

# New Year's Messages of President Reagan and Soviet General Secretary Gorbachev

January 1, 1986

## President Reagan's Address

Good evening. This is Ronald Reagan, President of the United States of America.

I'm pleased to speak to you on the occasion of the New Year. This is a time for reflection and for hope. As we look back on the year just concluded and on the year that is to come, I want to share with you my hopes for the New Year, hopes for peace, prosperity, and good will that the American and Soviet people share.

Just over a month ago, General Secretary Gorbachev and I met for the first time in Geneva. Our purpose was to begin a fresh chapter in the relations between our two countries and to try to reduce the suspicions and mistrust between us. I think we made a good beginning. Mr. Gorbachev and I spent many hours together, speaking frankly and seriously about the most important issues of our time: reducing the massive nuclear arsenals on both sides, resolving regional conflicts, ensuring respect for human rights as guaranteed under international agreements, and other questions of mutual interest. As the elected representative of the American people, I told Mr. Gorbachev of our deep desire for peace and that the American people do not wish the Soviet people any harm.

While there were many areas which we did not agree, which was to be expected, we left Geneva with a better understanding of one another and of the goals we each have. We are determined to build on that understanding in the coming months and years. One of the most important things on which we agreed was the need to reduce the massive nuclear arsenals on both sides. As I have said many times, a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought; therefore, we agreed to accelerate negotiations where there is common ground to reduce and eventually eliminate the means of nuclear destruction.

Our negotiators will soon be returning to the Geneva talks on nuclear and space arms, where Mr. Gorbachev and I agreed we will seek agreements on the principle of 50-percent reductions in offensive nuclear arms and an interim agreement on intermediate-range nuclear systems. And it's my hope that one day we will be able to eliminate these weapons altogether and rely increasingly for our security on defense systems that threaten no one. Both the United States and Soviet Union are doing research on the possibilities of applying new technologies to the cause of defense. If these technologies become a reality, it is my dream that, well, to one day free us all from the threat of nuclear destruction.

One of the best ways to build mutual understanding is to allow the American and Soviet peoples to get to know one another better. In Geneva we signed a new agreement to exchange our most accomplished artists and academics. We also agreed to expand the contacts between our peoples so that students, teachers, and young people can get to know each other directly. If people in both countries can visit, study, and work together, then we will strengthen the bonds of understanding and build a true foundation for lasting peace.

I also discussed the American people's strong interest in humanitarian issues. Our democratic system is founded on the belief in the sanctity of human life and the rights of the individual -- rights such as freedom of speech, of assembly of movement, and of worship. It is a sacred truth to us that every individual is a unique creation of God, with his or her own special talents, abilities, hopes, and dreams. Respect for all people is essential to peace, and as we agreed in Geneva, progress in resolving humanitarian issues in a spirit of cooperation would go a long way to making 1986 a better year for all of us.

A safe and lasting peace also requires finding peaceful settlements to armed conflicts, which cause so much human suffering in many parts of the world. I have proposed several concrete steps to help resolve such conflicts. It is my hope that in 1986 we will make progress toward this end. I see a busy year ahead in building on the foundations laid in Geneva. There is much work to be done. Mr. Gorbachev will visit the United States later this year, and I look forward to showing him our country. In 1987 I plan to visit your country and hope to meet many of you.

On behalf of the American people, I wish you all a happy and healthy New Year. Let's work together to make it a year of peace; there is no better goal for 1986 or for any year. Let us look forward to a future of chistoye nyebo [blue skies] for all mankind. Thank you, spasibo.

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### General Secretary Gorbachev's Address

Dear Americans:

I see a good augury in the way we are beginning the New Year, which has been declared the Year of Peace. We are starting it with an exchange of direct messages, President Reagan's to the Soviet people and mine to you. This, I believe, is a hopeful sign of change which, though small, is nonetheless a change for the better in our relations. The few minutes that I will be speaking to you strike me as a meaningful symbol of our mutual willingness to go on moving toward each other, which is what your President and I began doing at Geneva. For a discussion along those lines, we had the mandate of our peoples. They want the constructive Soviet-American dialog to continue uninterrupted and to yield tangible results.

As I face you today, I want to say that Soviet people are dedicated to peace, that supreme value equal to the gift of life. We cherish the idea of peace, having suffered for it. Together with the pain of unhealing wounds and the agony of irretrievable losses, it has become part and parcel of our flesh and blood. In our country there is not a single family or a single home that has not kept alive the memory of their kith and kin who perished in the flames of war, the war in which the Soviet and American peoples were allies and fought side by side.

I say this because our common quest for peace has its roots in the past, and that means we have a historic record of cooperation which can today inspire our joint efforts for the sake of the future. The many letters I have received from you and my conversations with your fellow countrymen -- Senators, Congressmen, scientists, businessmen, and statesmen -- have convinced me that in the United States, too, people realize that our two nations should never be at war, that a collision between them would be the greatest of tragedies.

It is a reality of today's world that it is senseless to seek greater security for oneself through new types of weapons. At present, every new step in the arms race increases the danger and the risk for both sides and for all humankind. It is the forceful and compelling demand of life itself that we should follow the path of cutting back nuclear arsenals and keeping outer space peaceful. This is what we are negotiating about at Geneva, and we would very much like those talks to be successful this year.

In our efforts for peace, we should be guided by an awareness of the fact that today history has willed our two nations to bear an enormous responsibility to the peoples of our two countries and, indeed, the peoples of all countries for preserving life on Earth. Our duty to all human kind is to offer it a safe prospect of peace, a prospect of entering the third millenium without fear. Let us commit ourselves to doing away with the threat hanging over humanity. Let us not shift that task onto our children's shoulders.

We can hardly succeed in attaining that goal unless we begin saving up, bit by bit, the most precious capital there is: trust among nations and peoples. And it is absolutely essential to start mending the existing deficit of trust in Soviet-American relations. I believe that one of the main results of my meeting with President Reagan is that, as leaders and as human beings, we were able to take the first step towards overcoming mistrust and to activate the factor of confidence. The gap dividing us is still wide, to bridge it will not be easy, but we saw in Geneva that it can be done. Bridging that gap would be a great feat, a feat our people are ready to perform for the sake of world peace.

I am reminded of the title of a remarkable work of American literature, the novel "The Winter of Our Discontent." In that phrase let me just substitute hope for discontent. And may not only this winter but every season of this year and of the years to come be full of hope for a better future, a hope that, together, we can turn into reality. I can assure you that we shall spare no effort in working for that. For the Soviet people, the year 1986 marks the beginning of a new stage in carrying out our constructive plans. Those are peaceful plans. We have made them known to the whole world.

I wish you a happy New Year. To every American family I wish good health, peace, and happiness.

*Note: The President's remarks were recorded at 9:18 a.m. on December 28 in the Cypress Room at the Century Plaza Hotel in Los Angeles, CA, for television broadcast in the Soviet Union at 1 p.m. on January 1. As printed here, General Secretary Gorbachev's address, which was televised simultaneously in the United States, follows the unofficial Soviet translation contained in the White House press release.*

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/1986/10186a.htm>