

Ronald Reagan Movie–Art and Politics, and Whittaker Chambers

by [Daniel Mallock](#)



Art and politics are sometimes the same thing. In the case of *Reagan*, it's a superb combination.

I found out about this film because I wasn't supposed to know about it.

I wasn't supposed to know about it because of the censorship actions of the same sort of people who Whittaker Chambers described in his 1952 classic autobiography [Witness](#) as "the concealed enemy against which we are all fighting."

After being [exposed for censoring](#) advertising for the film, Facebook issued a not-very-convincing explanation. They claimed that “this happened because our automated systems mistakenly determined that content about President Reagan required prior authorization in accordance with our policies for ads about Social Issues, Elections or Politics. This was a mistake and the restriction on the ads has been lifted.”

The CEO of Facebook recently admitted that his company had cooperated with the current American presidential administration in [censoring opposition viewpoints](#). Elon Musk’s hostility toward Facebook CEO Mr. Zuckerberg is perhaps now better understood.

Though I wasn’t supposed to know about this film I found out about it anyhow—ironically because of discussions about how it had been suppressed by Facebook.

Reagan is a fantastic, entertaining, uplifting, patriotic, and mainly historically honest/accurate film. Such a combination is important and rare.

The film is based on Paul Kengor’s [2007 book](#) *The Crusader: Ronald Reagan and the Fall of Communism*. It’s an American story about someone from an ordinary background who dedicated himself to defending fundamental American concepts of freedom, opportunity, justice, the constitution, and patriotism. The result of Reagan’s dedication to foundational American principals is portrayed in this excellent and laudable movie.

Reagan is shown reading Whittaker Chambers’s book *Witness* in the film. The movie implies that Reagan was so influenced by Chambers’s book that his life became a mission to continue Chambers’s fight—destroy the evil empire of communism and protect freedom.

According to K. Alan Snyder, the author of [The Witness and the President: Whittaker Chambers, Ronald Reagan, and the Future of Freedom](#), “Chambers [helped Reagan understand](#) why people

would be attracted to communism, and spurred him on to take on communism, which ultimately led to the breakup of the Soviet Union.”

The portrayal of Reagan by Dennis Quaid in this excellent movie is a touching, deep, and impressive take on this exceptional president and his extraordinarily supportive wife, Nancy. Quaid is convincing and impressive as Reagan and, within half an hour into the film, completely becomes the president on the screen. Penelope Ann Miller is sympathetic as Nancy Reagan, too. This is an old-fashioned sort of film. While some movie tricks are used to get real 1984 [Mondale on the debate stage](#) with present-day actor playing Reagan, the movie is character- and event- driven in the main. The acting is solid and the pacing excellent.

The story of Reagan’s life is told through the narration of Jon Voight, portraying elderly KGB analyst Viktor Petrovich. He tells the story of the fall of the Soviet Union to up and coming politician, Andrei Novikov. Novikov wants to recapture the “glory of the motherland.” The movie is something of a post-Soviet flashback which is meant, according to the Voight character, to answer the younger man’s question: “Why did the Soviet Union disappear?”

One of the more powerful moments in the movie, and there are many of these, is when Voight says to Novikov: “Communism is not the Motherland!” Voight’s aging analyst character was making the important distinction between the failed communist political system and the Russian national identity; the communist system was not the national character/identity of Russia.

The movie excels at highlighting what it views as the key moments of the Reagan historical timeline; certain events in his childhood, his mother’s beneficial influence particularly in building his determination and courage, his happy marriage to Nancy, a dinner conversation at a supper club at which

novelist Dalton Trumbo (the character is called "Dalton") tells Reagan that eventually they would all have to "choose a side." The Dalton Trumbo character was implying that an existential conflict between freedom (Democratic America) and utopian totalitarianism (Communist Russia) was on the horizon.

Trumbo was famous for his 1938 anti-war novel [Johnny Got His Gun](#) as well as screenwriting in Hollywood. He would later go on to further fame/infamy as one of the blacklisted "Hollywood Ten" in the late 1940s. His blacklisting was due to his membership in the US Communist Party.

It is difficult for many present-day Americans to imagine a time not so long ago in which being associated with or identified as a communist was one of the worst things possible; being a Communist was tantamount to being a traitor.

Communism had always been associated in American circles, until only recently, as a fundamentally oppositional viewpoint contrary to American principles—if not outright treason.

Dalton's comment was certainly a foreshadowing of what was to follow.

The culmination of the existential war between American democracy and Soviet communism was Reagan's daring [1987 speech](#) at the Berlin Wall during which he challenged Gorbachev to "tear down this wall." *Reagan* shows all of this honestly and clearly with this speech in particular given well-deserved special attention.

Two years after Reagan challenged Gorbachev to tear down the Berlin Wall, a challenge to which Gorbachev complied believing as he did in a new sort of statecraft and interaction with the West that he called "Glasnost" and "Perestroika," the Soviet Union collapsed. [Glasnost and Perestroika](#) were meant by Soviet leadership to be a [final lifeline](#) to an obviously oppressive and totalitarian system which they had inherited from their Bolshevik forebears and which Reagan had condemned as a vile,

evil system worthy of the trash heap of history.

Gorbachev's efforts to reform the communist political system of the Soviet Union failed because communism itself was/is inherently totalitarian and could not be reformed—it could only be thrown into the dust heap of history. This then was Reagan's great mission according to this film. Historically, it was also his greatest victory and for which he is and ought to be forever remembered as a great American president and true hero of humanity.

Many absolutist political philosophies/ideologies that claim to resolve all of the great challenges of humanity and of politics and society are fundamentally utopian.

In the communist context only through a determined adherence to what the totalitarians describe as a temporary absolutism can utopia be achieved. According to Marxism, after the absolutist "dictatorship of the proletariat" period, government itself will eventually become unnecessary and will "wither away" and disappear.

Unfortunately for the victims of this fraudulent, failed, totalitarian theory, government never disappears because utopia is a lie.

Why would Facebook or any other company or organization or political party want this movie about Ronald Reagan suppressed? Why would any American want to keep an excellent film about this important American president from the American movie-going public?

During this lengthy and incredibly important 2024 election cycle the answer is clear.

The current version of utopian political absolutism in the United States is the Democrat party.

Leading Democrats like [RFK Jr.](#) and [Alan Dershowitz](#) have

publicly condemned and left the party. Both of them openly criticized Democrat's absolutist, communist, utopian, anti-Semitic, anti-freedom direction.

Perhaps the future of the US Democrat party (one hopes) is the same as that of the Soviet Union.

Reagan is an excellent, entertaining, important, and honest telling of an exceptional American president's life and career whose character and leadership continue to inspire.

Why is the film *Reagan* art and politics? If this weren't the United States and this wasn't the most important election cycle in our history this film would be seen mainly as art only.

But the times and the film have met. It is art and it is politics.

Directly challenging this viewpoint is Dennis Quaid, the actor who played Reagan. In a [recent interview](#) with Megan Kelly he said that "the movie is not political." Quaid said that "Reagan was a Democrat for 40 years before he was Republican for the next 40 ... (the movie) is also ... about America, really." The movie is certainly about America and in these highly charged times it is certainly political regardless of Mr. Quaid's assertion that it isn't. In fact, in the same interview Quaid says, "The principles that Trump has are very much the same [as Reagan]. I would also venture to say that both of them are very pragmatic." This direct comparison between Reagan and Trump, and that Reagan is portrayed in the film in an unusually positive if not almost hagiographic way, seem to definitively show that the film is, despite denials from its star, more than just art.

Why would the film's trailer and advertising be censored if it was simply a bit of art?

The non-involved film-goer will see this film as just another

excellent movie about a great American who became the President of the USA and was very successful in that office. The more informed viewer will know that this is a fine film but, more importantly, they will see it as a political manifesto of sorts that sends a message. The film's message is considered by those on the political left as a direct and dire threat—that America is a beacon of light and freedom in a world of totalitarians and nightmares; and that people who support and defend totalitarianism and other evils must be defeated.

See *Reagan*. You'll be glad you did.