

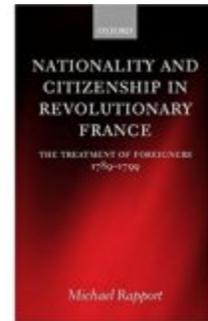
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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Michael Rapport. *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France: The Treatment of Foreigners 1789-1799.* New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. x + 382 pp. \$85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-820845-7.

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Published on H-Diplo (November, 2000)



This solid and well-written work is a mine of information on the thorny question of how the French nation attempted to deal with those in its midst who were not clearly members of that august body. At the beginning of the revolutionary period, it seemed for a moment as if the distinction between French and not-French might cease to matter, but after the plunge into war from 1792, it came to matter a great deal. However, the importance placed on the distinction was never expressed in entirely consistent ways, nor always in those which a casual observer might expect. Michael Rapport explores the twists and turns of revolutionary theory and practice with a fine eye for the paradoxes of the subject.

In the Old Regime, the treatment of foreigners was largely an issue of international relations. Thus, for example, decisions about whether or not to shelter Jacobite exiles in the early part of the century were to an extent related to views of their usefulness in causing trouble for the Protestant English enemy. While the Jacobite court at St-Germain-en-Laye was allowed to flourish for decades as a thorn in England's side, Charles Edward Stuart was later to be physically snatched from the streets of Paris and bundled out of the country, as one of the conditions of the ignominious Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748. Foreign clergy, specifically those from Ireland, Scotland and England, also had a role to play in the long-term fight with Protestant England, although over time their small and scattered outposts, mostly self-sufficient on their lands and endowments, tended to fade into insignificance.

Foreigners in general who chose to live in France were subject to the fearsome *droit d'Raubaine*, which

meant that, if they died, all their property in the country would be forfeit to the king unless passed to a French subject. As the legal dictum put it, foreigners 'lived free, but died slaves', and like slaves, in a tradition going back to ancient Rome, their goods were then not their own. Any relaxation of this rule, which was widely viewed as a discouragement to inward investment, was subject to considerations of reciprocity, and it tended only to be lifted for the subjects of other monarchs who formally agreed to do likewise for Frenchmen in their lands. Nevertheless, the French state persisted in its efforts to encourage economically-useful foreigners to enter France. The French crown relied on its connections to the international banking community, through members resident in Paris, for its financial survival. Foreign, and especially British, industrial engineers and artisans were avidly sought-after, to counter the already-perceived industrial backwardness of France, in a process which amounted to large-scale industrial espionage as workers were bribed into bringing their new expertise into the country. This was much to the discomfort of the English crown, which specifically forbade this practice. Exemptions from French laws and taxes were widely, and successfully, used as an inducement, and a number of mills and forges were set up with British expertise.

Foreign soldiers formed a significant part of the French army, including some of its elite units. These too were seen as having special value on the international stage, as in time of war each foreign soldier had a triple worth: as a soldier of France himself, who freed a Frenchman to serve elsewhere, and who simultaneously deprived an enemy of his service. Foreign units were also regarded as particularly reliable in times of civil disorder,

when the army was the defence of the state against its people. It was in this role, of course, that foreign troops added infamy to the suspicion in which they were held by some, playing a major part in the military build-up that provoked the storming of the Bastille in July 1789.

As it launches into the course of the Revolution from its second chapter, this book is concerned to tell some five different stories, and it is perhaps a flaw of the work that it chooses to tell them in rather small chunks. There is a clear logic to dividing the chapters chronologically, and considering the pre-war, early war, Terror and post-Thermidorian periods separately. However, this results in each chapter being itself divided into a minimum of five parts. In the first, general events, legislative and ideological innovations and consequences are discussed. Then come separate sections on foreign troops, foreign clergy, foreign patriots, sympathisers and refugees, and lastly on foreign workers and businessmen. It is clear that these are separate, albeit linked stories, and one of the strengths of the book is to show that a single, consistent 'ideologically coherent' line on foreign participation was never pursued by revolutionary authorities. The foreign clergy, for example, rapidly became something of an embarrassment, and the government havered at different points in the Revolution over whether their property was subject to expropriation like the French clergy's, and whether foreigners need be subject to the same, increasingly onerous surveillance as French ecclesiastics.

In the end, however, they were only a minor irritation. Foreign troops, on the other hand, posed a multifaceted challenge. The practical reasons for their retention continued to weigh heavy, especially as the quality of French regiments visibly declined in 1791-2 through desertion and emigration. Nevertheless, such troops' loyalty to the nation was always dubious, and some patriots called for their banishment. Further foreign troops were introduced into the army by groups of refugees, especially from the Low Countries, who sought and received arms and the grandiose title of various 'Legions' of patriots. Although these latter groups in particular were never very large, France would eventually purge itself of both kinds of foreign soldier, only to see a last about-turn in 1799 as refugees from the overrun Italian sister-republics were hastily enlisted in a moment of crisis.

Foreign patriots caused the Revolution some of its knottiest problems, as they tended to embroil themselves with the factional warfare that increasingly disfigured republican politics, while also becoming by default the citizens of enemy states in 1792-3, and thus subject in theory

to a range of increasingly harsh measures. Thus it was that Thomas Paine, welcomed as an honorary Frenchman, and elected to the Convention, later suffered imprisonment for his Girondin connections, and was only able to avoid further troubles later by official recognition as an American. Anacharsis Cloots, the Prussian ex-baron who was one of the loudest and most consistent voices of expansionist cosmopolitanism throughout the Revolution's first years, went to the guillotine with the Hébertists in the spring of 1794, at a point when accusations of entanglement with 'foreign plot' had become the quickest way to bring down an opponent.

The fate of individuals such as Paine and Cloots is one of the better-known aspects of the treatment of foreigners by the Revolution. Perhaps more obscure, and ultimately more noteworthy, are the persistent efforts of revolutionary administrations to retain foreign workers, artisans and entrepreneurs, even when xenophobic rhetoric had become dominant. At the height of Terror, when foreign bankers had become political bogeymen charged with speculation and hoarding, and those of them who had become embroiled in politics were facing the guillotine, others who had kept their noses clean continued to be wooed by the state. Likewise, even British artisans and industrial engineers, at a time when all Britons were subject to arrest, and British prisoners-of-war to summary execution, were protected by the authorities. There was also a lower-key, more informal toleration of foreigners within society. This is perhaps one of the elements which this text under-emphasises, but clearly within the major urban centres at least, there was a body of individuals born outside the borders of France whose 'foreignness' was never perceived as a threat, perhaps because it was simply invisible. Exploring the activities of foreigners within Parisian radicalism, for example, the book mentions Pierre Cardinaux, an innkeeper from Neuchtel, a Francophone enclave of Prussian territory on the Swiss border. His foreign birth did not prevent Cardinaux from taking a leading role in neighbourhood politics, and serving in the politically-sensitive *arme révolutionnaire* in 1793, nor was it to prevent him joining the babouvist plot in 1795, or ultimately being exiled to the Seychelles as part of a group of dangerous radicals in 1804. As an individual, Cardinaux had previously come to the attention of this reviewer through an arrest in 1791, and in that episode, as in all the others of his later career, there is no evidence that his 'foreign' birth was of any consequence whatsoever. This French-speaking subject of the King of Prussia, but long-term resident of Paris, was as French as he chose to be.

All the thematic narratives of this text emerge, as noted above, through separate sub-sections of the chronological chapters, and the experience of reading these, it must be said, can become repetitive. One suspects that some significant economies of style could have been achieved by, for example, concentrating in one chapter on the legislative tergiversations of the Revolution, and in another on groups such as soldiers and clergy who had enjoyed special corporate status in the Old Regime. Certainly, the stories of the revolutionaries' relationships with the foreigners who chose to support the Revolution, and with those who for very different reasons the state regarded as economically necessary, might have been drawn out into distinct chapters of considerable interest. As things stand, the reader is faced with a multitude of mini-introductions and conclusions, and a feeling that some chapters try to keep too many balls in the air at once.

It is not exactly a criticism, but perhaps a caveat, to note that this is very much a work of good old-fashioned historical scholarship. There is a suspicion of paying lip-service to contemporary interdisciplinary demands in the Introduction's casual citation of figures such as Chantal Mouffe and Julia Kristeva, and the single forlorn reference to Jürgen Habermas (p. 13). Any sophisticated analyses that such references might suggest are absent

from the body of the work, which largely confines itself to the earnest task of exposition. More general considerations resurface in the Conclusion, which notes, intriguingly and ironically, given the title, that the concept of *nationalité* was never invoked by the revolutionaries in all their wrestling with the ins and outs of the citizenship game. Membership of the nation was decidedly not (yet) an ethnic issue, nor even a linguistic one (it could not be, for most peasants in the south, in Brittany, and elsewhere, did not speak French in their everyday lives). And yet, xenophobia, in virulent form, was decidedly present in revolutionary rhetoric, intensifying as the Revolution's enemies seemed to multiply around it. As Rapport concludes, although the Revolution planted a germ of cosmopolitan citizenship, other more divisive forces prevented its full flowering. Nevertheless, perhaps only because of the coincidence of administrative convenience and the momentarily undeveloped nature of nationalistic thought, some elements of that cosmopolitan inclusiveness continued to shine through, even in the Revolution's darkest hours.

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Citation: David Andress. Review of Rapport, Michael, *Nationality and Citizenship in Revolutionary France: The Treatment of Foreigners 1789-1799*. H-Diplo, H-Net Reviews. November, 2000.

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