GENERAL HISTORY

The Papers of James Madison: Vols. VI, VII. Edited by WILLIAM T. HUTCHINSON and WILLIAM M. E. RACHAL. (University of Chicago Press, VI, 1969. Pp. 545. Notes, index. $15.00; VII, 1971. Pp. 479. Notes, index. $16.00.)

James Madison appeared on the national scene for the first time in March, 1780, when he arrived in Philadelphia as a Virginia delegate to the Continental Congress. He did not return to Virginia until December, 1783, after he had served the three years allowed in Congress by the Articles of Confederation. Six of the first seven volumes of *The Papers of James Madison* are devoted to these three years. Many of the important documents have been printed before; others have not. All of them are massively annotated, and sometimes excessively so, but without these materials and their annotation the history of the United States in these crucial years would be much the poorer. In fact, the information in these volumes has yet to be woven into a full history of the times.

The two volumes reviewed here are devoted to the year 1783. The year began with the appearance of a delegation of discontented army officers before Congress. Army discontent was seized upon by political leaders such as Robert Morris, superintendent of finance, to secure an independent income for Congress. The attempt to amend the Articles of Confederation to give Congress an independent income had been defeated by Rhode Island and Virginia in 1782. In the spring of 1783 Congress finally agreed to request the states for an independent income for a limited time, an agreement reached in part because many members of Congress feared that the army and the public creditors would unite and overthrow the government if their demands were not met.

During the early months of the year men were also waiting anxiously for news of the peace negotiations in Paris. In June, 1781, the pro-French Robert Morris faction had drafted new instructions which placed the peace negotiators under the control of the French. Fortunately for the United States, John Adams and John Jay ignored the instructions and a complaisant Benjamin Franklin went along with them. The result was a preliminary treaty with Britain written without consultation with the French. When the preliminary treaty reached Philadelphia in March, 1783, adherents of the Morris faction professed to be outraged. Those interested in the rhetorical aspects of foreign policy debates in the twentieth century should consider John Francis Mercer's denunciation of the peace negotiators on March 19, 1783, as reported in Madison's notes on the debates. They had "insulted" Congress and their conduct was a "mixture of follies which had no example, was a tragedy to America & a comedy to all the world besides." He "reprobated the chicane & low cunning" of the journals sent by the negotiators. "They proved," he said, "that America had at once all the follies of youth and all the vices of old age" and declared that the ministers should be recalled. Fortunately, cooler heads prevailed.

Involved of course were old political divisions dating back to 1775 when the "Lee-Adams Junto" had led the drive for independence against the opposition of Middle States leaders such as Robert Morris and James Wilson. The battle had continued throughout the war with the Adamses of Massachusetts and the Lees of Virginia leading the attack against Robert Morris and other merchants who made fortunes out of the war. The Lee-Adams group and its allies had bitterly opposed placing the peace negotiators under French direction in 1781, and they were delighted with the preliminary peace treaty.

Such issues divided states as well as Congress. Benjamin Harrison, a business partner of Robert Morris, was governor of Virginia in 1783. Richard Henry Lee had led the fight to repeal Virginia's ratification of the Impost Amendment of 1781 and Harrison called Lee a "cloven footed monster" in a letter to Madison. Meanwhile, Lee's brother, Arthur Lee, was one of the Virginia delegates in Congress and he fought Madison on every issue, for Madison was a steadfast supporter of Robert Morris and his plans for creating a powerful central government between 1781 and 1783.

These volumes therefore illuminate issues in both national and state politics. Furthermore, most of the leaders in 1783 had been debating many of those issues ever since the beginning of the war for independence, and they continued to debate them after the establishment of government under the Constitution of 1787. Thus James Madison wrote a letter to Edmund Randolph in July, 1783, about the prospect of locating the national

capitol on the Potomac that reads very much like letters he wrote to Randolph five years later while the Confederation Congress was deadlocked over whether the new government should meet temporarily in New York or Philadelphia. The documents in these volumes are a remarkable demonstration of Lord Acton's dictum that history is a "seamless web."

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