne aussi que ceci conduirait à l'édification de sociétés moins vulnérables de leurs fondements à leur sommet. Ces sociétés moins vulnérables auraient une capacité de survie supérieure, même en temps de crises, y compris l'état de guerre dans le pays même — et par conséquent seraient moins vulnérables au chantage. La clé de l'invulnérabilité nationale est l'invulnérabilité au niveau local. Et une société moins structurée sur une dépendance des centres nationaux et internationaux serait aussi une société moins dépendante des armes offensives, plus réglée sur les méthodes défensives pour organiser sa sécurité. Les méthodes actuelles et prédominantes de défense ne tentent pas seulement de combiner un haut niveau de vulnérabilité avec des armes offensives, mais elles opèrent aussi à un niveau si éloigné du citoyen ordinaire que celui-ci sent qu'il n'a pas grand chose d'autre à faire que d'être informé et peut-être d'avoir des opinions solides.

There is an immediate and clear difficulty with peace education, from the very beginning. If *peace* and war are, above all, relations among states, and if peace *education* is something that takes place, above all, among teachers and pupils at school, then how are these pupils going to make use of what they have learnt? Is it not rather like sex education in a monastery, interesting theory, but with the practice of knowledge acquired only for the very few (strictly speaking for nobody)? Learning by doing is out of the question. The distance from theory to practice looks insurmountable.

There are, traditionally, two rejoinders to this rather important objection to peace education. One would be that peace is not necessarily a state of affairs only applicable to nations in relationship to each other. It also applies to other levels of social organisation — from relations among communities, organisations, associations (e.g., classes and racial/ethnic groups) down to inter- and intra-family relations. General insight into how conflicts emerge, and their dynamics and possible resolution, should be of significance to everybody, at all levels, in all areas of society.

And yet there is the feeling that relations among states are the most important ones because of the horrible means of destruction they have amassed and are ready to launch at each other!

Correspondingly, there would be the idea of educating statesmen — like the Quakers have been doing for many years now — with one particular group, diplomats, in the seminars for diplomats around the world. No doubt they, like anybody else, will have much to learn.

And yet there is the feeling that even if they are in a position to practise the art of peace, what is expected of them in times of crisis is something quite different, i.e., to act 'in the national interest', according to which war at times is the lesser evil (loss of honour, freedom, material property – including land – ranging higher)!

The original argument, the two rejoinders, and the two responses to the rejoinders all have some validity. But as we shall soon see, there are also other possibilities worth considering. To see that more clearly, let us very briefly have a look at some approaches to peace. The point to be made can be formulated immediately. Peace education has to be concerned not only with the projection of images of the horrors of war, the suffering and the costs (easily done), and images of the delights of peace, the enjoyment and the benefits (more difficult, as this is ordinary life, this thing referred to as 'peace', which means that real *peace* studies have to have a tinge of the utopian about them, to go further than non-war – that is, beyond data and into the realm of imagination). Peace education has also to be concerned with what to do about it, which means that there has to be not only a theory of how to avoid war and build peace, but a 'do-able' theory, linked to some kind of practice for those who study this field, not only for 'others'. Of course, one may study chemistry without necessarily becoming a chemist – but then there are at least laboratory exercises. But chemistry does not have to be everybody's concern, directly; *peace does*. It affects all of us as a matter of life and death. Hence, a society set up so that there is nothing people can do about peace except as participants – actors or victims or both – in a war, is a bad society, however much else good may be said about it. To have not only 'a say' but also 'something to do' in connection with peace, should be a human right.

Let us look briefly at some roads to peace in this light.

First, there is the possibility of *conflict resolution*. Take the great super-power conflict today. There is little doubt that it is also a conflict of *value*, over which system should be seen as the best, liberal/capitalist or marxist/socialist – and not only for each super-power and their immediate 'sphere of interest', but for the whole world for that matter. Three types of conflict resolution offer themselves immediately:

- the '*green*', *local* approach – denying both systems, downgrading national markets and national plans, emphasizing the local level;
- the *social democrat* approach – accepting a little of each; and
- the *Japanese* approach – being very much of both, combining market and plan at the national level – and beyond, for that matter.

In all these cases, the two extreme solutions preferred by the super-powers become exactly that – extreme, even slightly one-sided – and a certain depolarization of the ideological issue takes place. Clearly, if there are 'n'

countries in the world and 'n-2' choose one of these three approaches, then the ideological issue may dissolve because of super-power isolation. And in such processes, people can participate very actively once the importance of developing third alternatives in a very polarized conflict is fully understood. For world politics then become national politics, even local politics (in the 'green' approach).

But there are also the material *interests* of the super-powers, for each to secure buffer-states in a geo-political belt around itself, and to ensure access to 'strategic' raw materials and markets — or both. There is little one can do about neighbourhood, there is something inflexible about geography. But it makes sense to find out what the legitimate security interests of a big neighbour are, in the light of history. Finland learnt something about this through a painful, collective experience and seems to have been able to convert the shock into positive practice, in a peace system that works. Neutrality is a basic aspect of neighbourhood to a super-power, together with a policy of non-provocation and active peace politics.

Correspondingly for raw materials and markets. Traditionally, a country counts itself fortunate when it commands a broad spectrum of raw materials and is attractive as a market. But the price of these assets may also be prohibitive: big power attention, from pressure via domination to invasion. The Japanese people collectively learnt the opposite: by being poor you can become rich; if you have no raw materials, not only does nobody bother about occupying you and holding on to you to exploit the riches, but you yourself have to create the riches with your own hands and brains. Another power may come and attack to steal raw materials, but the stealing of people to put them to work creatively is very difficult, if not impossible. There is protection in being materially poor, even if one is spiritually rich. And again there is something one can do about it: maybe it is better to rid oneself of such riches lest they attract too much attention — not necessarily throwing them all to the bottom of the sea, but converting them into something less exploitable by others, e.g., into education and health?

Secondly, there is the whole *idea of security*, including the security of others — not forgetting that of possible antagonists. But what is security? There seem to be two ideas at work here. First, there is the threat of destruction from the other side. Secondly, there is one's own level of invulnerability. However, the threat of being destroyed also depends on how much one threatens to destroy the other side. And that one can only do with offensive weapons. Hence it becomes very much a question of whether one's own destructive power is 'offensive', meaning something that can be used against an enemy on his own territory, or 'defensive', meaning something that cannot be used to destroy *him* (because it can only

be used in one's own country), but only to destroy his weapons. And what kind of weapons to have, that is a decision in which people in the country themselves should be able to participate, based on peace education.

If security is above all a question of having a good defensive defence capability (both in the conventional military, the para-military and the non-military – nonviolent – sense) *and*, a high level of *invulnerability*, then there is clearly much that anybody can do. For what is invulnerability? Is it not to be less dependent on foreign trade and on centralized administration? In short, does it not have something to do with a higher level of local self-reliance and autonomy, so that a country cannot be immobilized simply through cutting off from the outside supply of such essentials as food, medicaments, energy and means of defence? And can this be done without the active involvement of people themselves, in the type of defence they believe in, and in building strong local communities?

And one could go further than that. A country divided against itself because of deep cleavages along lines of class, age, sex, race, ethnic, district is a vulnerable country; and a country able to overcome such cleavages through policies of equity and equality is a much less vulnerable one. But in this, everybody can participate. It can never be done by decree and law alone, it has to be built from the bottom of the hearts and minds of men and women everywhere.

All of this can be summarized into a simple proposition of applied peace education, understood fully by the peace movement of Europe in recent years: *international peace is also a local issue, not only a national- and an individual-level one*. That it is a national level issue is more than clearly enough understood by all national governments. Even in federal systems, 'defence' is the prerogative of the central level. It is also the least truly participatory exercise in the nation state, in spite of universal conscription: it is surrounded by so many rules of secrecy that it is beyond democratic control mechanisms, except in a very superficial parliamentary sense. That it is an individual issue is clear, not only as a question of knowledge, but also as a question of individual ethics, most clearly expressed in the act of conscientious objection.

But the peace movement is now also quickly exploring the social spaces between the nation and the individual. The *local community*, for instance. The peace movement has not (yet) come to the point of increasing local and national security by building local defence and self-reliance. But it has certainly objected to the stationing of offensive arms in many local communities. In Britain, for instance, the local authorities that have declared their territories 'nuclear free zones' comprised, by the autumn of 1981, more than half of the population. What that means operationally is not quite clear. No doubt the national level has the means of coercion to force

such offensive arms as long- or middle-distance nuclear missiles on an unwilling local authority, and also to bribe an undecided one into acceptance with promises of some good contracts. But the more this has to be done against the will of the people concerned, the more will the credibility of these offensive arms suffer — something very different from the credibility of the defence, in the defensive sense, of one's own territory. And this may mean that the government will have to rely on the co-operation of more conservatively-inclined local authorities, which, in turn, means that there will be a higher mortality among conservatives than among progressive people in case of war — as offensive arms installations will be among the first to be hit.

The peace movement has brought *occupations* into the picture in a new way, by very clearly expressing what a profession — such as the medical profession — thinks of the prospect of a nuclear war. This is done *qua* profession, not as one more group of people signing an appeal for or against something. And from this the step is relatively short to *organisations* — farms, factories, firms, to mention but a few. All of them have a role to play in peacebuilding and war prevention, in terms of not being offensive, not contributing to offensive policies, of being a factor contributing to the increase of security through defensive defence and increased invulnerability.

In short, the days are past when one could truly claim that peace education is only a question of being *informed*, so as to accept or oppose governmental policy, whatever the case may be. It is true that beyond conscientious objection (or the opposite, choosing war as one's profession), there is little the single individual can do. Many individuals can do more when conscientized and organised. They may even contribute to staying the hand of an aggressor, as the movement for peace in Vietnam showed. But even if such a group should win political elections, peace is far more in need of solid structural support and not content with a parliamentary majority only. And this is where all the work at the intermediate level should enter as chapters in the book(s) on peace education, and as key parts of a programme of peace action.

Nothing of this is to belittle the significance of peace education in the sense of informing about the nature of war and the potentials of peace. But there is an asymmetry here: war is so active, so full of heroism and achievement; peace is so quiescent, even dull — sheep grazing next to a lion on a summer day, as some child's drawing might portray it. Peace can only be attractive by linking education to action. That this action will be controversial to start with goes without saying: peace and peace education are profoundly political. We have to pay for generations of secrecy in these matters with lack of training in dialogue among all parties concerned about all

these notions of peace and war, security, defence and vulnerability. Leaving no assumptions unquestioned, and no questions without at least a preliminary answer. Including the assumptions and the questions raised in this article . . .