

Ronald Reagan

A P R E S I D E N T ' S V I S I O N

Ronald Reagan



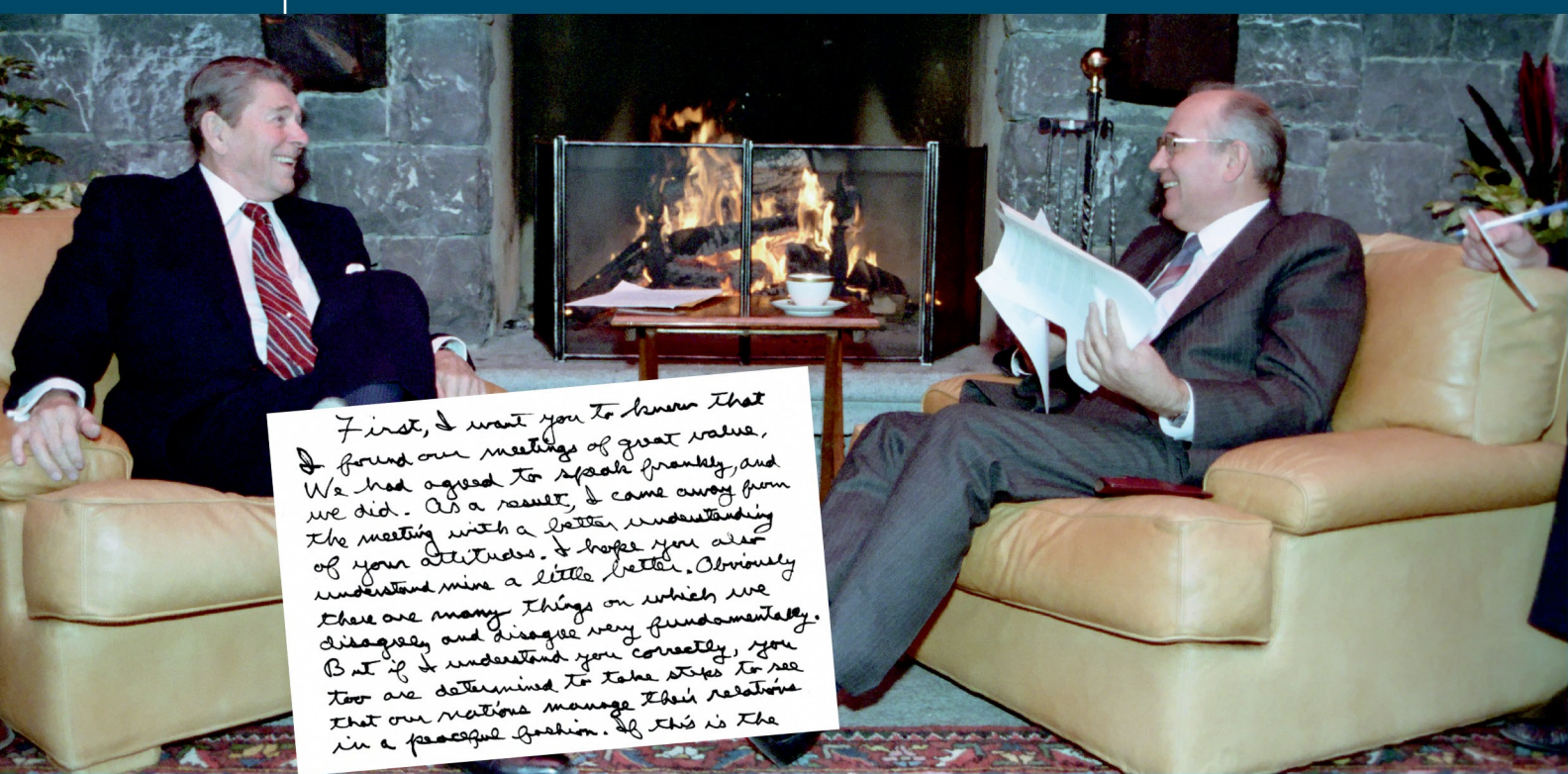
President Reagan with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher at Camp David, November 15, 1986.
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“In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.... It is my intention to curb the size and influence of the Federal establishment and to demand recognition of the distinction between the powers granted to the Federal Government and those reserved to the States or to the people.”

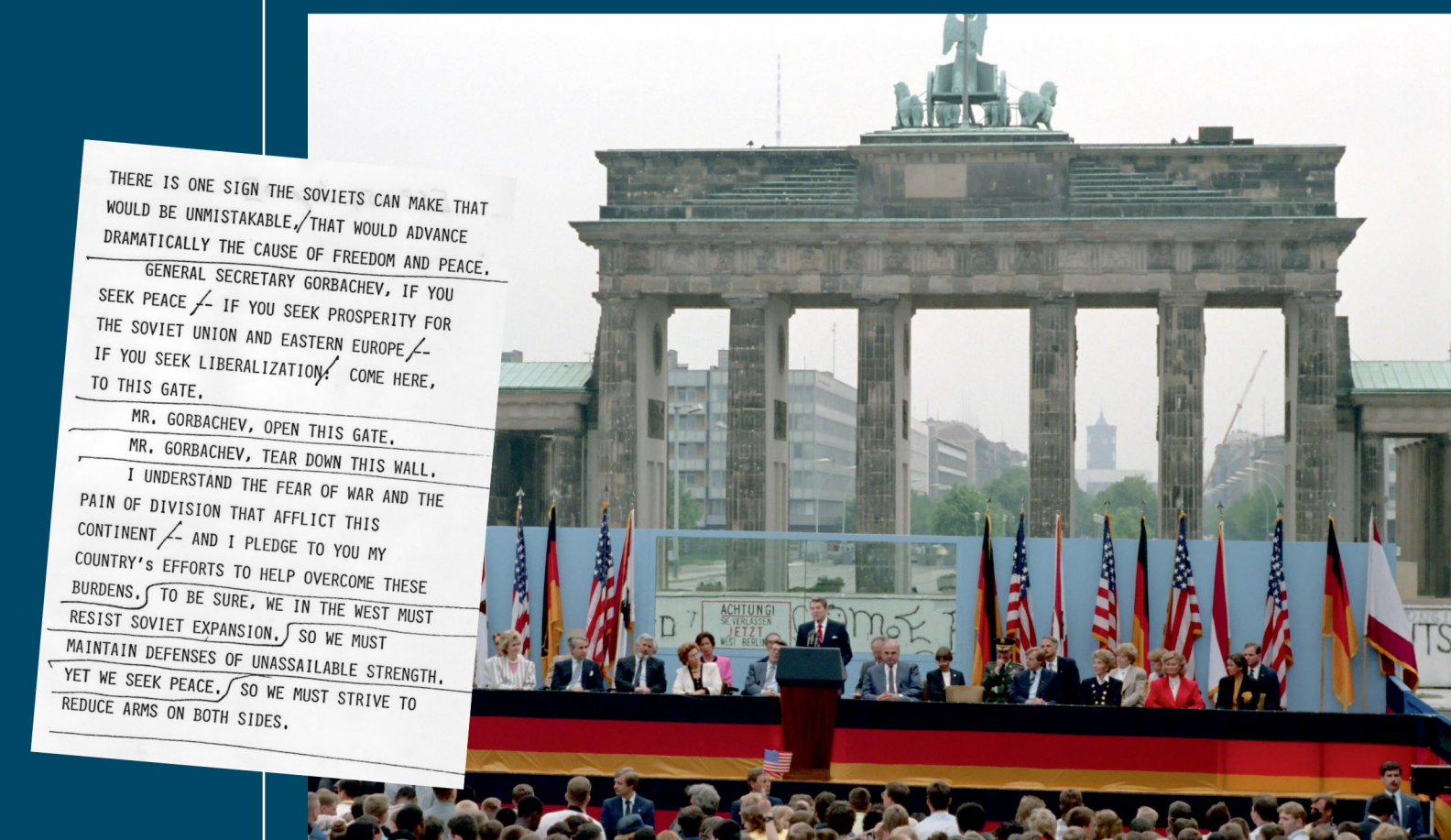
— FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS, JANUARY 20, 1981



President Reagan moments before he was shot in an assassination attempt, March 30, 1981.
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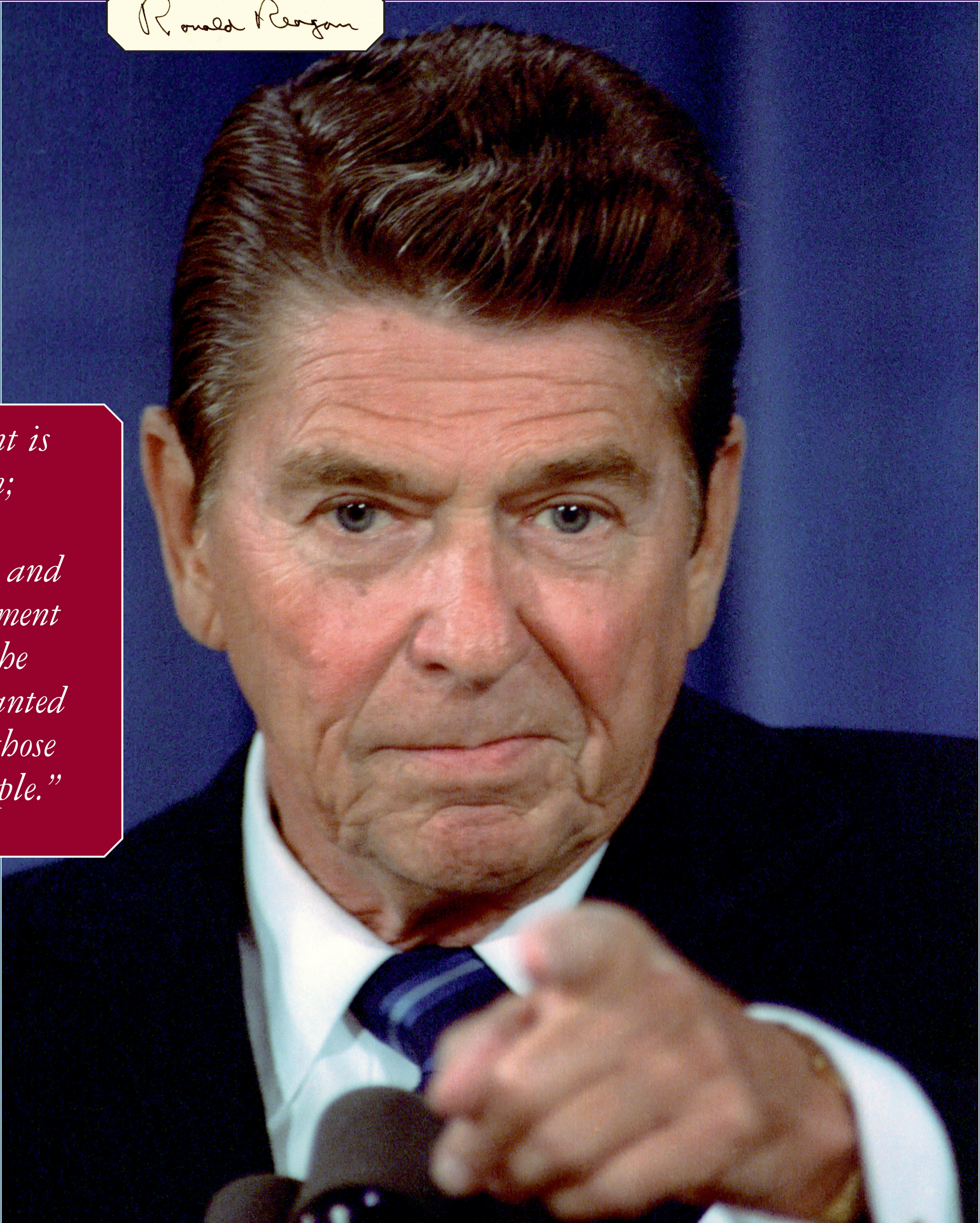
President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, Geneva, Switzerland, November 19, 1985, with a handwritten draft of a letter from Reagan to Gorbachev from November 28, 1985.
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President Reagan speaking in Berlin, Germany, June 12, 1987, with the text of his remarks.
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First Lady Nancy Reagan speaking at the Republican National Convention, August 15, 1988.
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President Ronald Reagan at a White House press conference, October 1, 1981.
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Ronald Reagan won the 1980 presidential election by a substantial margin, promising to restore American economic prosperity and military prowess. Facing double-digit inflation and high unemployment, he sought to decrease spending on domestic programs and deregulate the private sector. Reagan believed that smaller government and lower taxes would solve the nation's economic woes. Cutting taxes, he argued, would encourage spending and restore public confidence. The former actor and radio announcer used his extraordinary speaking skill to promote his policies.

Reagan's agenda incorporated three central objectives: reassert America's status as a superpower by increasing military spending, reduce taxes, and submit a balanced budget to Congress. When these objectives proved contradictory, he focused on the first two at the expense of the third. As a result, the budget deficit remained high during Reagan's tenure in office, and the national debt nearly tripled in size. However, inflation fell, unemployment dropped, and the gross national product nearly doubled. The public credited the economic recovery beginning in 1983 to the president's policy changes and overwhelmingly elected him to a second term in 1984.

Reagan's foreign policy was focused on winning the Cold War. He believed that by increasing military spending, the United States could pressure the Soviet Union to seek a mutual arms reduction. The prospect of nuclear war led Reagan to advocate creating a space-based antiballistic missile shield. Although his second term was marred by controversies in Central America and the Middle East, the president made inroads in U.S. relations with the Soviet Union. After developing a rapport with the progressive new Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the Americans and Soviets signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 1987, reducing hostilities between the two countries and raising hopes for an end to the Cold War.

In a 2010 Gallup poll, only John F. Kennedy outranked Reagan in popularity among recent presidents.



Rescue crews search debris after a suicide bomber drove a truck filled with explosives into the Marine barracks in Beirut, Lebanon, on October 23, 1983, killing 241 American servicemen.
PHOTOGRAPH BY RANDY GADDIS. COURTESY ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTION, LIBRARY OF THE MARINE CORPS, QUANTICO, VIRGINIA.



On January 28, 1986, the space shuttle Challenger and its seven-member crew were lost when a booster rocket exploded soon after launch.
COURTESY NASA



President Reagan and his staff watch the televised replay of the Challenger explosion, with the text of Reagan's remarks to the nation, January 28, 1986.
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President Reagan and Sandra Day O'Connor, his nominee to the Supreme Court, July 15, 1981, with Reagan's formal transmittal of O'Connor's nomination, August 19, 1981.
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