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The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of His Conversion to Conservatism

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renaming of forward operating bases and combat outposts.

The proposed way out of Afghanistan is offered in rather abrupt fashion in the final chapter of the book. West's examples and repeated references to Vietnam-era Combined Action Platoons and his comparisons of them to effective SOF-led forces in Helmand are indeed well founded. However, as painstakingly as he describes the regionally compartmentalized long-term failure of small units in one region, caution is warranted in prescribing one district's successful approach as a theater-wide solution. Furthermore, while West identifies the challenges, his solution does not address the broader problems of the narcotics trade, district-level corruption, and the synchronization of incentives-based development programs—all of which must be addressed while simultaneously balancing an "exit" strategy with mid to long-term advisory force structures. Also noticeably absent is the inclusion of a chapter on the P2K (Paktia/Paktika/Khowst) region and the Haqqani network insurgent group.

The Wrong War will undoubtedly be a popular read among junior leaders and war fighters, as well as the general readership, and it should be considered for battalion-level reading lists and pre-deployment cultural-awareness training. Nevertheless, and while the lessons of Kunar and Helmand are certainly relevant and West's advisory-team structure is well considered, policy makers and strategists will find the book lacking sufficient depth in addressing the broader-based challenges for a long-term, comprehensive solution.

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Evans, Thomas W. *The Education of Ronald Reagan: The General Electric Years and the Untold Story of His Conversion to Conservatism*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2006. 302pp. \$20

Thomas Evans is the first author to examine comprehensively Ronald Reagan's eight years (1954–62) as host of the television show *General Electric Theater* and then as a traveling spokesman for General Electric. Evans has deepened our understanding of how a devoted "New Dealer" became not only a champion of Barry Goldwater but then displaced him as the patron saint of American conservatism. Evans's fine book examines a critical period in Reagan's life during which his skills as a public figure blossomed. Reagan was one of our most ideological presidents, yet at the same time he considered himself a master of the art of negotiation and frequently compromised with political opponents in Sacramento and Washington. As Reagan developed his negotiating skills as president of the Screen Actors Guild (1947–52), he saw the other side of midcentury American labor strife, from the perspective of management, during his time with GE. General Electric was a formidable and respected union adversary in terms of countering big labor's demands; the company poured considerable resources into "educating" its workers to reject union radicalism. GE's management was also ahead of its time in communicating directly with its labor force, over the heads of the union leadership—a tactic Reagan employed to great effect in the White House when Congress stood in his way.

At the same time, Reagan also learned to "work a room"—meeting GE

employees and hearing their complaints about intrusive government and high taxes. Though he had spent years in the film industry, this contact with lower- and middle-class Americans rubbed off some of the Hollywood veneer and had the added benefit of teaching him what worked and what didn't in trying to appeal to the "common man." By 1980, millions of these "common men" would become known as "Reagan Democrats." Yet perhaps most importantly, it was during his employment with GE that Reagan robustly embraced a political ideology of free markets, limited government, and anticommunism. Evans believes that Reagan's GE experience was his "apprenticeship for public life" and his "postgraduate education in political science." The author argues that GE's vice president, Lemuel Boulware (who directed the aforementioned campaign against the union bosses of the era), was Reagan's mentor in his conservative apprenticeship. By 1964 Ronald Reagan had publicly come out of his New Deal closet (he voted in 1960 as a "Democrat for Nixon"), but neither he nor the company was anxious to publicize the impact of his GE years on his conversion.

This work has all the flair of a government report on agriculture subsidies, and the author occasionally overstates the impact of Reagan's GE experience (according to Evans, it was when the seeds for the Iran-Contra scandal and Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative were planted). Nonetheless, Thomas Evans's book is the best kind of history and biography, in that it explores a facet of a statesman's life that tends to be overlooked, especially, in this instance, by historians and political

scientists with tin ears for the world of business.

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Beevor, Antony. *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy*. New York: Viking Penguin, 2009. 591pp. \$32.95

The 6 June 1944 Normandy invasion has received ample research over the years, with works by such noted historians as Cornelius Ryan, Stephen E. Ambrose, and Max Hastings. Known as Operation OVERLORD, it was by all accounts a pivotal event of the war in Europe. Hindsight clearly shows that ending Hitler's control of Europe required the Allies to meet the Wehrmacht in the field in mainland Europe.

So what can another book add to the canon on Normandy? Antony Beevor's meticulously written and researched *D-Day: The Battle for Normandy* might at first blush appear to be simply another treatise on the famed battle. Yet anyone who believes this to be so without reading it will miss out on sweeping narrative and credible research.

Beevor minces no words in telling the story of this grand operation, the epitome of Allied wartime cooperation and a daunting plan to develop and execute. There is no shortage of controversies and points of debate, which Beevor meticulously brings out again and again. A fellow countryman, General Sir Bernard Montgomery, his famous ego well documented, comes in for pointed criticism for decisions and actions he made throughout the battle. In fact, both Allied and German military leaders face