Transimperial Exiles: Emigration and the Making of the Revolutionary Caribbean

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On October 12, 1795, an American merchant ship, the *Luckey*, lay anchored in the commune of Fraternité in the war-torn colony of Saint-Domingue, when one of its sailors was hauled off the ship for questioning by French authorities. Their suspicions had been raised by the discovery of a parcel of letters bound for Martinique, then a British-occupied island. The sailor claimed to be British himself, but under interrogation he confessed he had joined the crew under an assumed identity, and was in fact a Frenchman, Michel Montral. The investigation revealed that Montral was born in Trinidad and had lived in Martinique prior to leaving for Massachusetts in 1791. Two years later, he had allegedly sworn allegiance to the Republic when he traveled back to Martinique. He afterwards once more left Martinique for New England. This journey, the Dominguan authorities determined, had been an illegal act of emigration. They arrested Montral and sent him to Guadeloupe, and no record remains of him thereafter.[1] Six years later, another French colonial émigré, the Comte de la Touche, found himself in similar trouble because of a brief journey he had allegedly made into enemy territory. His plantation in Martinique was seized and he was deported to the United States. In this case, however, he was barred from British-held territory, and his deportation justified by the Comte's previous fleeting presence on French soil. From his refuge in Philadelphia, the Comte pled through intermediaries with the War Office in London for his return and for the restoration of his property.[2]

Both men, in different ways, had fallen afoul of one of the chief legacies of the French Revolution: its reconfiguration of the relationship between territory, sovereignty, and citizenship. Even as the French Revolution proclaimed a universalist political doctrine, it produced an increasingly territorialized polity. One product of this transformation was a new kind of exile: the émigré. Increasingly severe laws from 1792 onwards associated the physical frontiers of France with the bounds of citizenship and unauthorized migration with civil death. The figure of the émigré, "ideologically and juridically linked with foreign enemies,"[3] became the anti-type of the citizen in the republican political framework, with its geographically uniform set of rights and duties.[4] Yet the question of emigration became most pressing for revolutionaries on the colonial

[1] Archives Nationales (hereafter AN), AF/II/303, Dossier 2514, 27–29.
[2] National Archives (hereafter NA), WO 1/66, 619–21.
[3] Heuer, *The Family and the Nation,* 29.
[4] On the theme of the development of territorial nationality under the Republic, see Sahlins, *Boundaries*; and Spieler, *Empire and Underworld*.

periphery, where this ideal of a unitary nation-state of equal citizens confronted a system predicated on racial hierarchy.

Émigrés, long understudied actors stereotyped as aristocratic reactionaries, have received a fuller and more nuanced treatment in (particularly Anglophone) scholarship in the decades since Donald Greer's seminal study *The Incidence of the Emigration During the French Revolution.*[5] The global and imperial dimensions of the revolutionary French emigration, however, have as yet received little dedicated historiographical attention.[6] This comparative neglect exists despite the even greater demographic and political impact of mass exile on the revolutionary Caribbean relative to hexagonal France. As many as 30,000 French citizens were dispersed around the Caribbean and North America during the revolutionary decades.[7] The multi-sided revolutionary struggle in Saint-Domingue, culminating in the establishment of the Republic of Haiti in 1804, produced the largest episode of colonial migration, but displacement from other colonies was widespread. In Guadeloupe, more than 20 per cent of the pre-revolutionary free population had fled or been deported by 1796.[8] The Atlantic world was awash with human jetsam assigned with hotly-contested labels: *émigrés, refugiés, déportés*. A fuller appreciation of the role that exile, and the Republic's role in generating and responding to it, played in the creation of an "imperial nation state"[9] requires a perspective that looks beyond the metropole-colony dyad, following the routes of the displaced across islands, oceans, and national boundaries.[10]

For both French republicans seeking to defend the revolution, and for the British seeking to contain it, attitudes and policies toward displaced colonials were ambivalent, marked by both inclusive and exclusive impulses. Both empires responded with a blend of humanitarian assistance, political cooption, surveillance, ideological vetting, confiscations, and deportations. The flux of migration policy developed alongside the shifting political and military situation in the Caribbean, but it also reflected a set of persistent imperatives: the need to capitalize on and safeguard against the divided loyalties of the French colonial diaspora, the importance of émigré property for the war effort and the plantation economy, and, ultimately, competing answers to the question of what role the displaced colonists would play in the future of the colonial system. French colonial exiles became trans-imperial actors and trans-imperial objects of policy. Their movements, and the attempt of state actors to regulate them, helped to transform the entanglement of British and French imperial projects, intensifying conflict between the two nations even as they forged new cross-border ties of interest and ideology. These connected imperial histories reveal the complex linkages between emigration and slavery during the revolutionary crisis of the colonial system. Soldiers, politicians, and administrators in both empires were attempting to grapple with the same phenomena: revolution and counterrevolution, which were borderless and ambivalently implicated with the fortunes of colonial white supremacy. Displacement and exile − of the planter class, especially, but also of French colonial populations of all races and backgrounds − are accordingly central elements in understanding how the emancipatory challenge to that system unfolded across the Atlantic world.

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[5] See also Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution*; Burrows, *French Exile Journalism;* Reboul*, French Emigration.*
[6] Jasanoff, "Revolutionary Exiles," 56–58.
[7] Meadows, "Engineering Exile," 67.
[8] AN F/II/303, Dossier 2516, 1-25, 33–34.
[9] Wilder, *The French Imperial Nation-State*.
[10] Meadows, "Engineering Exile," provides an admirable (if brief) attempt to sketch the transatlantic connections made by French exiles.

The trajectories of the colonial exodus were many and complex. The wave of revolutionary upheavals in 1789–91 produced the initial wave of exiles and the first attempts to criminalize them. In April 1790, for instance, when Jacobin forces seized control of Saint Pierre, the principal city of Martinique, the revolutionaries issued a demand that all male residents who had fled the city return within sixty hours, under penalty of loss of citizenship and property.[11] The massive uprising of enslaved people in the Northern Province of Saint-Domingue in 1791, along with smaller revolts in the Windward Islands, produced the first large-scale arrival of French colonists to the British colonies, above all Jamaica. French colonists began to circulate between the British West Indies, Britain, and the United States, along with Dutch, Spanish, Danish, and Swedish colonial territories. The outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1793 accelerated this multidirectional traffic. The result of these upheavals was a refugee diaspora made up of all sectors of French colonial society.

Under such conditions, one of the chief problems for French or British state actors seeking to monitor and regulate wartime migration was not simply its size, but its heterogeneous composition. French émigré laws effectively equated unauthorized departure with disloyalty, but from an early stage, revolutionary leaders in the Caribbean and the metropole recognized that the reality was more complex, and saw the need to vet displaced people and to facilitate the return of loyal refugees to French soil. By the same token, if the French could not count all exiles as enemies, neither could the British count them all allies. Both sides had to contend with a transatlantic sphere of exilic politics, where loyalties were ambiguous and shifting, and in which the fact of displacement, the counterrevolutionary cause, and opposition to emancipation intersected in complex and unstable ways.

Republican colonial migration policies had both a negative and a positive aim: to exclude counterrevolutionaries, certainly, but also to facilitate the homecoming of desirable refugees. Attempts to control wartime migration were continually pulled between these goals. Indeed, it is impossible to disentangle the history of colonial émigrés as such from the wider story of displacement during the colonial revolution, precisely because contemporaries themselves were often unable to do so.

The need to vet displaced colonists became particularly pressing for French consular officials in the United States as fighting in Saint-Domingue intensified in 1793 and 1794. Their response is suggestive of the ambivalent relationship between colonial exiles and the revolutionary cause. The New York consulate, among others, was deluged with *colons* fleeing the fall of Cap-Français, and responded to the crisis by chartering vessels to transport refugees to the metropole. To avoid admitting "enemies of the state who have escaped our surveillance," in January 1794 they formed a *Comité de vérification* to devise guidelines for vetting the applicants.[12] The consul-general's instructions to the committee were clear: "It is necessary that every expatriated Frenchmen give an accounting of his absence from the Republic." Only those whose exile was an "involuntary misfortune" were to be granted passage. Female, elderly, and child refugees from Saint-Domingue would only require an oath from a witness testifying to their circumstances for the consulate to cover the costs of their repatriation. Younger men were additionally required to take an oath expressing "horror at the enterprises of the friends of royalism" and swearing that their return was for the purpose of "the defense of my country."[13]

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[11] M. Knox, Note to Colonial Office, April 30, 1790, NA CO 166/1, 396.
[12] Rapport fait au comité de Vérification, Archives Diplomatiques – Nantes (hereafter ADN), 473PO/1, Boîte 63, *passim*.
[13] Ibid.

Establishing these credentials with one organ of the French Republic, however, was no guarantee of safety. Breakdowns in communication or political enmities between different republican institutions and leaders ensured that some colonists regarded as citizens in good standing in one colony or in the metropole were proscribed elsewhere. Jacques Macduff and Jacques Darafie, two white Guadeloupeans living in Norfolk, Virginia, managed to secure residence papers from the French consulate there in 1795. Macduff then forwarded their certificates along with a friendly letter to the Mayor of the commune of Le Moule to ensure they were struck from the local émigré list. Macduff told the Mayor that he had wanted to return to Guadeloupe but feared being seized at sea by British privateers. However, the municipal administrators rejected their appeal, noting that both men had fled the island to Swedish-held Saint Barthélemy in 1793. The vicissitudes of war and revolution made an individual's status a matter of timelines: determinations of loyalty often depended on which colony an exile had left and when, and the two men's history confirmed them as émigrés.[14]

The republican commissioner in Guadeloupe, Victor Hugues, had developed a grudge against the Republic's consular agents in the United States, whom he saw as condoning illicit reentry to both the colonies and the metropole. Martin Oster, the vice-consul who had signed off on Macduff and Darafie's documents, came under censure from municipal authorities in Guadeloupe on multiple occasions on these grounds.[15] Hugues repeatedly complained to the Ministry of the Colonies that such officials were providing residence papers to émigrés who had served with British forces against the Republic – émigrés who then became vocal critics of his administration.[16] Both colonial and metropolitan officials feared that the comparative leniency afforded to colonial exiles was being exploited for counterrevolutionary ends. A 1796 address from the Directory denounced colonists who had used loopholes in emigration laws to "hatch plans of counterrevolution" in the United States, where it was alleged that émigrés were in contact with British consular officials.[17] Étienne Desforneaux, Hugues' successor in Guadeloupe, claimed that émigrés were more to be feared for their "perfidies, intelligences, and corruption than for their arms."[18] The unauthorized movements of colonials like Michel Montral not only constituted abandonment of the Republic, but also made them potential vectors of counterrevolutionary conspiracy.

The uncertain blend of loyalties among French colonists abroad also meant that the politics of the colonial revolution extended onto foreign territory. On several occasions French authorities took steps to rally displaced citizens to the Republic. In 1794 a planter named Vereuil, who had been deported to France from Saint-Domingue by Léger-Félicité Sonthonax, secured the backing of the Committee for Public Safety to travel to New England, both to retrieve his family who had fled there and to spread information and propaganda among the French exile community.[19] Victor Hugues also hoped to find allies in the colonial diaspora. In December of the same year he secured the arrival of 2,000 republican volunteers to Guadeloupe from the United States, most of them soldiers who had been deported from Martinique and other islands after the British occupation.[20] The next year Hugues issued a proclamation to Guadeloupean colonists in the United States –

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[14] AN AF/II/303. Dossier 2515, 37.
[15] AN AF/II/303/2515, 13–14, 37–38.
[16] Victor Hugues to Ministry of the Marine and Colonies, 29 brumaire an IV; Aix-en-Provence, Archives Nationales d'Outre-Mer, C7A48 F37.
[17] AN AF/III/*/2, 89–90.
[18] AN AF/III/209, Dossier 954, 10.
[19] AN AF/III/209. Dossier 955, 10.
[20] John Vaughan to Henry Dundas, Jan. 27, 1795, National Archives, WO 1/31, 95.

predominately white, though there would have also been free people of color among them – promising that those who had not borne arms against the Republic would be welcomed back into the colony. He roundly condemned the counterrevolutionary emigres, hoping to divide politically more palatable refugees from the former group:

> Citizens, the moment is not far when national justice…will distinguish those who have placed the dagger in the hands of the colonists to slit one another's throats, from those who have snatched it away and replaced it with the olive branch, and have made them a family of brothers. [21]

Hugues also aimed to persuade republican-leaning exiles that Guadeloupe remained a disciplined and prosperous colony, one that would not see a repeat of Saint-Domingue with its "theater of slaughter, burning, and devastation."[22] Not coincidentally, public attacks on the coercive racial policies of Hugue's administration – which had enacted formal emancipation, but severely limited the civic rights of newly-freed Africans and compelled them to continue plantation labor[23] – had partly motivated his grievances against the readmission of émigrés from the United States. The uncertain boundaries of the colonial emigration were thus not merely a matter of external security for the French state. They also impinged upon the internal politics of the colonial revolution itself, which were not always so internal after all.

Categorizing exiles was accordingly not only a concern for individual displaced people and for the state actors vetting them, but also for broader exile communities as they struggled to define their relationship to the Republic. As early as 1793, exiles in New York petitioned the consulate to declare their attachment to the Republic and protest against the "libel" of their indifference to it.[24] At political meetings and in print across the United States, colonists insisted that they were refugees, not émigrés; some argued that their presence in the United States proved their republican sympathies, as they would have otherwise remained in the colonies or in Britain for the purposes of counterrevolutionary intrigue.[25] But the exiles were very much divided, complicating such efforts at refashioning their collective image. Dozens of them publicly disavowed a reported memorial service held for Louis XVI held in Philadelphia in 1794, while admitting that some "senseless royalists" were among the Antilleans in the country.[26] These diasporic disputes did not always remain peaceful: in December 1793, a mob of refugees attacked and nearly lynched a fellow Frenchman, whom they alleged had committed crimes in Saint-Domingue, on a vessel in Philadelphia's harbor.[27]

The struggle to define the wartime colonial diaspora was likewise carried on in the metropole. Pierre François Page and Augustin-Jean Brulley, deputies from Saint-Domingue who were the foremost pro-slavery lobbyists under the Republic, sought to distinguish between the aristocratic reactionaries and the democratic republican exiles, contending that the latter were penniless in contrast to the former, who had "brought their loot with them." Page and Brulley

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[21] "Proclamation: Les commissaires délégués par la Convention Nationale, aux citoyens des îles du vent, actuellement aux États Unis de l'Amérique," 25 fructidor an III. AN AF/II/303/2515, 15.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Dubois, "The Price of Liberty," 375.
[24] ADN 518PO/1/123.
[25] White, *Encountering Revolution*, 98.
[26] "Protestations des colons de Saint-Domingue, réfugiés à Philadelphie, contre un écrit inutile service funèbre de Louis XVI (1794)," quoted in White, *Encountering Revolution*, 98.
[27] White, *Encountering Revolution*, 93–94.

claimed that the republicans had separated themselves from the counterrevolutionaries and should not be blamed for the actions of a few.[28] In a similar vein, a deputy in Martinique named Fourniol prepared a 1796 report for a special commission on the colonial emigration, arguing that it required a different set of classifications than its European counterpart. Since Britain had seized Martinique, he pointed out, the "real émigrés" were the counterrevolutionary forces on the island itself, while most Martinican exiles elsewhere were loyal republicans.

Even many avowedly republican exiles fiercely opposed the polices of civil equality and emancipation enacted in the colonies, however, and Victor Hugues had good reason to fear their influence. Hugues' counterparts in Saint-Domingue, the commissioners Polverel and Sonthonax, were recalled to the metropole and impeached in 1795, in large part through the lobbying efforts of Dominguan planters in the United States and their allies in Paris. Polverel died during the inquest, but Sonthonax was eventually exonerated and reinstated, allowing him to pursue his revenge. In 1796 he banned all exiles from returning to the colony and issued a proclamation forbidding French consulates in the United States from issuing passports to these "eternal enemies of the principles of France and of its sacred laws."[29] This measure did not explicitly define all Dominguans abroad as émigrés, but returning to the metropole without official endorsement was dangerous. When the pro-slavery writer Moreau de St. Méry arrived in Paris in 1798 after years of exile in Philadelphia, he was denounced as an émigré and had to quickly assemble official documentation to avoid arrest or worse.[30] Migration controls became tools in a transnational battle over emancipation, in which dividing lines between revolution and counterrevolution were not always clear.

The British Empire meanwhile confronted similar problems of management of wartime migration, even though the label "émigré" lacked the same singular ideological and legal importance in a British context. Ministers, colonial administrators and military commanders perceived the uncontrolled mobility and mixed loyalties of the colonial emigration as a threat to British interests even as they sought to exploit ties with counterrevolutionary émigrés. The result was again an unsteady mix of accommodation and exclusion. Despite close cooperation between the British Government and Caribbean émigrés, disdain toward the latter was common; they were, in one British general's view, "a doubtful race."[31] The chief impulse behind British ambivalence was not national difference, however, but a perception of the fundamental similarity between British and French colonial societies and the forces that threatened them. The result was a system of policies characterized less by xenophobia than by the drive to defend the shared Caribbean plantation complex against revolutionary contagion from politically and racially heterogeneous migrants.

The regulatory measures imposed on exiles in the British Caribbean are illustrative. In 1791 the Jamaican Assembly instituted new vetting requirements for both new arrivals at the ports as well as foreigners who already lived on the island, many of whom were of French backgrounds. Free colored people with French backgrounds were supposed to provide two householders to vouch for their character, under pain of deportation.[32] As the refugee population swelled, parish-level registration was required for all migrants. In Kingston, residency permits were to be presented every fifteen days, a regulation aimed to keep most newcomers tethered to the city,

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[28] Page and Brulley, *Notes fournies au Comité de salut public*, 71.

[29] *New York Journal and Patriotic Register,* June 14, 1796, quoted in White, *Encountering Revolution*, 118.

[30] White, *Encountering Revolution*, 117–21.

[31] Sir Ralph Abercombie to the Colonial Office, April 9, 1796. NA CO 319/6, 9.

[32] NA CO 137/89–90, *passim*. See also Geggus, "Jamaica and the Saint Domingue Slave Revolt," 220.

where they could be more easily monitored by vigilance committees.[33] This policy of concentration, along with the sheer numbers of refugees, made Kingston a quasi-Francophone city by the spring of 1792.

The Caribbean was not the only locus of colonial émigré activity under the British aegis. By the end of 1792, a loose French colonial circle had formed in London. Its leaders were composed of émigrés from the continent with colonial connections – most prominently the moderate monarchist Pierre Victor Malouet – as well as representatives from the anti-Jacobin assemblies of the French colonies. The contacts with the Pitt Ministry formed by these émigrés culminated in the Treaty of Whitehall in February 1793, which promised British protection of the French colonies in exchange for the *colons*' loyalty. This Anglo-planter alliance provided an institutional highway between Britain and the Antilles. The elite exiles in London constituted an influential lobby for émigrés seeking safe passage to serve the colonial counterrevolution (or at least themselves). Requests for passports or travel subsidies circulated through the hands of politically-connected émigrés to the upper levels of the Colonial Office or War Office. Among the petitions that reached Whitehall were those of planters seeking to join the British expeditions in order to safeguard their property, while others concerned military officers and noblemen from the metropole who wished to join "proprietors of their acquaintance" in sailing for the West Indies.[34] Hundreds of non-juring French priests also embarked from England for the French colonies, aiming to replace revolutionary clergy under a restored royalist administration.[35] Appeals for patronage reached London from the United States, too, where some French colonists aimed to return to the Caribbean to fight.[36] The British intervention in the Antilles thus became a major outlet for the political and martial energies of the French emigration as a whole.[37]

At the same time, much of British migration policy was driven by fear of a repeat of the slave uprising in Saint-Domingue and was therefore strongly marked by racially-skewed suspicions. Both free colored exiles and enslaved people brought to the British colonies by their French masters provoked official fears of sedition. These fears were redoubled from February 1794 onwards, with the French Republic's commitment to emancipation. To prevent the conjunction of internal and external enemies, the British authorities sought to limit the numbers of "French blacks" on British soil. In Jamaica, at least, they also took measures to confine the imported enslaved population to Kingston and keep them away from rural plantations. This policy directly collided with the interests of exiled French planters and their British business partners, who hoped to use the skills of enslaved Dominguans in developing Jamaica's coffee industry. A prominent free-colored counterrevolutionary, Jean-Baptiste Lapointe, ran into trouble for importing 160 "French blacks," many of whom, it was alleged, were not legally his, while another French planter, Edward Montaganc, brought sixty-five to a plantation property he had acquired, where they were seized.[38] Given the sheer numbers of black Dominguans reaching the island, the colonial government also struggled to verify whether some of these arrivals were legally enslaved, and, if so, to whom they belonged. Unauthorized or unattached enslaved people were detained under wretched conditions in the prison at Bath, where, as contemporaries noted with trepidation, the guards were also black.[39] Motivated by actual and feared unrest, in 1795 the British Governor, the

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[33] Cauna, "La diaspora des colons de Saint-Domingue," 346.
[34] NA WO 1/58, 645–50.
[35] NA WO 1/58, 223–231, 405.
[36] Lacombe, "Note au nom des habitants de Saint Domingue," Oct. 14, 1793. NA WO 1/58, 397–400.
[37] Frostin, "L'intervention britannique," 294.
[38] Bryan, "Émigrés: Conflict and Reconciliation," 15.
[39] Ibid.

Earl of Balcarres, took even more sweeping steps against the Francophone black and colored populations. Balcarres sent the greater part of the free colored exiles in Jamaica, along with a large number of "French blacks", to Saint-Domingue – this time, as part of the British occupation forces.[40] The British war effort had given Balcarres an expedient to rid himself of what he called "the greatest rascals in the universe."[41]

To be sure, ideological threats among white French *colons* were not taken lightly by the British. The fractious internal politics of Saint-Domingue produced multiple waves of exiles, some of them antagonistic to others. Pro-slavery *patriotes*, like the National Guard commandant Auguste Borel, who had embraced the revolution as a means of promoting colonial autonomy, were anathema to committed royalists.[42] When Borel and his associates were forced out of Port-Au-Prince by the republican commissioners, they fled to Jamaica. Angry letters percolated through the transatlantic French emigration and reached the War Office in London, warning of Borel's corruption and republican sympathies, and urging that he be surveilled or deported to Europe.[43] Governor Adam Williamson seems to have been charmed by Borel, however: while admitting the Frenchman was an "avowed democrat," Williamson noted with approval that Borel had resisted the commissioners because of their efforts to extend further rights to the *gens de couleur*. In the end, Williamson issued Borel a passport and sent him to New York, relieving both the émigrés and himself of a political liability.[44] The Borel affair underscores that while white French exiles might fall under suspicion, the politics of race tended to trump other concerns. As a French colonist wrote to the Jamaican planter Edward Shirley in March of 1793, "It is no longer a matter of aristocrats or democrats; the question has changed: is one a white man or a man of color?"[45] The more explicit racialization of British migration controls relative to their French equivalents reflected the overwhelming imperative to avoid the spread of uprisings on the model of Saint-Domingue. For both empires, however, the question of emigration was inextricable from the racial politics of a colonial system under threat, and the ambivalence that white colonials encountered from state actors reflected this.

The consequences of mass exile were not simply a matter of people in motion, but also of property left behind. For both the British and French, migration controls were closely linked to the fates of thousands of plantations, many of them either abandoned by their owners or owned by absentees. Since the plantation was in many respects the center of colonial society, the question of who was entitled to own or operate it was of critical importance. The disappearance of owners or managers, through flight or death, left the French Republic as the biggest landlord in the Caribbean, setting the stage for its subsequent experiments in emancipation and coercion. All émigrés forfeited their property, which was collectively labeled the *biens nationaux* – the same term applied to the expropriated church property that formed the basis of the *assignat* currency (plantations belonging to mere absentees were given a less permanent sequestered status).[46] The colonial *biens nationaux* were, if anything, more crucial to the fate of the colonial revolution than their metropolitan namesakes. The multiracial citizen armies that the Republic raised during the 1790s were funded by émigré goods and products from émigré plantations, which covered as much as

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[40] Cauna, "La diaspora des colons de Saint-Domingue," 347.
[41] Lord Balcarres to the Duke of Portland, Oct. 27, 1796, NA CO 137/96.
[42] Frostin, "L'intervention britannique," 309.
[43] Dundas to Williamson, July 5, 1793, NA CO 137/91, 197–202.
[44] Williamson to Dundas, Sept. 5, 1793, NA CO 137/91, 272–73.
[45] Unsigned letter to Edward Shirley, March 2, 1793, NA WO 1/58, 207.
[46] Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 201.

fifty million *livres* in military expenses in the Windward Islands alone between 1793 and 1796.[47] This economic importance is reflected in the fact that some of the first public decrees after the arrival of the Republic's civil commissioners in Martinique concerned the management of émigré property – notably coming just before orders to disarm enslaved people.[48] Under Victor Hugues in Guadeloupe, crimes against property became subject to military tribunals as crimes against the state – a measure driven not only by the practical necessities of the island economy in wartime, but also the sacred status of the *biens nationaux* as a totem of collective progress.[49]

Both the ideological and fiscal necessity for republican colonial leaders of exploiting confiscated property to the fullest drove them towards more coercive approaches toward enslaved people – or, after emancipation, *cultivateurs*.[50] Shortly after his arrival in Guadeloupe in 1794, Hugues noted that there was "a huge quantity of coffee plantations seized from the emigres, which promised a huge harvest," but both labor and management were missing. As Hugues saw it, "most of the citizens of the countryside have deserted their plantations to take refuge in the city, where, unconcerned about the public good, they wallow in laziness."[51] The drive to eradicate "laziness," which republicans associated with both slavery and aristocracy, became an ideological leitmotif of Hugues' administration.[52] It was thus significant for Hugues that the "desertion" of the plantation by its enslaved workforce was a direct consequence of its abandonment by its owners; illicit mobility on both ends of the social scale, both inside and outside the colony, reinforced one another. Hugues' zeal against both émigrés and recalcitrant *cultivateurs* was of a piece, in this sense – neither were where they were supposed to be.

British management of sequestrated plantation property has received only passing attention in Caribbean revolutionary historiography. Yet virtually no subject occupies more correspondence from the British-occupied zones of the French Caribbean during the 1790s. The chief drivers of this intense concern were, again, fiscal and military: the proceeds of seized estates helped to defray the dizzying costs of Britain's West Indian campaigns. However, the circumstances of the Revolutionary Wars in the Caribbean, with unprecedented numbers of migrants of divided and uncertain loyalties, created peculiar and contradictory pressures on the development of the policy. As with other aspects of migration policy, ideological, legal, and institutional differences between the French and British belied functional similarities.

Sequestration itself was not a novelty. The British used Old Regime legal mechanisms to handle the administration of abandoned or seized estates, placing the properties on an official list known as the *Régie du Roi*. However, sequestration policy quickly became more complex and far-reaching in response to the fragmented state of French colonial society. The British initially sequestered only the properties of owners known to be resident on enemy territory, but later added the estates of any proprietor who had not quit republican France after 1794 or who had borne arms against Britain.[53] As time passed, after the British invasions of Saint-Domingue and the Windward Islands, numerous émigré proprietors attempted to regain control of their estates. Addressing these claims ultimately required British commanders and officials to adjudicate the movements and loyalties of foreign subjects across the entire Atlantic world.

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[47] Deputy Lion, Letter to the Executive Directory, brumaire an IV, AN AF/III/209, Dossier 956, 14.
[48] AN AF/III/209, Dossier 953, 11.
[49] Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 201–203.
[50] Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens,* 203–209.
[51] "Extrait du registre des délibérations du Conseil géneral de la commune du Port de la Liberté, 29 Vendemiaire, An III, ANOM C7A, 47, 117, quoted in Dubois, *A Colony of Citizens*, 207.
[52] Dubois, "The Price of Liberty," 363–92.
[53] Pierre Victor Malouet to War Office, 1797, NA WO 1/66, 573–75.

The Comte de la Touche, as noted, lost his property in Martinique by virtue of a journey to France, and, while resident in Philadelphia, complained to the British Government via the Martinican envoy Louis De Curt in London.[54] In another instance, an émigré officer who had returned to France (for the needs of his family, it was observed) subsequently acquired a plantation in Saint-Domingue by inheritance, and requested its removal from the *Régie*.[55] Evidently some appeals of this sort were successful, since the Home Secretary the Duke of Portland chided the Governor of Martinique for his laxity in this regard in 1799. Portland mandated that future requests for the restoration of sequestered property be sent to London: he was more concerned with the financial support the *Régie* properties could provide for the occupation than in placating the émigré claimants.[56] With émigré leaders such as Malouet and De Curt complaining that the sequestrations were far too strict, however, British officials in the West Indies were caught between competing constituencies.[57]

Sequestration policy was further complicated by the fact that some property claims involved multiple countries. One disputed plantation in Saint-Domingue, for instance, was leased by an émigré in England from an owner in Switzerland.[58] Yet another émigré inherited a plantation in Martinique from his mother in France while living in Denmark, and traveled to London to establish residency there and claim the Caribbean property.[59] Absentee owners were sometimes permitted to retain their property if they could establish their residence in British or neutral territory. A consequence was that proprietors in Europe might submit fraudulent residency documents, or they might set up house in a neutral location such as Hamburg just long enough to obtain certification from a British consulate before returning to France.[60]

British sequestration policies, like those of the French, aimed to feed military and administrative budgets and to punish political undesirables; however, the connection between them was deeper. The measures for vetting proprietors in the occupied islands were the closest British colonial refugee policy came to the mirror image of the French émigré laws. The past or present fact of presence on republican-controlled soil became a basis for confiscation of property and, in some cases, expulsion of individuals. These regulations did not constitute as far-reaching an ideological project as republican émigré legislation did: the occupying administrations never formally equated illicit travel or residence with treason per se. Nonetheless, attempts to manage wide-ranging mobility, divided loyalties, and the lucrative but fragile plantation economy produced shared patterns of policy in both republican and Anglo-Royalist areas. On both sides, the bounds of colonial revolution and counterrevolution were defined in territorial terms.

While not all displaced colonists were slaveholders, the central political question tied to the ultimate fate of colonial exiles was the future of plantation society, as Sonthonax's feud with the émigrés suggests. Accordingly, French efforts beginning in the later 1790s to relax emigration and sequestration laws coincided with changing attitudes toward slavery. The policy shift was anticipated by abortive legislative efforts in 1798 to subsidize the return of colonists to Saint-Domingue, as well as by Toussaint Louverture, who similarly aimed to reconstitute the plantation economy by welcoming exiled planters (Sonthonax's objection to which provoked his final exile

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[54] Louis De Curt to Duke of Portland, Sept. 29, 1801, NA WO 1/36, 615.
[55] NA WO 1/66, 619–21.
[56] Duke of Portland to William Keppel, August 26, 1799; NA CO 166/5, 93–97.
[57] See, for example, Malouet to War Office, 1797; NA WO 1/66, 573–75.
[58] NA WO 1/66, 673–93.
[59] Pierre Coudere, Petition to Duke of Portland, NA WO 1/36: 549–51.
[60] Duke of Portland to William Keppel, Oct. 31, 1800, NA CO 166/5, 120–23.

from the colony).[61] By 1801, the French administration under Jean-Baptiste Lacrosse in Guadeloupe – the most important colony still under French metropolitan control – was readmitting émigrés to the colony on a large scale. Those who had "proven themselves constantly the enemies of the Republican government" were excluded, but others could regain their homes and compensation for lost property by petitioning the administration and submitting to surveillance.[62] Despite Lacrosse's reputation as a revolutionary firebrand, émigrés began to trickle back into the colony, especially the poorest or those with the least fear from their political activity.[63]

After the Treaty of Amiens in March 1802, whose terms included a broad amnesty for most émigrés, the Napoleonic Consulate moved gradually toward the reestablishment of colonial society on the basis of slavery. Migration would prove integral to this policy of retrenchment in the New World. The Consulate first tightened movement controls over non-whites. A June decree forbade blacks or *gens de couleur* from the Antilles to travel to the Louisiana territory without government approval: violators were to be deported.[64] The Government next turned its attention to exiled planters. According to a decree from that September, "the reestablishment of order…depends principally on the presence of proprietors on their property."[65] Displaced planters from Saint-Domingue (where Leclerc's expedition had temporarily restored the colony to metropolitan control) and Guadeloupe were to return to the colonies "with the shortest delay," under penalty of the continued sequestration of their estates. Once there, they were required to obtain certification of residence and provide proof of non-emigration or removal from the émigré list. In return, their property would be restored. A subsequent decree sweetened the deal by suspending the collection of debts from Saint-Domingue proprietors.[66] Through both coercion and incentives, the Consulate aimed to help rebuild the colonial empire through an engineered reversal of a decade of displacement of the slaveholding class. While Bonaparte's designs for Saint-Domingue failed with the destruction of the Leclerc expedition, the decision to restore the slave system meant that the tension between the exclusive and inclusive impulses in republican colonial migration policy was essentially resolved – for white colonists, at least.

The Peace of Amiens did not entirely end the influx or influence of French colonial exiles in British territory. Their reception and management by the British reflected previous patterns of ambivalence. Prior to the handover of Martinique to the Napoleonic Consulate, colonists whose collaboration with the British had rendered them fearful of the new regime were offered land grants in the former Spanish colony of Trinidad, whose virgin soil and existing Francophone population had already made it a choice destination for the refuse of the Caribbean revolutions.[67] Both white counterrevolutionary planters and free colored refugees and migrants flocked there from across the French Caribbean, raising fears of subversion and contributing to an increasingly dictatorial style of rule under the island's first British governor, Thomas Picton.[68] Jamaica, meanwhile, received a further wave of refugees from Saint-Domingue with the failure of Leclerc's attempted reconquest in 1803. The colonial House of Assembly demanded that exiles of "almost every description" be removed, and by 1805 most of them were. Another group of Dominguans who

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[61] White, *Encountering Revolution*, 119–20.
[62] Jean-Baptiste Raymond de Lacrosse, proclamation de 7 Messidor an 9, AD 473PO/1, Boîte 59.
[63] William Keppel to the Duke of Portland, July 17, 1801 National Archives, NA WO 1/36, 203–205.
[64] "Arrêté du 13 Messidor, An 10" AD 473PO/1, Boîte 59.
[65] "Arrêté des consuls de la République, concernant des colons de St. Domingue" AD 473PO/1, Boîte 59.
[66] Ibid.
[67] William Keppel to George Hobart, Dec. 11, 1801, NAWO 1/36, 347–48.
[68] Candlin, *The Last Caribbean Frontier,* 80–86; Epstein, *Scandal of Colonial Rule*, 92–100.

were expelled from Cuba in 1808 were given a similarly unfriendly welcome by the Jamaicans.[69] Ultimately, most of the French of any color left the island, voluntarily or otherwise, though a small number of émigrés integrated into Jamaican society.

Anxieties of revolutionary contamination left a long legacy, however. As late as 1824, Lescesnes and Escoffrey, two Jamaican-born men of colored Dominguan descent, were banished from the island as "aliens and dangerous persons" for their advocacy for colored rights, which was construed by the authorities as a conspiracy to reenact the Saint-Domingue uprising.[70] Local reactions largely broke down around racial rather than national lines, with white French émigrés testifying against the pair.[71] The question "is one a white man or a man of color" had not lost its salience a generation after the colonial exodus began.

Peter Sahlins, in his account of the formation of France as a territorial nation-state, observes that "it was only by abolishing privilege as the basis of private and administrative law that the revolutionary government could institute a direct link between power and territory." If the attempt to impose this link in the colonies through (among other means) controls on movement was particularly turbulent, it was in part because the colonial world was the site of the most totalizing form of private law – slavery. The fate of that institution and its beneficiaries and victims – their location inside or outside the frontiers of sovereignty and citizenship – became inextricably bound to the colonial emigration and its challenges to the project of imperial nationhood. The crossing of borders and the breaking of chains were interpenetrating test cases of the limits of the universal Republic.

Yet the interplay between them was far more than just a story of the revolution's internal contradictions, for there was no strictly internal revolution. Exiles became trans-imperial actors, not merely in the sense that they crossed imperial boundaries, but in that they served as vectors of imperial problems and practices that circulated across the French and British Empires and the interstices between them. Planter "white flight" operated in many respects as the opposite pole of enslaved resistance within the crisis of what contemporaries increasingly recognized as the "colonial system."[72] In the Francophone zone of that system of racial capitalism, both labor and capital were in flight or revolt. Each pole of the crisis created a set of strategic problems for the two empires that drove entangled – not simply parallel – approaches to the migration policy, which assumed an increasingly territorialized logic despite the gulf of ideology and interest between them. The mobility of the wartime Caribbean threatened to upend any particular arrangement of territory, citizenship, property, and race in colonial society, as revolution and counterrevolution shadowed one another across the routes of exile. It was this trans-imperial predicament that made exile a central component of the revolutionary experience in the New World.

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[69] Bryan, "Émigrés: Conflict and Reconciliation," 16.
[70] [n.a.], "Lewis Celeste Lecesne," *Legacies of British Slave-ownership Database*, wwwdepts-live.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/44760 (accessed June 30, 2018).
[71] Bryan, "Émigrés: Conflict and Reconciliation," 16.
[72] Malouet was perhaps the first to employ this term in a systematic fashion. See Bongie, Introduction, Baron de Vastey, *The Colonial System Unveiled*, 45–50.

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