

BERLIN WALL – TWENTY YEARS LATER

People Differ on Who Deserves Credit for the Collapse of Communism

While Britons and Canadians believe Mikhail Gorbachev and Lech Walesa deserve “Most of the Credit”, Americans overwhelmingly choose Ronald Reagan.

[VANCOUVER – Nov. 7, 2009] – People in the United States are more likely to say that former U.S. president Ronald Reagan deserves credit for the collapse of communism, while respondents in Canada and Great Britain select former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and Polish union leader Lech Walesa, according to a new three-country study by Angus Reid Strategies.

The online survey of representative national samples asked respondents to assess the performance of nine political figures of the 1980s, and their effect in the eventual collapse of communism.

For Americans, Reagan is the clear winner with 69 per cent of respondents claiming he deserves a lot of credit or some of the credit for the collapse of communism. More than half of people in the U.S. also commend Gorbachev (56%) and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher (57%) for their efforts.

In Britain, only Gorbachev (57%) and Walesa (56%) clear the 50 per cent mark, followed by German chancellor Helmut Kohl (47%), Thatcher (45%) and Reagan (44%).

In Canada, Gorbachev is seen as the most important figure (65%), followed by Reagan

KEY FINDINGS

- **U.S.: 36% say Reagan deserves "a lot" of the credit for the collapse of communism**
- **Canada: 33% say Gorbachev deserves "a lot" of the credit for the collapse of communism**
- **Britain: 28% say Walesa deserves "a lot" of the credit for the collapse of communism**

Full topline results are at the end of this release.

From November 4 to November 6, 2009, Angus Reid Strategies conducted an online survey among 1,003 randomly selected Canadian adults who are Angus Reid Forum panelists, 1,011 American adults who are Springboard America panelists, and 2,000 British adults who are Springboard UK panelists. The margin of error—which measures sampling variability—is +/- 3.1% for Canada, +/- 3.1% for the United States, and 2.2 per cent for Great Britain. The results have been statistically weighted according to the most current education, age, gender and region Census data to ensure samples representative of the entire adult population of Canada, the US and Great Britain. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding.

CONTACT:

Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, mario.canseco@angus-reid.com

(58%), Thatcher (56%) and Walesa (52%). Canadians are more likely to select Reagan and Thatcher as deserving "some of the credit", and place former Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney at the bottom of the list with 25 per cent.

The survey also shows that a considerable proportion of people in the two North American countries (47% in the U.S. and 44% in Canada) regard Pope John Paul II as an important player in the collapse of communism, while Britons (31%) are decidedly more skeptical.

Former French President Francois Mitterrand, former U.S. President George H. W. Bush and Mulroney are ranked in the bottom by respondents in all three countries.

Are Former Communist States Better Off Now?

Clear majorities of respondents in the three countries surveyed (72% in Britain, 67% in Canada, and 55% in the U.S.) believe that the people in the former East Germany are better off now than they were two decades ago.

Half of Canadians (50%) also see Poland and the Czech Republic as countries that are better off now than under communism, followed by Hungary (43%), Russia (41%), Ukraine (39%), Slovakia (37%) and Romania.

For Americans, Poland and Russia are tied at 38 per cent, followed by the Czech Republic (32%), Hungary (30%), Ukraine (also 30%), Romania (29%) and Slovakia (27%).

In Britain, more than half of respondents believe Poland (62%), the Czech Republic (58%) and Hungary (52%) are better off now than in 1989, followed by Slovakia (49%), Russia (47%), Romania (45%) and Ukraine (43%).

Analysis

Americans have long been exposed to excerpts of Ronald Reagan's June 1987 speech at the Brandenburg Gate, where the president urged Gorbachev to "tear down" the Berlin Wall. People in the United States clearly regard Reagan as the most important figure in the collapse of communism.

Britons are not as welcoming with the actions of their own head of government at the time, with Thatcher failing to reach the 50 per cent mark on this question. As is the case with Canadians, people in Britain tend to side with the notion that Gorbachev's internal policies, and Walesa's leadership, played a more prominent role in the collapse of communism than Reagan's actions.

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Collapse of Communism

CANADA



As you may know, twenty years have passed since the revolutions that led to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. Overall, do you think the people in each one of these countries is now better off, worse off, or about the same as they were twenty years ago?

	Better Off	Worse off	About the same	Not sure
The former East Germany (now part of unified Germany)	67%	4%	10%	20%
Poland	50%	4%	16%	29%
Czech Republic	50%	7%	12%	31%
Hungary	43%	5%	15%	37%
Russia	41%	16%	21%	23%
Ukraine	39%	11%	17%	33%
Slovakia	37%	8%	17%	39%
Romania	36%	8%	18%	38%

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Collapse of Communism

UNITED STATES



As you may know, twenty years have passed since the revolutions that led to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. Overall, do you think the people in each one of these countries is now better off, worse off, or about the same as they were twenty years ago?

	Better Off	Worse off	About the same	Not sure
The former East Germany (now part of unified Germany)	55%	6%	12%	28%
Poland	38%	6%	17%	39%
Russia	38%	14%	19%	29%
Czech Republic	32%	11%	15%	42%
Hungary	30%	7%	18%	45%
Ukraine	30%	13%	16%	41%
Romania	29%	9%	18%	43%
Slovakia	27%	11%	16%	46%

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Collapse of Communism

GREAT BRITAIN



As you may know, twenty years have passed since the revolutions that led to the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. Overall, do you think the people in each one of these countries is now better off, worse off, or about the same as they were twenty years ago?

	Better Off	Worse off	About the same	Not sure
The former East Germany (now part of unified Germany)	72%	5%	9%	14%
Poland	62%	10%	12%	16%
Czech Republic	58%	8%	14%	21%
Hungary	52%	8%	16%	25%
Slovakia	49%	10%	16%	26%
Russia	47%	16%	17%	19%
Romania	45%	12%	19%	23%
Ukraine	43%	13%	18%	26%

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Collapse of Communism

CANADA



Below is a list of leaders. Overall, please say whether you think each one deserves a lot of credit, some of the credit, or no credit at all for the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

	A lot of credit	Some of the credit	No credit at all	Not sure
Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev	33%	32%	8%	27%
Polish union leader Lech Walesa	26%	26%	7%	41%
U.S. President Ronald Reagan	18%	40%	16%	26%
Pope John Paul II	15%	29%	25%	31%
British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher	14%	42%	14%	31%
German Chancellor Helmut Kohl	11%	35%	10%	44%
French President Francois Mitterrand	4%	28%	21%	47%
U.S. President George H. W. Bush	4%	22%	47%	27%
Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney	3%	22%	45%	30%

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Collapse of Communism

UNITED STATES



Below is a list of leaders. Overall, please say whether you think each one deserves a lot of credit, some of the credit, or no credit at all for the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

	A lot of credit	Some of the credit	No credit at all	Not sure
U.S. President Ronald Reagan	36%	33%	12%	19%
Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev	22%	34%	11%	32%
British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher	20%	37%	10%	33%
Polish union leader Lech Walesa	18%	25%	9%	49%
Pope John Paul II	16%	31%	19%	34%
German Chancellor Helmut Kohl	8%	30%	11%	51%
U.S. President George H. W. Bush	8%	29%	38%	25%
Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney	5%	27%	18%	50%
French President Francois Mitterrand	3%	24%	22%	51%

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Collapse of Communism

GREAT BRITAIN



Below is a list of leaders. Overall, please say whether you think each one deserves a lot of credit, some of the credit, or no credit at all for the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe.

	A lot of credit	Some of the credit	No credit at all	Not sure
Polish union leader Lech Walesa	28%	28%	9%	34%
Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev	27%	30%	13%	30%
British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher	15%	30%	26%	29%
U.S. President Ronald Reagan	11%	33%	26%	31%
German Chancellor Helmut Kohl	10%	37%	15%	39%
Pope John Paul II	9%	22%	33%	36%
U.S. President George H. W. Bush	5%	21%	42%	32%
Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney	4%	19%	26%	52%
French President Francois Mitterrand	4%	26%	28%	43%

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Angus Reid Strategies is the public opinion practice of Vision Critical—a global research and technology company specializing in custom online panels, private communities, and innovative online methods. Vision Critical is a leader in the use of the Internet and rich media technology to collect high-quality, in-depth insights for a wide array of clients. Dr. Angus Reid and the Angus Reid Strategies team are pioneers in online research methodologies, and have been conducting online surveys since 1995

Vision Critical is now the largest Canadian-owned market research enterprise. In addition to its five offices in Canada—located in Vancouver, Calgary, Regina, Toronto, and Montreal—the firm also has offices in San Francisco, Chicago, New York, London, Paris and Sydney. Its team of specialists provides solutions across every type and sector of research, and currently serves over 200 international clients.

Angus Reid Strategies polls are conducted using the Angus Reid Forum (www.angusreidforum.com), Springboard America (www.springboardamerica.com) and Springboard UK (www.springboarduk.com) online panels, which are carefully recruited to ensure representation across all demographic and psychographic segments of these populations. Panel members pass through rigorous screening and a double opt-in process ensuring highly motivated and responsive members. These premier online survey platforms present respondents with highly visual, interactive, and engaging surveys, ensuring that panel members provide thoughtful and reliable responses. Each survey is actively sampled and weighted to model that characteristics of the universe required and employs the latest in quality control techniques to ensure data validity.

Angus Reid Strategies, the only public opinion firm to exclusively use online methods to follow the views of the electorate during the 2008 federal campaign, offered the most accurate prediction of the results of Canada's 40th election.

http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.10.15_Election.pdf

Since 2006, Angus Reid Strategies has covered eight provincial elections in Canada—more than any other pollster in the country—and the results have accurately predicted the outcome of each of these democratic processes.

http://angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.03.28_Anniversary_1.pdf

http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/2008.12.09_QuebecElection.pdf

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More information on the way Angus Reid Strategies conducts public opinion research can be found at <http://www.angusreidstrategies.com/uploads/pages/pdfs/ARS.ARF.WP.pdf>

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**For more information, please contact
our spokesperson listed in the footnote.**

**Copies of this poll are available on our website:
www.angusreidstrategies.com**

CONTACT:

Mario Canseco, Vice President, Public Affairs, 604-647-3570, mario.canseco@angus-reid.com