RESOLUTION CONCERNING A CALL FOR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH COMMUNIST NATIONS

ADOPTED by the General Assembly

The Christian faith affirms that all human institutions, including governments and nations, are ambiguous mixtures of good and evil.

This is particularly important for Christians to recognize in their assessment of relations between the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Communism comes in many varieties and degrees, displaying various mixtures of good and evil. In some, the government is cruelly tyrannical; in others, broadly benevolent. Within any one Communist nation, such characteristics may change from decade to decade.

The United States has established a wide variety of relationships with Communist governments, ranging from extensive aid to Yugoslavia, friendly recognition of China, unfriendly recognition of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, non-recognition of Vietnam, and covert military support of the ousted Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea.

As Christians we should have long known and recognized that the same ambiguities mark the life of our nation. It is possible to say with a significant degree of accuracy that the United States historically has been in the forefront of those nations which have most often enhanced human freedoms and well-being. The Bill of Rights, actions such as the opening of America's doors to hundreds of thousands of people from Southeast Asia, the Marshall Plan after World War II, and the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, all stand as a beacon of enlightenment, righteousness, and generosity.

On the other hand, there have been many instances in which the United States has been less than exemplary, as in 1848 when it annexed approximately one-third of the territory which Mexico claimed, or as minorities have been enslaved, segregated, and treated discriminatorily for centuries. The United States has been at the same time a land of freedom and opportunity for people fleeing from conditions of poverty and tyranny, and a threat to life and liberty of Native Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Blacks, as well as to people in other lands.

We recognize among the nations within the sphere of American influence the same ambiguous mixtures of good and evil. The United States ranks among its allies nations as far different from each other as parliamentary England, apartheid South Africa, socialist Venezuela, and tyrannical Chile.

An essential component in distinguishing between allies and enemies is the influence of ideology on our thinking. An ideology is a strongly held commitment controlling behavior in contrast to, or ignorance of, known facts.

In many of its international relationships the United States operates non-ideologically, on the basis of an enlightened national self-interest. But in its dealings with certain Communist nations the people and the government of the United States are dominated by extreme views and statements of ideological differences.

WHEREAS, such a strong ideological bent causes many of the leaders and people of this nation to an unquestioning support of military solutions to the problems confronting the United States, contradicting our Lord's call to be peacemakers and reconcilers.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Des Moines, Iowa, August 2-7, 1985, call upon its members to become more informed about the nature of ideology in general, the ideological differences between capitalism and communism in particular, and the many ways in which the actual facts about life in the United States and in Communist nations is different from those ideologies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Christians call upon their leaders in government to use the same principles of enlightened self-interest in dealing with Communist nations which we use with other nations; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) call upon the United States government to enter into good faith negotiations with those Communist governments with which it is currently in ideological disagreement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that such actions should consist of, but not be limited to, good faith negotiations with the Soviet Union, and the establishment of diplomatic relations with Vietnam and Cuba.