

Mikhail GORBACHEV

To Feel Responsible for the World's Destiny

**Speeches Made at the Meeting
of Representatives of the Parties and Movements
Participating in the Celebration
of the 70th Anniversary
of the Great October Socialist Revolution**

Moscow, November 4-5, 1987

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Speech on November 4, 1987

Esteemed Comrades and friends,

My greetings to you again—this time as participants in our Meeting, which is unusual from all points of view and reflects the deep-going changes taking place in the world of today.

I take this opportunity to thank you for coming, and for taking part in our celebrations. This is an honour and great support for us.

Dear Comrades and friends,

All of you attended the festive meeting in honour of the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution. I therefore do not need to speak again of our affairs. Here I would like to share a few ideas elaborating on what I said in my report.

When the mighty revolutionary wave sweeping across Europe and the whole world receded, the revolutionary wave that was brought about by the October Revolution, Lenin realized before anyone else the whole complexity of the movement leading towards the goals which, as it seemed to many, the October Revolution had brought so much closer. His concept of a New Economic Policy took his idea of peaceful coexistence ("peaceful cohabitation") out of the initially purely political, even diplomatic, sphere into the sphere of the fundamental laws of the epoch.

Later, it is true, other notions would at times gain the upper hand, but now we have once and for all put an end to the attempts to play around with history, for

there were times when we proceeded not from reality but from what we wanted to see.

The specific features of world development which had been building up and maturing throughout the entire postwar period became clearly visible in the 1980s. This applies, first and foremost, to the specific features of the nuclear age, which has pushed to the forefront the problem of humanity's very survival. This also applies to the process, which is stimulated by the scientific and technological revolution, of world-wide economic ties becoming more complicated, of all the world's countries and nations becoming more interdependent, and of the world becoming an integral whole in diverse and contradictory conditions. Finally, this applies to the exacerbation of the global problems that are challenging man's biological ability to adapt to the dangers, pace and stress of modern living.

All this brings out new elements of the idea of peaceful coexistence, which requires that political movements reexamine and reconsider their tasks and overcome prevailing ideological schemes and stereotypes.

This is not easy to do. No one has any ready-made prescriptions. It is unlikely that someone holds in his hands Ariadne's thread, which would help us get out of the labyrinth of the present-day contradictory world. As we set forth our concepts of a new way of thinking, we are not in any way claiming a monopoly on the truth: we are engaged in a search ourselves and invite others to join us in looking for ways by which humanity could get cross the "minefield" of our times and enter the 21st century—nuclear-free and non-violent.

Certainly, in the historical perspective, it is socialism—of this we are convinced—that will make the decisive contribution to overcoming the critical elements that have arisen in civilization's development. No other system but socialism has the potential effectively to influence the search for that Hegelian "measure", that balance of interests, which will enable humanity to break through to a fundamentally

new frontier, a frontier which will mean safety for it. Socialism's potential has far from being fully exhausted, yet.

In essence, **a most profound social revolution**, which originated in the 1917 October Revolution, **is under way**. But its long duration, novelty, and lack of uniformity, the combination and coexistence of progressive changes and backward shifts, the alternation and interconnection of revolutionary and evolutionary processes—all this makes any logical scheme drawn up by the old manuals inapplicable.

The logic of the social movement of our epoch is increasingly apparent. Its essence is the material and spiritual self-discreditation of the exploiting society.

Neither the negative pages in socialism's history, nor the entire libraries of works refuting Marxism, nor the acuteness and refinement of the ideological polemics going on in the world have been able to disprove the conclusion that there is an alternative to capitalism. And this alternative is socialism.

However, there are still many ways in which the world can develop. At each successive spiral of history the forces of the old world are able to eliminate the most dangerous contradictions at that moment, and thus extend their domination. That is what happened, for example, when capitalism took advantage of the scientific and technological revolution. Of course, the intrinsic antagonisms of the capitalist system reappear at every new stage, but in a new and different form.

To be sure, the new stage of the scientific and technological revolution is just beginning, and the main results of its use by capitalism are still to come. Thorough theoretical study of this matter is also at an early stage. The essence of what is happening to the mode of production is only just beginning to show behind the familiar formula about the continuous aggravation of capitalism's general crisis, to say nothing of political forecasts.

The fact that real socialism is so far tailing behind capitalism in technological development has also slowed us down in grasping the ongoing processes.

The conditions for overcoming this lag are taking shape as perestroika, the revolutionary reorganization of socialist society, makes headway, and as socialist society attains a qualitatively new state. Yet, it is this society, the society of tomorrow, that represents the higher type of socialism that will help those who are looking for a social alternative.

You may have recalled that in the report at the festive meeting I spoke of two especially dangerous manifestations of capitalism's objective laws: militarization and non-equivalent exchange with the developing world. However, they are possible only if they are backed by an appropriate governmental policy. But that policy will continue to enjoy support so long as fear of the "Soviet threat" remains and so long as people continue to believe that there are "priority" national interests and secondary ones, that there are "subjects" of world politics and the economy and there are "objects", that is, the sphere of neocolonialism.

Our perestroika, with all its international consequences, is eliminating the fear of the "Soviet threat", and militarism is losing its political justification. The unacceptable and pernicious waste of resources on armaments is also becoming ever more obvious both in the light of the ecological danger and due to growing unemployment, which is becoming an entirely different problem than it was before in view of the new spiral of the scientific and technological revolution. Danger signals are also coming from the financial system, which is not coping with the extreme burden of the arms race, the astronomical state debts, and the hegemonic economic egoism.

On the other hand, the new impulse of liberation building up at the present stage in the Third World (as for the term itself, I agree with Ram Ratan Ram whose opinion I heard here) threatens to explode if the developing countries do not obtain an equal place in the world economy, if the idea of a New International Economic Order is not realized, and the task of "disarmament for development" is not put on a practical plane.

Those are the elements of the world process which are responsible for the build-up of "critical mass", which poses the question of whether civilization is to be or not to be, and which affects everything going on in the world.

It is no longer possible to look at world development in just the context of the struggle of the two opposing social systems. The dialectics of this development represent unity, contention, competition and interaction of a multitude of factors, and it is in this interaction of different societies that each society is put to the test. This does not mean, of course, that there can be any sort of unification or convergence between them.

We will not in any way renounce the genuine values of socialism. On the contrary, we will enrich them, and at the same time get rid of everything that distorted the humanitarian idea of our system. We do not expect our class adversary to become "enamoured" by us. We do not need that at all. We are counting on life to force our class adversary to reckon with the realities and realize that we are all in the same boat, and that we must make sure that it does not capsize.

For socialism this policy secures a merging of its class interests as a system and the interests of all humanity. And for capitalism, too, there is no other sensible way than coexistence and competition.

Joint action alone can lessen and remove the global danger of an ecological "heart attack". The problem became an international one long ago. No country is likely to come up with a radical solution to the energy problem all by itself, and is even less likely to develop the riches of the World Ocean this way. Finally, only the collective reason of mankind is a match for the job of going into outer space and further to the solar and stellar expanses of outer space.

In this context, the international responsibility of the progressive forces of our time, among which the **communist movement** holds and will always hold a worthy and prestigious place, is extraordinarily high.

As a representative of the CPSU here, I would like to add a few words to what I said about that movement in my report the day before yesterday. Like many other things in the modern world, the communist movement needs rejuvenation and qualitative changes.

Today it is especially important that it is not only a national, but by its very nature also an international force. Mankind needs such a force today. As for the CPSU, it cannot even think of its domestic plans and affairs outside the international context, and, of course, considers what those plans will mean or could mean for those who share our ideals, and for all progressive forces in general. We ourselves were strongly aware of the sharp decline in socialism's international influence during the stagnation period. So perestroika in the Soviet Union became vital from this point of view as well. We are fully aware of the importance of our work at the new stage not only on the worldwide economic and political plane, but also as regards moral support for the forces of socialism, democracy, and progress.

But parallel activity in our own countries alone is not enough. There must also be joint action—but, of course, in up-to-date forms. What is needed, if I may put it this way, is a more sophisticated **culture of mutual relations** among the progressive forces. A kind that would make it possible to amass all the diverse experience and that would help us appreciate the varicoloured diversity of the surrounding world and its contradictory nature. The "arrogance of omniscience" is akin to fear of one's inability to cope with new problems. It testifies to the tenacious habit of rejecting other points of view out of hand. Here there can be no dialogue, no productive discussion. And worst of all, it is the cause that suffers.

Just as not all of the propositions of Marx and Engels could be dogmatically extrapolated to the imperialist epoch at the beginning of the century, so too the postulates of the 50s and the 60s, let alone the 30s, are of no use in assessing the world today. A new comprehensive analysis of the theoretical legacy of our predecessors in the name of man's social

emancipation is needed—an analysis which would give a precise definition of the new realities and would yield the best political conclusions.

There are many questions that must be answered in the search for a programme alternative to the antagonistic society and to tensions arising from confrontation in the world arena. Our Party and its theoreticians and scholars are attacking these questions in earnest, rejecting notions and schemes that were born in another time and were based on other possibilities for displaying initiative.

We issue an invitation for cooperation and a joint search not only to the fraternal parties and Communists, but also to Socialists and Social-Democrats, to Labourites, to followers of other trends in political thought and action, to all those who cherish the gains of the human spirit, who want to safeguard and use those gains for the benefit of coming generations. This work is vitally important for understanding the new situation, when the rejuvenation of civilization has become part of the task of ensuring the survival of the human race.

New way of thinking is also a new morality, a new psychology. Its aim is for every person, while remaining a citizen of his own country, a member of his own party, an activist of any progressive national movement, to become aware of his responsibility for what the whole world is to be and whether it is to be at all.

Speech on November 5, 1987

Comrades, we are completing the evening session of the second day of our Meeting.

I want to brief you on the state of our work. Present at the Meeting are 178 delegations. Representatives of 119 parties and organizations have asked for the floor. Sixty-three people have spoken in the past two days. That is the objective situation.

We have two options open to us:

The **first** and the more realistic one, I think, is to complete the Meeting today, and to ask the Comrades who wanted to speak and could not do so due to the lack of time to hand in the texts of their speeches for publication in *Pravda*, just as those who did get the floor will do.

The **second** option is to hold one more session tomorrow, a morning session, but, as you see, this will not solve the problem.

Let us discuss that.

(The participants unanimously chose the first option.)

Dear Comrades, as we have agreed in a democratic way, we are now completing our Meeting.

I do not have the authority to draw conclusions or to sum up the results of the Meeting. And I do not think anyone could do this right now. But since you entrusted me with the task of presiding over the Meeting, and it must be concluded somehow, allow

me to express just a few impressions as the Meeting's Chairman.

I would look at our Meeting in the context of the present-day international situation, which—and this has also been confirmed by our two-days-long exchange of views—has at least **two most important characteristics**.

First, we all agree that the contemporary world has come up against a host of problems it has never faced before. These are new realities which we must see.

Second, all of us are witness to the fact that there is mounting concern in the world for the destiny of peace and the destiny of civilization, concern over the fact that problems affecting millions of people are getting worse.

And this concern has stirred broad masses of working people to action throughout the world.

Obviously today it is correct to note—and this is a politically important statement—that millions of people have emerged on the proscenium of history.

Quite naturally this has had a profound effect on political movements and, to be more specific, has evoked serious response, above all, from the world working-class movement and from progressive movements. We all felt, as it were, the need for both joint reflection and interaction. That is why we got together at this Meeting.

I would like to emphasize that, in essence, the nature of the current epoch and the course of events have placed an immense responsibility on all of us for the destinies of peace and mankind. Precisely this factor, as we see it, is that objective prerequisite of our unique Meeting which is by itself evidence that we have entered a new epoch.

I believe—and many speakers have spoken about this—that by attending such a Meeting we have made a step demonstrating our awareness of our responsibility in the face of new problems and of the broad working masses' deep concerns. The exchange of views here has centered on all this.

The Soviet delegation believes that the Meeting has

lived up to our expectations and has removed some of the fears some people used to have.

Nobody has lost anything but we all, I believe, have gained a great deal. I would even say that, having exchanged views and experience in struggle, we have learned many instructive things.

Thus we can congratulate each other, and I congratulate you.

I would like to make special mention of the atmosphere that reigned here for the past two days. Perhaps this is the most substantial point: we are changing, both from the standpoint of our understanding of the world we live in and from the standpoint of our views on the nature of our mutual relations. I would like to add: the statements made here give us the right to assume that the worst, the most difficult in our relations is behind us, although for us the future is not likely to be a leisurely stroll.

Despite all the differences between us and the peculiar features we all have, we are united—and this is absolutely obvious from all the speeches—by **two things**: all of us are acting in the interests of the working people and all of us are prepared to do our utmost to avert the threat of war and improve international relations.

The Meeting has indeed reflected the diversity of the contemporary world and the various conditions in which each of us is working, the specific character of the way of thinking and approaches.

We have come to know each other better and—what is most important—we have become convinced that we can speak to each other frankly, candidly, with respect, and I would say, in a comradely manner.

I believe that the Meeting has given us much food for thought, for reflection, for quests in the spirit of creative thinking and creative understanding of the world we are living in and of our new role in that world.

Dear Comrades, it has been extremely interesting and important for us to listen to what you have said and learn about your appreciation of and an attitude to the processes taking place in Soviet society today.

In other words—to our perestroika. We regard your words as a demonstration of support for our work which is by no means easy, as a manifestation of solidarity with us in our efforts.

The CPSU, working for the development and rejuvenation of Soviet society—a process in which all the people are actively participating—sets itself the task of revealing the potential of socialism, of socialist democracy and of taking our society to qualitatively new frontiers. We regard this work which we are doing in the interests of our people as something being done in the interests of all mankind as well.

I would like to express my heartfelt and sincere gratitude to you for responding, for coming to Moscow and taking part in the ceremonies marking the 70th Anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution.

I thank you on behalf of our Party and the entire people. I wish you, dear Comrades, all the best and every success in your work.

Михаил Сергеевич Горбачев

ПРОНИКНУТЬСЯ ОТВЕТСТВЕННОСТЬЮ ЗА СУДЬБУ МИРА

Выступления на встрече представителей партий и движений,
прибывших на празднование 70-летия Великого Октября

Москва, 4—5 ноября 1987 года

на английском языке

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