

Radio Address to the Nation on Soviet-United States Relations

December 3, 1988

My fellow Americans:

There's a meeting in New York next week I'm looking forward to. I'll be getting together next Wednesday on Governor's Island with the leader of the Soviet Union, Chairman Gorbachev. This will be our last such meeting, and I must admit that I would not have predicted after first taking office that someday I would be waxing nostalgic about my meetings with Soviet leaders. But here we are for the fifth time, Mr. Gorbachev and I together, in the hope of furthering peace.

And always in my mind, I go back to that first summit held in 1985 at a private villa on the shores of Lake Geneva. At the first of our fireside talks, I said to Mr. Gorbachev that ours was a unique meeting between two people who had the power to start world war III or to begin a new era for humanity. The opportunity for such a new era is there and very real.

That isn't to say, of course, that that era is already upon us. No, too many fundamental differences on matters such as human rights and regional tensions remain unsettled between East and West. But it is to say that there is the hope of an era in which the terrible nightmares of the postwar era, totalitarianism and nuclear terror, may diminish significantly and—please God—someday fade away. Throughout the postwar period, this has always been America's agenda: that the blessings of peace and freedom we know so well in this country will someday belong to every nation, to every people.

Toward this end, the United States and its allies have, over the last 8 years, pursued a course of public candor and military strength, but also a course of vigorous diplomatic engagement with the Soviets. And the Soviets have responded. The result has been progress on a wide series of fronts. First and most obvious, we have signed the first treaty in history reducing nuclear armaments; indeed, wiping out a whole class of U.S. and Soviet nuclear missiles. So, too, other arms negotiations are moving forward. In pursuing this cause, the Soviets must abide by past agreements. And in this regard, the Krasnoyarsk radar violation remains a significant problem.

In the area of regional conflicts, we've seen a partial Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and a commitment to full withdrawal by February. In Angola, U.S. mediation has led to a cease-fire and prospects for a political settlement and withdrawal of Cuban

troops. In Cambodia, steps have been taken toward a withdrawal of Vietnamese troops. And in other regions, we have seen movement toward peace.

So, too, in our -bilateral relations with the Soviets, there has been movement toward wider exchanges between our two peoples that bring American and Soviet citizens in closer contact and communication.

Finally, but most important, in the area of human rights we have also seen progress. Yes, we welcome recent steps like an end to jamming of Western broadcasts heard in the Soviet Union. But we also are hopeful that talk of democratic reform and greater freedom for all the Warsaw Pact countries will become more than just talk. We hope, for example, for a day when the Soviet Union will permit the publication of the works of Solzhenitsyn or the day when the Berlin Wall will be no more. Yes, we want bold words of reform about political and religious expression to become more than just words.

So, for all the progress and all the hope, the journey to this final meeting between Mr. Gorbachev and me at Governor's Island has been a difficult one. And believe me, the journey toward better Soviet-American relations will remain a difficult one. Yet it is a journey that must continue beyond any single President or term of office. And that's why I'm particularly delighted that Vice President George Bush will be joining Mr. Gorbachev and me at Governor's Island next week.

Now, I've spoken many times about Vice President Bush's foreign policy credentials and his long experience in this field. At every stage in the summit process, he has been at my side. No one is better versed in the details of Soviet-American relations or has a stronger foreign policy portfolio than our Vice President.

So, while our get-together next week will not be a working summit with a formal agenda, you can be sure I'll be telling Mr. Gorbachev that George Bush represents change, yes, but also continuity; that he stands for firmness and strength and candor in the cause of freedom; that he knows intimately the essentials of the Soviet-American relationship; and that the American people do not want treaties for the sake of treaties—they want agreements that endure and help prevent wars as the world moves relentlessly toward a new birth of freedom for all humanity.

Until next week, thanks for listening, and God bless you.