

PEACE AND THE COMMUNIST THREAT

A Social Document of the
ULCA



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

A Statement of the United Lutheran Church in America, 1948

1948: Adopted by Board of Social Missions. Reported in Minutes, 16th Biennial Convention, ULCA, pp. 367-68.

The existence of nation-wide anxiety and hysteria over the tensions between Russia and the United States makes war a possibility though not an inevitability. Sharp differences exist between the Soviet Communist party and the "Western" democracies over Communism's methods of spreading its faith through infiltration, fraud and terrorism. There is also a sharp difference between Communist faith and the Christian faith. We must further recognize that the suspicions of the Soviet leaders have been aroused because many policies and practices of the United States have not been fully democratic, and because they have been promoted in an intemperate and inconsistent manner. These basic differences need not result in war, and in fact cannot be resolved by war. Communism has only gained its chance in Russia and Central Europe through the chaos and impoverishment resulting from two world wars. A third world war, even if waged to prevent the spread of communism, would almost certainly result in the loss of our own democratic freedom, and in the disruption and anarchy on which communism grows.

Public confidence and strength based on a sound democratic program of cooperation between America and Western Europe, a program designed to speed economic, social, political, and moral recovery is the best bulwark against communist infiltration and terrorism. The support of a cooperative program of this kind has always been incumbent upon us as Christians. It has special political significance now. Failing to achieve its goal by its shortsighted methods, in our estimation, Soviet communism will not attempt an unprovoked military aggression.

Nevertheless the dangers of war will continue unless the intemperate voices of the molders of public opinion and the hysteria of our people are calmed. There is reason to fear that our present mood can turn any incident, no matter how insignificant, into a war.

1. Study the statements A Positive Program for Peace and Soviet-American Relations circulated by the Board of Social Missions.
2. Challenge the judgment of those who say "War is inevitable," and those who urge "a preventive war" with Russia.

3. Discuss, if possible in person, otherwise by letter, the present international situation in the light of the above-mentioned statements with your congressional Representatives and Senators.
4. Seek to influence others to join you in securing support of a Federal program of sound democratic co-operation with other nations. present mood of our people and of elements in the government of the United States constitutes an immediate threat to peace. It is against this threat that we should direct a program of action now.

At the same time we must develop a long-range program of action in support of a positive program for building world order and peace. The recognition that we may fail to avoid war should make us doubly concerned to leave nothing undone which can now be done. We have confidence that if we act with a sense of Christian responsibility now, ultimately it will be possible, under God, to resolve the tensions and conflicts growing out of the fundamental differences existing between the United States and Russia.

For too long a period the Church has failed to interpret adequately its Gospel, so as to focus man's attention on his responsibility, under God, to work for justice, freedom, and social order. We have permitted oppression and discrimination to go unquestioned by the Church. Yet our Gospel reminds us that in Christ we are members one of the other. Christ died that we all might be one.

War is the antithesis of the spirit of the Gospel, which proclaims peacemakers to be the children of God. As Christians we are called to be fully mindful to our own, and of our nation's sins and shortcomings. In this spirit of humbleness and concern for God's peace we believe it possible for Christians to contribute to the building of peace among men today. As practical steps to avert World War III we believe both individuals and church groups should:

5. Pray daily that the leaders of the nations may know and follow God's will and that as individuals we may be cleansed from hatred and selfishness.