**The Unveiling Ceremony of the Gorbachev-Reagan Statue**

**Burganov Museum, Moscow, Monday, July 3, 2017**

**The Speech of Michael S. Karlen, Editor
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**Geneva/New York**

I remember well the discussions I had with my father in neutral Switzerland when President Gorbachev made his unilateral disarmament proposals. My father was very critical, while I was hugely inspired. At that time I was ready to put my young life at the service of this brave and great man.

What a relief when the frozen relations between the two superpowers thawed and the very imminent threat of a nuclear holocaust disappeared as the smiling Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev appeared side by side in growing friendship.

I am happy and grateful to have observed this historic moment because it proved to me, and to the world, that the reality of friendly relations, of solidarity, of constructive and visionary politics, can be achieved.

And now, how to go forward? Where are the Reagans and Gorbachevs of today? Where is the vision, where is the will to attain these lofty heights in international relations again?

We are all very concerned about the current situation and the future of our planet.

Here, I would suggest to take the same approach as Vladimir Petrovsky, Deputy Foreign Minister under President Gorbachev and later an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Director-General of the UN office in Geneva. I had the good fortune to work closely with him for several years. While keenly observing the world situation, he often said, “I am a historical optimist.”

Indeed, if we look at history, mankind has always found ways to move forward, and overall the movement has been positive. There are countless individuals, organizations and initiatives working with intense consecration and dedication towards a positive and sustainable future for our world. I believe it comes down to each individual making wise decisions in his own life, drawing inspiration from both global and personal heroes.

The Director of the Peace Meditation at the United Nations, Sri Chinmoy, said: ***“Peace is not the hope of our life; Peace is the promise of our breath.”***

Mikhail Sergeyevich expresses the same commitment when he says:***“If not me, who? If not now, when?”***

And most of us would probably agree with Ronald Reagan when he says “**A people free to choose will always choose peace**.”

In that spirit, Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan stand as shining and lasting examples. Let us follow the road that they have revealed for us.