
FOREWORD



*(L to R) The author,
and Mikhail Gorbachev*

I first met Dr. James Martin in Moscow in the summer of 2012. Though we come from very different backgrounds, we belong to the same generation. We know firsthand what the twentieth century meant for humankind, with two devastating world wars followed by the Cold War and the nuclear arms race.

We agreed to work together to advance the goal that I continue to regard as a top priority—the goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Our conversation vividly brought back to me the memories of the years when the momentum of the arms race slowed down and the world began ridding itself of the weapons of mass destruction.

It all started in Geneva, at my first summit meeting with the President of the United States. After difficult discussions, Ronald Reagan

and I adopted a joint statement that contained two main points: first, that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought; and a second, equally important point, that the USSR and the United States will not seek military superiority over one another.

It was my view that since the leaders of the two major powers had agreed on those points, negotiations must be conducted in a new way. But even after Geneva the negotiations were stalled. What is more, overall relations between our two countries were tense. In the spring of 1986 US Navy ships entered our territorial waters in the Black Sea. We had to push them back.

I proposed to the President that we meet in Reykjavik because I felt we had to break the negative tendency and move the nuclear arms talks off the ground. Our proposals were clear and concrete: to cut in half the entire triad of strategic nuclear weapons; to eliminate medium range missiles in Europe; to stop nuclear testing; and to prevent an arms race in outer space.

Our discussions in Reykjavik were substantive and productive. We agreed on the main issues. Not only did we set the goal of implementing fifty-percent cuts in five years—we agreed that our final goal was a world without nuclear weapons. What stood in the way of agreement was the Strategic Defense Initiative—the US President's pet project. He insisted that we give a green light to the testing of weapons in space. I could not agree to that.

The agreement that could have become historic was not signed. But at the press conference that followed the summit, I said to the hundreds of journalists who had gathered there: "This is not a failure but a breakthrough. We have looked over the horizon, to the prospect of a nuclear weapon-free world."

Subsequent events confirmed my assessment. The impetus from Reykjavik enabled us to sign, just one year later, the Treaty on the elimination of medium and shorter range missiles. Let me emphasize something that is often overlooked: the ceilings and parameters agreed in Reykjavik began to take effect even before the formal treaties were

signed. The numbers of nuclear weapons stopped growing.

In 1991, I signed with President George Bush the first START treaty. We also agreed on the elimination of the greater part of tactical nuclear weapons. The implementation of the Reykjavik program began. We established a rapid pace of reductions, which, had it been maintained, could have brought us much farther than where we are now.

Of course, much has been achieved since then. The Cold War has been relegated to the past. The danger of a global nuclear conflict is no longer imminent. Thousands of nuclear weapons have been destroyed.

There is much, however, that continues to be alarming. Nuclear arsenals are still large and dangerous—over 20 thousand, by the latest count, with 5 thousand of them deployed and ready to fire. Hundreds of nuclear weapons continue to be deployed in Europe. The Treaty on the cessation of nuclear testing has not entered into force. New nuclear weapon states have appeared, and there is a continued threat of nuclear proliferation. Right before our eyes, a new arms race is being launched, and the threat of weapons in outer space is again looming. The promise not to seek military superiority has been forgotten. A single country accounts for almost a half of the world's military spending.

If this situation continues, the goal of a world without nuclear weapons will be unattainable. And one day, this gun will fire! What must be done to prevent it?

We need demilitarization: the demilitarization of international relations and the demilitarization of political thinking. We need real steps that would prove to the world that nuclear powers are serious about their obligation under Article 6 of the Non-proliferation Treaty—to eliminate nuclear weapons. Military budgets should be cut to levels needed only for defense, and all countries must renounce attempts to achieve military superiority.

This is how I see the agenda. Some may say that it is unrealistic, that it is utopian. But I have to say that twenty-five years ago many believed that it was impossible to put an end to confrontation, to stop the arms race and to begin eliminating the huge stockpiles of weapons

of war. Yet, the leaders of the two nuclear powers had the political will to act, and the process got under way despite all obstacles.

What is needed most today is precisely that: the political will. We need a new level of leadership, collective leadership, of course. We need to remember the lessons of the twentieth century in order to rid the world of its legacy—the legacy of militarism, violence against people and nature, and the weapons of mass destruction.

I very much want to be an optimist.

I hope Dr. Martin's book will be read by policy-makers and by ordinary citizens. It is a call to action.

Mikhail Gorbachev
Moscow
September 2012