

Education & Peace - Maria Montessori, Date Unknown

The question of peace cannot be considered only in its negative side as is generally done in politics: that is as a problem of 'avoiding war' and consequently of solving the conflicts between nations without violence.

Peace also has a positive side which consists in a constructive social reform. It is often repeated that 'to have a new society a new man must be formed', but that is an abstract sentence. It is true that man himself can be improved and that society could be founded on principles of justice and love, but this represents a remote aspiration.

There is however a positive and immediate question to be considered with regard to peace: the society of man has stayed behind as to the form of organization needed at its present state. What must be considered therefore is the 'need of the present moment' not the organization of a better 'future'.

Today society lacks an adequate training of man for the present state of civil life, and a 'moral organization' of the masses.

There is an absolute disorganization of humanity. Men are educated to consider themselves as isolated individuals who have to satisfy their own immediate interests in competition with other individuals. Instead there should be a powerful organization to understand and organize social events, to propose and pursue collective aims, thus ordaining the progress of civilization.

Today there is only an 'organization of things', but not of man. The environment is the only thing organized. Technical progress has set in motion a formidable mechanism that now moves of its own accord and drags the individuals after itself, as a magnet draws a cloud of iron dust, and they are crushed in its gearing. This can be said of everybody, manual and intellectual workers as well. They are all isolated in their interests; they are only looking for the profession that secures their material life; they are all drawn and absorbed by the material machines or the bureaucratic mechanisms. But it is evident that mechanism cannot draw man toward progress, because progress must depend on the man himself. There should be a moment when mankind should take command of its products and assume the directive. This moment has arrived. Either the masses organize themselves and master the mechanical world or the mechanical world will destroy mankind.

If it is recognized that it is this formidable progress and this universal participation of mankind to the realized progress that needs the organization of mankind to uphold itself, it will then also be understood that a new factor must be taken into consideration. Not only, but that this factor has already set to work and therefore urges the whole of mankind to interfere and to fill up the gap that endangers the existence of civilization. Mankind must be organized, because the 'weak spot' through which enters the enemy - that is war - is not the material frontier of nations, but the lack of preparation of man and the isolation of the individual. It is necessary to develop the spiritual life of man and then to organize mankind for Peace. Peace has its positive side in reconstruction of human society on scientifically determined bases. The peaceful social harmony should have a unique foundation, this cannot be but man himself.