sources she so carefully mined. Such sinewy vignettes can convert a deserving investigation into stellar Annalist scholarship. But such lacunae may be a result of space limits set by the publisher. Any book has its share of faults. Leaving those aside, the wealth of data and arguments in this book make it a compelling read for early modernists and frontier historians, to name but a few.

Peter B. Brown
Rhode Island College


Mayers is interested in the mechanics of diplomacy. He distinguishes between the "high" diplomacy of presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers, and "ambassadorial" diplomacy which focuses on embassy staffs. He notes that in recent years the latter has been neglected by scholars who have viewed the ambassador's role as superfluous. Mayers' goal is to restore the balance. He presents a case study of American ambassadors in Russia and the Soviet Union to argue that ambassadorial diplomacy has played an important role in shaping US foreign relations and that it should not be ignored in future relations with Russia. His thesis is intuitional: "the United States benefited when high and ambassadorial diplomacies were closely combined. . . . Conversely, when overly influenced by ideological and domestic politics or offset by military preoccupations, U.S. policy stumbled from one mishap to another" (p. 5).

The monograph begins with a survey of the early history of the American embassy in St. Petersburg, between 1780 and the Russian Revolution. Mayers contrasts nineteenth-century perceptions of Russia as an "oriental despotism" with the more egalitarian notions of representative democracy present in the United States. In the early 1830s James Buchanan was ambassador in St. Petersburg; to President Jackson, described by Mayers as "that embodiment of democratic man in the New World," Buchanan wrote: "The most ardent republican . . . would be clearly convinced that the mass of this people, composed as it is of ignorant and superstitious barbarians who are also slaves, is not fit for political freedom" (p. 25).

Mayers is keen to cite the Marquis Astolphe Custine, the Frenchman who visited Russia in the 1830s after being disillusioned with his experience with the French Revolution. Mayers contrasts Custine's Russia in 1839 with de Tocqueville's Democracy in America to illustrate his point about America's more progressive traditions. According to Custine, "the eternal tyranny of the East menaces us incessantly" (p. 33). Similar comments were made by Ambassador Andrew Jackson White in the 1860s, as well as Presidents Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. The continuity in US perceptions of Russia and the Soviet Union is intriguing—Walter Bedell Smith and George Kennan read Custine in the 1930s and were sympathetic to the Frenchman's conclusions.

The roots of Western and American suspicion of Russia and the Soviet Union is an important topic which Mayers could have explored in greater depth. Closer analysis of
the language of the American diplomats would have been helped, and reference might usefully have been made to Edward Said's work. As it stands, there is a tendency to accept the perceptions of the participants at face value.

Mayers sees American diplomacy in the 1861-1914 period as a prologue to developments after 1945. In 1911, partly in response to tsarist harassment of American Jews visiting Russia, the US Congress abrogated the 1832 Russian-US treaty of commerce. In the same spirit of concern for human rights, Mayers notes, Americans withheld economic benefits from the Soviet Union in the 1970s. The 1911 decision resulted in even more pernicious treatment of Jews in Russia; for Mayers, the important lesson to be learned is that "formal diplomacy, with its deliberation and gravity, was more likely to produce results compatible with U.S. interests" (p. 60).

There is an element of presentism in these comments; American nativism was growing in the early twentieth century and US "interests" were not seen in terms of human rights. In the south the far west, and increasingly amongst skilled labor, American interests were often defined in anti-immigrant terms. The contrast between Russian autocracy and American democracy, while convenient and appealing, tends to break down on closer examination.

Following the revolution, the period of "successful" ambassadorial diplomacy begins with the arrival of Averell Harriman in Moscow in 1943. Mayers describes Harriman's early role in Roosevelt's New Deal and notes his initial optimism about the Grand Alliance. Disillusionment set in after the Soviet Army refused to help the Polish underground in the Warsaw uprising in the late summer of 1944: "Harriman was staggered by the spectacle of the Red Army within striking distance of the capital, standing idle as the Polish fighters were slaughtered" (p. 157). Mayers suggests that the ambassador's warnings to Roosevelt in the spring of 1945 about Soviet totalitarianism made the President more wary about the Soviet Union near the end of the war, and he criticizes Roosevelt for not paying attention to Harriman's criticisms of America's East European policy. As early as the spring of 1944 Roosevelt had told the ambassador that he "didn't care whether the countries bordering Russia became communized" (p. 158).

The book presents a generally sympathetic portrait of the Kennan-Acheson containment policy before 1949. The Korean War resulted in the militarization of the containment doctrine and brought about a rift between Acheson and Kennan; Mayers laments these developments and is critical of McCarthyism. Kennan's ambassadorship in the early 1950s initiated a period of decline in ambassadorial diplomacy. The nadir was reached in the mid-1950s while Charles Bohlen was stationed in Moscow. He was rarely consulted by Dulles or Eisenhower who were interested in pursuing more provocative containment policies. Only after Llewellyn Thompson was appointed as ambassador to Moscow in 1957 was the US once again successful in establishing an effective local channel of communication with Khrushchev. Thompson's experience in Moscow later played an important role during the Cuban Missile Crisis when as one of President Kennedy's advisers on the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (Excom), he recommended a relatively cautious policy. According to Mayers, "Prosaic professional diplomacy with its hard-earned knowledge, personified by Thompson, had contributed hugely to averting war in 1962 from which there would have been no recovery" (p. 210).