

Appeal of Conscience Foundation
"Man of History" Award
Presented to
Mikhail S. Gorbachev
Washington, D.C.
June 1, 1990

Address by Rabbi Arthur Schneier, D.D.
President, Appeal of Conscience Foundation
Senior Rabbi, Park East Synagogue, New York City

Mr. President, you made history in April of 1988 when you discussed the role of believers with the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, the late Patriarch Pimen, in Moscow. Last December you made history when you journeyed to the Vatican to meet with Pope John Paul II, as the first Soviet leader in 70 years to have this encounter, ending seven decades of conflict. And today, you are making history again in this meeting with a Rabbi who also speaks for an ecumenical coalition of major faiths in the United States, the Appeal of Conscience Foundation.

President Gorbachev, in Judaism it is a tradition to pronounce a Blessing on meeting a head of state. In welcoming you to these shores as you engage in dialogue with President Bush and explore the length and breadth of our country, I am privileged to invoke this ancient Blessing: "Blessed are thou, O God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments and who has given of His glory to human beings."

We honor you, today, President Gorbachev, for your vision and courage in chartering political and economic reforms of epic proportions in the Soviet Union. One of the most important qualities of leadership is vision -- the ability to see beyond the immediate. Another is courage -- the ability to lead and to act. These qualities you possess in full measure as you bring your country into a new era, proving once again that one can make a difference. The man and the historic moment met and the world is the better for it.

Two years ago, you brought joy into the hearts of religious communities by proclaiming that "believers are Soviet people, workers, patriots, and they have the full right to express their convictions with dignity." Shortly thereafter, as a guest speaker at the Millennium of the Russian Orthodox Church, I stated that "Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Moslems--all believers--are ready, willing and able to do their share in the restructuring of society.

As a student of history you have understood that in order to unleash the full potential of the Soviet people, they must have freedom of association, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion. With historic insight, you have proceeded to institutionalize these changes into a body of law and are determined to make the rule of law a permanent feature of Soviet society.

You have understood that nations, like men, must live together in harmony on this planet. In your book, Perestroika, you wrote:

"...for all the diversity of social and political systems...this world is nevertheless one whole. We are all passengers aboard one ship, the Earth, and we must not allow it to be wrecked. There will be no second Noah's Ark."

As the architect of glasnost and perestroika, you have initiated policies that have changed the course of world events in our time. The winds of political and personal freedom in Europe have provided new hope to millions.

Your commitment and support of the principle of dialogue between nations in building friendship and mutual trust have had a profound impact on all mankind. You are truly a "Man of History".

As a distinguished graduate of Moscow University, you know the value of education in strengthening mutual understanding.

We of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation share that view. To implement this principle, we have signed an Agreement with the Soviet State Committee for Public Education to create the Gorbachev Scholar program. The Co-Chairman of our Committee is the distinguished former Deputy Secretary of State, Honorable John C. Whitehead, who is here with us.

This program will enable ten graduate students from the Soviet Union to study at American universities for the academic year beginning September of 1991. We want to open up new avenues to young men and women from the Soviet Union so that they may know and understand our country and our people. We will welcome the Gorbachev Scholars with open arms and open hearts, just as the American people have welcomed you to our land.

And so at this time, Mr. President, I am honored to present to you the Appeal of Conscience Foundation's first "Man of History" Award in the form of this Steuben crystal star. I also present you with this leather binder containing the protocol of the Agreement to establish the Gorbachev Scholar Program along with a listing of Charter Sponsors:

The Citation reads:

APPEAL OF CONSCIENCE FOUNDATION

"MAN OF HISTORY" AWARD

Presented to

MIKHAIL SERGEYEVICH GORBACHEV

President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

for his vision of common humanity

and for leadership

that has changed the course of history,

giving hope and promise to the world.

THE GORBACHEV SCHOLAR PROGRAM

is established in his name to enable graduate students from the Soviet Union to study in the United States and explore the American experience in their disciplines. In the spirit of

Malta, this program seeks to enhance mutual understanding, through education, between the United States and the Soviet Union.

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Rabbi Arthur Schneier
President

Congratulations, President Gorbachev, and God bless you.