

CURRENT BOOKS

FELLOWS' CHOICE

Recent titles selected and reviewed by Fellows of the Wilson Center

**FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
AND AMERICAN FOREIGN
POLICY, 1932-1945**

by Robert Dallek
Oxford, 1979
657 pp. \$19.95
L of C 78-7910
ISBN 0-19-502457-5

Troubles overseas faced FDR soon after his election to the U.S. Presidency in 1932: German Nazism, Italian Fascism, Japanese militarism. Yet, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, isolationist sentiment dominated Congress and the electorate. Roosevelt, always a believer in a strong U.S. role in world politics, was ultimately successful in convincing the American people that freedom and democracy at home were inevitably linked to their fate abroad. He moved cautiously as he prepared the country for World War II—artfully exploiting Americans' sympathies and cultural affinities for embattled Britain. During the 1940 presidential campaign, while pledging to keep the U.S. out of a foreign war, he and Winston Churchill boldly closed a deal that traded 50 overage U.S. destroyers for naval and air bases in seven of Britain's Western Hemisphere possessions. Dallek, a U.C.L.A. historian, argues that FDR's latter-day critics have underestimated his dilemma before Pearl Harbor as he contemplated both the people's desire to avoid war and their hopes for an Axis defeat. Dallek's balanced analysis leads to a disturbing question: If so masterful a politician as Roosevelt had such difficulty persuading Americans to accept uncomfortable truths, what can we expect from less skillful leaders?

—Stephen Pelz ('79)

NAPLES '44

by Norman Lewis
Pantheon, 1979
206 pp. \$8.95
L of C 78-13060
ISBN 0-394-50354-6

Most books about war stress battles and military heroics; this World War II diary focuses on the messy side effects. Lewis, a British intelligence officer attached to the U.S. Fifth Army, arrived in Naples a month after the Italian surrender in September 1943. As the fight against the Germans went on to the north, liberated Naples was plagued by

thievery, starvation, prostitution, and perhaps history's biggest black market operation. After years of Fascist rule, city politics underwent a revival, although a corrupt one. It was a *Beggars' Opera* world in which small criminals sometimes got caught, but big ones usually prospered, with the complicity of local administrators or the Allied troops, who brought much-needed food, clothing, and other essentials. There was no systematic allocation of these supplies among the Neapolitans, giving ample incentive to local politicians and crooks to traffic in stolen goods. War often deposits this sort of chaos in its wake, but rarely does it find so thoughtful a reporter. At one point, Lewis, dining in a restaurant, observes that all the Italian patrons' overcoats were made from stolen U.S. army blankets. His writing is precise and evocative: "Ragged, hawk-eyed boys . . . wandered among the tables ready to dive on any crust . . . to snatch up left-overs . . . I couldn't help noticing the intelligence—almost the intellectuality—of their expressions. No attempt was made to chase them away. They were simply treated as nonexistent."

—Geoffrey Best ('79)

**BLOWING ON
THE WIND: The Nuclear
Test Ban Debate, 1954–1960**
by Robert A. Divine
Oxford, 1978
402 pp. \$14.95
L of C 77-25057
ISBN 0-19-502390-0

In March 1954, more than 200 Marshall Islanders and the 23-man crew of the Japanese fishing trawler *Lucky Dragon* suffered classic symptoms of radiation poisoning (nausea, fever, bleeding gums) as a result of a U.S. nuclear bomb test on Bikini Atoll. The blast was part of a U.S. effort to stay ahead in the nuclear arms race, which had accelerated when the Soviet Union detonated its first hydrogen bomb in August 1953. After the *Lucky Dragon* incident, public debate over atmospheric testing intensified. Divine, a University of Texas historian, gives us a well-documented account. Proponents of an atmospheric test ban included prominent scientists (Linus Pauling) and politicians (Adlai Stevenson). Senior U.S. military men opposed a ban, but they played a minor role in the Washington debate; far more influential in arguing against a ban were Atomic Energy Commis-