



The Chief of Staff: The Military Career of General Walter Bedell Smith (Contributions in Military Studies)

Dan Crosswell

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The functions of staff officers in U.S. military history have been largely ignored by historians who have preferred to focus on the role of the combat officer. This examination of the career of General Walter Bedell Smith, Chief of Staff to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and his valuable contribution to Allied success, represents an effort to fill a void in the current historiography of U.S. participation in Europe in World War II. While specifically looking at Smith's military career from his entry into the Indiana National Guard on his sixteenth birthday to his retirement from the U.S. Army as a four-star general 39 years later, the volume is also a general investigation of the role of Chief of Staff and a critical study of the interwar U.S. Army and its participation in the campaigns of the Mediterranean and Northwest Europe during World War II. The institutional and attitudinal structure that produced the generation of American officers that commanded armies and manned higher headquarters is thoroughly evaluated in this volume. D.K.R. Crosswell concludes that the normative influences of the Army's advance schools conditioned the U.S. approach to war in Europe: Eisenhower and Smith's broad front strategy is seen as a product of their Leavenworth educations. Smith's relationships with Eisenhower and George C. Marshall are also seen as important formative influences.

Despite a paucity of personal papers and no prior book on Smith, Crosswell had access to a wealth of primary materials in the Eisenhower Library in Abilene, Kansas and the resources of the Combat Studies Library at the Command and General Staff College in Leavenworth, Kansas. Substantial collections of materials at the federal research facilities in Washington, the U.S. Army Military History Institute holdings in Carlisle Barracks, Pa., and the George C. Marshall Library in Lexington, Va., were consulted. Personal interviews with surviving World War II officers and an examination of British sources were conducted to give the most complete picture of Smith to date. *The Chief of Staff* is divided into four major sections: Bedell Smith and Officership in the U.S. Army, 1917-1939; The Towering Figure: George C. Marshall; The First Campaign: The Mediterranean; Northwest Europe, and an epilogue which covers Smith's post-Army years. The 14 chapters present Smith as perhaps the best example of the World War II military manager. He emerges from these pages as a central figure of the period and his contributions within the Allied sphere proved fundamental to eventual battlefield success. Seven maps of World War II major theaters of operation from Morocco to Normandy and never-before-published archival photographs are included. Military history and World War II buffs won't want to miss this splendid read which will also appeal to academic military historians, libraries and research facilities, as well as current and retired military officers. The book is ideal supplemental reading for courses in U.S. military history.

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