



Conference Reports

EXILE AND EMIGRATION IN AN AGE OF WAR AND REVOLUTIONS, CA. 1750-1830

Workshop at Re:work International Research Center, Berlin, June 22–23, 2018. Sponsored by the German Historical Institute Washington, in collaboration with Princeton University and the re:work International Research Center, Berlin. Conveners: Linda Colley (Princeton University) and Jan C. Jansen (GHI). Participants: David A. Bell (Princeton University), Rafe Blaufarb (Florida State University), Edward Blumenthal (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle-Paris 3), Linda Colley (Princeton University), Nathalie Dessens (Université de Toulouse-Jean Jaurès), Franziska Exeler (University of Cambridge/FU Berlin), Peter Gatrell (University of Manchester), Debora Gerstenberger (FU Berlin), Felicitas Hentschke (Re:work), Mischa Honeck (HU Berlin), Maurizio Isabella (Queen Mary, University of London), Jan C. Jansen (GHI), Kirsten McKenzie (University of Sydney), Matthias Middell (Universität Leipzig), Friedemann Pestel (Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg), Karen Racine (University of Guelph), Liam Riordan (University of Maine), Padraic X. Scanlan (LSE), Frederik Schulze (Universität Münster), Michael Zeuske (Universität zu Köln/Re:work).

Exiles were long at the margins of the extensive historiographies of the American, French, and Latin American revolutions in the half-century between 1776 and 1826. Only recently, American Loyalists, French émigrés, and the refugees of the Haitian revolution have become subjects through whom historians are studying the wider impact these revolutions had on Europe, the Atlantic world, and beyond. Yet even as the upheavals in the Atlantic basin have come to be seen as part of an “Age of Revolutions” — or, indeed, as part of a broader “world crisis” — the forced migrations they provoked have remained the subject of separate historiographies. The workshop “Exile and Emigration in an Age of War and Revolutions (ca. 1750–1830)” set out to place the history of exiles and refugees back into the larger picture of the transformative period around 1800. To that end, it adopted a geographically broad perspective. As Linda Colley made clear in her opening remarks, the workshop sought to determine the place of exiles within the history of Atlantic and global migration during these years. She referred to the implications of the categories used, pointed to the importance of class, race and gender as determining factors, the prominent role of certain centers of exile, and the agency of exiled persons.

The first panel, “Categorizing ‘Exile,’” addressed the place of political exile within broader migration patterns. In his paper “Choice and Mobility: Loyalist Refugees from the American Revolution and the Deep History of Migration,” Liam Riordan placed the experience of American loyalist migrants in the larger context of the deep history of forced migration within the Atlantic basin, in particular the demographic impact of European immigration on Native Americans and the transatlantic slave trade. He argued that the resettlement of the loyalists has to be seen largely as an extension of early modern migration within the British Atlantic world. Kirsten McKenzie’s paper “Political Removal: Strategies of Exile in the Australian and Cape Colonies” emphasized the question of how people got exiled in the British empire between the 1790s and the 1820s. Comparing the cases of the “Scottish martyrs,” five political leaders forcibly transported to New South Wales, and the banishment of political opponents from South Africa in the mid-1820s, McKenzie demonstrated how blurred the categories of exile, transportation, and banishment were in practice. In his comment, Peter Gatrell noted the important connections between (forced) migration and state-building, in particular in the case of the loyalists, and stressed the self-fashioning and agency of these migrants.

The second panel, on “Control,” examined increasing attempts by state authorities to control migration movements during this period. Padraic Scanlan’s paper “Peasants and Slaves, 1780–1838” made a case for including people who stay in place in the broader comparative picture. His paper focused on the significance of the idea of a stable peasantry as a leitmotif in both pro-slavery and abolitionist discourse. In her paper “No Exiles and Emigrants within Sight: French, Hispano-Americans and Spaniards as Revolutionaries and Messengers of a ‘Wrong System’ in the Luso-Brazilian Empire (1808–1820),” Debora Gerstenberger examined the ways in which the Portuguese exile court in Brazil perceived movements of foreigners. She stressed the fact that the court neither referred to itself as being in exile, nor used the categories of “exiles” or “refugees” for migrants in its territory, instead casting them as political spies or revolutionary agents. In his comment, Mischa Honeck raised the question of how anti-revolutionary xenophobia travelled between countries and continents and how British the discourse examined by Scanlan was.

The third panel, “Connecting seas,” looked at the geographies of involuntary movements during the period. In her paper “New Orleans between Atlantic and Caribbean: Reinterpreting the Saint-Domingue

Migration,” Nathalie Dessens argued that the migration of more than ten thousand refugees to New Orleans in the wake of the Haitian revolution recentered Louisiana within the Atlantic world. The refugees’ cross-border networks, movements, and trading activities connected New Orleans more intimately to an emerging Caribbean space. Maurizio Isabella’s paper “Crossing the Mediterranean in the Age of Revolution: The Multiple Mobilities of the 1820s” examined the marginal revolution in Sicily in 1820–21 and the mobilities of people that it entailed. He showed how categories such as political exile, volunteer, mercenary, economic migrant or professional career become blurred when looking at the migration patterns of the people involved. In his comment, David Bell emphasized the importance not only of mobility but of spaces and the complex itineraries of the migrants and the aspect of violence in the Mediterranean context.

The fourth panel examined two instances of “Monarchs and Monarchists in Exile.” In his paper “Global Imaginaries of Political Exile: Settlement Projects of French Émigrés in an ‘Age of Emigrations,’” Friedemann Pestel traced the wide-ranging projects of colonial settlement put forth within the diaspora of French émigrés in the 1790s, stretching from North America and the Caribbean to southern Russia and Australia. Such settlement projects, he argued, were informed by a world view centered on France and helped them enhance their internal cohesion and bolster their position in the international arena. Karen Racine’s paper “The Ex-Emperor in Exile: Mexico’s Agustín de Iturbide in London, 1824” focused on the short exile of Mexico’s dethroned emperor Agustín de Iturbide in London in the first half of 1824. In London, he joined a large number of exiled monarchs from around the world and got involved in geopolitical struggles for influence in Spanish America. In his comment, Matthias Middell pointed to the need to include the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in a larger chronological time frame of forced migration, and to place the Atlantic in a broader global context.

The fifth and final panel, “Geopolitics of Exile,” examined how exiles became actors in larger geopolitical conflicts of the period. Jan Jansen’s paper “American Indians for Saint-Domingue? Exiles and Geopolitics after the Haitian Revolution” examined plans for a military reconquest of Haiti immediately after its independence in 1804 among Saint-Domingue refugees and French diplomats. Discussing a plan that would have involved a large auxiliary army of Native Americans, he emphasized how the refugees’ exile politics meshed with

other geopolitical struggles in the Americas during this period. In his paper “Caudillos, Native Americans and Exile: Border Formation in Chile and the River Plate, 1810-1833,” Edward Blumenthal discussed the connection between border-crossing and border-formation in the Chilean and Argentinian borderlands. Based on two case studies of Chilean exile families, he teased out the crucial interactions between creole and indigenous networks among both republican and royalist emigrants. In his comment, Rafe Blaufarb pointed to the multiplicity of agents and the unconventional chronologies that were common to both cases, but also emphasized the different broader geopolitical settings, with British hegemony being more at stake in the case of Latin American independence.

The concluding session was introduced by David Bell and Peter Gatrell. Summing up major findings of the case studies, David Bell pointed to the porosity of borders and the complexity of migration processes during the period, the persistence of earlier patterns of migration, connections cutting across state borders, and the collision of legal systems. Topics of further inquiry included the migration across land (e.g. within Europe), the particular role of men with military training or demobilized soldiers, and the changing concepts of exile. Peter Gatrell commented on the extension of the time frame of refugee history, which tends to focus on more recent periods, as well as the agency and choices of the migrants. He pointed to the resources migrants drew on, both locally and internationally, and the historical references they used and the traces they left as topics worthy of further examination.

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