

famous Texas and Pacific Railway. In 1874 he returned to public service and took over the scandal ridden national Treasury. The author considers Bristow a reforming secretary but does not provide a clear analysis of his financial policy, particularly in the confusion of the resumption question. Bristow was never close to President Ulysses S. Grant, and his unwavering determination to expose the Whiskey Ring angered the President.

In 1876 reform Republicans seriously considered Bristow for President, but he had little support in Kentucky and did not actively seek the nomination, although he did receive a respectable vote at the convention. In campaigning for Rutherford B. Hayes, Bristow spoke widely on the themes of sectional reconciliation and Republicanism in the South. Leaving public life Bristow settled in New York City and prospered as a lawyer with a large corporate practice. He was a founder and early president of the American Bar Association, and in his last years he argued his greatest case in persuading the Supreme Court to void the income tax of 1894.

Bristow was never a leading figure in American politics, but this biography does advance the reader's understanding of the Gilded Age, of the Republican party in the Upper South, and of its connections with business. It reveals also the personal dilemma of a border state Republican striving to instruct his fellow Kentuckians in new patterns of politics.

Despite the heading the bibliography is entirely uncritical, and the occasional reliance on such outdated works as those of Matthew Josephson is rather startling. Typical of the limitations of Webb's approach is his failure to cite Milton Friedman's monumental *Monetary History* (1963). Webb's volume is a sound traditional political biography, but economic historians will be disappointed.

Indiana University, South Bend

Patrick J. Furlong

The American Revolution and the French Alliance. By William C. Stinchcombe. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969. Pp. viii, 246. Notes, illustrations, bibliography, index. \$7.95.)

It is a pleasure to encounter a monograph as satisfactory as William C. Stinchcombe's *The American Revolution and the French Alliance*. His focus is as sharp as it is steady: it is on "the implementation of the French alliance in the United States" and its impact upon American domestic and foreign policy (p. vii). This is not another review of the diplomacy of the American Revolution, nor is Stinchcombe particularly engrossed with the details of Franco-American relations in the period 1776-1783. His interest is rather with Ameri-

can opinion and changing views of the vicissitudes of international politics.

Among the many virtues of Stinchcombe's study is his vigorous reminder that the French alliance was hardly as inevitable as often portrayed. Indeed, he might well have dwelt at greater length on the political discussions on the question of an alliance in the summer of 1776. For some colonists an alliance with the long hated and feared French was too high a price for independence; for others it would take time to adjust to the thought of soliciting—and taking—aid from France against Great Britain. But for still others, such as John Dickinson, an alliance was viewed as having higher priority than the Declaration of Independence itself. Certainly old prejudices died hard: Englishmen in America did after all share much with Englishmen in Britain—including their fear of “popery,” their hatred of the Roman Catholic religion. Necessity, in the War of Independence as in other conflicts, made for some surprising political bedfellows. The French were hardly enamored with American republican principles, but they could hardly resist the opportunity to embarrass Britain. The Count de Vergennes, Stinchcombe reminds us, was even prepared to recognize the United States in 1776 but held back on the news of the British capture of New York. Even so the flow of French aid continued, to the extent that the Americans at Saratoga were supplied with 90 per cent of their arms and ammunition by French merchants. While political doubts caused an initial congressional preference for a commercial treaty with France, continuing French assistance, along with growing self-confidence soon persuaded a majority to favor a full scale alliance.

Its success was self-evident, although French activity to nourish American public support for the alliance was not. Stinchcombe's treatment of the French financed propaganda effort—via Thomas Paine, Samuel Cooper, and Hugh Brackenridge—is unusually interesting as is his examination of the pulpit rationalization of a Roman Catholic ally. “The French,” remarked William Gordon, “are the most disinterested people in the world. They are everything but Protestants: & their being otherwise is a matter of no great importance” (p. 100). Even John Jay confessed to an attachment to France “in a degree that I could not have thought myself capable ten years ago” (p. 210). But, notes Stinchcombe, there was a price: “If French aid was indispensable, it also meant that Americans had to respond to unilateral French decisions” (p. 152). Americans learned their lesson in power politics. To all intents and purposes the alliance ended with the war. Americans determined to be their own masters. They were not ungrateful or unmoved by their experience, but they declined further purportedly permanent alliances. It was a *liason*,

rather than a marriage, of convenience, one which allowed both parties to pursue their own interests simultaneously.

University of New Hampshire, Durham

Trevor Colbourn

Correspondence of James K. Polk. Volume I, 1817-1832. Edited by Herbert Weaver; Paul H. Bergeron, Associate Editor. (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969. Pp. xxxviii, 619. End maps, notes, illustrations, index. \$15.00.)

This volume contains 664 letters; the ninety-six written by Polk—and most of the others—are reproduced in their entirety even though a few have been previously printed. There is only one letter from Polk to his wife, no letter to Polk from his wife, and only one from his mother, whom Polk referred to as “old lady.” Fortunately, there are letters to and from other members of his family, and they reveal the role of the eldest son James as a principal adviser and consultant and indicate a rather close and warm family relationship.

Polk had not acquired a national reputation by 1832, and a majority of his correspondents were fellow Tennesseans. Some of the letters give good insights into the life of the times and of the writer; many of Polk’s congressional constituents sought his help in connection with appointments, claims, land titles, pensions, and other matters of vital concern. Polk apparently viewed himself as a servant of these constituents; he was not always successful in achieving the desired ends, but there is no evidence here that he ever refused his aid in an honorable cause.

The twenty letters between Polk and Andrew Jackson document the development of the early relationship between those two and especially indicate that the younger man sometimes had sound advice for Old Hickory. The respect of each for the political astuteness of the other is clearly evident.

While the Polk-Jackson letters are rewarding, they are far less interesting than the twenty from Archibald Yell to Polk; no Polk to Yell letters were located by the editors. Yell, later prominent in Arkansas politics, filled his communications with rumored or actual developments on the Tennessee political scene, verbally castigated his adversaries and praised his friends (sometimes obliquely), occasionally followed one of his observations with a “ha-ha,” and generally made accurate political predictions. His spelling adds flavor to his writing.

The editors are dealing with the correspondence, not the papers or works, of Polk, and their editorial procedures and practices are worthy of emulation. They have summarized the 138 letters which