

[Reflections on Reagan](#)

Daniel McCarthy February 5th, 2011

Tomorrow is the centenary of Ronald Wilson Reagan's birth. Herewith, a few *American Conservative* classics on the 40th president and his legacy:

Pat Buchanan – [“We Shall Not See His Like Again”](#)

When America began to tear herself apart over morality, race, and Vietnam in the 1960s, the old certitudes he articulated and the old virtues he personified held a magnetic attraction for a people bewildered by what was happening to their country. When he spoke, he took us to a higher ground, above petty and partisan squabbles and divisions, where we could dream and be one people again.

Doug Bandow — [“American Realist”](#)

Reagan passionately believed in the importance of ideas and husbanded rather than squandered America's credibility. When Ronald Reagan left office the U.S. truly did stand tall, a far cry from its status today as an isolated, distrusted giant. President Reagan likely would have been horrified: the U.S. initiating war on a lie and then finding itself caught in an unnecessary guerrilla war that has made the West less secure and America more hated by more people than at any point in its history.

Daniel McCarthy — [“Getting Reagan Right”](#)

*[The Reagan I Knew](#) could just as fairly have been called *The Reagan I Didn't Know*, for after a 40-year friendship, Buckley suddenly realized he had misjudged the man. At National Review's 30th-anniversary gala in 1985, he toasted the then-president as the consummate cold warrior: “What I said in as many words, dressed up for the party, was that Reagan would, if he had to, pull the nuclear trigger,” writes Buckley. “Twenty years after saying that, in the most exalted circumstance, in the presence of the man I was talking about, I changed my mind.”*

Richard Gamble — [“How Right Was Reagan?”](#)

Reagan's speeches abounded with themes that were anything but conservative. He aligned the Republican crusader more closely with America's expansive liberal temperament. In particular, his brand of evangelical Christianity, combined with fragments of Puritanism, enlightenment optimism, and romantic liberalism, set Reagan apart in key ways from historic conservatism.

And here's Jack Hunter's podcast, [“Reagan: Hawk or Dove?”](#)

Update: I've added [some further thoughts at Tory Anarchist](#).