UNUNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

EDUCATIONAL TECHNIQUES FOR PEACE.

DO THEY EXIST?

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"Techniques to develop a spirit of international collaboration, the spirit of peace, by means of education..." Unesco is studying such techniques. Do such techniques really exist? and what do we mean by these phrases?

To educate children so that they may become members of the human race as a whole, and not merely members of separate nations, is an immense task — an undertaking so vast that the old-established and powerful churches have failed; and many people are prepared to resign themselves to the old saying: "Homo homini lupus."

Nevertheless, through the ages there has emerged the conception of man as a human being, whatever his race, creed or colour. This concept has been expressed by that fine name, 'the humanities' which we apply to a type of education stemming from the Renaissance, and which is far from having lost its significance and prestige. This ideal of a classical education springs from the very sources of European civilization, from its beginnings on the shores of the Mediterranean. It implies the assimilation of two ancient languages by means of texts selected by generations of scholars and having the nobility of tradition. In those texts all the recesses of the human soul, considered as changeless, can be studied; ideals are expressed in them; there are maxims, stories of heroic actions worthy of imitation; there are appeals to love, to hatred or to resignation. By means of these languages, now no longer living tongues, a code of 'humanity' has been passed on to all occidental peoples, has leapt the Atlantic, and has even reached as far as India. The strong tradition of the Latin tag still persists in almost every Parliamentary or academic speech.

Unhappily, those internationally-shared 'humanities' have in no way fundamentally changed humanity itself. Besides, Christianity, whose perquisite they are, was in fact practised independently in countries at war with each other when this type of education was created. Furthermore, this education was meant to benefit only a minority in each country. Indeed, it became the basis of a kind of freemasonry, setting the educated
person apart from the common man. Even now in Western Europe the children of well-to-do families are often made to study Latin and Greek for social reasons.

In our modern world, born of the swift evolution of material conditions, of the newly-found power of man over matter, this thin veneer of the classical education cracks; gradually it has ceased to have its full meaning. Public men in positions of control in various countries, if they have received a classical education, have had to round off such a preparation by other knowledge. Consequently their intellectual baggage is somewhat heterogenous. Are they provided with the necessary equipment for a wide and far-reaching view, and the ability to foresee the steps needed for a peaceful world? In some individual cases, they are. But nowadays there are men with other types of education who reach positions of control. Does this differing background render them less able to work for peace? Again, the question depends on the individual.

The really important factor lies elsewhere. It rests with the common people, the crowds, newly-arrived to political consciousness. The mind of the common people has not been and is not being shaped by a classical education. Does this prevent their wishing for a peaceful world in which, at this time of immense power over material things, every human being could be assured of a decent way of life? Certainly not. But wishing and actually creating are not quite the same thing.

These common people are the audience before which the drama of human destiny is acted. They view the play by means of press, cinema and radio. They criticize it, and therefore the leading actors must keep an eye on their audience.

And here we come to the most critical point: Does this audience really understand what it is all about? If its leaders were to suggest the compromises and national sacrifices necessary to international understanding, would the audience uphold the leaders, or scorn them at the crucial moment? The education of most of the common people comes from the reading of printed matter. Do they really understand this printed matter? Are they capable of selecting and criticizing all the kinds of printed material so generously fed to them?

The leaders know, of course, how poorly prepared is the audience to understand them: they advance, retreat, shamble and side-step; the common man senses the dangers, and both sides are fully conscious of the foul pit of war looming ahead. The leaders try to think out a solution; the common man, who has been half-educated, if at all, only feels: and one of his most deeply-rooted feelings is violent, egotistic nationalism.

How are we to find our way out of this? How are the masses, who read the newspapers, who listen to the radio and visit the cinema, to be educated to listen and read and watch with their minds and not merely with their hearts? How to impress upon them that the fate of everyone of them is linked...
with the economic welfare of the entire earth, and that all of us stand or fall together?

What educational technique will produce the true ‘humanities’ needed for a world conception?

Chance provided the opportunity for experiment – an experiment which has been going on for about twenty-five years. In Geneva, some of the members of the staff of the League of Nations, motivated by their belief in the institution they served, decided to set up a school in which their children would be brought up in accord with the new world which their parents believed to be in course of construction — a world at peace, and with understanding between nations.

But it was not a Utopian school. It was understood that each child was to return to his own country properly equipped to continue his studies in one of the national universities. The old humanities had their place. But it was also understood that efforts would be made to give the child a complete and rounded view of the world which was the workshop of his parents; not only the view, but knowledge and understanding; not only knowledge, but the love of and the desire for peace, the feeling of the brotherhood of man.

Educationists were given the task. Other children joined those whose parents were at the League of Nations. In twenty-five years, more than 2,000 children have passed through the school. Never have fewer than 19 nationalities been represented in the course of a single year; in some years there have been as many as thirty. Techniques had to be created to organize the daily life of this diversified troop, to make of it one school, with a unified school spirit, and to ensure that this spirit was in fact an international spirit.

At first, empiric methods, adjusted as time went on, were used. Now these methods have begun to become traditional, and even risk becoming hard and fast rules. Let us now try to analyse them, to confirm their value, and draw from them inferences which go beyond the bounds of the school.

First of all, the children are mixed together. Nationalities are jumbled. Chinese, Japanese, some Indians, some inhabitants of the Near East, share the lives of a more homogeneous mass of Europeans from all squares of the chessboard, together with Americans, particularly from the North. This mixing-up is not enough in itself to create a spirit of internationalism and peace; but it can do a great deal. From the very beginning, it provides exceptional conditions.
The children learn at first hand that the world is inhabited by many varieties of men, with differing customs, speaking all tongues. They become accustomed to this, though at first it seems strange. And it must be added that they get used to it more quickly than adults. The teaching staff always has been and still is international. It has been composed of as many as fifteen nationalities, but these nationalities have inter-penetrated less easily than those of the children.

But the international spirit, the conscious will to collaborate, does not necessarily emerge of itself from this jumble, compared by some people to the Tower of Babel. Rivalry, competition, even an increase in national feeling and national pride, could arise from it.

What have been the real results? In 1945 the Direction of the school, renewing ties broken by war, invited former students scattered all over the world (those, that is to say, whose addresses were available) to reply to a questionnaire which asked in part: "What is the most lasting impression that the spirit of the school has left upon you? Has the school had some influence on your actions and opinions? What do you remember most strongly?".

Among many vague ones, sixty-four clear-cut replies were received, and were published in the 'Journal Annuel des Anciens Élèves et Professeurs' in 1946 and 1947. These replies came from every corner of the world. Of the 64 explicit responses, 45 repeated, in often nearly identical terms, the same idea.

I quote at random: "One of the most important things I believe to have learned at the Ecolint is understanding and tolerance, and, even though it is not enough to secure peace, it is very substantial that the people who have to agree are understanding and respecting each other. I never forgot my knowledge of colours and nationalities being of no importance if only we had been together long enough to know each other a little. 'L'esprit sportif', I believe, had a great deal to do with that, the demand for 'fair play'. I never have been able to get caught by the nationalistic and chauvinistic currents which came all over the world following the war, and that even though my country was occupied by the Germans and that I naturally stood on the side of the Allies and looked forward to the day when we would be able to throw out the invaders. I have never felt any hatred directed against the Germans because of their nationality! -- written (in English) by a Danish boy who left the school at 14, after being there four years.

"The strongest impression that the school made on me was that spirit of comradeship which took account neither of race nor nationality" -- written by a French girl who left the school at 16, having been there for two years.

"Ecolint, for the brief period I was there, proved conclusively that it is possible for people of different nationalities, religions and backgrounds to live together happily and on a completely equal basis." -- written by an American girl of 16 who was at the school for a year.
"I believe that the spirit and the teaching at Ecolint while I was there for ten years had a great deal of influence on my opinions and actions. The war only strengthened my conviction of the necessity for an international fellowship based on understanding among peoples." -- written in French by an Italian boy who left the school at eighteen.

"The strongest impression I received at Ecolint was the continual demonstration of the fact that incompatibility between nationalities is not inborn or natural, but acquired under group pressure, and ceases as soon as that pressure is removed." -- written (in English) by an Austrian girl who spent two years - from 15 to 17 - at the school.

"I feel that in matters of human relations, Ecolint influence is constantly present and impossible to break away from me: not to find fault with the other man, but to try to understand his views and actions. To give a more concrete example: during the last few years, in spite of some rather varied experiences, I could never get myself to hate, and I always felt guilty when other people preached hate. Even when witnessing S.S. men beating up young Jewish boys on a railway siding near Auschwitz, I could not but feel sorry for them to have become so degraded, their minds so numbed, that one could hardly call these men human beings any more.

But I think what Ecolint has taught us can best be expressed in the words of Saint-Exupéry, if you will allow me to quote from 'Terre des Hommes': "To be a human being means precisely that one is responsible. It is to know shame before distress which does not seem to be of one's own making." -- written by a Jewish Pole (in English) who fought with the British Army and was a prisoner in Germany. He spent three years - from 13 to 16 - at the school.

"The school gave me, through the spirit of its teaching, a xenophile mentality. I am expressing myself badly, but what I mean is that every country, known or unknown, is as dear to me as my own, because I know something of it, or because I can visualise it." -- written (in French) by a young Swiss girl, who was at the school from the age of ten to the age of 15.

"The strongest impression which the Ecolint spirit made upon me was that of international friendship. I only realized this fully several years after leaving the school. When I arrived back in Belgium I felt at first a great emptiness. The surroundings I had just left seemed so normal, so natural, that I had no idea that this spirit was the very real and exceptional expression of an ideal of international fraternity which each of us carries in his own mind, secretly." -- written (in French) by a young Belgian girl who was at the school from her sixth to her tenth year.

"I detest phrases which are dramatic and often false, but Ecolint
must not die. I realize this more and more, especially now I am working for an international institution, for the spirit which is needed in such an organization as this, and indeed in the entire world, is precisely that which animated the school when I was there, and which I hope and believe still animates it. This is all the more important in a school, for the sense of humanity, which extends beyond national, political and religious differences, must be founded in the minds and the friendship of individuals; and the links of childhood are much stronger, and often the deepest." -- written in French by a young American girl who lived at the school between her sixth and twelfth years.

"You remember the Japanese Takamasa, the German girl called Dignowiti, Mademoiselle Zanni from Turkey, the Nictos from Colombia, who were all comrades? If the whole world had known this spirit of brotherhood of sincere friendship, would not the politicians' war which has almost ruined the world, have been impossible?" -- written in French by a Colombian who was at the school between his fourteenth and sixteenth years.

Two poignant letters received since the end of the war from a Japanese girl and a German boy are too personal to be quoted - even anonymously.

There, then, are some signs, not always well put, but all showing the same feeling. How was that obtained? Was there a technique? At first sight, it seems they found comradeship was the most important thing; but they also mention teaching, and for my part I believed that comradeship played the role it normally does in every school: although it must not be forgotten, that this was taking place in conditions which had been created by methods which were more or less empirical, but none the less deliberate. How was this done?

First by a common attitude on the part of the adults: to minimise the idea of nationality, and never to speak of it as something that mattered. But never, let me add, were the children told that they had to like each other in spite of their nationalities. All sentimentality was carefully avoided. Moreover, one rule was and is deliberately inculcated: "You may have disagreements - you will have them, in the normal course of events: that happens with all children and certain adults, but furious though you may be, you must never use nationality or race as an insult. In this school that is the worst crime of all."

The crime did occur, but very rarely, and was followed by considerable contrition. One occasion a young Albanian begged a Polish boy not to tease him any more "because then I wouldn't be able to stop myself from calling you a dirty Pole, and "they" would make another row." The Polish boy was convinced that it was better to avoid the scene; and besides underneath it all, they were really great friends.
Properly speaking, these rules are not techniques - merely attitudes, or conditionings, and are rather negative.

Is it negative or positive conditioning to instil into children the idea that war is a horrible thing, disastrous for all concerned, victor or vanquished; that it is a revolting spectacle? I do not know. We tried to carry out this conditioning by reading frightful pages of French, German or English war books to the children on certain anniversaries. They listened and wept, or shuddered. Some of them remembered this indelibly; a young Bulgarian once wrote us: "The morning assemblies on 11 November were what I believe impressed me most deeply at Ecolint. I came from a country where that date was not celebrated. I remember the idealism of those years 1929, 1930 and 1931. Full of the feelings I had experienced there each November, I received a shock in my own country to find that, for my compatriots, the 11 November was a date for derision and not for meditation. I had learnt otherwise in Geneva. I cannot boast of having become international and a pacifist, but certainly my mind has been enlarged and broadened, thanks to the education I received at the International School."

But on the other hand, I remember a young boy who after one of these demonstrations of horror said to his mother: "You know, when I'm big, I'm going to one of those countries where they still have wars!"

A doubtful method, it seems to me ....

We come to other methods, whose purpose it is to reach beyond feelings or behaviour to the very mind.

Monsieur Dupuy, a former professor of Geography in France, after his retirement, came to teach at the International School. He originated a new teaching method, a sort of synthesized geography, which he called International Culture. His premise was that we learn to visualize the world by the aid of maps, from the time in earliest childhood when we first see them. Most people get their introduction to geography by means of an elementary textbook, half-atlas, half reference book. Mostly, this book presents the map of our own country on its very first pages. And it is that map which becomes fixed in our mind from the very beginning. Certainly, somewhere in the book, there are some maps of the world, but the map of the whole world takes up exactly the same amount of space as the one of our native land.

In more advanced books, there is always this variation in scale, which places countries as varied in size as Switzerland and the United States on pages of the same size. Of course, if the child or the adult wishes to, he can make comparisons on a map of the world or on a globe.
How many do it, or are capable of doing it? How many people know that the Ganges Delta is as big as Switzerland, and that of the Nile half as big? That Borneo is as big as France? That Sumatra is twice the size of England. That China is a little larger than the United States, and the U.S.S.R. is twice as big as the two latter, but represents a little less than half the extent of the British Commonwealth?

It is disturbing for many adults to find themselves faced with facts like these. The reason is that facts like these conflict severely with fundamental ideas acquired during childhood. The ideas have passed into the subconscious; have become linked up with others and form an entirety which is of vital importance to the personality. The child forms the idea that his country, taking up a whole page of the atlas, is of necessity the most important in the world. This idea, acquired once and for all, is coloured by an emotional mixture which is born of the need for security and importance felt by every young child, looking for his place in the vast world about him. The idea is satisfying and reassuring, as all possessions are. But it is also dangerous, for it distorts all thinking about world affairs.

The International School, thanks to Monsieur Dupuy, has tried to reverse the order of these values.

The method consists in getting the child in contact only with the picture of the entire world from the very first, whether the picture be in the form of a globe or a map; deliberately to ignore, for several years, the map of the child's own country, except in its proper place on the map of the world; very early to compare the relative sizes of the different countries, and to learn their names; to give lessons about the great natural regions, independent of the frontiers; to make the representation of the world a field for imaginery games.

However, this contradicts a principle of modern teaching methods: to proceed from the particular to the general, from the known to the unknown, based on a psychological theory. Yet from its experiments, the International School has been able to demonstrate that children proceed very willingly and with the greatest ease from the unknown to the known. They can quite easily understand the map of the world or the globe without going by way of the room, the city, the county, the country and the continent. With perfect ease, a child can be both abstract and synthetical: children's drawings prove it: they are essentially abstractions. The poet Baudelaire speaks somewhere of the "vast appetite" of the child for the world, shown in his love of pictures, maps and stories of faraway lands. The vast appetite is there very early, and asks only to be nourished. But when, as is nearly always the case, the only food given to appease the hunger is the traditional nationalistic kind, the appetite dwindles.

M. Dupuy taught this synthesized geography by having each child construct his own map of the world by means of a simplified system of parallels and meridians. One day, a little boy who was having a lot of
trouble getting the island of Guam into its proper place, sighed: "Why does M. Dupuy like the islands lost in the sea so much?" Ten years later, this little boy probably realized the value of knowing where Guam was.

Since 1940, when M. Dupuy stopped teaching, we have not used exactly the same method of map-making, but our pupils still draw their own maps, and we always begin the geography course with the study of the map of the world.

The picture of the world as a whole must, furthermore, be complemented by human geography; the study of the various peoples must balance ideas of relative proportions. Questions of population density have enormous importance, and besides, interest children greatly. They love statistical figures. Recently, a little American boy got into a state of open revolt when he learned that China had more inhabitants than the United States. He had come from his elementary school at home, quite firmly convinced that his country was the biggest in the world!

And I remember the astonishment of a teacher, again an American, when she found from a graph that the density of American railways to the square kilometre was very much less than that of Europe's. It is of course a fact that geography is an optional subject in U.S. secondary schools, and, generally speaking, rarely chosen.

Young Swiss, on the other hand, are shocked to discover that the population of Paris is equal to that of the whole of Switzerland, while London and New York are even larger.

One might well reflect on the notion that such is the background of knowledge (or ignorance) that conditions our understanding of the newspaper articles we read every day. The information covers the whole world, and we know far too little of it to be able to bring clearly to mind what is reported. A geography teacher said to me once: "A group of listeners will accept without a murmur the news that the Hung-Ho drowned 5 million Chinese peasants at its last flooding, and may even think the whole thing sounds rather funny. But a minor railway accident in the audience's own country is taken very seriously."

Our second technique is concerned with the teaching of history. First, we begin the teaching of history much later than in most schools -- as late as the age of twelve. Secondly, as with geography, we give as a beginning, or base, a course of universal history, in which national history finds its place, but with its proportions carefully watched.

We postpone the beginning of our history course because feeling for time past is entirely lacking in the young child. "Once upon a time"
"a long time ago", "ten, twenty, a hundred, a thousand years ago," — all of these are senseless phrases to him, almost interchangeable. On the other hand, history for children under twelve can only be presented in the form of 'stories.' To interest the child, it must be centred on persons, who, just as in stories, must be either good or bad, and can therefore be hated or loved. Thus in all countries, young people, fed on nationalistic history from textbooks of necessity childish, take sides in disputes shrouded in the dust of centuries and pass judgment on human lives which have been made up of tears and joys (frequently of blood too) and lived under conditions impossible for a child to imagine or appreciate. And these young people become adults. Recently some French Civil servant wondered whether or not he should authorize the screening of the English film 'Henry V' in France, partly because of the scene in which the French horse is badly defeated at Agincourt. When I saw this admirable film, I myself felt the chauvinism of my childhood rising in certain scenes. So fairy-tale history can put down some deep and dangerous roots.

Every child of any nation, very early gets together his gallery of 'great men,' very few of whom are international, and to them he remains faithful for the rest of his life. This history as taught in the elementary schools dominates the life of each nation, strongly impressed as it is upon youthful imaginations. Furthermore, linked, like the national map with the concept of security and importance so dear to children, this concept of history will not give way willingly to a later and broader teaching given in the secondary stage.

But apart from that elementary course, does any country give a real course of universal history, even in the secondary stage? I do not think so. Perhaps they do in the Far East. All I know — and this quite definitely — is that what is called General History in the countries of Europe and America is a programme in which the history of Europe is dominant, and according to the country, national history plays a relatively greater part than that of other countries. Never is the history of Eastern and Far Eastern countries treated other than by passing reference, and then only when it is connected with a European intervention or conquest.

I thought about this last year when listening to the speech of the Indian representative at Lake Success, when the new flag of India, freed from its position as a British Crown Colony, was being raised. He tried to explain the 'Wheel of Asoka', which decorated the centre of the flag. How many people listening knew who Asoka was, and when he lived? The Indians... and I, I supposed. Later I found that my supposition was correct. I knew only because I had made it my job to teach Indian history to the pupils of the International School in the same way as the histories of other countries. I teach Asoka as thoroughly as Alexander, Charlemagne and Napoleon; and his reign and his person have a far greater significance from the international and pacific point of view.

I suppose I am emphasizing the obvious when I speak of the necessity of reforming the teaching of history, so frequently the basis of chauvinism,
in order to make it international. But I should like to stress the necessity for beginning to teach it later, and not giving it to aggroupes, whether national or international at a time when it can only be a series of sentimental slogans impressing themselves dangerously on children's minds, forever tainting their ways of thinking, and specially of feeling.

This in no way means that children should be kept ignorant of all historical developments until the age of 12. At the International School, we precede the teaching of history by an indirect preparation, lasting four years.

First, we take out little ones, aged 8 to 10, round the world in imagination by means of tales of recent explorations. Stories of polar voyages, a crossing of Africa from North to South, the crossing of Asia by car -- these enable them to visualize the surroundings. Each trip is studied from an authentic text, lived again (if one may use the expression) with much detail, pictures, maps and drawings. These distant realities become near realities, and the children's familiarity with things strange, with distances - with the world, in fact, becomes greater.

Then from 10 to 12, we use the Belgian Declarly system: interest centres throughout the year on food, or clothing, housing, or transport. Each subject is studied according to a historical or geographical aspect. By this means, too, the historical side, as it relates to humble objects of food for daily use, shows the slow and painful transformation which these materials underwent until they reached their present forms. On this basis, the feeling for the length of the road covered by humanity is created little by little, together with the feeling for time.

Then, at 12, begins the course of universal history. Therein prehistory is given the place which it must have to inspire each one of us with the humility needed for the study of history proper. We must never forget that pre-history goes back more than 1000 centuries, against the 70 of known history. In accordance with the recommendation of Professor Pittard of the University of Geneva, we teach that there has been no revolution more profound than the one which changed men from the state of hunters, fishers and gatherers of berries to agriculturalists and broderers. Then we place in perspective the two ways of living, sedentary and nomadic, which are diametrically opposed, and which have caused innumerable human conflicts throughout history.

During the next six years, we follow this current of universal history, and our pupils learn the avatars of all the peoples. The histories of India, China, Japan, Persia, are synchronized with the events of European history, century after century. The history of the American continent and that of the Australian make their appearance at the appropriate times.

We have had to make up our own roneotyped textbook, which is far from perfect, and needs revision by specialists. But at least it tries
to preserve the relatively just proportions between the various histories. The history of Europe still plays a dominant part, because it is true that this continent has weighed more heavily in the balance of man's destiny than any other. But the long dignity of Chinese civilization, the romantic history of Japan, the periodic breaking-out and the attempts at unification by the different parts of India, torn more by religious than by political questions --- all these things are not dead letters and objects of exotic curiosity for our pupils. This all plays its part in the history of man: and in that lie our Humanities. The words of Asoka renouncing war are as beautiful as is the death of Socrates; the story of the little Mikado drowning in the arms of his consoling grandmother at the Battle of Dan-no-ura, is as touching as is the account of the Battle of Thermopylae; the tenderness Confucius showed towards men is as noble as that of Marcus Aurelius.

"Was Buddha a sort of Christ, then?" a kiddie asked me after a story of the life of Siddatta Gautama. I avoided a direct reply, so as to avoid conflicting with his Christian religious education. But I am sure that he will no more forget the story of the sermon in the Park of Deer at Benares than he will that of the Sermon on the Mount.

Our students only take up the study of modern and contemporary history late, during the last two years of school — between the ages of 16 and 18. This is also deliberate. From the time of the American Revolution, history is no longer understandable unless it also includes history of the ideas and principles which led men to try to direct their destinies and not merely to submit. These are abstract ideas, subject to controversy, and the comprehension and discussion of such ideas require minds already somewhat evolved. For younger students, this is impossible.

This fact is heavy with foreboding if one remembers at what age schooling ends for many children in the world.

But the knowledge of these ideas, and the political and social principles in whose names all the revolutions of the last hundred and fifty years have been made, and which are far from losing their momentum, is as necessary to the understanding of present conditions, presented by the newspapers or the radio, as is knowledge of the political human and economic geography of the world. With the history of the human being as a basis, these facts are the essential determinants of our present adventurings: there is never a discussion at a United Nations meeting which does not bring in one or another of these elements.

World geography and universal history are the common heritage of all men, but are unknown to the majority of them. If you wish to bring men's thoughts together, then those men must be brought up in the same house, the house in which our entire race has grown up, and which is full of reminders of the thoughts and actions of men in times past. This is what the International School tries to do: to give all its students a common heritage. But many leave us before the end of their studies; many
others arrive with their studies already under way. For a great number, therefore, these systems of teaching remain patchy. We try to overcome this by what we call our 'assemblies', in which the two main sections - Middle School and Secondary - usually participate separately though sometimes together. Daily the children gather to listen to a talk, to see some slides with a commentary, or a film, to discuss a question which has previously been put forward, or perhaps to hear some music. By constant efforts in all domains, literary, artistic, musical, scientific, we try to provide them with the common heritage.

I personally believe that these are the things which have created the climate in which their international friendships, referred to in the questionnaires replies, have grown.

The possibility of thinking 'universally' and so internationally depends upon the presentation of geography and history. Of this I am quite convinced. The proper presentation of these two subjects is one of the most effective methods of killing the terrible undercurrents of narrow and militaristic nationalisms, born of national pride deeply impressed on the sub-conscious mind from childhood.

This in no way means that the children must be 'denationalized'. At the International School, we want what is individual in the customs, art and literature of each nation to be maintained, in order to enrich the life of the international community. Therefore we add to the lessons of history and geography an hour each week of what we call 'National Culture.' For these lessons, children from the age of twelve onwards are divided into national groups. So each little French, English, American, Swiss, Indian or other child learns to know his own country, its history, its art and its customs in vivid detail. But this teaching is clearly subordinate to the other: it is used to enrich the other. These different national groups compare the practical work they have done during the course of the year. Thus into the broader conception of the world as a whole, each child can fit a conception of his own country.

Another technique works simultaneously towards the international end: the learning and daily use of two living languages.

When it was founded the International School adopted the two official languages of the League of Nations - English and French. These are the languages currently used, compulsorily taught, from the age of six, and used indifferently at the school. Two complete and parallel teaching programmes are carried on side by side - one in English, the other in French. A student with a working knowledge of the two languages can be in either section for some of his instruction. The organization needed for these programmes is complicated, and it would serve no purpose were I to go into it here.
But I do want to emphasize the role which partial and sometimes total bilingualism plays in the formation of an international state of mind. The reader may have noticed in the quotations from the students' letters that some of them were written in a language other than the one to be expected from the nationality of the student. Some of our American or English students write and speak French fluently; many of the French ones make use of English with perfect ease without ever having been in an English-speaking country. Children of other nationalities have, for purposes of study, adopted one main language, either English or French.

Instruction in two languages, begun very early, always given by teachers working in their native tongues with whom the children can chat out of class; the presence of schoolmates of another tongue with whom they must somehow make contact -- all that gives results quickly enough, provided only that the children are at the school for more than one year.

It is very convenient to be able to speak and read in two or more languages; but it is more than merely convenient.

Language stamps our manner of thinking, especially when it comes to languages whose spirits are as different as those of French and English. The Latin tongue, deductive and analytical, in which the line of thought must be carried from logical paragraph to logical paragraph, from one conclusion to another; the Anglo-Saxon tongue, synthesized and condensed, with word-images often replacing deductive reasoning; a tongue in which one may pile up words and ideas so that the conclusion springs from the juxtaposition like a jack-in-the-box ....; and the literatures resulting from these widely-differing methods of thought and expression, the one explicit and searching, the other evocative. The casts of mind arising from these habits of language bring with them widely-differing methods of thought, which create endless difficulties in any international discussion. This was very obvious in the debates at the old League of Nations and can now be observed in United Nations debates, as well as in our humble circle at the International School, in the course of discussions between teachers whose mother tongue is French, and those whose native language is English.

But from the moment a person really uses the two languages, he begins to use the two methods of thinking, the two approaches. In any case, he at least understands the manner of thought of the person with whom he is dealing. No longer is he taken aback, and hostile. And from the time understanding and familiarity exist, the possibility of agreement is there; the international mind has come into being. Two languages are like two open windows on the same landscape, but framing two different aspects.

There are bilingual countries, and although the purists may scorn the imperfections that inevitably creep into both languages, personally I am convinced that the countries gain a great deal spiritually, although they may lose linguistically. Switzerland is such a country, and to me it is obvious that the adaptability of the Swiss, in all circumstances, in all parts of the world, has its origins partly in the fact that the country is bilingual. The role of language in enlarging the horizon and lessening the
idea of 'foreignness' is tremendous. The simple fact of speaking the language with someone whose mother tongue it is has also an immense importance psychologically. Therefore we always try to have our languages taught at the school by those who have spoken them from birth.

As things are now it is obviously not feasible for a second language to be taught in every elementary school in the world. But could not something be arranged so that in all secondary establishments where living languages are taught, those languages would be taught by persons whose mother tongue they are? Contact between teacher and child would in itself create the international reality which is so grudgingly admitted by those who, shut up as they are in their own countries and surrounded by their compatriots, instinctively regard the foreigner as curious, often funny - in any case as a disturbing and undesirable person. I know the practical difficulties implicit in exchanges of teachers: the preparation needed for new teaching methods, the results of change of country on family life, the adjustments of pension and insurance schemes. I do not believe them insuperable. The greatest difficulty, however, would come from the language teachers themselves everywhere, who would defend their position fiercely against such an invasion of 'foreigners.'

Those, then, are the three techniques for the forming of an international person. They are methods which to me seem essential, as much in their negative aspects as in their positive ones.

There remain some other questions. In the majority of national schools, children learn many things, but commentaries on contemporary political and economic matters are forbidden. This is admittedly dangerous ground. There are exceptions: some schools use a weekly radio commentary to keep the young people in touch with what is happening. England and Australia are two examples.

It is a practice which should be made more general. Certain information, in particular facts of an economic nature, makes even children realize certain inevitable necessities, and prevents them from considering world affairs in the irresponsible way of so many adults.

Radio transmissions are important, and their efficacy was proved during the recent war. However, I maintain that the oral, living commentary on world affairs is preferable, done once a fortnight or once a month. For nearly twenty years we have done this at the International School, in the assemblies mentioned above.

Today the world is changing more quickly than ever before. Economic conditions have echoes which reach further than they ever did. Every one of us is a poor swimmer paddling in the hollow of a wave, scarcely capable of realizing the state of the ocean which surrounds him. Adults realize this well enough, and try to orient themselves by reading their newspapers - well or badly informed, more or less partial. From the jumble of latest reports, from fragmentary or too esoteric economic or financial information they try to grasp a shadow of reality - when they can find the time.
Do adolescents even try? It is a shock to realize that, in a school library, where newspapers are put at the disposition of the pupils, very few like to read the newspapers, apart from the comic strips and the serial - provided it is a detective serial. For many, the picture story, that great and lucrative international enterprise which exploits human childishness is the only part which is interesting. (I am speaking only of countries where the illiterate is not supposed to exist.) The radio, which has usurped the place of reading, is perhaps responsible in part. But it can also cure a little of the evil it has done. How is it setting about this? In what ways does it inform? That, of course, depends on the country.

At the International School we set ourselves to give impartial commentaries as objective and documented as possible. It is an arduous task for the teacher who takes this responsibility, for he must try to keep in touch, read various kinds of papers, and must present the results of his work in an interesting and intelligible way. He often wishes he had the help of texts prepared by experts. Great help could be given by radio services if they would agree to broadcast material on international affairs at times convenient for schools, and in a way lively enough to capture the attention of schoolchildren. With the aid of a little booklet, an intelligent teacher could interest gatherings of pupils and answer their questions after the transmission. Recent and reliable statistics are the greatest lack (newspaper figures are not always complete.) Badly needed also are comparative figures and general information on economic affairs broken down for assimilation by wide audiences. As I have already said, children love statistics.

The International School has done its best in this, although it has had exceptional opportunities arising from its situation in the international city of Geneva where the authorities of the various international bodies can be readily consulted and even called in personally to help. However, I am certain that much more could be done with the aid of the international institutions themselves. It should not be too difficult to effect this.

Finally, if we are to make citizens of the world who know their responsibilities as citizens, I feel that still another technique is needed. We must have an education that awakens the consciousness of the brotherhood of man -- not only in the domains of thought and feeling, but also in those of action. Habits of mutual aid and concerted action must be set up.

Apart from team sports, all our present scholastic methods are individualistic. Help given among the children themselves in the matter of schoolwork is generally considered as a crime - as cheating.

In most schools in the majority of countries, care of materials and organization of the social life of the school depend entirely upon some adults. Besides, the disciplinary outlook does not allow of much initiative on the part of the children. Movements of 'new education' or
'active education' have tried to work towards this -- sometimes too far. But what percentage of the school population of the world is reached by them? An infinitesimal minority. How many schools have self-government, preparing children and adolescents to understand the machinery of government? As a result, many adults do not realize when 'the State' is discussed, that they themselves are the State, because they pay their taxes and vote. Taxation! In many countries it is considered a frightful exaction, still the perquisite of a Prince although his name is now the State!

Certain countries have evolved farther than others in this respect. But for the citizens of many lands, not to mention the citizens of the world, much remains to be done to bring them to understand more fully the word 'commonwealth.'

Part of it can be done ex cathedra; but that doesn't get us very far. Such lessons do not reach the depths of the human being and affect his mode of living. But in any activity or schoolwork which involves joint action, responsibility or teamwork, whether it be in sports, in the classroom, in looking after material, in creative work, such as a play, the organization of some entertainment, the building of a wall, gardening — all these things go to form habits of mutual dependence and mutual aid.

At the International School, as a former student has pointed out, the sporting spirit with its idea of fair play has played a large part. In addition, the students themselves administer a great deal of their life together by means of students' committees. They intervene in questions of discipline through courts of honour. A co-operative shop for both food and school materials is run entirely by them and the entire group of co-operative members decide how the benefits — often quite considerable — will be disposed of. They are generally used to make a special gift to the community or for some form of social work. A certain number of other schools in other parts of the world make use of the school co-operative: this needs encouragement.

The habit of friendly discussion, frank and reasonable, between children and adults, between members of the various committees, or held before assemblies of the whole school, is also a characteristic of the International School. These discussions are among the features which have remained in the memories of former students who answered the questionnaire. Naturally it is difficult to say just how far this method has gone towards forming citizens of the world. I personally am convinced that it has been fruitful.

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Summarizing: in our opinion, in order to create a spirit of international collaboration the following appear essential:

1. the avoidance of all that might set up in the young child...
2. the creation, very early, in the mind of the child of a view of the entire world and the living conditions of the people in it - a view as correct as it can possibly be;

3. to weaken the idea of 'foreignness' by the fluent use of a second language taught by those whose native tongue it is;

4. to create in daily school life habits of teamwork, social interdependence, mutual aid and practical participation in affairs of community interest.

Once again I emphasize the 'very early' for much depends upon what is done while the subconscious is still functioning fully in order to link up the intellectual and emotional sides of the child's personality. 'Give me a child until the age of seven', said some Jesuit father, 'and you may have the rest.' He was right. Even adults whose power of reasoning is greater than that of children feel rather more than they reason. The orientation of 'human' feelings beyond the family, the social group and the nation must be done very early. After all, abundant proof has been given that 'inhuman' attitudes can be set up by education. The bulk of this work should be carried out during childhood in the period of extraversion, of the 'vast appetite' for the world. Adolescence is an introverted period when curiosity turns inwards upon itself.

Let me now speak of the possibilities of getting more practical results from the activities of international bodies such as Unesco.

Here are a few suggestions as subjects for consideration:

Eventually agreement regarding primary instruction, a basic common programme of geography and history, could be discussed. It is desirable but the practical tools are lacking. These tools would be, first of all, an international atlas published with blank maps on which transparent sheets, bearing place names in each national language, would be placed; an atlas in which the world as a whole would have first place, together with comparative representations and plenty of statistics in the form of easily read graphs. The publication of atlases is an expensive business and many countries cannot afford it for their elementary schools. I know the kind in use in many countries before the war because a collection of them was made for the International School. It is a sorry sight. Publication on a world scale would be an immense advantage, because at such a level cost would be tremendously reduced and all the children of the world would have a common basic picture of the earth they inhabit.
The publication of textbooks of universal history, suitable for use in every country, seems an even more remote possibility. Would a commission of national historians ever come to agreement on such material? I doubt it, anyway that would be a long-range project. In the meantime, generations of children are rushing to waste like rapids of a river, to use a simile of H.G. Wells.

Still, perhaps one could envisage the publication of films in several languages. There are even now some interesting popular educational films, but they are often as full of technical errors as they are of good intentions. Recently I saw a film in which a series of animated maps showed strikingly the growth of civilization round the Mediterranean. It was slightly inexact but, on the whole, satisfactory. Why could not film and scholastic experts be brought together to prepare and distribute to schools films of this nature? Up to now such films have been produced on a commercial basis and belong in the rather deprecated category of the documentary. Film could be used to excellent effect in the creation of a world outlook. Even the commercial film has already done a great deal, merely by showing various countries, their modes of life and their customs. It is unfortunate that most of them for all kinds of reasons, are scarcely good for children and in many countries are forbidden to them just at the impressionable age. Here is a vast field for activity, a whole world of possibilities which could be organized.

Could Unesco take charge of this? Could it also establish a radio centre, giving authoritative and documented commentaries on the basic facts concerning contemporary world events? Such broadcasts could be translated into each national language and accompanied by complementary booklets -- something in the nature of the information given by a geostatic service which existed for some time before World War II.

Finally, anything encouraging personal contacts among the nations should be supported -- for instance, exchange of pupils and teachers. This has been given a good beginning in the field of higher studies, but in the elementary stages it almost does not exist, while in the secondary stages it is difficult to put into practice. It is a serious matter to send a child abroad, even for one year, during his secondary studies. Oddly enough, we at the International School have discovered that the biggest stumbling-block to the synchronization of studies is the science of mathematics -- a universal study if ever there were one! But there are as many methods for beginning and pursuing the study of mathematics as there are countries -- or nearly as many. Dare one hope that an international congress of mathematicians would agree on a common programme in less than a century?

While we are waiting for all this, let us exchange students during the holidays, poor substitute though that may be, for often exchange serves merely to emphasize the feeling of 'foreignness' instead of lessening it. The contact is too brief and homesickness sometimes interposes. Still let us exchange students and teachers as much as we can.
I have spoken a great deal about experiments made at the International School of Geneva. Other schools have experimented along their own lines with the same end in view.

It seems to me that if we want to get to work seriously on proven foundations, a great institution such as Unesco should take an interest in a certain number of research schools in different countries and under different conditions, in order to stimulate and control their findings. But let us avoid the phrase 'experimental schools'; it frightens parents.

It is also a fact that in the various places where large international organizations are found, there are also private international undertakings. In such places, schools similar to the International School of Geneva could render signal service to international employees living overseas with their families. An international school can conserve the indispensable elements of each national education while internationalizing the mind. Further, this grouping together of children of different nations and races forms a unit particularly favourable for valuable pedagogical observations about international understanding. Such schools naturally offer propitious research conditions.

These research schools would need to be encouraged, perhaps guided. Is not this the kind of undertaking which could be carried out by the Education Section of Unesco?

8 June, 1948.