

The Papers of James Madison: Secretary of State Series. Volume 7: 2 April–31 August 1804. Edited by David B. Mattern and others. (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2005. Pp. [xxxviii], 714. \$75.00, ISBN 0-8139-2353-0.)

This is another large volume dealing almost entirely with the business crossing the desk of Secretary of State James Madison during five months of exceedingly difficult and complex efforts to guide the nation through the early months of the resumed world war between France and Great Britain. Reporting to Madison from London in June 1804, well aware of Napoleon's vast power and ambition, James Monroe nonetheless wrote that England had renewed the war with France "deliberately, . . . [and] in cool blood," aiming "to attack her on the sea, block up her ports, ruin her commerce and marine, while it sought the aggrandizement of G. Britain . . . and by the extension of her commerce and marine" (pp. 387, 388). Thus confident that French armies on the Continent posed no threat and that the blockade would slowly but surely reduce Napoleon's power, Britain expected that France would soon be rendered helpless in the New World. Britain would then be able to take the rest of the French colonies there and secure first the independence and then the trade of all of Spain's colonies. "Commanding at sea and controuling by means of it, the general commerce of Europe with other countries, and in a great measure of the world itself," Britain would thus "become equally imposing and prosperous" (p. 388). The only additional requirement was the inclusion or coercion of the United States in the scheme as a sort of junior partner, which meant acquiescence in all the high-handed or violent measures of the Royal Navy to control sea traffic in Europe, on the high seas, and throughout the Americas. Madison, of course, saw this plan as the end of American independence; as Thomas Jefferson put it early in his administration, the United States would thus have to "marry" itself to the British fleet (Thomas Jefferson to Robert R. Livingston, April 18, 1802, in Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *Thomas Jefferson: Writings* [New York, 1984], 1105). As the documents in this volume reveal in vivid, sometimes excruciating, detail, Madison sought to cope with Britain's condescension and then arrogant and brutal use of power to control the commerce of the world as part of that nation's life-and-death struggle with Napoleon.

Most of the documents in this volume (many of them abstracted or merely listed) are from American ministers in London, Paris, and Madrid and deal

with the large matters of war, peace, and international law. Madison worked to defend American rights and commerce. On the whole, though, nothing happens as everything is stalled or subordinated to the rapidly changing fortunes of war. Even more voluminous letters and documents arrive from American consuls around the world, especially in the Mediterranean, where American ships and sailors were being captured or destroyed in the Barbary wars; Madison had to direct war plans and diplomacy from Morocco to Constantinople. Equally taxing were complicated efforts to secure the Louisiana Purchase. The boundaries were contested by Spain. British (and even French) warships cruised the mouth of the Mississippi River to disrupt commerce and to take advantage of any sign of American weakness. Madison also had to supervise the establishment of American civil law in New Orleans and the rest of the Louisiana territory. The earnestly Jeffersonian governor William C. C. Claiborne wrote Madison fifty-four letters in five months about all the problems of bringing American constitutional government to the formerly Spanish and French territories. The fact that French, Spanish, and especially dangerous British forces hovered, hostile to each other but all eager to exclude American rule from New Orleans and the land west of the Mississippi, was a serious concern of Madison's. Hundreds of letters document a level of threat to the United States perhaps not again equaled until Pearl Harbor or 9/11. Two British warships, for example, operated brazenly in New York harbor for months, impressing American sailors, capturing prizes, and defying the orders of American port authorities; the *Chesapeake* affair, the embargo, and the War of 1812 loomed.

As has been true of other volumes in the Secretary of State series, there is very little of Madison's own thought or private life here. One glimpses a bit of his personal travails and joys, though, in exchanges with Jefferson about summer visits. Madison was hoping to visit Jefferson at Monticello at the end of August, along with Dolley Madison and the French minister Louis-André Pichon and his wife, but their failure to appear on time meant that the visit had to be transferred to Montpelier on Jefferson's way back to Washington; "I shall certainly be very happy to see you at my house," Madison wrote (p. 635). Altogether one sees the benefit to the nation of perhaps the most amicable, like-minded, and public-spirited collaboration in American history.

The fine editing continues in this volume; as I wrote in reviewing a previous volume in this series, "there is everything to praise and very little to complain about in the superb editorial presentation of these vital records of early American government" (*Journal of Southern History*, 67 [November 2001], 840).

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