

The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series. Volume 3: 1 March–6 October 1802. Edited by David B. Mattern, J. C. A. Stagg, Jeanne Kerr Cross, and Susan Holbrook Perdue. (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1995. Pp. xlii, 657. \$47.50, ISBN 0-8139-1541-4.)

With this volume the pattern for the Secretary of State Series of *The Papers of James Madison* seems established: large volumes (at the present pace perhaps fifteen volumes covering 1801–1809) filled almost entirely with State Department business. The huge bulk of papers—including long and frequent letters from American ministers and consuls abroad, many often routine instructions to them from the State Department, domestic documents (especially correspondence about territorial matters), and incessant, nagging letters seeking or supporting appointment to office—often requires mere listing or summarizing. Page after page is filled with half-a-dozen entries, briefly abstracted or merely noted as “not found.” Yet, as has been true with other volumes in this series, the fullness of understanding of State Department business and exceedingly helpful but well-proportioned editorial information make this a highly useful book for historians.

The period covered, a brief interval of peace in the Napoleonic era, was filled with inaction, inconclusiveness, and anxiety for American officials. Many documents have to do with claims against Spain, France, and Great

Britain over depredations in previous wars or quasi-wars, while many others chronicle the continuing difficulties with the Barbary powers over American commerce in the Mediterranean. Most critical and potentially ominous, however, was the anxiety created by Napoleon's intentions in the Caribbean and Louisiana. Madison received letters from all directions. Robert Livingston wrote from Paris of Napoleon's autocratic but seemingly capricious plans to expand French hegemony in the Old and New Worlds. Charles Pinckney in Madrid and Rufus King in London (plus consuls there and in other European cities) reported on machinations and frustrating negotiations in those capitals. Territorial officers in the Mississippi Valley wrote of threats and ambiguities arising from the uncertain status of the Spanish retrocession of New Orleans and Louisiana (and perhaps West Florida?) to France. Most portentous and hair-raising of all were the letters from Santo Domingo about the large force under General LeClerc attempting to reestablish French power there. Though nervous about any triumph of the ongoing slave revolt that LeClerc sought to put down, Madison and Jefferson nonetheless knew a victory for LeClerc would be a prelude to a major French effort to establish a great empire in Louisiana, thus cutting off American westward expansion. Madison had on his mind the possible effects of LeClerc's failure, the fate of reinforcements coming from Europe, the transfer of authority in Louisiana, and the possible purchase of New Orleans and West Florida (from whomever possessed them), but in 1802 all of this was simply up in the air. The Secretary of State listened, worried, reacted, and attempted cautious initiatives in a world situation where his capacity to control events was very limited indeed.

Even amid all the detail and complexity of State Department business, though, one gets occasional brilliant glimpses of the overall philosophy of what we see was truly a Jefferson-Madison administration. Every comment and exchange reveal their close, deeply committed, wholehearted agreement during these months. In a classic Enlightenment ploy, for example, they instructed the newly appointed American consul in Algiers to try not to provide the customary elaborate gifts to the Dey there in order "to discourage on all occasions the venal and expensive customs with which Barbary now taxes the intercourse with civilized nations." If some offering nonetheless seemed necessary to maintain good relations, Madison hoped, in order to "simplify" relations, that the Dey would "accept in cash the value of the customary presents" (p. 137). In another luminous remark, Jefferson suggested to Madison that they not leave an important matter about bankruptcy law to Congress—"that," Jefferson said, "would be abandoning it." Observing that the administration had "led Congress" to the law in the first place, it should present further facts to the country about the law and thus "rally the public opinion again to what is right" (p. 550). The incident perfectly captured the Jefferson-Madison theory of executive leadership of Congress and of the public, in a republic, toward what they thought were measures for the common good. This volume, in fact, reveals this ideology on nearly every page, and this revelation is the basic contribution that it makes to the study of American history.