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“I don’t think he’s had much experience in global relations. The General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union from 1985 to 1991, and President of the Soviet Union from 1989 to 1991, Gorbachev was executed the 1980 Nobel Peace Prize for his outstanding efforts to end the Cold War. In the 1980s, during one of the one of the most important decades in the Cold War, when relations between the East and West were very tense, Gorbachev initiated arms control talks, ended the Soviet War in Afghanistan, and released Soviet control over communist states in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev coined two important words, recognized in all languages of the world - perestroika (governmental and economic restructuring) and glasnost (political openness) - and began the revolutionary political and economic reforms which these two new words symbolized. The first half of Gorbachev’s speech was a reflection on his reforms in the former Soviet Union. “The moment came when we needed to conclude that the small steps that we had been taking were not producing the expected results, were not allowing people to move forward. At that time we needed to do something bold... We understood it was necessary to change the system.” The latter half of the talk focused on the present and the ways in which Gorbachev feels the collapse of the Soviet Union has shaped the current global landscape. Gorbachev does not believe the world situation has evolved properly, instead he believes we are facing a crisis. “The environment, food shortages, poverty, all of these problems are because we don’t have a system of global governance. I must say I have been disappointed over these past years by many developments we have witnessed,” he argued. Throughout the course of his lecture, it became clear that Gorbachev believes it is time, again, to do something bold and change the system.”

When Gorbachev and his contemporaries began to enact change, they were the ‘new generation.’ He told us that it had been their responsibility to “not put security and the safety of the Russian people.” In America, this ‘new generation’ is ours. Gorbachev expressed his belief that any change to come to the world is going to come from the students and ordinary people - not from the individuals already in power. He told us that he is saying the same thing to the people of Russia: “Those who want...”