

With a heart of deepest gratitude

New York, September 24, 2015

Dear President Gorbachev,

I really do not know how to express my gratitude to you for this wonderful, exquisite, all-encompassing, illuminating and uplifting preface that you wrote for the book about Vladimir Petrovsky. To receive such a personal comment from you is like the fulfillment of a life long dream of mine.

I have to add a little story here that may amuse you. In 1986, I was 26 years old then, I had often discussions with my father in Switzerland about your unilateral disarmament proposals. He was rather skeptical, as many people in the beginning and could not really believe in the deeper sincerity of your intentions. I, on the other side, was hugely inspired. At one point I told my father: "If I would not have joined Sri Chinmoy's path, I would go and serve President Gorbachev all my life."

Now, while working on the book that you so graciously blessed, I have read a good amount about the Perestroika time and your role in it. My admiration only grew because of how you have transformed the international landscape in just a few years, and also because of your extraordinary vision, confidence and steadfastness to your principles even in times of greatest adversity. The recent interview that you gave for "The Spiegel" about nuclear disarmament or your speech in Berlin on the occasion of the 25 anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall only strengthened these feelings.

I fully and wholeheartedly join in Sri Chinmoy's statement that you are not the man of the century but the man of the millennium!

I can not really understand that today's leaders have not taken the huge opportunity that you created. It represents a huge deception for me and sometimes I am really frustrated. Maybe the world was not yet ready for somebody like you and your global perestroika, or the dark clouds of adversity are trying to cover the bright light of the sun.

I think though that your efforts and your example during the perestroika time and beyond, are surely not in vain. Time is definitely on your side and will bring back the spirit that you infused into humanity and the vision and confidence that solidarity and cooperation are not only possible but inevitable.

As in 1986, I am still devoted to Sri Chinmoy's path and I am planning in the years to come to work on education materials, connected to the global Peace Run that our team is organizing. In these materials that will be directed and adapted to all grades and levels, we are planning to include excerpts from your 1988 UN speech and the 1987 Pravda article. For me these are timeless documents of the highest beauty, value and inspiration, real treasures that show humanity the direction to pursue on its way to more progress, freedom and happiness. Personally I feel that these documents should hang in each and every school classroom around the world.

I hope that I will be able to see you again soon (like on the occasion of your 84th birthday in March of this year). Maybe it could be when Mira Petrovsky and her daughter Lena will present you with the first copy of the printed book.

With highest esteem and respect and all my heart's warmest feelings,
Shashanka M. Karlen