

Radio Address to the Nation and the World on the Upcoming Soviet-United States Summit Meeting in Geneva

November 9, 1985

My fellow Americans:

We're expanding the format of our radio broadcast today. During the next 10 minutes, I'll be speaking to the citizens of the Soviet Union over the Voice of America about the upcoming Geneva summit. My words will be directed to them, but I want you to hear what I say. My speech is also being broadcast to over 50 nations by the Worldnet Television Network.

So, good evening, this is Ronald Reagan, President of the United States, speaking to you from Washington about my upcoming meeting with General Secretary Gorbachev in Geneva and my hopes for a better relationship between our two governments. Your leaders can freely appear on American radio and television and be interviewed by our magazines and newspapers. So, I was grateful for my recent and rare opportunity to speak with representatives of the Soviet press. While I appreciate that, only parts of the interview were published in Izvestia, and much of what was left out I think is important. So, I wish to speak to you personally as a husband, father, and grandfather who shares your deepest hopes -- that all of our children can live and prosper in a world of peace.

I grew up in a small town in America's heartland where values of faith in God, freedom, family, friends, and concern for one's neighbors were shared by all -- values you also share. During my school years I worked during vacations, for a time on construction and then for several summers as a lifeguard at a river beach. After finishing my education I became a radio sports announcer, which led to acting in Hollywood where I was elected head of our actor's guild. I'm the only American President who was also president of a labor union. Back then I had no intention of engaging in national politics, but America's a great country filled with opportunities. In the years that followed, including my years as Governor of California and as President, I have not forgotten the values I learned as a boy nor have my fellow Americans.

Now, I know that much has been written in your press about America's hostile intentions toward you. Well, I reject these distortions. Americans are a peace-loving people; we do not threaten your nation and never will. The American people are tolerant, slow to anger, but staunch in defense of their liberties and, like you, their country. More than once, our two countries have joined to oppose a common enemy. During our War of Independence, Russia provided assistance to the distant American colonists. A century and a half later, we joined together to defeat the common enemy of fascism; before that, we were allies in World War I.

Even before we entered World War II, America was supplying massive quantities of food and equipment to those fighting the Nazis. We provided 14,795 aircraft to your forces, 7,056 tanks, more than half a million vehicles, and more than 6 million tons of food and other staples. Americans will never forget the valor, the pain, and, at last, the joy of victory that our peoples shared. I remember President Roosevelt's praise for the Russian people's heroism. How can any of us alive then forget that terrible year of 1941 when the Nazis were repulsed at the gates of Moscow, the courage of Leningraders during the 900-day siege, the victory at Stalingrad, or our historic meeting on the Elbe in 1945? Americans fought for 4 years on all fronts. Many lie buried in northern Africa, Europe, Burma, China, the Pacific islands, and at the bottom of the sea. Some are buried on Soviet soil -- in the hero city of Murmansk, where they had brought precious supplies through the treacherous convoy route.

Yet after that victory, Americans gave generously to help rebuild war-torn countries, even to former enemies, because we had made war on a vicious ideology, not on a people. And we demonstrated our desire for peace by rapidly demobilizing. At the end of 1945, we had an armed force of almost 12 million men; by 1948 we had reduced that number to less than 1\1/2\ million. We were the only country with nuclear weapons. We proposed giving those weapons up altogether to an international authority so that no country would have such destructive power at its disposal. What a pity this idea was not accepted.

Today we must both face the challenge of eliminating nuclear weapons. I have said many times and will say again to you: A nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. I pray God that we can rid the world of these dangerous weapons, in part by finding a reliable defense against them. Our negotiators in Geneva are working hard to reach a breakthrough. I am pleased that the Soviet Union finally responded to our original proposals. We studied the response carefully and replied quickly. These are complicated negotiations and satisfactory results will take long, hard work.

Let me be clear about our research and testing program on strategic defense technologies. Our goal is to make the world safer through development of nonnuclear security shields that would protect people by preventing weapons from reaching their targets and, hopefully, render ballistic missiles obsolete. Your own government has been conducting longstanding and extensive programs on its own defensive systems, including advanced research. The United States is just beginning a long process of investigating defenses. If and when our research proves that a defensive shield against nuclear missiles is practical, I believe our two nations, and those others that have nuclear weapons, should come together and agree on how, gradually, to eliminate offensive nuclear weapons, as we make our defensive system available to all. We ought to start talking about this process at the Geneva arms talks.

We must live together in peace. America's whole history has been a search for peace and opportunity by pioneers seeking freedom, many from the old European order. We're proud of the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Jews, the Armenians, and many others who sailed by our Statue of Liberty and reached our shores. Diversity is one of our great

strengths. This is partly why we're confusing to outsiders. Our government is elected by the people; it is not above the people or above the law. We believe the truth is found through debate and discussion. Truth does not burn in the fire or drown in the water. Our system is often uncomfortable for elected officials, because one of our proudest institutions is a free press. The press criticizes me, and sometimes it hurts, but that is their role -- to raise difficult questions and keep officials accountable to the people. But no one should mistake our freedoms for weakness. We favor free and open dialog not just for Americans, but for all peoples. We believe in freedom of the individual. Freedom of worship, freedom of speech, freedom of the press are, as our Declaration of Independence says, unalienable rights of all men.

Ten years ago the United States and the Soviet Union, along with 33 other countries, signed the Helsinki accords. We all pledged to respect human rights, permit our citizens freedom of speech and travel, and improve communication among the peoples of the signatory nations. America asks the world's leaders to abide by what they have committed themselves to do. As the world's two strongest nations, we owe it to the rest of humanity not only to keep our word but to help find peaceful settlements to local and regional conflicts in Afghanistan, Africa, Latin America, and elsewhere.

We must also join forces against terrorism. There is no place in a civilized world for assassinations, terrorist bombings, and other mindless violence. I strongly urge you and your government to join us in combating terrorism and ensuring that no country will offer succor or comfort to terrorists.

We have much to learn from each other. Americans have long been enriched by your cultural giants. The works of Tolstoy, Dostoyevsky, Turgenev, Chekov, and Pasternak are taught in many American universities; just as American authors from James Fenimore Cooper, Mark Twain, and Jack London to Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner are popular in your country. I want expanded contacts between our two great societies, wherever there is mutual interest. I am particularly interested in increasing exchanges among our young people, for they are our future. We should open a dialog between our nations, so leaders of each country would have the same chance to communicate to the people of the other on television. If more of your citizens visited us, you would understand that our people want peace as fervently as you do.

I hope my discussions with Mr. Gorbachev in Geneva will be fruitful and will lead to future meetings. We seek peace not only for ourselves but for all those who inhabit this small planet. We share borders with three countries -- Mexico, Canada, and the Soviet Union. We pride ourselves on our friendly relations and open borders with our two North American neighbors. And I hope the day will come when that narrow chain of islands stretching from Alaska to the eastern shore of Siberia will symbolize the ties between our two great peoples, not the distance between us.

Everything has a season. Let us hope as we near Christmas and the New Year that this will be the season for peace. Thank you for welcoming me into your homes. God bless you.

Note: The President spoke at 12:06 p.m. from the studios of the Voice of America.