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Reagan's 1968 Dress Rehearsal: Ike, RFK, and Reagan's Emergence as a World Statesman

Gene Kopelson

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This ground-breaking book weaves an exciting, never-before-told story of Ronald Reagan's first quest for the presidency in the late 1960s. Reagan's goal was to prevent a first-ballot Nixon victory, as many delegates couldn't wait to vote for Reagan on the second ballot. Yet Reagan favored the broad political tent of the Republican Party and said he would support whomever was the nominee.

Behind the scenes, Reagan's private political mentor was Dwight Eisenhower, and Reagan's public political foe was Robert Kennedy. Reagan scholar Kopelson's analysis relies on newly uncovered audiotapes from candidate Reagan's days as governor of California, the Eisenhower-Reagan correspondence and files, Ike's post-presidential diary, and interviews with 35 grassroots Reagan activists from 1968.

Many of the major triumphs of Reagan's subsequent tenure as president originated during that first campaign: Tearing down the Berlin Wall. Lessening nuclear weapons. The peaceful defeat of communism. Creating a missile defense shield for America. Bringing freedom to Eastern Europe. And dealing with hostage crises.

During 1968, Reagan emerged as a world statesman and shaped his crusade to restore pride in America. Kopelson further demonstrates why for Reagan, Ike's tutelage was critical. This political mentorship changed America's national priorities through the end of Reagan's presidency, whose effects are still very much with us today.

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