



TEACH PEACE

Educators for Social Responsibility

May 12, 1987

Mr. Eliot F. Porter
Rural Route 4, Box 33
Santa Fe, NM 87501

Dear Mr. Porter,

This is your invitation to join a small group of distinguished Americans in launching a bold and innovative effort -- to lay the foundation for lasting peace between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Please understand: I'm not asking you to take part in some muddle-headed scheme to impose world peace overnight.

You and I know we can't sweep under the carpet four decades of hostility and tens of thousands of weapons of mass destruction.

I'm sure we both believe, too, that there are fundamental ideological and political differences that separate the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. No one can minimize the effects of these differences on each country's perception of the other country.

Instead, I need your help to set in motion a tough-minded, pragmatic program for peace, carefully planned and grounded in the harsh realities of the world we all live in. It's called the "U.S.-Soviet Education Project" of Educators for Social Responsibility.

There are four specific and concrete components to this ambitious plan for peace. I'll tell you shortly what those four things are; first, I would like to tell you about our organization.

Called ESR for short, we are a nonprofit, tax-exempt membership organization of teachers, administrators, parents, and other concerned citizens. We were established for the purpose of enabling students and teachers to come to grips with the single most important issue of our times: the threat posed by nuclear weapons.

But from the start, our work has not been limited to the nuclear issue alone. ESR's teacher training programs and curriculum materials help students understand controversial issues such as U.S.-Soviet relations, the spread of nuclear weapons, the need for conflict resolution and negotiation. We teach students critical thinking skills and the importance of individual responsibility for the democratic process.



Educators for Social Responsibility

23 Garden Street Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138

Roberta Snow, Founding President Susan Alexander, Executive Director

In the course of our thinking and teaching about nuclear matters, we came back to one inescapable fact over and over again:

We believe we will never solve the problems of spreading nuclear weapons, international terrorism, world hunger, and the destruction of the environment unless we learn to build a foundation for a long-term, cooperative relationship with the Soviet Union.

And to create this relationship we must act today to know them as more than an adversary.

According to a New York Times poll conducted in 1985, 76% of adults questioned did not know that Mikhail Gorbachev was the leader of the Soviet Union, and 44% didn't know that Russia and the United States were allies in World War II.

This astonishing ignorance shouldn't be surprising in view of the low level of teaching about the Soviet Union in our schools and colleges.

As an educator -- with 20 years of classroom experience at every grade level -- I can tell you that the problem is very serious.

Unless you and I do something about it.

That's why I want your help in launching the ESR U.S.-Soviet Education Project -- a long-term program to educate Americans to deal with the Soviet Union in ways that will lead to peace instead of war:

- o teacher education -- to prepare American elementary and high school teachers and college professors to use our new curriculum materials, and come to grips with other controversial issues in the classroom;
- o curriculum development -- to prepare and distribute balanced, factually-accurate materials of the highest professional caliber, so teachers and students in high schools and colleges throughout the U.S. learn who the Soviets really are and how they view the world;
- o adult and community education -- to involve the general public, and ultimately our public officials, in a more balanced -- and effective -- discussion of the differences between the U.S. and the Soviet Union; and

- o high-level dialogue between educators in the United States and the Soviet Union -- to learn from our colleagues overseas, and to challenge them to make changes in Soviet schools so that Soviet children will gain a more balanced view of us.

We've made a strong beginning.

We've published and distributed new curriculum materials for elementary and secondary schools -- and we've gained invaluable experience in training teachers to use these new materials.

With the advice and assistance from the international physicians who recently won the Nobel Peace Prize, I've met with top Soviet educators in Moscow.

And last fall, at our invitation, the Soviet government sent leading educators to visit the U.S. They addressed our fourth annual ESR conference, and they met with six of our chapters across the country.

This was not just a casual "toasting of peace." We went beyond friendship and trust -- taking these Soviet educators into dozens of classrooms to show them how ESR teachers are helping today's young people grapple with the critical issues of the nuclear age.

I'm enormously encouraged by this experience. To me, it proves the vast potential of the U.S.-Soviet Education Project.

For Educators for Social Responsibility, this project is a big step forward.

Our ultimate mission is to prevent nuclear war and to create a more secure, caring, and cooperative world.

To achieve this mission, ESR brings together professional educators -- with the support and encouragement of parents -- who are the persons so well placed to educate future generations to seek peace in our nuclear age.

After all, it's no good to make sure children brush their teeth or go to a good school if we can't ensure that they're going to grow up -- and to grow up with hope and confidence in the future.

ESR is able to take on this challenge because we've grown in the five years since our founding to include over 10,000 members and supporters, with 100 chapters in 36 states -- and I'm proud to say that we've accomplished a great deal by using our limited resources very effectively:

- * By alerting and informing the news media, ESR has made the public aware of the impact of nuclear weapons on children and has sparked a national debate among educators about ways the schools might deal with this problem.
- * Media coverage of ESR has included NBC's "Today" show, ABC's "Nightline," the "MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour" on PBS, Newsweek, the New York Times, the Christian Science Monitor, the Washington Post, TV Guide magazine and -- just as important -- numerous national education journals.
- * In response to the initiatives of ESR members, school boards in San Francisco, New York City, San Diego, Baltimore, and Los Angeles voted to provide nuclear-age education for all students. The school systems of Boston and Milwaukee, in collaboration with ESR, have developed innovative in-service programs for their teachers. Many other school boards around the country are considering similar proposals.
- * ESR's curricula for high school and grade school have won wide acceptance throughout the country. Our teacher training workshops have attracted educators from many states and indirectly reached millions of students.

ESR alone is able to do all this because we have demonstrated professional expertise in nuclear-age education. Because we are an organization of professional educators, only ESR can work in the schools -- in a professional, balanced, and objective way -- to prepare future generations for the hope and challenge of peace.

So ESR is now ready to take the next step.

To realize the U.S.-Soviet Education Project's full potential to lay the groundwork for peace -- and finance other ESR programs to help build a more peaceful world through education -- we estimate that we will need at least \$2.5 million over the next three years alone.

Unfortunately, charitable foundations will provide only a fraction of this amount -- and we believe it's important to be independent of government funding.

So, to continue this ambitious U.S.-Soviet Education Project, we need to recruit a "Committee of 100,000" Americans --

people like you and me -- who are willing to commit themselves to help change the direction of world history. To lead the way in this effort, we hope to persuade 50 individuals like you to contribute \$1000 each.

With your help, our nation's schools may truly "teach peace" to a new generation of American leaders.

As I told you at the beginning of this letter, there are four specific and concrete things you can do right now to help ESR lay the foundation for lasting peace:

- (1) Help us launch the U.S.-Soviet Education Project with a gift of \$1000. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.
- (2) Read and sign the "Principles for Peace" I'm enclosing with this letter. Your endorsement will help ESR persuade school boards across the country to adopt its new curricula on U.S.-Soviet relations.
- (3) Display the enclosed "TEACH PEACE" sticker in a window in your home or car. ESR needs to reach at least four million American families in the next three years. You can help us spread our message in the most cost-effective way we know.
- (4) Educate yourself and your family or friends about the Soviet Union. It's every citizen's job to play a part. If you contribute \$500 or more, we'll be happy to send you a free copy of our videotape, "A Day at School in Moscow." And let us know if you want advice on how to start a study group in your community or religious organization.

You can contribute to this historic effort in all four ways, and all are important. But, right now, ESR especially needs your financial support.

Of the \$2.5 million we must raise in the next three years, we'll need nearly half a million dollars this year alone -- including \$50,000 in the next few weeks to be able to fund an institute addressing U.S.-Soviet responsibility for international security.

Please be generous in your support of this far-reaching effort. And please send your contribution today.

There will never be any meaningful resolution of the arms race without Soviet involvement; we in the United States cannot afford to remain dangerously ignorant about the country and society with which we must negotiate on matters of life and death.

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Your gift to ESR is an investment in the future. Like a donation to your alma mater, your contribution is an affirmation of education as a force that will make the world a safer place for all of us -- and all our children.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan Alexander

Susan Alexander
Executive Director

P.S. Please take a moment to glance below at the list of members of ESR's National Advisory Board. You'll see many of the most distinguished names in American education -- proof positive of the great respect that ESR's work commands among educators. When you contribute to ESR's U.S.-Soviet Education Project, you're joining this illustrious group of Americans in a serious -- and tremendously promising -- effort to lay the foundation for lasting world peace.

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