

The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series. Volume 9: 1 February 1805–30 June 1805. Edited by Mary A. Hackett and others. (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2011. Pp. [xxxiv], 575. \$85.00, ISBN 978-0-8139-3098-5.)

This volume of James Madison's correspondence from the early months of 1805, which is as beautifully and authoritatively presented as scholars have come to expect, brings us to the midpoint of Madison's service as secretary of state under President Thomas Jefferson. Very little *happened* during the five months covered here, to be sure. The most common points of discussion in this volume involved failed or inconclusive negotiations with European powers, accompanied by fairly routine matters concerning territorial administration, diplomatic instructions, and disputes regarding impressed sailors and seized cargoes. But in reading the letters and memoranda coming into and out of Madison's office at the United States State Department, one begins to gain some sense of why—from a purely practical standpoint—his cabinet position became a common stepping-stone to the presidency for a significant part of the nineteenth century.

Madison's office was tasked with coordinating the actions of American officials representing the young United States in ports and capitals throughout the Atlantic world. And it was Madison who personally responded to pleas, demands, reports, and queries from places as far afield as the Louisiana Territory, the Caribbean, and North Africa. Before the creation of the Department of the Interior in 1849, moreover, it was Madison, as head of the State Department, who dealt with matters of territorial government. This task was especially taxing, as evidenced by the numerous reports and complaints Madison received from Louisiana's territorial governor, William C. C. Claiborne. In short, Madison, as secretary of state, acted on behalf of a singular United States in foreign affairs while simultaneously dealing with the challenges of creating that unity at home.

The secretary's correspondence with Claiborne in New Orleans makes up a prominent part of this volume, though it was mostly one-sided: Madison received thirty-seven letters from the governor in the months covered here while sending only four replies. The reasons for the discrepancy were partly mundane—Claiborne's letters tended to come in bunches, having been "long on the way," according to Madison—and partly revealing of just how insecure Claiborne was in his post (p. 67). Claiborne was painfully aware

"of a great want of respect for My Authority as the chief Magistrate of this Territory" (p. 437). Both reasons reveal the tenuous connection between the newly acquired region and the authority of a distant Washington City.

More notable still are the dispatches and instructions that passed between Madison's desk in Washington and the foreign missions of James Monroe (special envoy to Spain), Charles Pinckney (minister to Spain), and John Armstrong (minister to France). Negotiations with the Spanish government—which was then under Napoleon's thumb—over the proper boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase largely fizzled over these months. Monroe and Pinckney, for their part, urged their superiors simply to seize the Floridas and Texas as far as the Rio Bravo and to resume negotiations after the fact. Madison and Jefferson did not concur, partly for constitutional reasons. As Madison put it, because war "is a question which belongs to Congress, not to the Executive, that consideration alone forbids any step on the part of the latter, which would commit the Nation, and so far take from the Legislature the free exercise of its power" (p. 381).

The Madison found here is a man concerned with details. Anyone interested in precisely how foreign ministers in the Jefferson administration were told to file their expense reports, for example, will find it here. But the inquisitive mind of Madison appears as well. The seizure of American vessels by privateers of belligerent powers prompted Madison to research and reflect on the principles that underlay American claims of neutrality rights. We see here, in an April 1805 letter to James Monroe, Madison's rehearsal of some innovative ideas about international law that would take full form in his later work, *An Examination of the British Doctrine, Which Subjects to Capture a Neutral Trade, Not Open in Time of Peace* (Philadelphia, 1806), which will be printed in a future volume of this series.

Thus perhaps not a lot happened in these five months, but there is a lot to be found. The editors continue their accomplished work of effectively and informatively synthesizing related documents and enclosures. The index is remarkably thorough and especially useful for readers unsure of what office certain correspondents held. The volume also provides the occasional pleasant reminder of what an interesting confluence of personalities would have been found in Washington in 1805: in May a young Yale College graduate arrived there carrying a letter from David Ramsay, which Madison docketed with the note, "Introduces J. C. Calhoun" (p. 374).

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