

Drawing Parallels Between Reagan and Trump

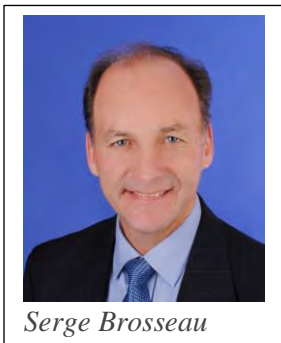
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I recently watched the movie "[Reagan](#)" with some friends at a local theater. It is based on the book, *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism*.

We follow former KGB agent Viktor Petrovich, played by Jon Voight, recounting and commenting on the life of the 40th president to a young Russian agent. Dennis Quaid plays Reagan in a convincing way. I find that actors do well when they have affection for the characters they play, and clearly, this is the case here. The love story between Ronald and Nancy brings also a romantic touch to the narrative.

This independent production illuminates Reagan's life of faith. It is part of a new trend in Hollywood of Christian-based productions, like the 2022 movie "Sound of Freedom" about sex trafficking, that were successful at the box office. The critics gave it mostly negative reviews, but it draws public interest as the election season is heating up.



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One of the happy memories I have of my early years in the movement was the night that Reagan was elected. I joined in Berkeley, CA, in June 1977, and by November 1980, I was fundraising with a team in Little Rock, AR. We stayed at the church center where Rev. Richard Buessing was the state leader. We celebrated the election result with a few members, which we felt was very hopeful for the country. Watching the movie brought some of this back. It inspired me to draw several parallels between the presidency and the personalities of Reagan and Trump in connection with this current election season, namely Ronald and Donald.

First of all, the movie opens up with the scene of Reagan delivering a speech at the Washington Hilton on March 30, 1981. He is shot and wounded as he departs. Three people are injured, including his press secretary, James Brady. When Reagan arrived at the hospital, he was considered "right at the margin of death," but he recovered quickly. It is said that Reagan came to believe that God had spared his life "for a chosen mission." We know that True Father, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, went deep into prayer, considering how important Reagan's life was to be spared as the nation's political leader.

Some 43 years later, Trump is holding an open-air rally in Butler, Pennsylvania. He is shot and wounded in his upper right ear. He is one inch away from being assassinated. One man in the audience is killed, and two others are critically wounded. On the day of the rally, on July 13, True Mother, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, is in Las Vegas. Upon hearing of the shooting, she sends a message delivered to Trump expressing the fact that it is "providential" that his life was spared. He has frequently stated that it was God who saved his life.

Second, neither of these men was a career politician. Reagan was well-known as an actor. When his status as a leading man declined after World War II, he eventually turned to television doing commercials and hosting a program.

Trump, on the other hand, was known as a real estate magnate who enjoyed celebrity status in New York City and beyond, but he reached greater recognition as the host of the popular program "The Apprentice" for 14 years. The difference between them is that Reagan became governor of California for eight years before becoming president, while Trump had to quit his TV show while announcing his candidacy and had no prior experience in any public office.

Third, before Reagan came to power, the Carter administration was soft on Communism. President Carter was willing to denounce human rights abuses in certain countries, like in South America, while staying mute towards communist countries where human rights were denied to a far greater extent. Communism made many inroads around the world during that time. Reagan took a different approach than Carter to confront communism and eventually labeled the Soviet Union as an evil empire. While he was the president of the Screen Actors Guild, he learned about communism and its effort to infiltrate Hollywood. As we see in the movie, he eventually delivered a speech near the Brandenburg Gate in 1987, where he asked then-president Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall; it was ultimately torn down shortly after he left office, and the Soviet Union dissolved two years later.

Communism is, unfortunately, still alive, but this time, the threat comes from China under General Secretary Xi Jinping. In its dealings with the Biden administration after Trump, China requested that the US not challenge its governance, to which the administration agreed. This current policy is one of appeasement towards Communist China that started with President Obama for the sake of trade. Trump changed the posture towards China from free trade to protectionist tariffs and confrontation. To his credit, Biden largely left Trump's policies intact and continued to turn the screws on the export of sensitive technology. Also, he has maintained a resolute posture towards Russia in the Ukraine war, which China has to consider before making a move to take over Taiwan. But now that Kamala Harris replaced Biden in the election, she chose Tim Walz as her running mate. He made more than 30 trips to China in the '90s. That puts him squarely as a friend of China. What influence will he have on the policy if Harris is elected?

Fourth, the movie shows that Reagan's father, Jack, was an alcoholic and that his mother, Nelle, instilled in him Christian values. We see him baptized in the water as he becomes a born-again Christian. Later on, while governor, he holds prayers with Pat Boone and pastor George K. Otis, who prophesies that he will become president if he "walks uprightly" before God. Trump's older brother, Fred Jr., was an alcoholic and died at 42. His parents joined the Marble Collegiate Church, part of the Reformed Church in America. He attended that church but was not an active member. At some point, though, while flipping channels one night in Florida, Trump was struck by the ministry of televangelist Paula White and called her basically on the spot. She became his personal pastor, and he appointed her to the White House Office of Public Liaison. Paula White eventually connected with the ministry of True Mother Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon when she spoke at Mother Moon's rally at Madison Square Garden in 2017. The two women developed a personal relationship, and Pastor White became one of the seven religious leaders to whom True Mother gave recognition.

Five, both men were divorced. The movie shows that Reagan's marriage to actress Jane Wyman ended in divorce due to his political involvement and the premature death of their daughter, Christine. They had two other children, Michael and Maureen, the latter of whom has participated in several Women's Federation for World Peace events. Reagan later married actress Nancy Davis, and they had two children: Michael and Patti. Trump married three times, first with Ivana Zelnickova. They had three children: Donald Jr., Ivanka, and Eric. Then, he married Marla Maples, with whom he had Tiffany. He finally

married Melania Knauss, with whom he had a son, Barron, who is now entering NYU. The children are known to display a strong loyalty and admiration toward their father.

Six, when Reagan became president, he was the oldest man to occupy the position. He was 69 at the time, an age when most people are enjoying retirement, and remained in office until he was 77. Donald Trump became president at 70, breaking Reagan's record until Joe Biden entered office at 78. If Trump is reelected and completes his term, he will be 82, the oldest sitting president ever. People live longer today, as Jimmy Carter turned 100 on October 1.

Finally, when Reagan ran for his second term, he faced Walter Mondale, Jimmy Carter's vice president. The movie shows the debate scene between the two when Reagan responds to Mondale, who remarks on his advanced age of 73, saying that he doesn't want to take advantage of his opponent's "youthful inexperience." Reagan was from the state of Illinois in the Midwest, and as a trained actor, he was comfortable speaking publicly in a polished way, which connected well with the American public. Trump is from Queens, NY. His way of speaking is more direct and not always gracious. However, he is charismatic, and his populist style enables him to connect with a large part of the population that has felt neglected by the elites. His opponent on the Democratic side, Kamala Harris, like Mondale, has been vice president. Interestingly, she spent her high school days in my hometown of Montreal while her mother was doing research at McGill University. She went on afterward to study law at Howard University in Washington before returning to the Bay area.

In conclusion, the movie "Reagan" is a refreshing look at the life of the 40th president of the United States, bringing to memory some of his remarkable achievements. When Reagan was in office, his policy of confronting communism as an evil force was considered by some as warmongering. In fact, it resulted in greater peace and freedom for large populations around the globe as the Soviet Union fell and its seemingly unstoppable influence declined. Rev. Moon predicted the collapse of the Soviet Empire at the PWPA conference of Geneva in 1985 while he was in prison. It actually occurred because there was also the political will to make it happen. The world has changed now but the forces of authoritarianism and communism are again threatening the foundations of the free world. At the center of it all is the question of the unification of North and South Korea. Trump attempted to do so by contacting Kim Jong Un, but he did not succeed. That window has closed for now.

The movie highlights the friendship between Reagan and Tip O'Neill, the Speaker of the House. They stood on both sides of the political divide, but "after 6 o'clock, they could have a beer together," as Reagan would say. That spirit is sorely missing with Trump, as seen in his relationship with people like Nancy Pelosi. Reagan won by a landslide against Mondale in 1984. As the country is now divided more than ever, that scenario is not likely to be repeated. It is much more likely that the outcome will be decided by the final results of six or seven swing states. Forty years ago, mainstream media appeared to maintain a semblance of objectivity in reporting the election. That objectivity is gone as the media today openly embraces the candidacy of Kamala Harris. They tend to paint Trump as a threat to democracy.

In spite of that, will the election on November 5th be a repeat of history? That answer belongs to the American people as they consider the choice that it is given.

Serge Brosseau is a graduate of UTS (now HJI) from the class of '98. He has been serving as pastor with the Montreal community for the past 25 years. His wife, Melissa, is from Los Angeles, and their daughter, Rebecca, now lives in New York City.