President Reagan goes to the Berlin Wall, and issues a famous challenge to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev: "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"

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President Reagan at the Berlin Wall

GARRICK UTLEY, anchor:
Ronald Reagan went to the wall today in Berlin. He used the concrete and barbed wire which stand there to attack the system behind it. To challenge Mikhail Gorbachev. The Reagan visit and his speech were a response to Gorbachev’s campaign to win support in Western Europe. Chris Wallace reports now from the wall which divides a city, a country, and a continent.

CHRIS WALLACE reporting:
Ronald Reagan came to the wall today, the wall he calls an ugly scar. He peered down from a balcony into East Berlin, while some 50 yards away in a watchtower, East German guards looked back through binoculars and cameras. Standing behind bullet-proof glass, the President was asked whether he can get the Soviets to tear down the wall.

President RONALD REAGAN: Jericho didn’t last forever.
WALLACE: Near Brandenburg Gate, once symbol of a united Berlin, now cut off from the West, Mr. Reagan tried to knock down the walls of this Jericho. He noted Mikhail Gorbachev’s talk about reform, and issued a direct challenge to the Soviet leader.

Pres. RONALD REAGAN: If you seek liberalization, come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall.

WALLACE: Presidents have called for a tearing down the wall before, but Mr. Reagan has a special problem. Polls indicate most West Germans think Gorbachev is more a man of peace than Mr. Reagan is. With a crowd of 20,000 listening in West Berlin, the President addressed comments to the several hundred who massed across the wall in East Berlin.

Pres. RONALD REAGAN: For I join you, as I join your fellow countrymen in the West in this firm, this unalterable belief, “Es gibt nur ein Berlin.”
WALLACE: There is only one Berlin, that Mr. Reagan hoped would be reunited. It was reminiscent of 1963 when John Kennedy came here and said all free men are citizens of Berlin. 

President JOHN F. KENNEDY: “Ich bin ein Berliner.”

WALLACE: Then a million people jammed the streets, half the population of the city. But for Mr. Reagan, there were violent demonstrations last night. More than 60 were arrested, and the city banned all demonstrations today. The President gave his critics a mixed message, talking of a repressive Soviet system that can’t feed its’ people, but also noting the super powers are on the verge of an arms deal. 

Pres. RONALD REAGAN: I invite those who protest today to mark this fact. Because we remained strong, the Soviets came back to the table.

WALLACE: When Kennedy came to Berlin 24 years ago, the divisions between East and West were clear, and so were people’s loyalties. But on this trip, US-Soviet relations are far more complicated, creating new problems and new opportunities. Chris Wallace, NBC News, with the President in Berlin.