

The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series. Volume 4: 8 October 1802–15 May 1803. Edited by MARY A. HACKETT, J.C.A. STAGG, JEANNE KERR-CROSS, SUSAN HOLBROOK PERDUE, and ELLEN J. BARBER. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988. xli, 673p. Index. \$65.00.)

Only the editors and perhaps a handful of scholars read a volume such as this from cover to cover. This is unfortunate because to do so is to gain insight into the nature of the federal government and the workday of the secretary of state at the beginning of the nineteenth century. As secretary James Madison was involved in the minute details of two very different worlds. One consisted of the various domestic responsibilities assigned to his department because the First Congress failed to create a home department, leaving Madison to oversee such matters as patent and copyright, communication with the states, the upcoming Lewis and Clark expedition, and territorial affairs (including the District of Columbia). The other, and more demanding, was overseeing foreign affairs. This meant at least acknowledgment, if not resolution, of major foreign policy issues as well as irritating clashes among members of a sometimes petty diplomatic corps whose loyalty to the Jefferson administration was no given. In addition to the duties imposed on the secretary of state by the laws governing his department, Madison was also a leader of his political party and a close advisor to the president—though one would hardly know so from the documents. One must assume that the virtual absence of a personal life indicates that the documents did not survive rather than that Madison lacked one.

Madison is no longer dealing with the profound issues and hardball politics involved in the creation of a new federal Constitution and its implementation. Nevertheless, one is struck by the fact that the issues dominating the volume are not new to anyone familiar with the Madison of the 1780s: the potential stranglehold over American commerce held by those nations which controlled New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi River and the straits of Gibraltar at the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea. At least in the case of the latter, Madison knew which nations those were—Tunis, Algiers, and Morocco—and just how much in annual bribes was required. Whether France or Spain actually controlled the port of New Orleans and the contiguous Floridas was not so clear when the United States lost its treaty right of deposit at the port, spurring the United States to attempt to purchase it and the Floridas. How the American ambassador to France, Robert Livingston, unhappily cooperating with special envoy James Monroe, acquired New Orleans and with it the Mississippi River's vast western watershed is the most important story in the documents. It's a cliff-hanger because the volume ends before news of the purchase reached the United States, leaving the reader to await treatment of the domestic reaction.

How the editors of documentary editions select which documents to include,

decide which of these to print, excerpt, or abstract, modernize the text, and render the information more accessible through annotation and indexing varies according to editorial project and available funding. The editors of this volume should be especially complimented for their solution to the complex problem of selection and the light they thereby shed on the rich and often untapped public record held by the National Archives. Also striking is the almost ten-page preface which provides the background and context of the diplomatic issues confronting Madison as well as critical information not available to the secretary of state because it did not come to light until a century later. Volume 4 of the secretary of state series is well edited, but like so many of their colleagues in the field, the editors have produced an index, which despite its more than seventy pages, does not provide ready assistance to someone seeking information about concepts rather than persons, places, and things. Missing from the editorial apparatus is a CD-ROM copy of the intriguing film *Dangerous Liaisons*; viewing it would help users of the volume better appreciate the challenge of what Livingston accomplished in the spring of 1803.

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