

# **Address to the American and Soviet Peoples on the Soviet-United States Summit Meeting**

**December 8, 1987**

Well, thank you, and thank you all very much, and I think that maybe I got out the wrong set of notes here. Still, I do say thank you very much. General Secretary Gorbachev and distinguished guests, my fellow Americans and citizens of the Soviet Union, the American philosopher, Ralph Waldo Emerson, once wrote that there is properly no history, only biography. He meant by this that it is not enough to talk about history as simply forces and factors. History is ultimately a record of human will, human spirit, human aspirations of Earth's men and women, each with the precious soul and free will that the Lord bestows.

Today I, for the United States, and the General Secretary, for the Soviet Union, have signed the first agreement ever to eliminate an entire class of U.S. and Soviet nuclear weapons. We have made history. And yet many so-called wise men once predicted that this agreement would be impossible to achieve -- too many forces and factors stood against it. Well, still we persevered. We kept at it. And I hope the General Secretary will forgive me if I reveal that in some of the bleakest times, when it did truly seem that an agreement would prove impossible, I bucked myself up with the words of a great Russian, Leo Tolstoy, who wrote: "The strongest of all warriors are those two -- time and patience."

In the next few days, we will discuss further arms reductions and other issues, and again it will take time and patience to reach agreements. But as we begin these talks, let us remember that genuine international confidence and security are inconceivable without open societies with freedom of information, freedom of conscience, the right to publish, and the right to travel. So, yes, we will address human rights and regional conflicts, for surely the salvation of all mankind lies only in making everything the concern of all. With time, patience, and willpower, I believe we will resolve these issues. We must if we're to achieve a true, secure, and enduring peace.

As different as our systems are, there is a great bond that draws the American and Soviet peoples together. It is the common dream of peace. More than 40 years ago we fought in a great war as allies. On the day that news of the enemy's surrender reached Moscow, crowds gathered in front of the American Embassy. There they cheered the friendship of a nation that had opened a second front and sent food, munitions, and trucks to the Soviet peoples as they displayed awesome courage and will in turning the invader back. A young American diplomat later told of a Soviet soldier in the crowds who shouted over and over, "Now it is time to live."

Too often in the decades since then the soldier's dream -- a time to live -- has been put off, at least as far as it concerned genuine peace between our two countries. Yet we Americans have never stopped praying for peace. In every part of the world we want this to be a time to live.

Only those who don't know us believe that America is a materialistic land. But the true America is not supermarkets filled with meats, milk, and goods of all descriptions. It is not highways filled with cars. No, true America is a land of faith and family. You can find it in our churches, synagogues, and mosques -- in our homes and schools. As one of our great writers put it: America is a willingness of the heart -- the universal, human heart -- for Americans come from every part of Earth, including the Soviet Union. We want a peace that fulfills the dream of all peoples to raise their families in freedom and safety. And I believe that if both of our countries have courage and the patience, we will build such a peace.

In the next 2 months, people throughout the world will take part in two great festivals of faith: Hanukkah and Christmas. One is a celebration of freedom, the other of peace on Earth, good will toward men. My great hope is that the biographies of our times will record that we had the will to make this the right season for this summit.

Thank you, and God bless you.

*Note: The President spoke at 2:10 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House. His remarks were translated into Russian by an interpreter. The address was broadcast live on television. Following the broadcast, the President and the General Secretary met with U.S. and Soviet officials to discuss arms reduction and bilateral issues.*

