

his *Memoirs* must be compared with what he wrote during the war, for there are important differences, as the editor clearly indicates. Of course, the person about whom these documents reveal most is Grant himself—the man and the army commander—whose character, patterns of thought, decision making process, and prowess as a military leader almost defy comprehension.

The text consists of all of Grant's significant official and personal letters (including eighteen previously unpublished letters to his wife), telegrams, reports, and general orders. They are printed in full and appear in chronological sequence with related communications, explanatory notes, two maps, five illustrations, a chronology, and a calendar containing other Grant documents. The editing is truly professional, the notes are well prepared and informative, and the index is superb. The editor, his assistant, and the Ulysses S. Grant Association merit congratulations for a publication that is and will remain an indispensable contribution to American biography and history.

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*The Politics of Inertia: The Election of 1876 and the End of Reconstruction.* By Keith Ian Polakoff. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1973. Pp. xiv, 343. Notes, essay on sources, index. \$10.95.)

Because the election of 1876 represented an important turning point in American history and was marked by a dramatic electoral crisis, a substantial body of historical literature exists on the subject. Historians have generally focused on the electoral controversy or treated the election in the larger context of Reconstruction. In this book, Keith Ian Polakoff presents the first comprehensive study of the actual campaign. *The Politics of Inertia* carefully details the events leading to the respective nominations of Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel J. Tilden and the presidential campaign on both the national and state levels, as well as the ensuing electoral stalemate and controversy.

Although the author's main interest is the "configuration of power" (p. xiii) in the political parties of the 1870s, Professor Polakoff attempts to refute C. Vann Woodward's long standing explanation of the Compromise of 1877. Polakoff's thesis is that the eventual settlement of the electoral controversy resulted directly from the nature of party politics in the 1870s rather than from any secret political bargain between Republican leaders and southern Democrats with "Old Whig" antecedents. The author argues that eventually "the very inability of party leaders to control their own organizations, even in a crisis demanding centralized direction, assured a pacific, if blundering, solution to the electoral dispute" (p. x). Accordingly, the book includes an excellent analysis of party structure and campaign techniques. Although his statement that "the major parties in the nineteenth century had no national leaders" (p. x) is certainly much too sweeping a generalization, Polakoff does demonstrate that the major parties of the 1870s did lack effective national leadership. In 1876 the national party organizations played an ineffectual and limited role in the campaign. As a result, "there were in reality thirty-eight campaigns for the presidency in 1876, one in each of the states of the Union" (p. 148).

*The Politics of Inertia* is a significant study which well details the elections of 1876 and includes fresh material on party organization, campaign practices, and managerial techniques of the day. Although some will be disappointed by Polakoff's decision not to analyze election returns, this should not detract from his contribution. The book is well written, clearly organized, and soundly researched. In regard to the electoral controversy of 1876-1877, Polakoff demonstrates that such historians as Woodward have exaggerated the danger of civil war. In addition, the author's attempt to refute Woodward's thesis is persuasive. But to argue that party structure made Woodward's Compromise of 1877 superfluous and unnecessary is not necessarily to prove that such a political bargain was not instrumental in settling the crisis. Whatever they conclude, historians of the period will now have to reevaluate the issue on the basis of this study.

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