

This MAY be my last commentary on Reagan “Not surprisingly, I was pleased to receive the following note from Bill Taubman, the Pulitzer prize winning biographer of Khrushchev who is working on the biography of Gorbachev.

From: [William Taubman](#)

To: [William Peverill](#)

Subject: Re: REAGAN 101

Dear Bill Peverill,

Thanks for your note. I'm glad you enjoyed the webinar. If I'd had more time to devote to Gorbachev and Reagan, I too would have noted the way their shared optimism and confidence helped them to think they might actually be able to banish nuclear weapons. I think you put the point about their symbiotic relationship very well.

All best,
Bill Taubman

On 9/19/12 6:06 PM, William Peverill wrote:

DEAR PROFESSOR TAUBMAN—I today enjoyed ever so much your webinar on Gorbachev, Putin, and Obama... Naturally, I was especially interested in your remarks about Reagan and Gorbachev—two optimistic and confident leaders whose symbiotic relationship delivered an end to the cold war

Thanks,

Bill Peverill—Amherst '52

.Subject: : REAGAN 101

This year Ronald “Dutch” Reagan turned 101. It seems to be an especially good time in the “light” of the presidential campaign to revisit and reconsider my Pow Wow paper of almost ten years ago which is attached if you wish to read it.

The paper is entitled “The Babysitter (he was 27; I was 9) and a Rendezvous With Destiny” Curiously, the Republican party has created a Reagan documentary film entitled “Rendezvous With Destiny” which was mostly orchestrated by Newt Gingrich. They didn't borrow the title from me; it comes from Reagan's famous speech (where he used the phrase without attribution) endorsing Barry Goldwater which in the subsequent analysis led to the launching of

Reagan's own political career. But the original source of the phrase is from FDR's speech at the 1936 Democratic convention.

(an interesting footnote: Reagan made his speech on October 27, 1964. Two days later he wrote my mother. The letter is included in my Pow Wow paper)

It is not unusual for either promoters or detractors to credit or discredit inappropriately political leaders' accomplishments or pitfalls. The following are examples:

Reagan did not bring an end to rampant inflation although this happened on his watch. It was the "first" Volcker (appointed by Carter) Plan which dramatically raised interest rates and "broke the back" of inflation, not to mention thousands of small businessmen, myself among them.

Clinton's budget surplus was the result of 1) the "peace dividend" and 2) capital gains taxes from gains which could only have begun during Reagan/Bush years. He deserves limited credit for the results

Reagan's detractors seem to be dedicated to focusing on the tax bill of 1986 even while there have been four presidential administrations and two dozen congresses since the bill was enacted. Both parties have had a chance to remove it. Here is a recent citation (albeit from the WSJ):

"The last time Congress had the fortitude to look under the hood of the tax code was with the Tax Reform Act of 1986 which was negotiated by the Reagan administration, DEMOCRAT Rep. Dan Rostenkowski, and Republican Sen. Bob Packwood. It was one of the true bipartisan triumphs of modern times, passing with 97 Senate votes including those of current Senate DEMOCRATIC leaders Harry Reid and Charles Schumer."

The 1986 tax reform eliminated most special interest deductions and loopholes, lowering the tax rate to 28% from 50%. Harvard economist Dale Jorgenson says the gains to economic growth from the lower rates and simplified code increased GDP by more than \$ trillion and that a similar reform now would increase national wealth over the long term by \$7 trillion on net present value."

Some observations on the 1986 Bill: While it was a workable piece of legislation at the outset which could lead to ongoing benefits, there have been over 5000 changes in the code since its enactment. These changes include a substantial number of tax deductions each one of which has been achieved by powerful lobbies leaving small

hope for their elimination. The George W. administration saw fit to compound whatever shortcomings existed in the bill and added costly wars in the process. The other observation is that the legislation demonstrates Reagan's compromise effectiveness and his ability to join together both sides of "the aisle". The tax proposals offered by either party IN THE 2012 ELECTION are neither fiscally nor politically viable (see the attachment "fiscal myths"). And the slim prospect for compromise was clearly demonstrated when the Simpson-Bowles proposals were "thrown under the bus" by both parties. I sincerely hope we revisit these recommendations

Although I would be willing to debate, in a different forum various points I made on Reagan's behalf in my paper there are two which should escape argument.: Theories abound over what brought the end to the Cold War. Although there were assuredly several factors, one seems especially significant.: Against advice from Nixon, Kissinger, Weinberger, Schlesinger and several cabinet members Reagan sought a close and one on one relationship with Gorbachev . Reagan's personal diplomacy and strategy were critical in ending the Cold War. No other president, not Clinton, Bush, Carter, Nixon, even Eisenhower but possibly Kennedy could have related to Gorbachev on a one on one basis the way Reagan did.

At the beginning of the Great Depression, Hoover bumbled that it was necessary only to restore confidence; the nation laughed bitterly. When Roosevelt said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself", essentially the same half-true idea , the nation was thrilled. Roosevelt was warm, personal, concrete. So was Reagan. He brought a restorative function to the presidency that was sorely needed at the time after the debacles of Vietnam, Watergate , and the economic reversals of the 1970s. He justifiably received praise for his unembarrassed patriotism. Even those who disagreed with him were not immune to his graciousness and humor and unshakable optimism.

Can you find in either of the presidential candidates any of the above? Let me put it this way, Barack and Mitt... I knew Dutch Reagan and you are no Dutch Reagan !!.

To my liberal friends to whom I have grown closer both personally and, to an increasing extent, philosophically ... THERE YOU GO AGAIN!!

BILL PEVERILL