

Redetranscript seiner Dankesworte anlässlich der Verleihung des MTV Free Your Mind Awards

beim CINEMA FOR PEACE Ehrendinner am 8. November 2009

Please take your seats. Thank you very much, thank you MTV, thank you, for having shared your thoughts with us.

You know people change. When I was in 10th grade, I chose the theme "Stalin is our Glory" for my graduation paper. Then years passed (I went to the university, then did political work in the Stavropol region and, finally, was elected General Secretary). And there unfolded many opportunities for me to get information about the past, including mass executions. Many of them were performed at Stalin's direct order. Millions of people fell victims to repressions in the years of Stalin's regime. I believed: people must know about this. When one learns about all these things, one must speak, one must speak out, and this is a time when I say: Stalin is a man who committed horrible crimes against the people of his country.

Having become member of the Politbureau, that was in 1980, I gained access to a number of secret documents, not to all, but to quite a few. I learned about nuclear weapons, I learned about the danger of nuclear weapons. To compare: one Russian "SS 18 missile" was called "Satan" in the West. Just one such missile could cause huge destruction. And there were thousands of such nuclear missiles, so you can imagine what could happen. And what about "Persings" that were installed in Europe and directed at Russia? It would have taken those missiles just two or three minutes, maximum five minutes, to reach Saint Petersburg and seven minutes to reach the Volga. So, we had a gun at the temple of our heads.

A person who has conscience, a person who has responsibility, cannot look at such thing quietly. This is something that kept me concerned, and I could not just sit back counting of missiles. Counting missiles on the one side, counting missiles on the other side. I came to the conclusion it was totally immoral to just continue the way it had been. Of course, decision-making on all those problems involved a tremendous risk and a tremendous responsibility.

We've been friends for many years with Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Barbara, he is a person one can rely on. I must say that when I started to propose my programs of peacefully changing international affairs, quite a few people in Europe and particularly in the US were skeptical. They said, well, this is just another hollow statement by another general secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. Hans-Dietrich Genscher said: "Gorbachev represents a new generation of Soviet leaders, let us try to trust him". Genscher said: "Let us take this man at his word. What he is saying he is saying to his people and also to the world. Let us give him a test. If he is deceiving us that would be his political death". And then they started to accuse Genscher of being too trustful, that all this was an unrealistic approach, "Genscherism". And so every major step that he took was taking a risk but Genscher stood his ground.

So thank you for having recalled the problem of nuclear weapons here in this audience. Today there still are nuclear weapons in the world, enough to undermine the very foundations of the life we have. But now with President Obama, the process of nuclear arms negotiation has resumed in the United States and Russia. It seems that a new agreement will be signed. That is very important because the nuclear weapons are still a big problem. And that is why the Gorbachev Foundation and various American foundations and associations are working on those issues, We are developing and declaring our evaluation of the situation. We are saying that still there is a lot that needs to be done.

Now as regards music. Since my childhood I have known some songs that my mother taught me. I sang some songs to Irina, who is present here, and also to Raisa. I do love music and I am very glad to be here among you. Among the people who have done a great deal, the artists, I mean, who have done a great deal over the past years and decades for people to understand the importance of the environment and the importance of the future of our planet earth. Musicians, artists, actors have done a great deal to make people understand the issues, the global issues that the world is facing. To make people understand that they must be involved. Without their involvement, the world will not become better. Musicians and artists, can do a great deal and they are doing a great deal. So I wanted to take this opportunity to say "Thank you" for your unique creativity. In politics one can sometimes do without too

much talent, in art, one cannot. Thank you and I wish you a lot of good luck and high spirits, just like tonight.