

NOBEL LECTURE

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by

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Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and gentlemen,

This moment is no less emotional for me than the one when I first learned about the decision of the Nobel Committee. For on similar occasions great men addressed humankind—men famous for their courage in working to bring together morality and politics. Among them were my compatriots.

The award of the Nobel Peace Prize makes one think once again about a seemingly simple and clear question: What is peace?

Preparing for my address I found in an old Russian encyclopaedia a definition of “peace” as a “commune”—the traditional cell of Russian peasant life. I saw in that definition the people’s profound understanding of peace as harmony, concord, mutual help, and cooperation.

This understanding is embodied in the canons of world religions and in the works of philosophers from antiquity to our time. The names of many of them have been mentioned here before. Let me add another one to them. Peace “propagates wealth and justice, which constitute the prosperity of nations”; a peace which is “just a respite from wars . . . is not worthy of the name”; peace implies “general counsel”. This was written almost 200 years ago by Vasiliy Fyodorovich Malinovskiy—the dean of the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum at which the great Pushkin was educated.

Since then, of course, history has added a great deal to the specific content of the concept of peace. In this nuclear age it also means a condition for the survival of the human race. But the essence, as understood both by the popular wisdom and by intellectual leaders, is the same.

Today, peace means the ascent from simple coexistence to cooperation and common creativity among countries and nations.

Peace is movement towards globality and universality of civilization. Never before has the idea that peace is indivisible been so true as it is now.

Peace is not unity in similarity but unity in diversity, in the comparison and conciliation of differences.

And, ideally, peace means the absence of violence. It is an ethical value. And here we have to recall Rajiv Gandhi, who died so tragically a few days ago.

I consider the decision of your Committee as a recognition of the great international importance of the changes now under way in the Soviet Union, and as an expression of confidence in our policy of new thinking,

which is based on the conviction that at the end of the twentieth century force and arms will have to give way as a major instrument in world politics.

I see the decision to award me the Nobel Peace Prize also as an act of solidarity with the monumental undertaking which has already placed enormous demands on the Soviet people in terms of efforts, costs, hardships, willpower, and character. And solidarity is a universal value which is becoming indispensable for progress and for the survival of humankind.

But a modern state has to be worthy of solidarity, in other words, it should pursue, in both domestic and international affairs, policies that bring together the interests of its people and those of the world community. This task, however obvious, is not a simple one. Life is much richer and more complex than even the most perfect plans to make it better. It ultimately takes vengeance for attempts to impose abstract schemes, even with the best of intentions. Perestroika has made us understand this about our past, and the actual experience of recent years has taught us to reckon with the most general laws of civilization.

This, however, came later. But back in March-April 1985 we found ourselves facing a crucial, and I confess, agonizing choice. When I agreed to assume the office of the General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee, in effect the highest State office at that time, I realized that we could no longer live as before and that I would not want to remain in that office unless I got support in undertaking major reforms. It was clear to me that we had a long way to go. But of course, I could not imagine how immense were our problems and difficulties. I believe no one at that time could foresee or predict them.

Those who were then governing the country knew what was really happening to it and what we later called “*zastoi*”, roughly translated as stagnation. They saw that our society was marking time, that it was running the risk of falling hopelessly behind the technologically advanced part of the world. Total domination of centrally-managed state property, the pervasive authoritarian-bureaucratic system, ideology’s grip on politics, monopoly in social thought and sciences, militarized industries that siphoned off our best, including the best intellectual resources, the unbearable burden of military expenditures that suffocated civilian industries and undermined the social achievements of the period since the Revolution which were real and of which we used to be proud—such was the actual situation in the country.

As a result, one of the richest countries in the world, endowed with immense overall potential, was already sliding downwards. Our society was declining, both economically and intellectually.

And yet, to a casual observer the country seemed to present a picture of relative well-being, stability and order. The misinformed society under the spell of propaganda was hardly aware of what was going on and what the immediate future had in store for it. The slightest manifestations of protest were suppressed. Most people considered them heretical, slanderous and counter-revolutionary.

Such was the situation in the spring of 1985, and there was a great temptation to leave things as they were, to make only cosmetic changes. This, however, meant continuing to deceive ourselves and the people.

This was the domestic aspect of the dilemma then before us. As for the foreign policy aspect, there was the East-West confrontation, a rigid division into friends and foes, the two hostile camps with a corresponding set of Cold War attributes. Both the East and the West were constrained by the logic of military confrontation, wearing themselves down more and more by the arms race.

The mere thought of dismantling the existing structures did not come easily. However, the realization that we faced inevitable disaster, both domestically and internationally, gave us the strength to make a historic choice, which I have never since regretted.

Perestroika, which once again is returning our people to common sense, has enabled us to open up to the world, and has restored a normal relationship between the country's internal development and its foreign policy. But all this takes a lot of hard work. To a people which believed that its government's policies had always been true to the cause of peace, we proposed what was in many ways a *different policy*, which would genuinely serve the cause of peace, while differing from the prevailing view of what it meant and particularly from the established stereotypes as to how one should protect it. We proposed new thinking in foreign policy.

Thus, we embarked on a path of major changes which may turn out to be the most significant in the twentieth century, for our country and for its peoples. But we also did this for the entire world.

I began my book about perestroika and the new thinking with the following words: "We want to be understood". After a while I felt that it was already happening. But now I would like once again to repeat those words here, from this world rostrum. Because to understand us really—to understand so as to believe us—proved to be not at all easy, owing to the immensity of the changes under way in our country. Their magnitude and character are such as to require in-depth analysis. Applying conventional wisdom to perestroika is unproductive. It is also futile and dangerous to set conditions, to say: We'll understand and believe you, as soon as you, the Soviet Union, come completely to resemble "us", the West.

No one is in a position to describe in detail what perestroika will finally produce. But it would certainly be a self-delusion to expect that perestroika will produce "a copy" of anything.

Of course, learning from the experience of others is something we have been doing and will continue to do. But this does not mean that we will come to be exactly like others. Our State will preserve its own identity within the international community. A country like ours, with its uniquely close-knit ethnic composition, cultural diversity and tragic past, the greatness of its historic endeavors and the exploits of its peoples—such a country will find its own path to the civilization of the twenty-first century and its own place in it. Perestroika has to be conceived solely in this context, otherwise it

will fail and will be rejected. After all, it is impossible to "shed" the country's thousand-year history—a history, which, we still have to subject to serious analysis in order to find the truth that we shall take into the future.

We want to be an integral part of modern civilization, to live in harmony with mankind's universal values, abide by the norms of international law, follow the "rules of the game" in our economic relations with the outside world. We want to share with all other peoples the burden of responsibility for the future of our common house.

A period of transition to a new quality in all spheres of society's life is accompanied by painful phenomena. When we were initiating perestroika we failed to properly assess and foresee everything. Our society turned out to be hard to move off the ground, not ready for major changes which affect people's vital interests and make them leave behind everything to which they had become accustomed over many years. In the beginning we imprudently generated great expectations, without taking into account the fact that it takes time for people to realize that all have to live and work differently, to stop expecting that new life would be given from above.

Perestroika has now entered its most dramatic phase. Following the transformation of the philosophy of perestroika into real policy, which began literally to explode the old way of life, difficulties began to mount. Many took fright and wanted to return to the past. It was not only those who used to hold the levers of power in the administration, the army and various government agencies and who had to make room, but also many people whose interests and way of life was put to a severe test and who, during the preceding decades, had forgotten how to take the initiative and to be independent, enterprising and self-reliant.

Hence the discontent, the outbursts of protest and the exorbitant, though understandable, demands which, if satisfied right away, would lead to complete chaos. Hence, the rising political passions and, instead of a constructive opposition which is only normal in a democratic system, one that is often destructive and unreasonable, not to mention the extremist forces which are especially cruel and inhuman in areas of inter-ethnic conflict.

During the last six years we have discarded and destroyed much that stood in the way of a renewal and transformation of our society. But when society was given freedom it could not recognize itself, for it had lived too long, as it were, "beyond the looking glass". Contradictions and vices rose to the surface, and even blood has been shed, although we have been able to avoid a bloodbath. The logic of reform has clashed with the logic of rejection, and with the logic of impatience which breeds intolerance.

In this situation, which is one of great opportunity and of major risks, at a high point of perestroika's crisis, our task is to stay the course while also addressing current everyday problems—which are literally tearing this policy apart—and to do it in such a way as to prevent a social and political explosion.

Now about my position. As to the fundamental choice, I have long ago

made a final and irrevocable decision. Nothing and no one, no pressure, either from the right or from the left, will make me abandon the positions of perestroika and new thinking. I do not intend to change my views or convictions. My choice is a final one.

It is my profound conviction that the problems arising in the course of our transformations can be solved solely by constitutional means. That is why I make every effort to keep this process within the confines of democracy and reforms.

This applies also to the problem of self-determination of nations, which is a challenging one for us. We are looking for mechanisms to solve that problem within the framework of a constitutional process; we recognize the peoples' legitimate choice, with the understanding that if a people really decides, through a fair referendum, to withdraw from the Soviet Union, a certain agreed transition period will then be needed.

Steering a peaceful course is not easy in a country where generation after generation of people were led to believe that those who have power or force could throw those who dissent or disagree out of politics or even in jail. For centuries all the country's problems used to be finally resolved by violent means. All this has left an almost indelible mark on our entire "political culture", if the term is at all appropriate in this case.

Our democracy is being born in pain. A political culture is emerging—one that presupposes debate and pluralism, but also legal order and, if democracy is to work, strong government authority based on one law for all. This process is gaining strength. Being resolute in the pursuit of perestroika, a subject of much debate these days, must be measured by the commitment to democratic change. Being resolute does not mean a return to repression, diktat or the suppression of rights and freedoms. I will never agree to having our society split once again into Reds and Whites, into those who claim to speak and act "on behalf of the people" and those who are "enemies of the people". Being resolute today means to act within the framework of political and social pluralism and the rule of law to provide conditions for continued reform and prevent a breakdown of the state and economic collapse, prevent the elements of chaos from becoming catastrophic.

All this requires taking certain tactical steps, to search for various ways of addressing both short- and long-term tasks. Such efforts and political and economic steps, agreements based on reasonable compromise, are there for everyone to see. I am convinced that the One-Plus-Nine Statement will go down in history as one such step, as a great opportunity. Not all parts of our decisions are readily accepted or correctly understood. For the most part, our decisions are unpopular; they arouse waves of criticism. But life has many more surprises in store for us, just as we will sometimes surprise it. Jumping to conclusions after every step taken by the Soviet leadership, after every decree by the President, trying to figure out whether he is moving left or right, backward or forward, would be an exercise in futility and would not lead to understanding.

We will seek answers to the questions we face only by moving forward, only by continuing and even radicalizing reforms, by consistently democratizing our society. But we will proceed prudently, carefully weighing each step we take.

There is already a consensus in our society that we have to move towards a mixed market economy. There are still differences as to how to do it and how fast we should move. Some are in favor of rushing through a transitional period as fast as possible, no matter what. Although this may smack of adventurism we should not overlook the fact that such views enjoy support. People are tired and are easily swayed by populism. So it would be just as dangerous to move too slowly, to keep people waiting in suspense. For them, life today is difficult, a life of considerable hardship.

Work on a new Union Treaty has entered its final stage. Its adoption will open a new chapter in the history of our multinational state.

After a time of rampant separatism and euphoria, when almost every village proclaimed sovereignty, a centripetal force is beginning to gather momentum, based on a more sensible view of existing realities and the risks involved. And this is what counts most now. There is a growing will to achieve consensus, and a growing understanding that we have a State, a country, a common life. This is what must be preserved first of all. Only then can we afford to start figuring out which party or club to join and what God to worship.

The stormy and contradictory process of perestroika, particularly in the past two years, has made us face squarely the problem of criteria to measure the effectiveness of State leadership. In the new environment of a multi-party system, freedom of thought, rediscovered ethnic identity and sovereignty of the republics, the interests of society must absolutely be put above those of various parties or groups, or any other sectoral, parochial or private interests, even though they also have the right to exist and to be represented in the political process and in public life, and, of course, they must be taken into account in the policies of the State.

Ladies and gentlemen,

International politics is another area where a great deal depends on the correct interpretation of what is now happening in the Soviet Union. This is true today, and it will remain so in the future.

We are now approaching what might be the crucial point when the world community and, above all, the States with the greatest potential to influence world developments will have to decide on their stance with regard to the Soviet Union, and to act on that basis.

The more I reflect on the current world developments, the more I become convinced that the world needs perestroika no less than the Soviet Union needs it. Fortunately, the present generation of policy-makers, for the most part, are becoming increasingly aware of this interrelationship, and also of the fact that now that perestroika has entered its critical phase the Soviet Union is entitled to expect large-scale support to assure its success.

Recently, we have been seriously rethinking the substance and the role of our economic cooperation with other countries, above all major Western nations. We realize, of course, that we have to carry out measures that would enable us really to open up to the world economy and become its organic part. But at the same time we come to the conclusion that there is a need for a kind of *synchronization of our actions* towards that end with those of the Group of Seven and of the European Communities. In other words, we are thinking of a *fundamentally new phase* in our international cooperation.

In these months much is being decided and will be decided in our country to create the prerequisites for overcoming the systemic crisis and gradually recovering to a normal life.

The multitude of specific tasks to be addressed in this context may be summarized within *three main areas*:

— Stabilizing the democratic process on the basis of a broad social consensus and a new constitutional structure of our Union as a genuine, free, and voluntary federation.

— Intensifying economic reform to establish a mixed market economy based on a new system of property relations.

— Taking vigorous steps to open the country up to the world economy through ruble convertibility and acceptance of civilized "rules of the game" adopted in the world market, and through membership in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

These three areas are closely interrelated.

Therefore, there is a need for discussion in the Group of Seven and in the European Community. We need a joint program of action to be implemented over a number of years.

If we fail to reach an understanding regarding a new phase of cooperation, we will have to look for other ways, for time is of the essence. But if we are to move to that new phase, those who participate in and even shape world politics also must continue to change, to review their philosophic perception of the changing realities of the world and of its imperatives. Otherwise, there is no point in drawing up a joint program of practical action.

The Soviet leadership, both in the center and in the republics, as well as a large part of the Soviet public understand this need, although in some parts of our society not everyone is receptive to such ideas. There are some flag-wavers who claim a monopoly of patriotism and think that it means "not getting entangled" with the outside world. Next to them are those who would like to reverse the course altogether. That kind of patriotism is nothing but a self-serving pursuit of one's own interests.

Clearly, as the Soviet Union proceeds with perestroika, its contribution to building a new world will become more constructive and significant. What we have done on the basis of new thinking has made it possible to channel international cooperation along new, peaceful lines. Over these years we have come a long way in the general political cooperation with the West. It

stood a difficult test at a time of momentous change in Eastern Europe and of the search for a solution to the German problem. It has withstood the crushing stress of the crisis in the Persian Gulf. There is no doubt that this cooperation, which all of us need, will become more effective and indispensable if our economies become more integrated and start working more or less in synchronized rhythm.

To me, it is self-evident that if Soviet perestroika succeeds, there will be a real chance of building a new world order. And if perestroika fails, the prospect of entering a new peaceful period in history will vanish, at least for the foreseeable future.

I believe that the movement that we have launched towards that goal has fairly good prospects of success. After all, mankind has already benefited greatly in recent years, and this has created a certain positive momentum.

The Cold War is over. The risk of a global nuclear war has practically disappeared. The Iron Curtain is gone. Germany has united, which is a momentous milestone in the history of Europe. There is not a single country on our continent which would not regard itself as fully sovereign and independent.

The USSR and the USA, the two nuclear superpowers, have moved from confrontation to interaction and, in some important cases, partnership. This has had a decisive effect on the entire international climate. This should be preserved and filled with new substance. The climate of Soviet-US trust should be protected, for it is a common asset of the world community. Any revision of the direction and potential of the Soviet-US relationship would have grave consequences for the entire global process.

The ideas of the Helsinki Final Act have begun to acquire real significance, they are being transformed into real policies and have found a more specific and topical expression in the Charter of Paris for a New Europe. Institutional forms of European security are beginning to take shape.

Real disarmament has begun. Its first phase is nearing completion, and following the signing, I hope shortly, of the START Treaty, the time will come to give practical consideration to the ideas which have already been put forward for the future. There seems, however, to be a need to develop a general concept for this new phase, which would embrace all negotiations concerning the principal components of the problem of disarmament and new ideas reflecting the changes in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia, a concept that would incorporate recent major initiatives of President Bush and President Mitterand. We are now thinking about it.

Armed forces and military budgets are being reduced. Foreign troops are leaving the territories of other countries. Their strength is diminishing and their composition is becoming more defense-oriented. First steps have been taken in the conversion of military industries, and what seemed inconceivable is happening: recent Cold War adversaries are establishing cooperation in this area. Their military officials exchange visits, show each other military facilities that only recently used to be top secret and together consider ways to achieve demilitarization.

The information environment has changed beyond recognition throughout Europe and in most of the world, and with it, the scale and intensity and the psychological atmosphere of communication among people of various countries.

De-ideologizing relations among States, which we proclaimed as one of the principles of the new thinking, has brought down many prejudices, biased attitudes and suspicions and has cleared and improved the international atmosphere. I have to note, however, that this process has been more intensive and frank on our part than on the part of the West.

I dare say that the European process has already acquired elements of irreversibility, or at least that conflicts of a scale and nature that were typical of Europe for many centuries and particularly in the 20th century have been ruled out.

Should it gain the necessary momentum, every nation and every country will have at their disposal in the foreseeable future the potential of a community of unprecedented strength, encompassing the entire upper tier of the globe, provided they make their own contribution.

In such a context, in the process of creating a new Europe, in which erstwhile "curtains" and "walls" will be forever relegated to the past and borders between States will lose their "divisive" purpose, self-determination of sovereign nations will be realized in a completely different way.

However, our vision of the European space from the Atlantic to the Urals is not that of a closed system. Since it includes the Soviet Union, which reaches to the shores of the Pacific, and the transatlantic USA and Canada with inseparable links to the Old World, it goes beyond its nominal geographical boundaries.

The idea is not at all to consolidate a part of our civilization on, so to say, a European platform versus the rest of the world. Suspicions of that kind do exist. But, on the contrary, the idea is to develop and build upon the momentum of integration in Europe, embodied politically in the Charter of Paris for the whole of Europe. This should be done in the context of common movement towards a new and peaceful period in world history, towards new interrelationship and integrity of mankind. As my friend Giulio Andreotti so aptly remarked recently in Moscow, "East-West rapprochement alone is not enough for progress of the entire world towards peace. However, agreement between them is a great contribution to the common cause". Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Near and Middle East, all of them, are to play a great role in this common cause whose prospects are difficult to forecast today.

The new integrity of the world, in our view, can be built only on the principles of the freedom of choice and balance of interests. Every State, and now also a number of existing or emerging regional interstate groups, have their own interests. They are all equal and deserve respect.

We consider it dangerously outdated when suspicions are aroused by, for instance, improved Soviet-Chinese or Soviet-German, German-French, Soviet-US or US-Indian relations, etc. In our times, good relations benefit all.

Any worsening of relations anywhere is a common loss.

Progress towards the civilization of the 21st century will certainly not be simple or easy. One cannot get rid overnight of the heavy legacy of the past or the dangers created in the post-war years. We are experiencing a turning point in international affairs and are only at the beginning of a new, and I hope mostly peaceful, lengthy period in the history of civilization.

With less East-West confrontation, or even none at all, old contradictions resurface, which seemed of secondary importance compared to the threat of nuclear war. The melting ice of the Cold War reveals old conflicts and claims, and entirely new problems accumulate rapidly.

We can already see many obstacles and dangers on the road to a lasting peace, including:

- Increased nationalism, separatism, and disintegrational processes in a number of countries and regions;

- The growing gap in the level and quality of socio-economic development between "rich" and "poor" countries; dire consequences of the poverty of hundreds of millions of people, to whom informational transparency makes it possible to see how people live in developed countries. Hence, the unprecedented passions and brutality and even fanaticism of mass protests. Poverty is also the breeding ground for the spread of terrorism and the emergence and persistence of dictatorial regimes with their unpredictable behavior in relations among States;

- The dangerously rapid accumulation of the "costs" of previous forms of progress, such as the threat of environmental catastrophe and of the depletion of energy and primary resources, uncontrollable overpopulation, pandemics, drug abuse, and so on;

- The gap between basically peaceful policies and selfish economies bent on achieving a kind of "technological hegemony". Unless those two vectors are brought together, civilization will tend to break down into incompatible sectors;

- Further improvements in modern weaponry, even if under the pretext of strengthening security. This may result not only in a new spiral of the arms race and a perilous overabundance of arms in many States, but also in a final divorce between the process of disarmament and development, and, what is more, in an erosion of the foundations and criteria of the emerging new world politics.

How can the world community cope with all this? All these tasks are enormously complex. They cannot be postponed. Tomorrow may be too late.

I am convinced that in order to solve these problems there is no other way but to seek and implement entirely new forms of interaction. We are simply doomed to such interaction, or we shall be unable to consolidate positive trends which have emerged and are gaining strength, and which we simply must not sacrifice.

However, to accomplish this all members of the world community should resolutely discard old stereotypes and motivations nurtured by the Cold

War, and give up the habit of seeking each other's weak spots and exploiting them in their own interests. We have to respect the peculiarities and differences which will always exist, even when human rights and freedoms are observed throughout the world. I keep repeating that with the end of confrontation differences can be made a source of healthy competition, an important factor for progress. This is an incentive to study each other, to engage in exchanges, a prerequisite for the growth of mutual trust.

For knowledge and trust are the foundations of a new world order. Hence the necessity, in my view, to learn to forecast the course of events in various regions of the globe, by pooling the efforts of scientists, philosophers and humanitarian thinkers within the UN framework. Policies, even the most prudent and precise, are made by man. We need maximum insurance to guarantee that decisions taken by members of the world community should not affect the security, sovereignty and vital interests of its other members or damage the natural environment and the moral climate of the world.

I am an optimist and I believe that together we shall be able now to make the right historical choice so as not to miss the great chance at the turn of centuries and millenia and make the current extremely difficult transition to a peaceful world order. A balance of interests rather than a balance of power, a search for compromise and concord rather than a search for advantages at other people's expense, and respect for equality rather than claims to leadership—such are the elements which can provide the groundwork for world progress and which should be readily acceptable for reasonable people informed by the experience of the 20th century.

The future prospect of truly peaceful global politics lies in the creation through joint efforts of a single international democratic space in which States shall be guided by the priority of human rights and welfare for their own citizens and the promotion of the same rights and similar welfare elsewhere. This is an imperative of the growing integrity of the modern world and of the interdependence of its components.

I have been suspected of utopian thinking more than once, and particularly when five years ago I proposed the elimination of nuclear weapons by the year 2000 and joint efforts to create a system of international security. It may well be that by that date it will not have happened. But look, merely five years have passed and have we not actually and noticeably moved in that direction? Have we not been able to cross the threshold of mistrust, though mistrust has not completely disappeared? Has not the political thinking in the world changed substantially? Does not most of the world community already regard weapons of mass destruction as unacceptable for achieving political objectives?

Ladies and gentlemen, two weeks from today it will be exactly fifty years since the beginning of the Nazi invasion of my country. And in another six months we shall mark fifty years since Pearl Harbor, after which the war turned into a global tragedy. Memories of it still hurt. But they also urge us to value the chance given to the present generations.

In conclusion, let me say again that I view the award of the Nobel Prize to me as an expression of understanding of my intentions, my aspirations, the objectives of the profound transformation we have begun in our country, and the ideas of new thinking. I see it as your acknowledgment of my commitment to peaceful means of implementing the objectives of perestroika.

I am grateful for this to the members of the Committee and wish to assure them that if I understand correctly their motives, they are not mistaken.