

CURRENT BOOKS

FELLOWS' CHOICE

Recent titles selected and reviewed by Fellows of the Wilson Center

**THE PAPERS OF DWIGHT
DAVID EISENHOWER**

(Vols. 6-9)

6. Occupation, 1945

edited by Alfred Chandler, Jr.
and Louis Galambos

7-9. The Chief of Staff

edited by Louis Galambos

Johns Hopkins, 1978

2517 pp. \$85 (4-vol. set)

The War Years, volumes 1-5 of Dwight Eisenhower's collected papers, confirmed Thomas Hardy's view that war makes "rattling good history." This second well-edited set, alas, finds Ike mired in the postwar tedium of occupation duty in defeated Germany, followed by 26 months of daily frustration as chief of staff in Washington, presiding over the dismantling of the recently victorious U.S. Army. No longer is Ike choosing commanders or deciding Allied strategy. Now he is preoccupied with policies for training troops awaiting discharge and for disposing of surplus property (including 91 Miami Beach hotels). Eisenhower put it succinctly in a letter to his son: The Pentagon "was a sorry place to light after having commanded a theater of war." On the larger issues, Ike's days as chief of staff bore bitter fruit. His hopes for complete unification of the U.S. military services were dashed by the 1947 National Security Act, which created a kind of federation under the titular leadership of the Secretary of Defense. The new Joint Chiefs of Staff arrangement failed to eliminate interservice feuds. And his program for universal military training was rejected by Congress. For all the disappointments associated with this period of Eisenhower's career, one aspect of his personality remained undiminished—he was "Old Army" to the core. Ike was meticulous in his personal correspondence and careful to duly note important events—birthdays, promotions, awards—in the lives of his colleagues and friends. Although it is true of his writing that the higher the level of abstraction, the less he shines, at the personal level, and in dealing with day-to-day problems, he was superb.

—David MacIsaac ('79)