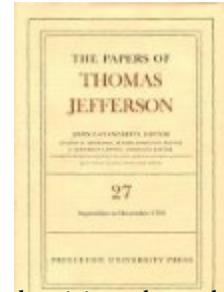


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John Catanzariti, ed. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: 1 September to 31 December 1793*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. 856 pp. \$93.75 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-691-01585-9.

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This is the last of eleven volumes of the Papers of Thomas Jefferson project dealing with his tenure as Secretary of State. As scholars have come to expect from this series, the quality of the editorial work is exceptionally high in this latest product as well. Covering his final months in office from September to his resignation December 31, 1793, Volume 27 contains information on some of the most significant and controversial matters of these months. Thematically as well as chronologically, this volume builds on the issues preeminent in Volume 26, which covered Jefferson's correspondence from May to August 1793.

While many of the letters deal with Jefferson's diplomatic concerns as Secretary of State, they are interspersed with letters which suggest Jefferson's multifaceted interests, responsibilities and duties and the wide circle of family and friends with whom he maintained a correspondence. For example, one of Jefferson's correspondents was Eli Whitney, who sent him a detailed description of his newly-developed cotton gin along with a request for a patent which was duly granted. Along with his cover letter to Jefferson, Whitney sent both a short and long description of the machine and a drawing of the cotton gin as required by the Patent Act of 1793. Beyond his official interest in this invention, one imagines the inventor Jefferson reacting with interest to this new device.

Jefferson also corresponded with friends about the immense relief he expected to feel once he resigned his office. To Angelica Schuyler Church, Jefferson wrote of his upcoming plans to return to Virginia: "I am then to be liberated from the hated occupations of politics, and to sink into the bosom of my family, my farm and my books" (p. 449). He recounted the blessings provided by

his daughters and their happiness, and anticipated spending more time with them once he got away from official responsibilities. Other letters contain nuggets of Jefferson's observations on his contemporaries, including Alexander Hamilton with whom his personal and political feud had been raging. In a letter to James Madison on the Yellow Fever epidemic, Jefferson observed that Hamilton's excessive concern about catching the fever was making him ill. Hamilton had been miserable, he wrote, "from a firm persuasion he should catch it." Jefferson noted cattily, "A man as timid as he is on the water, as timid on horseback, as timid in sickness, would be a phaenomenon if the courage of which he has the reputation in military occasions were genuine" (p. 62).

There are several dominant, recurring themes in the letters in this volume. Beyond the merely personal, the fuller dimensions of Jefferson's political and policy disputes with Hamilton are apparent from reading his lengthy "Report on Commerce" dated December 16. In what is actually a series of reports dating from 1791, he spelled out in copious detail his vision of the yeoman republic ideal he sought for the United States. At length, Jefferson defined a path for the nation to take which would allow it to postpone for as long as possible the kind of degeneration he feared was being hastened by Alexander Hamilton's fiscal policies and could only be avoided by his own ideas of agrarian republicanism. As an excellent and thorough editorial note spells out, Jefferson, who prepared but did not submit these reports for a variety of reasons, chose to release them all as he left office. Although they reflected views he held for some time, the release was timely as it anticipated the proposals on commercial discrimination against Great Britain that James Madison introduced to the House of Representatives in January 1794. Taken together with Madison's earlier ef-

forts to get the House to pass discriminatory measures against England, these reports of Jefferson's provide a clear summary of the agrarian republicanism which was the crucial backbone of Republican political economy.

The Yellow Fever epidemic, which virtually shut down the government and forced many to flee Philadelphia, necessarily receives considerable attention, and Jefferson's letters of these months are filled with news about the plague. In several letters to Madison and others, he tracked the progress of the disease, noting the deaths of friends, persons leaving the city, and the general course of the epidemic. Although others left the town to flee the Fever, Jefferson told Madison he wanted to postpone his exit as long as possible since "I do not like to exhibit the appearance of panic. Besides that," he continued, "I think there might serious ills proceed from there being not a single member of the administration in place" (p. 62). To Thomas Mann Randolph, Jr., he explained his reluctant decision to leave Philadelphia as stemming not so much from fear of the Fever. "I find it impossible to keep my servants from going; and as my clerks have all gone off except one, so that the business of my office cannot be carried on, I have determined to go also" (p. 121). By mid-November, however, Jefferson could write with relief to Madison that the Fever was abating and residents were returning.

By far the most important matter Jefferson dealt with during this interval—and the subject receiving the most space in this volume—concerns the actions of French minister Edmond Genet and the ramifications of those acts for Jefferson, the Republican interest, and the nation. Previous volumes of the Jefferson papers contained the vital correspondence of the early summer of 1793 between Jefferson and Genet and reflected the growing difficulty of the relationship between the U.S. government and the French diplomat. By June, it was clear to all that Genet's actions and statements put Jefferson and French sympathizers in a bind. Continued support of Genet would be nearly disloyal and unpatriotic. Following a cabinet meeting July 12, President Washington decided to ask the French government to recall Genet. Jefferson, now in a dilemma, developed a shrewd strategy which allowed him to carry out his official diplomatic duties, minimize the damage Genet was doing to the emerging Republican cause, and at the same time maintain friendly if scrupulously correct and proper relations with the French diplomat himself. Jefferson devised a strategy of distancing or separating Genet from the French government and people and, more broadly, the goals of the French Revolution, and of portraying the minister instead

as a rogue diplomat who had the trust and confidence of neither the American government nor his own. Acting on this decision, Jefferson took a decidedly cool, gently chiding, but still respectful tone in his correspondence with Genet during his final months in office while hinting to friendly correspondents of his larger designs.

Jefferson's letters to Genet bespeak this approach. In early September, he wrote that "in order to bring to an end what can not be permitted to continue, there could be no hesitation to declare in it the necessity of their having a representative here disposed to respect the laws and authorities of the country" (p. 52). A month later, Jefferson, seemingly trying to find a way to exculpate Genet while still rebuking him, wrote that he was sure indiscretions were committed "from a want of intimacy with our constitution... But it is my duty to remark to you that by our constitution all foreign agents are to be addressed to the President of the U.S. no other branch of the government being charged with the foreign communications" (p. 176). In these and other similar letters, Jefferson evinced sympathy and concern for Genet all the while gently admonishing the Frenchman and warning him against any further improper behavior. On occasion, Jefferson was especially emphatic and curt. Of Genet's appeal to the state legislatures he observed sharply, "In this country the President is delegated to exercise that power, and not the legislature of a particular state as you have imagined" (p. 379).

If Jefferson carefully weighed his words when writing to Genet, he was less measured when writing about Genet to others. To James Madison, he observed with some irritation, "Genet by more and more denials of powers to the President and ascribing them to Congress, is evidently endeavoring to sow tares between them, and at any event to curry favor with the latter to whom he means to turn his appeal, finding it was not likely to be well received with the people" (pp. 395-96). To Thomas Pinckney in London, Jefferson wrote that the entire business with Genet would soon be made public, and he indicated to Pinckney the Republican strategy. Drawing a clear distinction between Genet and the nation of France he observed, "We have kept it merely personal, convinced his nation will disapprove him. To them we have with the utmost assiduity given every proof of inviolate attachment" (p. 450). In a draft of Washington's statement to Congress on December 2, 1793 on the Genet matter, Jefferson continued in the same vein, writing for Washington: "It is with extreme concern I have to inform you that the proceedings of the person whom they have unfortunately appointed their Minister Plenipotentiary here

have breathed nothing of the friendly spirit of the nation which sent him" (p. 474). In a final draft of a proposed public statement on Genet, Jefferson, on December 16, again distanced himself from the minister in recounting the controversy made public by Washington just two weeks earlier. He regretted "that I find my self made use of for any thing in so disagreeable an altercation," and stressed that he had personally done nothing improper in his conduct or dealings with Genet. "[S]ilence on my part," he wrote, "might beget surmises which would not be just...I think it therefore safest to give the whole report, without the suppression of a tittle" (p. 529).

Volume 27 continues the outstanding work which scholars have come to expect from the Jefferson papers editors. This volume has a superb index and unobtrusive yet exceptionally helpful editorial notes which clarify and place in context some of the major controversies and issues dealt with here. Also included is a supplement of some 270 documents, dating from 1764, found or reclassified since the last supplement in Volume 15. This final phase of Jefferson's tenure as Secretary of State is dominated by the Genet controversy which takes center stage. Reading this correspondence makes it clear how much of Jefferson's time and attention was taken in fashioning a satisfactory resolution to the crisis. In fact, the

one disappointment of the volume may be that the editors, continuing a long-standing editorial practice, chose to publish the many letters from Genet to Jefferson in the original French without translations. For many readers, this means that only one side of the fascinating exchange between the two men will be accessible, and, since the Genet matter and the letters themselves make up such a large portion of this volume, that editorial decision detracts from the impact for most readers. Still, this is a relatively small complaint about a work which both continues the excellence of the Jefferson Papers and extends our understanding of the actions of Jefferson in his final months as Secretary of State. Of course, despite Jefferson's protests to the contrary made to Angelican Church, the end of this period would hardly mark his last involvement in "the hated occupations of politics." For more on Jefferson's brief retirement and the long career to which he soon returned, scholars will await anxiously successive volumes of the papers.

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