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**Escaping the Revolution: Interpreting French  
Migration after 1789**

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**Abstract:** *The French Revolution of 1789 is regarded to be an epoch making event – a watershed in history with ample justification. However, the incident triggered a massive wave of political migration. Émigré (French for emigrant) from all levels of French society dispersed throughout Europe in the 1790s. Politically speaking, these ‘enemies’ of the Revolution belonging overwhelmingly to the Aristocracy and Clergy, attempted to mobilize their host societies against the Revolution, which grew increasingly radical as it spilled across French boundaries. The response of the Revolutionary France was swift and brutal, as the emigres were stripped of their titles, property, rights and promised an immediate visit to guillotine should they dared to return. At the same time they became agents in a multifaceted process of cultural transfer, as part of their attempt to earn their livelihood in exile. They had demonstrated that there were alternatives to the revolutionary process outside of France, before most of them returned to their motherland under Napoleon Bonaparte.*

**Keywords:** Emigres, Jacobites, Directory, Huguenots, Ancien Regime, Third Estate, Jacobin.

***Introduction***

The exile of 150,000 French people in the wake of the French Revolution of 1789 constitutes the first instance of political emigration on a European, if not indeed a global scale. *Émigrés* of the French Revolution left their homeland because they eschewed the political development in France or in reaction to the increasing pressure of political exclusion. They dispersed throughout practically all European states from Sweden to Sicily and from Portugal to Russia, as well as to the fledgling United States and to French,

British, and Spanish colonial territories (Jasanoff 2009). They were a politically active minority that made a very significant difference – simply by not being defeated and being able to return. They fought to assume their right to be French and to live safely in a hostile France, where the Republicans used their majority vote to condemn the *émigrés* to death. This group braved the perils of exile, experienced poverty and misery to stand up for their right to belong in a Nation, determined to blame them for all the evils of absolute monarchy. Some did not return from emigration, dying from exhaustion, in childbirth, of old age and stress, or in war serving with the armies of the allies against Republican troops.

On account of its political character and geographical scope, this migration differs from two similarly large predecessors: the emigration of French Huguenots<sup>1</sup> after - the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, and that of the Scottish and Irish Jacobites<sup>2</sup> following the Glorious Revolution of 1688/1689 (Ruymbeke 2006). Whereas confession was the decisive factor for the Protestant Huguenots' emigration, the Catholic Jacobites were more strongly motivated by political considerations. Accordingly, both groups sought exile in Europe and in part in the Atlantic world. Another difference lies in the temporal dimension: whereas the Huguenots integrated relatively quickly and enduringly into their host society, the Jacobites focused upon their political activities until the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century more than on returning home. Nevertheless, the latter's initiatives missed the mark over many generations, in part because they were linked to the restoration of the fallen Stuart dynasty. In contrast, *émigrés* of the French Revolution succeeded in large part in returning home - and not only on the coattails of the Bourbon royal family, which returned in 1814 after having been overthrown in 1792, but rather from the end of the 1790s in most cases.

The peculiarity of the emigration unleashed by the French Revolution should not be overestimated when seen within a broader European and French context. For French exiles were in no way the only political *émigrés* in Europe between 1789 and 1814. When they sought refuge in Protestant territories, *émigrés* of the French Revolution encountered local Huguenot colonies. In Great Britain and in the British Empire, they met with American Loyalists who had opposed the rebels in the American War of Independence. In Hapsburg areas, French *émigrés* mixed with exiles from parts of the Monarchical states that were also affected by the Revolution, such as the Southern Netherlands, with the result that continuous streams of exiles flowed until the late nineteenth century. As a result, *émigrés* of similar origin met again in different places and often lived in a community of other exile groups. These interrelations began to dissolve the individual characters

of the various revolutions and the emigrations they caused. Out of the *émigré* societies arose a transnational space of political exile. Within the common self-understanding as *émigrés*, the political motives of individual groups lost their immediacy.

### ***Composition and Leanings***

The composition of the French *émigrés* is more difficult to track than the paths they followed into exile. The reason is patchy record-keeping both on the French side and in host countries. During the first years of the Revolution, emigration was not yet regulated by law in France. On the contrary, the Constitution of 1791 explicitly stipulated a right to freedom of movement. Only after Louis XVI's (1754-1793) brothers stepped up their military activities in Koblenz, were the first laws passed threatening *émigrés* with loss of property should they not return (Carpenter 2015). With the outbreak of war and the overthrow of the monarchy in 1792, these regulations became draconian: once an individual emigrated, all of his assets in France were confiscated, and his property was nationalized and sold. At the apex of the Jacobin *Terreur* (Terror), *émigrés* were declared dead for purposes of civil law; if they returned from their perpetual banishment, the death penalty awaited them. This also applied should *émigrés* fall into the hands of revolutionary troops outside of France. Thus the high mobility of *émigrés* within Europe is explained by the course of the war in the 1790s.

In order to enforce these laws, lists of *émigrés* were drawn up in their home communities, in the newly created *departements*, and by the central authorities in Paris. Yet these lists were anything but reliable. Gaps in registration, the mistaken spelling of names, and duplicate names impeded the quantification of the emigration. Even the documents of the reparations commission, established in 1825, were of limited value, as they only included *émigrés* with landholdings. Back in the 1950s, Donald Greer pioneered a social and regional classification of the *émigrés* on the basis of these sources. Greer's statistics, despite their shortcomings, continue to provide the basis for demographic conclusions about the French emigration that resolutely contradict the contemporary commonplace that it was a royalist-noble phenomenon. Of the 150,000 *émigrés*, only 17 per cent were nobles, and 25 per cent were clergy; the majority were members of the Third Estate (Greer 1951). This supposedly clear picture, however, should not lure us into accepting the apologetic argument, according to which the *émigrés* came primarily from plebeian social strata. On the one hand, numerous members of the Third Estate followed the nobles for whom they

worked into exile. In addition, there were many artisans, cooks, and musicians who lost the posts they had held in noble families in France and likewise sought to secure their livelihood via emigration. On the other hand, the considerable share (nearly 20 per cent) of farmers in particular can be explained by short-term migration over the French border, such as happened in 1793 in Alsace with the changeful course of the revolutionary wars. The implication is that emigration in numerous host territories far from France was clearly more socially exclusive than the aggregate numbers suggest. As a portion of the overall population of about 25 million, *émigrés* totalled 0.6 per cent. If the first two Estates are considered separately, however, roughly one tenth of the nobility and a whole quarter of the clergy emigrated. Therefore, emigration represented a significant and relevant phenomenon for the political and social elites of the *Ancien Regime* (Carpenter 2015).

The first *émigrés* to leave France, shortly after the storming of the Bastille, were the king's youngest brother, the *Comte d'Artois* (future Charles X, 1757-1836) and his inner circle, initially with the prospect of a short absence and in the hope of a quick containment of the Revolution. In the coming months, he was followed by many of the noble families affected by the abolition of feudal rights, and then by royalist officers in the wake of the army reforms. The 'Civil Constitution of the Clergy', which required an oath to the constitution, was the main catalyst for the emigration of high and lower clerics alike. The fundamental break has always been seen in the year 1792. The outbreak of war and above all the fall of the monarchy broadened the political spectrum of noble royalists and clerics to include constitutional monarchists in particular, who fled above all for humanitarian reasons and not as a conscious repudiation of the Revolution.

Despite what would come to unite them, in particular on an average ten years stay outside France that most endured, for many it was not a completely free choice. They often had only one option that could be relied upon to leave them alive, or to keep their family intact. For many individuals who were not themselves heads of households, emigration had little of choice about it at all. Dependence upon the decisions of others – fathers, husbands, or other male relatives – was responsible for leaving many women and children individually subject to revolutionary proscription (Hunt 1992). Priests too, who were not officially classed as *émigrés* until the 'Law of Suspects' came into effect. There was a large cross section of people who found themselves on these lists or trapped in emigration through no direct political decision of their own, underscoring the point that emigration was fundamentally violent. The *Courier de Londres* clarified in November of 1792:

There are in England several thousand brave people who have not quitted France because their courage was not equal to the events, but because they were personally persecuted, against which their heroism served no purpose (Burrows 2000: 206)

By 1789 September, the Court of Artois and his émigré cohort were based in Turin (Italy) where they established a committee to organise and promote counter-revolution. Artois spent the next two years trying to convince foreign governments to raise an army and intervene in France. He also planned to hire mercenaries to snatch the king and relocate him to a safer province, where Louis could re-form “national government”. Neither of these plans came to fruition. The focus of the *émigrés* political orientation was therefore the king’s brothers, especially the *Comte d’Provence*. After Louis XVI’s execution in 1793, he proclaimed himself regent for Louis XVII (1785-1795), still a minor, and after the latter’s death in a Paris prison in 1795, in the eyes of his supporters he ascended the French throne as Louis XVIII. While these decisions may have seemed anachronistic and fictitious and while Louis XVIII (Mansel 2005) failed to be recognized for long by the great European powers, nevertheless in their self-understanding France remained, at least until Napoleon Bonaparte’s (1769-1821) coup in 1799, a kingdom with an absentee monarch.

By the summer of 1791, there were sizeable *émigré* communities in London, Vienna, Hamburg, Aix-la-Chapelle and Coblenz. London was by far the largest, holding around 40,000 refugees from the revolution. Most of the London *émigré* community sought sanctuary and a return to high society; they attempted to recreate the *salons* and balls they attended back home. There were at least three French-language newspapers in London that catered for *émigrés*; the pages of these newspapers were filled with ridicule of the revolution and its leaders. The *émigrés* on the continent were more interested in bringing an end to the revolution, facilitating their return home and the reclamation of their wealth. Young nobles and former military officers were at the forefront of counter-revolutionary *émigré* armies. One of the first significant forces was *La Legion Noire (The Black Legion)*, formed in late 1790s by Andre Riqueti. Viscount Mirabeau, younger brother of the National Assembly leader Honore Mirabeau. The German city of Coblenz became a gathering point for Counter – revolutionary military activity.

Once formed, *émigré* armies adopted an organisational structure that reflected the old society. *Chateaubriand* noted that one *émigré* army ‘was composed of nobles, grouped according to [their] province. At the very end of its days, the nobility was going back to its roots and to the roots of

the monarchy, like an old man regressing to his childhood'. Despite their determination, most of *émigré* armies were failures. They were costly to organise and supply, experienced problems with internal organisation and military discipline and were not well led. The *émigré* armies reached their peak in mid-1792 when their numbers approached 25,000. In July 1792, *émigré* commanders persuaded the Duke of Brunswick to issue his famous manifesto, threatening the people of Paris with devastation if any harm came to the royal family. The *émigré* armies were supremely confident of their ability but their first forays into battle proved disastrous. In late August 1792, a 16,000-strong *émigré* force laid siege to the French town of Thionville but failed to capture it, despite outnumbering the defenders four to one. At Longwy and Verdun, the *émigrés* achieved virtually nothing. At Valmy, they arrived after the battle was over. Experienced Prussian and Austrian generals lost confidence in *émigré* battalions, finding most of their leaders militarily inept, cocky and unbearable to work with. To add to these military failures, *émigré* leaders failed to demonstrate an understanding of events in France. The revolution, for all its faults, was unlikely to be crushed with by external force. As events in 1792 showed, external threats strengthened revolutionary nationalism and provoked radical violence. They also believed that once their armies swept into France, the peasantry would welcome them with open arms and volunteer for military service. This was far from true. While many peasants in north-eastern France opposed the revolution, they had no desire to welcome back their former noble masters.

### ***Legal Response of Revolutionary France***

Penal legislation targeting the opponents of Revolution was an inevitable product of the deposition of the king, and the property of *émigrés* had already been the subject of penal taxation, then confiscation after the outbreak of war. On 23 October 1791 *émigrés* were first banished in perpetuity from French soil, and those caught on French soil were condemned to death. *Emigrés* who had hoped to return to their homes after only a short absence, were made brutally aware by the first two articles of the legislation that their exodus was permanent. From 1793 onwards they could be condemned to death on the strength of a simple identification test and put to death by local officials in complete accordance with the law and without right of representation or appeal. Their predicament was legally defined by their geographic movements, and the date they left French soil, rather than by their taking arms against the state. The Republican government made it a crime for a virtuous Frenchman not to reside on French national soil and this posed many new administrative and political

dilemmas. The codification of the émigré laws by the Convention between 28 March and 5 April 1793 marked a turning point. These émigré laws, some 200 in all, affected not only *émigrés* but friends and relatives of them, as well as public functionaries who were responsible for implementing the law. The cumulative rigidity of these laws prevented a political rapprochement taking place between *émigrés* and moderate ex-nobles within France in the critical period 1795-97. This critical lost opportunity arguably prevented the institution of a constitutional monarchy years before the eventual Restoration (Carpenter 2015).

The 28 March 1793 legislation was unsurprising in the wake of the king's execution, and amid massive alarm at provincial revolts. The *émigrés* had been tarred liberally with accusations of treachery and desertion before the outbreak of war and these had been further reinforced by the image of émigré soldiers serving alongside the Revolution's enemies. Confusion, panic and paranoia surrounded the legislation stripping the *émigrés* of their political rights, possessions, families and friends. Exceptions were made for children less than fourteen years old, as long as they had not taken arms and as long as they returned within three months. In future, younger children would have to return by their tenth birthday in order to avoid being subject to the law. Persons banished and deportees were exempted as were those whose absence pre-dated 1 July 1789, as long as they were not living on enemy territory. The wives and children of government officials and diplomats were exempted, but domestic servants had to be 'habitually employed by that functionary' and had to be in the service of that employer prior to his foreign appointment. Frenchmen whose purpose for being abroad was the study of science, arts or crafts and the acquisition of new knowledge were exempted provided they were '*notoirement connus*' (publically recognized) before their departure. The crime of emigration could also be applied by association to those who had aided the *émigrés* or furthered their hostile projects; those who had sent their children abroad; those who had supplied arms, horses, munitions or financial assistance to them; those who had solicited them by promises or financial rewards; those who had knowingly hidden them or helped them to return to France; those who were responsible for false certificates of residence (Ibid.). The law itself initiated its own contradictions because an émigré was a criminal more because of what he or she had chosen not to do – return to France in the designated, brief, amnesty period – than for what any émigré had consciously or deliberately done in person to harm the French nation. As early as 1793, while asserting the need to bring to justice those Frenchmen prepared to take arms against the Republic, concerns were raised for those to whom

the leg-islation might be applied unjustly and without provision for appeal (requiring, as it did the execution of the sentence within twenty-four hours of the judgment). *Jean-Baptiste Michel Saladin*, a Jacobin and a lawyer, was one such individual who flagged the potential abuses. He argued fiercely for the premise of the presumption of innocence which he felt was taken away by a law which prematurely condemned the accused:

Because, if it is true that to condemn an individual to a punishment no matter which, there needs to be a moral certitude that he has violated the law, that he has committed the crime against which the law has established this punishment. Without this moral certitude, the condemnation is an injustice, and its execution an act of violence (Burgess 2008: 158).

Saladin's plea to have *émigrés* whose crimes were not conclusive, transferred for trial in the ordinary courts did not gain a majority, but it echoed across the Revolutionary years. The bureaucratic haste, the euphoria of victory and the impending trial of the king, whose death Saladin voted for, all compounded to set reason and law to one side. In 1792, the Convention was already acting on the premise that Robespierre enumerated (that the government owes national protection to good citizens; to enemies of the people it owes only death) and he dismissed those who counselled caution as stupid or perverse sophists.

The same issues of guilt and innocence would receive fuller treatment under the Directory, but then too the political circumstances dictated a negative response. 'The revolutionary tribunal made equality triumph by showing itself as severe for the porters, and for servants as for the aristocrats and financiers' (Greer 1951). Throughout the latter years of the Revolution the *émigré* laws could not be repealed, in part due to the immediate political threat they posed, but essentially because any re-examination of the validity of the laws questioned the foundations of the Revolution itself. If the *émigrés* were unjustly accused then the injustice was not a matter of Girondin versus Jacobin or confined to the Terror, but it undermined the more universal claims of Revolution going back as far as the Declaration of the Rights of Man of 1789<sup>3</sup>. After the fall of Robespierre the laws against *émigrés* were still in force, they were still registered on the police lists, but there were few deaths. A revision of November 1794 scaled down the punishment of *émigrés* to banishment in perpetuity and the forfeiture of their possessions to the state, but still referred to them as 'atrocious men who breathed only the ruin of their country'. This perhaps had more to do with revulsion for bloodshed in the aftermath of the Terror than any revision of policy on *émigrés*. Yet while all *émigrés* were declared to be enemies of the state, as time went on, more and more people were



prepared to argue that this was not so. *Les fugitifs francias* was a term adopted in an attempt to disentangle the former from the *émigrés* or *les royalistes-aristocrates*. The term ‘French fugitives’ was designed to provide a category of *émigré* where the crime was less severe and previous good service to the Revolution taken into account.

*Roederer*, a lawyer and a former member of the Constituent Assembly argued that, a state cannot condemn her citizens to perpetual banishment who fled their country only because the social guarantee was insufficient to protect them from violence. Arguments like this gave rise to a certain re-examination of the crime of emigration and to questions about what exactly the *émigrés* were guilty of. *Roederer* did not convince the majority, but he made it clear that the *émigré*, he was pleading for, was a modern political refugee:

The *émigré* only left his country to seek war against it, the Refugee only quit-ted it when it had made war on him. The *émigré* has not ceased to turn his arms on France – the Refugee unarmed in France did not take up arms outside it. The *émigré* wanted to shed blood in our homes, the Refugee only sought an asylum – the one has brought us death, the other tried to defend himself against it (Carpenter 2015: 342).

This sort of analysis made little difference to the actual legislative condition of the *émigrés*, but in the long term it did matter. It showed in many cases that what was missing was conclusive proof against the *émigré* not caught red handed and in that circumstance the date of emigration was the only indicator of intent-and that was arguably a rather flimsy one.

### ***Emigres and Host Societies***

At first, the *émigrés* were largely tolerated by the authorities; for the most part, Comprehensive rules of admission did not yet exist. A special case within this practice was the Electorate of Trier, where Archbishop Clemens Wenceslaus (1739-1812) allowed Louis XVI’s brothers, his nephews, to create an *émigré* army. Furthermore, he provided money and accommodations in Koblenz, where the number of *émigrés* approached that of local residents, and he even put a part of the city’s administration into their hands.

A change occurred in admission practice in 1792. The *émigré* army dispersed after the coalition troops’ failed autumn campaign, and its members increasingly headed eastwards through the Holy Roman Empire. In response, a series of German territories issued strict regulations for admission and passage through. As the case of Prussia shows, however, these orders

could barely be enforced, especially in areas along the borders. Thus, with local differences, a wide-ranging practice of toleration was established. Although the Imperial Diet (*Reichstag*) decreed no regulations for the Empire as a whole, Prussia, for example, chosen to follow the admission regulations of the Hapsburg Monarchy, which predicated *émigrés*' long-term residency on their ability to provide for their own subsistence. London's rapidly growing *émigré* colony, with numbers in the five digits, the largest in Europe, made the domestic security situation increasingly unmanageable. Thus in 1793 British Parliament passed the Aliens Act. This law allowed suspicious individuals to be expelled - a practice that among *émigrés* especially affected the *constitutionnels* and caused a number of them to move on to the USA (Carpenter 1999). The Russian Empire tested their views to determine whether they qualified for residency, and in 1793 it required a loyalty oath to Louis XVII and to religion. This was extended to French people who had long resided in Russia as well.

Around 1800, French *émigrés* became prominent intermediaries in European cultural transfer processes for many reasons. As French exiles seeking to return home quickly, they had a political interest in mobilizing their host societies against revolutionary France. Nevertheless, after various military defeats - such as the 1792 campaign in which *émigré* troops played a leading role, the short-lived British capture of Toulon in 1793, and the disastrous landing of *émigré* troops on the Quiberon Peninsula in Brittany in 1795 - the question of securing a livelihood became more and more pressing (Mori 1997). In addition to the clergy, often living in precarious conditions, and the less affluent members of the Third Estate, now noble families increasingly fell into a financial position that made them dependent on support or forced them to take up a profession. In their favour was French culture's traditional high prestige abroad, which despite all resentment towards *émigrés* made them attractive suppliers of cultural products. Then again, locals friendly to *émigrés*, such as Edmund Burke (1729-1797), defined European exile against the background of a common civilization. 'From all those sources arose a system of manners and of education which was nearly similar in all this quarter of the globe. When a man travelled or resided for health, pleasure, business or necessity, from his own country, he never felt himself quite abroad' (Burke 1991).

A close collaboration between French and Genevan *émigrés* developed in a totally different area, namely journalistic activity. Together they criticized the expansive character of the Revolution, which was republicanizing Europe, and implored the European powers to act more decisively against advancing revolutionary troops (Burrows 2000). French *émigrés* of all political

persuasions drew parallels between the French Revolution and 17<sup>th</sup> century British history - pointing to civil war, regicide, dictatorship, restoration, and the renewed overthrow of the ruling dynasty. Different émigré groups sought to make predictions for further developments in France on the basis of fixed points in the English revolutionary cycle, utilising them variously for their own propaganda purposes. Whereas the *royalistes* interpreted the English Restoration of 1660 as a return to the *ancienne constitution*, the *monarchiens* were more eager to stress that it was a constitutional monarchy that had been re-established.

French *émigrés* took on various functions in exile according to their own political and economic interests, keeping in view the needs of their territories of exile. For Britain and Australia, it can be shown on the political level, that *émigrés* partially replaced diplomatic structures once war broke out and embassies were withdrawn from Paris. They advised and sought to influence the various governments, always with an eye to their political competitors among the émigré community. That this input was ascribed a high informational value can be seen in its transmission in diplomatic correspondences, in the archives of foreign ministries. Thanks to their networks across various parts of Europe as well as their connections to revolutionary France via relatives, friends and agents, *émigrés* provided information relevant to the war that otherwise would have been hard to come by (Ibid).

The longer exile lasted, the more pressing became the issue of securing a livelihood, as noted above. This applied first to *émigrés* of the lower Third Estate and of the lower clergy, but increasingly to the upper Third Estate and to noble *émigrés* as well. The fact that the last group took up professions is noteworthy, since in the French understanding they would have been punished with *derogance*, the loss of their noble privileges. Nobles working as shoemakers, at times under assumed names, were as common as women and children involved in commercial activity. In sectors where state interests existed, manufactories and factories were created. In Prussia, for example, this happened in silk production but also for the purpose of agricultural innovations, as on the model estate of *Chevalier de Boufflers* (1738-1815) (Carpenter 1999). Officers, in contrast after the disbandment of the émigré army, sought employment with the coalition forces in émigré regiments and later in regular army units, especially in Austria. The *Armée de Conde*, part of the émigré army of 1792, spent the 1790s in close formation in foreign service, relocating from the Upper Rhine to Volhynia before being set loose in Austria. *Emigrés* with professional qualifications like architects, painters and artisans established themselves in their proven milieus. Thus

the musical instrument maker *Sebastien Erard* (1752-1831) had his harp design patented in London and thenceforth, after his return to France, built his pianos with English action mechanisms. The much more famous *Elisabeth Vigee-Le Brun* (1755-1842) spent her exile between Naples and St. Petersburg painting the portraits of the European high nobility. Conversely, *émigrés* in Weimar learned painting in the local drawing school and swapped techniques and motifs (Price 2007).

As for the clergy in exile, its ancestral domain became teaching. Beginning with positions teaching French at universities like Oxford, Gottingen, and Jena; *émigrés* then worked as home teachers and private tutors, and ultimately founded large schools such as those run by the *Abbe Guy Toussaint Julien Carron* (1760-1821) in London or by the *Abbe Dominique Charles Nicolle* (1758-1835) and *Frederic Francois Xavier de Villers* (1770-1846) in St. Petersburg, Moscow, and Odessa. If what has been said so far suggests that *émigrés* consciously exploited the locals' Francophile predisposition, such becomes even clearer in the example of the French restaurants that sparked a boom in Hamburg's gastronomy sector, or the *émigré* theatre troupes that successfully established themselves in Brunswick and Hamburg (Mori 1997). In urban centres like London, Hamburg, Vienna, and Philadelphia, *émigré* salons, schools, bookstores and publishers developed quickly that, at the same time, acted as forum for discussion about events in France and helped *émigrés* affirm their identity. It was especially the *émigré* publishers and journals - in part with older roots - that turned the emigration into a component of the communications and media event that the French Revolution had become. It was described as follows by the young *Francois Rene de Chateaubriand* (1768-1848): 'Exiles resulting from human persecution is not nearly as disadvantageous to the human spirit as one might think. The healthiest honey is the one that a bee, chased from the hive, sometime produces in the desert' (Burrows 2000). Gazettes like the *London Mercure Britannique* and the *Hamburg Spectateur du Nord* found an audience among *émigrés* in Great Britain and, ultimately all over Europe, within the *Republique des lettres* (Ibid).

There is no question that the vast majority of the *émigrés* wanted to live in a France governed by a Bourbon king. The sympathetic reception of the memoirs of *Clery*, Louis XVI's confessor, when they appeared in Britain in 1793 provides proof of the horror that both the British and the French felt at the king's execution. *Emigrés* provided the written proof that the Revolution could not eradicate all trace of the aristocracy and its supporters, or their habits and ways, simply by killing the king (Doyle 2009). In the

European cities of London, Vienna, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Madrid, and Lisbon; *émigrés* waited patiently imagining a better France. This imagination and hope for a different political future was the life-blood of the Emigration. It was expressed in all forms of literature from the writings of the exiled deputies of the constituent assembly like *Montlosier*, to the novels of *Madame d'Stael*, *Madame d'Souza* and *Senac d'Meilhan*. It can also be found in the work of another later generation, affected by those who had known the experience of emigration, and written their memoirs, *Émigré* authors were not so much seeking to give a sense to the explosion of violence as to understand how the destruction of a political regime, a system of State, had been possible. A significant proportion never saw their homes again, and the only trace they felt was their writings, giving proof of a patriotic French counter-identity without which the Revolution would not have been such a truly European event. *Madame de Stael* wrote of her hero *Le Comte d'Erfeuil*:

This man had borne the loss of a very large fortune with perfect serenity. He lived by his musical talent and supported an old uncle, whom he cared for, until his death. He constantly refused the offer of money that others pressed upon him. He showed the most brilliant valour, French valour, during the war, and the most unshakable good humour in the midst of adversity (Carpenter 2015: 343).

*Anatole France* in *Les dieux ont soif* portrayed the *émigré* from the point of view of *Evariste*; *Jacobin*, judge, and someone who prided himself on the sincerity of his commitment to revolutionary ideals. He was one of the first authors to point to the fact that it was the abuse of the legal system which was significant both in the cases of the *émigrés* and of *Dreyfus* – and importantly what was being protected by such abuse was the political establishment. Programmatic *émigré* writings like *Jacques Mallet du Pan's* (1749-1800) *Considerations sur la nature de la révolution de France* (1793) were translated into various languages, sometimes more than once, and even read in France itself. *Trophime-Gerard de Lally-Tollendal's* (1751-1830) *Defense des émigrés*, for example, appeared in Paris in 1797 in an edition of 40,000 copies. Key literary works included *Gabriel Senac de Meilhan's* (1736-1803) novel *L'Émigré* (1797) and *Stephanie Felicite de Genlis's* (1746-1830) *Les petits émigrés* (1798). Conversely, *émigrés* became a beloved subject especially in German and English fiction. As reviews and critical responses also show, the emigration had a substantial presence in the European public sphere, corresponding with situation on the ground in the host countries.

### ***Return to Homeland and the Aftermath***

With the end of the *Terreur*, the emigration had passed its apogee. Under the Directory (1795-1799), the first *émigrés* returned after their names were struck off from the *émigré* lists. This meant primarily *constitutionnels*, who were best able to come to terms with the Republican regime. After the Coup of 18 Brumaire in 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte as First Consul, swiftly had the *émigré* lists closed. Removal from the lists, however, still required an official proceeding. Only in 1802 was a wide-ranging amnesty declared; only 1,000 *émigrés*, especially the exiled monarchy and its orbit, were exempted from repatriation. Accordingly, the vast majority of *émigrés* returned to France under the Consulate, including groups supposedly loyal to the Bourbons such as the *royalistes*. As long as it had not been sold, they recovered their confiscated property. Former *émigrés* quickly found employment in the Napoleonic administration and army. After the return of the Bourbons, the emigration remained a controversial topic in both foreign and domestic politics. On the one hand, the period of emigration seemed to repeat itself during Napoleon's *Cent-Jours*<sup>4</sup> in 1815, as the royal family and several thousand supporters settled in Flemish Ghent as an *émigré* colony with clear parallels to the 1790s. On the other hand, the property transfers of the Revolution, embodied in what had been done with *émigré* property, contributed decisively to political polarisation in the 1820s. In 1825, both legislative houses passed a law that renounced property restitution but still recognized the *émigrés* material claims in the form of indemnification payments.

Along with the historical analysis of the Revolution and its dissemination in media, and along with the wide-reaching political mobilisation of European societies and the effects of the Revolution's wars, French emigration is one of the decisive factors in Europe's experience with revolution in the final decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For European societies, the impact of the French Revolution was immediately felt at home. The *émigrés* had to secure their everyday survival. They acted as politicians and diplomats, as agents in cultural transfer. As part of larger migration movements in the "Age of Revolutions", they established networks with other *émigré* groups. They thus cannot be reduced to the role of historical losers, as they were seen by adherents of the Revolution and have been seen by some historians. On the contrary, exile provided an alternative to the ever radicalising Revolution and presented a mutual challenge to *émigrés* and their host societies alike.

### **Notes**

1. French Protestants in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries who followed the teachings of John Calvin.
2. Supporters of exiled Stuart Monarch James-II and his descendants after the Glorious Revolution of 1688.
3. This was made explicit in the Constitution of 1791 which promised freedom of movement. This was not the only article of the 1789 declaration which was infringed. Article(s) 9 (a man is presumed innocent until proven guilty) and 17 (the right of property is inviolable and sacred) were blatantly ignored in regard to emigres.
4. Napoleon's return to the imperial throne following his exile to the principality of Elba.

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