

UPF International: In Memoriam: Mikhail Gorbachev

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UPF-International - Our sincere condolences go out to the family and friends of Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev, the former leader of the Soviet Union, who died on August 30 after a long illness. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres said, "The world has lost a towering global leader, committed multilateralist, and tireless advocate for peace." Mr. Gorbachev received many awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize (1990) for his role in bringing the Cold War to a peaceful end a year after the Berlin Wall fell.

Growing up under Stalin's regime, Mr. Gorbachev experienced German occupation in World War II. After the war, he studied law in Moscow and pursued a career in the Communist Party. In 1985, he was elected the new leader of the Soviet Union. He sought to reform communism and introduced the concepts glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring).

UPF's founders met President and Mrs. Gorbachev in April 1990 in Moscow at an international conference co-hosted by the Summit Council for World Peace, the Association for the Unity of Latin America (AULA), and the World Media Association. Four years later, in March 1994, President Gorbachev delivered the keynote address at the second World Peace Conference of the Federation for World Peace in Seoul, Korea.

Afterward, there was a ceremony conferring AULA's Latin American Order of Liberty and Unity on President and Mrs. Gorbachev. There was also a moving exchange of autographed books. President Gorbachev offered a signed copy of his Memoirs and was given a signed copy of Reverend Moon's Divine Principle, the core teachings of the Unification Church.

Reverend and Mrs. Moon expressed tremendous admiration for Mr. Gorbachev and the courageous steps he took to end the Cold War. At a private dinner in their residence in Seoul, Reverend Moon said: "Mr. President, you accomplished a great and incredible thing. You gave up the position of president of the Soviet Union. ... Through your wisdom and courage, world peace has been accomplished without war. You have liberated the people of the world from the horror of a terrible nuclear holocaust. Do not feel sorry for yourself, thinking that you have lost something. You have obtained the biggest thing imaginable, an eternal thing, a beautiful thing, a great thing. You have accomplished the will and purposes of God."

President Gorbachev was married for 46 years to the former Raisa Maximovna Titarenko, a university lecturer, from 1953 until her death from leukemia in 1999. The Gorbachevs have one daughter and two grandchildren.

UPF International expresses our gratitude to Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev and the legacy that has touched and continues to impact the lives of so many around the world.