

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## America then, the world now

By Alan Wallace – June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013

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“Revolutionary Summer: The Birth of American Independence” by Joseph J. Ellis (Knopf) — With its author again employing his gift for presenting fresh takes on familiar stories — which helped earn him a Pulitzer Prize for his 2002 book “Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation” — this book focuses on a brief period, centering on the summer months of 1776, to retell what the publisher calls “the crescendo moment in American history.” It does so from both political and military perspectives, and from the vantage points of leaders on both sides of the Atlantic — George Washington, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin, as well as British admirals and generals who responded to the Colonies' decision to secede by “dispatching the largest armada ever to cross the Atlantic to crush the rebellion in the cradle.” Ellis covers how the Continental Congress and Continental Army had “to make decisions on the run,” as well as the interplay of political and military developments. This close-up view conveys a less-than-tidy portrait of the fledgling American Revolution, but those critical first steps toward independence are no less remarkable for that, and this book may even leave readers viewing that quest's ultimate success as even more miraculous than it always has seemed.

“Lincoln Unbound: How an Ambitious Young Railsplitter Saved the American Dream — and How We Can Do It Again” by Rich Lowry (Broadside Books) — This best-selling author, the editor of National Review, offers a ringing defense of our 16th president against persistent criticism from what he calls, in a National Review essay drawn in part from the book, “a portion of the Right (that) has always hated Old Abe” — a portion “mostly, but not entirely, limited to a fringe” that “blames him for wielding dictatorial powers in an unnecessary war against the Confederacy and creating the predicate for the modern welfare state, among sundry other offenses against the constitutional order and liberty.” He says their “case against Lincoln is not only tendentious and wrong, it puts the Right crosswise with a friend” who “was perhaps the foremost proponent of opportunity in all of American history.” Lincoln espoused values he lived, such as hard work, self-discipline, individual initiative, self-improvement, aspiration — values in line with those of today's conservatives, applicable to America's current challenges and “particularly important to a country that has been stagnating economically and suffering from a social breakdown that is limiting economic mobility.” This book is a timely reminder that we need an economy that makes attaining the American dream possible for individuals at least as much as did Lincoln and his contemporaries.

“Poverty and Progress: Realities and Myths about Global Poverty” by Deepak Lal (Cato Institute) — Distilling 50 years of experience gained around the world, a Cato Institute senior fellow — also a UCLA and University College London professor emeritus — argues that classical-liberal economic policies are the best approach to improving developing nations' lot. He notes that today's era of globalization, driven by capitalist free enterprise, has achieved what the publisher calls human history's “greatest reduction in mass poverty” — despite the affluent West implementing misguided ideas about economic progress. He shows how the World Bank exaggerates poverty's extent, contends claims about the benefits of so-called “microfinance”

have been overstated, criticizes the return of such discredited theories as “vicious circles” of poverty and refutes the notion that Africa must receive massive foreign aid if it's to be saved. He also concludes that the blame-mankind climate-change orthodoxy that has been so prevalent recently in the West poses “a great potential threat to the world's poor,” but is heartened by economic liberalization's capacity to reduce the susceptibility of developing nations' populations to such “intellectual fads.” His bottom line on the best way to fight global poverty is to go with what works: the free-market approach that has enabled globalization to produce rapid progress in the health, education and life expectancy of impoverished nations.

“Subsidies to Chinese Industry: State Capitalism, Business Strategy, and Trade Policy” by Usha C.V. Haley and George T. Haley (Oxford University Press USA) — Here's an in-depth look at one nation's policy that has shaped global markets in four key capital-intensive industries — steel, glass, paper and auto parts. The husband-and-wife authors — she's a professor of management who directs West Virginia University's Center for Global Business and Strategy, he's a professor of marketing and international business who directs the University of New Haven's Center for International Industry Competitiveness — use publicly available data from private and governmental sources to develop their own measures of China's industrial subsidies. They conclude that such subsidies may exceed 30 percent of key industries' output — and have been far more important in China's swift economic rise than advantages of scale or edges in labor costs. Often viewed as distorting markets and capital's allocation, China's industrial subsidies reflect the interests and priorities of the Chinese government and Communist Party, and capital flows within China reflect internal struggles between its provincial and central governments, according to the authors. Their book — dense with data, charts, graphs, chapter endnotes, appendix, bibliography and index — should be valuable to fellow academics, business people, politicians, diplomats and general readers.

#### KIDS, MEET 'THE GIPPER'

Geared toward children ages 5 to 8, “The Remarkable Ronald Reagan: Cowboy and Commander in Chief” (Regnery Kids, available Tuesday) arrives just in time to stave off such youngsters' cries of school's-out boredom, giving parents an opportunity to introduce them to “the Gipper” in a fun, easy-to-understand way. Its 36 full-color, 8.5-by-11-inch pages cover its subject's life, from his humble beginnings as “Dutch” Reagan to how he worked his way through college, became a Hollywood star, helped America's World War II efforts, enjoyed life on his ranch and played a key role in ending Soviet communism as president. Along the way, it aims to teach children about the characteristics that made him so successful — responsibility, kindness, hard work — and inspire them to follow his example. The team behind “The Remarkable Ronald Reagan” is well-suited to the task: writer Susan Allen is the wife of George Allen, former Virginia governor and U.S. senator; illustrator Leslie Harrington is a well-known freelance artist who has worked for several educational publishers and modernized Highlights magazine's long-running “Goofus and Gallant” comic strip. They want young readers to know Ronald Reagan not just as a revered politician and president, but as a good person, humble and determined — a fine role model for them as they grow older.