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D-Day: The Battle for Normandy

David L. Teska

Antony Beevor

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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.

STEPHEN F. KNOTT
Naval War College



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

Beevor's scrutiny. The Americans, fixated on securing a port facility for logistical support, learned the hard way that the entrenched German garrison in Brest could hold out for a very long time. Despite a highly sophisticated air-ground coordination and the commitment of VIII Corps, the Americans had to pay dearly to pry Brest from resolute and determined German defenders—blood spilled for a port that in the end was never used.

Beevor is a well known historian of twentieth-century combat, one who knows his topic, capably weaves the broad sweep of the Normandy campaign into a compelling account, and provides the broader context, bringing in aspects of the battle that until recently have received short shrift. For example, he presents an excellent account of the battles fought by the Polish 1st Armored Division. Also, he shows the critical role of the 20 July assassination attempt against Hitler in how the German leadership responded to the relentless Allied onslaught. The subsequent hunt for conspirators wreaked havoc with the German military's ability to wage a cohesive and effective defense and helped set up the eventual Allied breakout and defeat of the Wehrmacht in France by the end of the summer.

Without a doubt, the battle for France in 1944 saw some of the most ferocious and savage fighting to take place in the European theater. There was the unrelenting fight by Montgomery to take Caen, which was won at great cost—Allied bombing during Operation GOODWOOD ultimately reduced the town to rubble. Seeing Caen as pivotal to the security of the beachhead, D-Day planners expected to have it in Allied

hands by the end of 6 June, but it did not fall until mid-July. Beevor makes the case that British sluggishness allowed a vast portion of the German army to escape the Falaise Pocket—German soldiers who would live to fight the Allies another day.

A constant thread throughout his book is the high cost paid by French citizens for the liberation of their land. Nearly twenty thousand French civilians died during the liberation of Normandy, in addition to the estimated fifteen thousand killed and nineteen thousand injured during the preliminary bombing.

CDR. DAVID L. TESKA, U.S. COAST GUARD RESERVE
San Diego, California



Fukuyama, Francis. *The Origins of Political Order: From Prehuman Times to the French Revolution*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2011. 585pp. \$35

Two decades ago scholars, government policy makers, and military cold warriors struggled to decipher the meaning of the sudden and drastic change happening in the Soviet bloc. Francis Fukuyama now offers a provocative approach to this puzzle, which has been widely debated and perhaps misunderstood ever since. He cautiously asked in *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) “whether, at the end of the twentieth century, it makes sense for us once again to speak of a coherent and directional History of mankind that will eventually lead the greater part of humanity to liberal democracy.” Fukuyama went on to theorize that the fall of communism represented a great step forward in mankind's struggle for