

“A Great and Noble Scheme”: Thoughts on the Expulsion of the Acadians

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“A Great and Noble Scheme”: Thoughts on the Expulsion of the Acadians

IN THE AUTUMN OF 1755 OFFICERS AND TROOPS from New England, acting under the authority of the colonial governors of Nova Scotia and Massachusetts, systematically rounded up more than 7,000 Acadians who lived in communities along the shores of the Bay of Fundy. Men, women, and children alike were crowded into transport vessels and deported in small groups to the other British colonies. Many families were separated, some never to meet again. The remaining 10,000 to 12,000 Acadians managed to escape and spent years as refugees. Many took up arms in resistance. The campaign of removal continued for eight years, by which time a total of more than 10,000 Acadians had been forced from their homes and dispersed widely across the Atlantic world. Meanwhile, their property was plundered, their communities were torched and their lands were seized.

Some of the most appalling violence occurred at the site of present-day Fredericton, New Brunswick, in a village called Sainte-Anne along both sides of the St. John River, which was home to approximately 1,000 Acadians. In November 1758, Colonel Robert Monckton, in command of 2,000 troops, ascended the river as far as present-day Gagetown, leaving a swath of destruction on both banks; he succeeded in capturing few of the Acadians living there, though, as most of them had fled upriver to Sainte-Anne. To remedy this, two months later in February 1759 Monckton sent a company of 15 New England rangers, under the command of Lieutenant Moses Hazen of Massachusetts, to strike that community. Hazen was ordered to “kill them all and give no quarter”.¹ He succeeded in bringing back 23 prisoners and 6 scalps. Joseph Godin-Bellefontaine, several years a resident of Sainte-Anne at the time, provided a rare first-hand Acadian account of the attack. The rangers captured his entire family, Godin-Bellefontaine declared in a deposition taken by French authorities. He and his grown son Michel were bound hand and foot and forced to watch as the Yankees abused their wives and daughters. “They took their rage to the point of massacring his daughter Nastazie, wife of Eustache Paré”, reads the deposition, “crushing her head with a blow of the butt of a gun, his two children and a son of Michel, and splitting the head of the wife of the latter with a blow of a hatchet”.² The surviving members of the Godin-Bellefontaine family were sent to Halifax and eventually transported to France.

The Acadians had a term for this violent turn in their history: *le grand dérangement* or the great upheaval. It continued from 1755 until the end of the Seven Years War between Great Britain and France in 1763. It claimed thousands of lives and laid waste one of the oldest colonial homelands in North America. After the war hundreds

1 John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (New York, 2005), p. 405. Aside from material from other sources (noted in footnotes), the information cited in Faragher’s talk was taken from this book and are referenced in the text by the page numbers within brackets.

2 Quoted in Richard J. Bergeron, “Three Acadian Generations: The First Bergeron d’Amboises in The Americas”, <http://www.acadian.org/bergeron.html> (accessed 4 December 2005).

of surviving Acadians settled again in the region, but not on their former farms for those had been turned over to Yankee settlers from New England. Other Acadians sought refuge in the French colony of Louisiana, where they became the ancestors of today's Cajuns.

My idea for a book focusing on this horrible episode began to take shape during a visit my wife and I paid to our daughter, who was attending graduate school at the University of Louisiana in the city of Lafayette, which is sometimes referred to as the capital of Cajun Country. On a memorable Sunday afternoon in November 1995 the three of us drove down Bayou Teche to Longfellow-Evangeline State Historic Site and there, in the reconstructed cabin of an Acadian exile, I first saw the poster "Acadian Odyssey", produced by Parks Canada, which maps the Expulsion of the Acadians.

Aside from short discussions in histories of the French and Indian War, boyhood memories of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Evangeline", and the plaintive chorus of The Band's "Acadian Driftwood", it was something I knew very little about. But it was something that seemed familiar. At that time the world was just learning of the fearful episodes of ethnic cleansing taking place in the former Yugoslavia and the central African state of Rwanda. In the gift shop at the site I bought Carl Brasseaux's little book on the Deportation, *Scattered to the Wind*, and before bed that night I had learned enough to know that the Expulsion of the Acadians, so strikingly similar to contemporary events of ethnic cleansing, was something about which I needed to know much more.

Quite early in my research I discovered a startling piece of evidence from which I drew the title of my book: a dispatch written by an anonymous correspondent, datelined Halifax, 9 August 1755, and published several weeks later in the colonial press of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland: "We are now upon a great and noble Scheme of sending the neutral French out of this Province, who have always been secret Enemies, and have encouraged our Savages to cut our Throats. If we effect their Expulsion, it will be one of the greatest Things that ever the English did in America; for by all the Accounts, that Part of the Country they possess, is as good Land as any in the World: In case therefore we could get some good English Farmers in their Room, this Province would abound with all Kinds of Provisions" (p. 333). This statement amounts to as frank an acknowledgement as one might fear to find that *le grand dérangement* was a classic episode of ethnic cleansing.

Compare it with the statement issued by the United Nations Commission of Experts, convened by the Secretary General in 1992 to investigate the violent conflict in the Balkans. "Ethnic cleansing", the commissioners concluded, "is a purposeful policy designed by one ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas. To a large extent, it is carried out in the name of misguided nationalism, historic grievances, and a powerful driving sense of revenge. This purpose appears to be the occupation of territory to the exclusion of the purged group or groups" (p. 469). Note how this definition amplifies the meaning of the August 1755 dispatch: the ethnic contrast drawn between "the neutral French" and "good English farmers". There is also an appeal to historic grievances and the desire for revenge: "the neutral French, who have always been secret Enemies, and have encouraged our Savages to cut our Throats". And there is a connection made between

dispossession and repossession: “If we effect their Expulsion, it will be one of the greatest Things that ever the English did in America; for by all the Accounts, that Part of the Country they possess, is as good Land as any in the World: In case therefore we could get some good English Farmers in their Room, this Province would abound with all Kinds of Provisions”. Ethnic cleansing always has this dimension – one ethnic or religious group clearing away another by violent and terror-inspiring means and an eagerness to seize their lands and possessions. Ethnic cleansing is nearly always a process of dispossession followed by repossession.

Most Americans in the United States are unfamiliar with the story of *le grand dérangement*, just as they are unacquainted with the Acadians. If Acadians are known to us at all, it is as the unfortunate people of Longfellow’s epic poem. For Americans of a certain age, myself included, “Evangeline” was required reading in public school. Yet Longfellow’s Acadians were a literary creation, little more than victims who endured other men’s prejudice, hatred and greed. For me, one of the most valuable lessons of this project was discovering the Acadians of history rather than legend. Although they were largely illiterate, their voices may be excavated from the colonial records of France and Great Britain. The Acadians turn out to be fascinating and important subjects in their own right.

Today Acadian descendants number several hundred thousand persons in eastern Canada and southwestern Louisiana in addition to tens of thousands more spread across the map of North America. 2005 marked the 250th anniversary of *le grand dérangement* and, over the course of those centuries, Acadian and Cajun society survived and more recently has thrived. That it has done so is, in important ways, the result of the strong sense of identity Acadians had developed before 1755.

Acadian history begins with the French colonists of the early-17th century who settled on the shores of Baie Française (known today as the Bay of Fundy) at roughly the same time English colonists were settling the colonies of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. French authorities hoped to transplant to the New World a hierarchical society of lords and peasants. But the Old World was a long way off, the social and religious institutions of the *ancien régime* were stunted in transplantation, and what developed instead was a clannish frontier society of farmers and fishermen who enjoyed rough equality and suffered few distinctions of rank.

The French may have been unsuccessful in transplanting feudal institutions, but they were quite successful in their missionary efforts among the Mi’kmaq, the most numerous of the Native peoples of the region, as Catholicism proved a powerful bond between colonist and Native. One missionary provided a description that is suggestive of the way a common faith encouraged cultural mixing. A contingent of colonists on a trading mission along the Fundy coast was invited to attend a Native celebration. “All night”, the missionary wrote, “there was continual haranging, singing, and dancing”. Horrified at the thought that “probably their songs and dances were invocations to the devil”, he asked the colonists to perform some of their sacred songs – to purify the air, so to speak. The men offered up hymns to the blessed virgin. Soon the Natives joined in with chants of their own, and before long both colonists and Natives were dancing and singing together. Even this relatively humorless missionary was delighted. “It was really very comical”, he wrote, “for you would have said that they were two choirs which had a thorough understanding of each other” (p. 27). The Catholic missionary effort created a bond of sympathy between Natives and colonists

in l'Acadie that made possible genuinely intimate personal relations.

Because many colonists of the first generation came to l'Acadie as single men, there was also a considerable amount of intermarriage with Mi'kmaq women. Eventually the two peoples came to think of themselves as kindred. Living in ethnically mixed communities, colonists readily adopted indigenous ways. From the Mi'kmaq they learned the arts of fishing and hunting, methods of making clothing and moccasins from skins, furs and animal sinew, and the many uses of birch bark. A jargon composed of French and Mi'kmawi'simk (the native language of the Mi'kmaq) became the lingua franca of the countryside, and many colonists learned to communicate (at least a little) with their Native cousins. All this made Acadian culture unique among the settler traditions that developed on the Atlantic coast of North America.

There was a material side to this as well. Ceding the wooded uplands to the Mi'kmaq for their migratory hunting, fishing and gathering, the colonists confined their settlements to the coastal lowlands where the tidal variation is one of the greatest in the world (as much as 50 feet at the site of the village of Grand Pré on Minas Basin at the head of the Bay of Fundy). In one of the most remarkable developments in the history of the colonization of North America, French colonists in l'Acadie developed the distinctive practice of dyking the tidal marshlands to create pastures and fields. This was no small task and required the energies of the entire community working together. It sealed a pattern of good relations with the Mi'kmaq, for instead of moving onto Native lands – as, for example, the settlers in New England did – the Acadians created land of their own without infringing on the estate of the Mi'kmaq.

The communal work on the dykes was perhaps the most important factor in the development of a common sense of Acadian identity. The first test of that identity came when Port Royal, the chief settlement in l'Acadie, was captured in 1654 by a heavily armed Puritan fleet out of Boston. The English claim to the province dated from the early-17th century when the English Crown asserted its right to the region, which it called “Nova Scotia” (or New Scotland). As French officials and soldiers prepared for repatriation to France, the Yankee conquerors offered the colonists a choice of either returning to their mother country or remaining “unmolested” on their marshland farms, with “liberty of conscience allowed to [their] religion”. We do not know precisely what the colonists thought about the Yankee conquest or their offer, but we do know what they did – they chose to stay, taking an oath “that they would no longer bear arms against the English nation” (p. 59). It marked a critical turning point, strongly suggesting that the colonists' attachment to their new home was more powerful than their identification with the mother country. It is at this point, I think, it is fair to begin thinking of the people as the *Acadians*.

During the next 16 years “l'Acadie or Nova Scotia” (as it was called in the official documents) remained under the nominal control of New England and, after taking an oath of loyalty to the English king, the Acadians were allowed to govern themselves. When France regained possession of the colony – in exchange for territorial concessions in the West Indies – French colonial officials found that the Acadians had grown accustomed to living without supervision. They exhibited “a certain English and Parliamentary inclination”, reported one French governor (p. 68). Another complained that the Acadians were “so little accustomed to subjection it seems to me they live as true republicans” (p. 107).

In 1690, during a conflict known in the colonies as King William's War, l'Acadie passed to New England's control once again when another Boston armada forced the surrender of Port Royal. The Acadians agreed to take another English oath of loyalty, but insisted on a condition: that in the struggle between the English and the French empires "they themselves would remain neutral" (p. 96).

This is the first evidence that I can find in the historical record of the Acadian insistence on their status as *neutrals*. The claim of neutrality was rare but not unprecedented. The pope granted the residents of the Channel Islands the "privilege of neutrality", allowing them protection in time of war between England and France, a privilege that Elizabeth I renewed in 1561 and which continued until the late-17th century. There are also North American examples. After the conquest of New Sweden by New Netherland in the 1650s, the Finnish, Swedish and Dutch settlers asked Governor Peter Stuyvesant that they "not . . . be obliged to take sides if any troubles should arise between the Crown of Sweden and [the United Provinces] at home", a request Stuyvesant granted.³ When his superiors objected, he argued that only with such a tolerant policy would officials win the hearts of the residents. In the case of l'Acadie the idea of neutrality became part of the Acadian conception of themselves as a people. It was a response to the facts of life on the margins of empire, to the uncertain ricochet of their homeland back and forth between empires and sovereigns. Learning to be a people "in between", they developed a willingness to do business with anyone, French, English or otherwise. Their marshland farms produced ample surpluses of fruit, grain and livestock, and the Acadians established a particularly lucrative commerce with Yankee traders, whom they jokingly referred to as *nos amis les ennemis* – "our friends the enemy". The phrase captured something essential about the Acadian situation. They lived in a world on the margins, a world of ambiguities, a world where by necessity people had to learn to play both sides, a world where, as the Acadians put it, "cunning was better than strength" (p. 79). Many would be the times the Acadians would successfully employ cunning to combat the strength of imperialists.

France regained control of "l'Acadie or Nova Scotia" in 1697, then lost it again in 1710, during Queen Anne's War (the War of the Spanish Succession) when yet another armed Yankee fleet conquered Port Royal and took possession in the name of the British Crown. The 1713 treaty ending the war formalized British control. The Acadians were once more given the choice of leaving or remaining in the province, with guarantees of the free exercise of religion and the security of their property as long as they agreed to become subjects of the British Crown. This required swearing an oath of loyalty.

Oaths of allegiance on the transfer of a colony from one empire to another were an accepted practice. Such a transfer took place numerous times in the 17th-century Delaware Valley, where the European settlers were required to swear allegiance as many as six times. As I have said, the Acadians themselves had taken such oaths to the English Crown before – in both 1654 and 1690. What was different this time was

3 Mark L. Thompson, "National Subjects in a Contested Colonial Space: Allegiance, Ethnicity, and Authority in the Seventeenth-Century Delaware Valley", PhD diss., John Hopkins University, 2004, p. 269.

the insistence that the oath be unconditional. The Acadians declared themselves willing to take an oath, but only with the inclusion of a condition: "That we will take up arms neither against his Britannic Majesty, nor against France, nor against any of their subjects or allies, by which they meant their cousins, the Mi'kmaq, allies of the French" (p. 147).

The British found themselves in a difficult position. The colony ranked low in their colonial priorities. They wished to maintain a garrison and small colonial establishment at Annapolis Royal (the new name for Port Royal) to check French ambitions in the region, but doing so required the material support of the Acadians, who supplied essential food, fuel and manpower for the operation. The British debated the idea of undertaking the removal of the Acadians and the resettlement of the province with British settlers, but in the end they rejected the scheme as too expensive. The British were stuck and the Acadians knew it.

The controversy over an unconditional oath continued for more than 15 years, ending only when the British colonial governor finally agreed to the Acadian terms. In 1730 Acadian leaders agreed to sign an oath of allegiance and in return the governor made an oral concession (which the Acadians recorded and had notarized) declaring "that he exempts them from bearing arms and fighting in war against the French and the Indians, and that the said inhabitants have only accepted allegiance on the promise never to take up arms". The British later denied having made the concession, but we have good reason to doubt their veracity. One British official present at the negotiations later testified that when the governor demanded the Acadians swear an unconditional oath "they at first absolutely refused". The officer then noted that, following earnest discussion, "they at last swore allegiance, after having extorted the same assurance . . . , that they should not be obliged to bear arms" (p. 177-8).

In the years following this agreement the Acadians became widely known as "the neutral French". Neutrality was shorthand for their complex relationship to the colonial world. It stood for their intimate and cooperative connection to the Mi'kmaq, with whom they shared the land. It stood for their cultural identity, one that retained its French origins in custom, language and religion, yet was at the same time something new, something *American* in its attachment to place, local practice and newly developed traditions. It stood for their problematic relationship to empire, their desire to participate wholeheartedly in the opportunities for wider commercial connections, but also for their insistence on an exemption from the violent and destructive inter-colonial struggle for conquest and hegemony. It also stood for their variety of "republicanism", for the idea that they had rights as a people as well as the right to argue for themselves and their interests in the court of kings.

If we date the origins of Acadian neutrality to the first period of English control beginning in 1654, we can say that this policy of neutrality served the inhabitants very well for nearly a century. But the situation began to change for the worse in 1744 when, after 30 years of peace, the British and French went to war once again in a conflict known in the colonies as King George's War (the War of the Austrian Succession). French forces invaded l'Acadie and besieged the British garrison at Annapolis Royal. Although a number of Acadians fought alongside the French invaders, others provided critical intelligence to the British and the great majority did their best to remain neutral.

The wartime climate of anti-French and anti-Catholic sentiment in New England, however, put the Acadians at great risk. Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts was convinced that Acadian neutrality was nothing but a sham and that the Acadians were treasonous supporters of the French. Shirley would become one of the primary architects of “the great and noble scheme”. In 1745 he urged “the immediate removal of some at least of the French inhabitants of Nova Scotia” and the settlement of New England families “in their room” (p. 231). The Governor’s Council of Nova Scotia, composed principally of Yankee emigrés, took Shirley’s recommendation a step further. “Upon the whole”, they wrote to British officials in London, “it is most humbly submitted whether the said French Inhabitants may not be transported out of the Province of Nova Scotia and be replac’d by good Protestant Subjects” (p. 229). When the news leaked out, there was panic in the Acadian community and to prevent them from going over the French *en mass*, Governor Shirley was forced to issue a public proclamation denying that any such deportation was being contemplated. In private letters to imperial officials, however, Shirley continued to argue for the removal of at least some of the Acadians and their replacement by Yankee farmers.

The war ended by treaty in 1748 and British officials decided not to pursue Shirley’s plan of removal. They had decided to “postpone anything of this kind for the present”, the colonial minister wrote to Shirley, but he added a significant postscript – “tho’ His Majesty would have you consider, in what manner such a Scheme may be executed, at a proper Time, and What Precautions may be necessary to be taken, to obviate the Inconveniences that are apprehended from it” (p. 241). This quintessentially bureaucratic language had chilling implications.

In the mid-18th century the colonial world of North America was on the verge of an enormous transformation. Before 1748 the pretext for hostilities between Great Britain and France was centered in Europe while afterwards the violent conflict between the two empires fixed on control of the seas, on the struggle for colonial possessions and on the privilege of unimpeded expansion in North America. Both the French and the British believed that l’Acadie or Nova Scotia, at the raw northeastern edge of their respective empires, would be one of the flashpoints of the coming conflict. To counter the great French fortress of Louisbourg, north of Nova Scotia on Cape Breton Island, the British committed themselves to establishing a fortress and naval base of their own in Nova Scotia.

In 1749 several thousand Protestant colonists from the British Isles and the continent arrived on the Atlantic coast of the province and began the construction of the fortified port town of Halifax. A new military government was installed under the leadership of Governor Edward Cornwallis, uncle of Charles Cornwallis, famous in American history as the general who surrendered the British army to Washington at Yorktown in 1781. One of Governor Cornwallis’s primary instructions was to finally resolve the Acadian problem.

Cornwallis, a member of the English aristocracy, was a career military officer who had served on the personal staff of the Duke of Cumberland, second-born son of King George II. He had been at Cumberland’s side in 1745 when the duke turned back the French-backed invasion of Charles Stuart, Catholic pretender to the British throne. Cornwallis led his regiment at the Battle of Culloden, brutally crushing Stuart’s Scottish supporters. In the aftermath of the battle he commanded raiding parties sent into the remotest parts of the Scottish Highlands to “pacify” the population, raids

legendary for their brutality and bloodlust. He supervised the burning of Catholic chapels and the torture of Catholic priests. He was instrumental in the “Scottish clearances”, executing orders to expel the most troublesome of the Highland Scots from their homeland. This was the man the British selected to handle the Acadian problem. His staff was composed largely of others who shared his experience, including the man that became Cornwallis’s protégé, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Lawrence, who soon was appointed lieutenant-governor.

Cornwallis had no specific instructions to expel the Acadians. Rather, he was expected to intimidate them into submission. A new civil government would be established to rule the province, but the Acadians, as Catholics, would be permitted neither to vote nor to hold office. They would be required, however, to swear an unconditional oath of allegiance. Those who did so would be allowed to “continue in the free exercise of their Religion . . . [and] the Peaceable Possession of such Lands as are under their cultivation” (p. 250). Those who refused would be forced to vacate the province, forfeiting all their property. Cornwallis had no actual plan to effect the removal of the Acadians, since he fully expected that they would bend to his pressure.

They did not. Governor Cornwallis anticipated humble and cloying peasants, tugging at their caps. He was surprised to find subtle and assertive republicans. To his demand that the Acadians swear an unconditional oath, the inhabitants reiterated their long-held position. While they were willing to take another oath, they insisted on an explicit exemption from bearing arms. They argued that since this exemption had been endorsed by the king’s representative in 1730, and it had been accepted as the ruling assumption of their civil life for nearly 20 years, the exemption had the force of law. “Acts proposed by the people”, they asserted, “when they are approved by Royal authority, acquire a force which the king himself cannot take away from them”. Consider the meaning of this remarkable statement; their neutrality was part of the customary law of l’Acadie or Nova Scotia and thus their identity was protected by the common law of Englishmen. It was a brilliant and original formulation. “It appears to me that you think yourselves independent”, Cornwallis responded, “and you wish to treat with the King as if you were so” (pp. 253-5).

This is a “tragic” story not simply because it is sad but because, as in classical tragedy, the Acadians helped to shape their own fate. They stood up for principles. Residents of the British colonies of North America were years away from declaring their rights as republicans yet here were the Acadians standing before British governors and making the case for similar rights. I think of them as *premature republicans* – a little too early for their own good. The Acadian story is a remarkable one, because the rights for which they were arguing were not that different from the rights ordinary British colonists would assert in the 1760s and 1770s.

Many Acadians responded to the new British threats by abandoning their homes and farms and decamping for French-controlled territory. The new military government was “reducing us to the condition of the Irish”, one group declared. “Thus we see ourselves on the brink of destruction, liable to be captured and transported . . . and to lose our religion” (p. 264). The Mi’kmaq responded to the new British military assertiveness by declaring war and launching a series of destructive attacks against Protestant settlers in the Halifax area. Over the next four years the province was overtaken by spasmodic violence. Cornwallis eventually resigned in failure and returned to England and, by late 1753, the military government was in the hands of

Lieutenant-Governor Charles Lawrence. “I cannot help being of the opinion”, he wrote to London in one of his first official dispatches, “that it would be much better, if [the Acadians] refuse the oaths, that they were away” (p. 282). He asked for official approval.

Much attention has been focused on the responsibility of the authorities in London for *le grand dérangement*. Lawrence did not receive a reply to his request for authorization for the expulsion until January 1755. The colonial office refused to either approve or disapprove, but instructed him to act on his own. I think the conclusion is obvious: by shifting responsibility to local authorities, officials in London were distancing themselves from what was about to take place, providing themselves with “plausible deniability”. Better to let Lawrence take the risk – something it turned out he was more than willing to do. Only after the dirty job had been done – after thousands of Acadians had been removed from their communities and shipped off in transport vessels, after thousands more had fled into the woods where they suffered from exposure, starvation, and disease, and after Acadian property had been looted and Acadian communities torched – only then did British officials offer an endorsement. The operation, the colonial minister wrote to the king in the aftermath, had been “crowned with a success greatly beyond our expectations and almost equal to our wishes”. The expulsion of the Acadians had made available, he wrote, “vast quantities of the most fertile land in an actual state of cultivation, and in those parts of the Province the most advantageously situated for commerce” (p. 410). His comments make it clear that ultimate responsibility lay with the British state.

But I would extend that responsibility. Longfellow’s *Evangeline* impressed readers with its tale of Acadian sufferings and exile. But perhaps because Longfellow was a New Englander himself, the poem offered no hint of the important role that Yankees played in the removal. Yet the fact is that New Englanders were the most prominent players in the planning of the “great and noble scheme” of Acadian removal.

Even as Lawrence sought the sanction of London authorities, he already had in hand a comprehensive plan for the removal of the Acadians. It had been prepared by provincial surveyor Charles Morris, a Massachusetts native and a protégé of Governor William Shirley. Morris’s thinking echoed that of his mentor. The Acadians controlled all of the best land in the province, he argued, and a program of Protestant colonization would require the confiscation of their farms and the expulsion of the Acadians themselves. “Without their removal”, he wrote in one of the several official reports he authored on the Acadian problem, “I am sure it would be impossible any large number of Protestants can ever be settled in the Country”. Morris urged a military campaign to eliminate once and for all the Acadian presence: “They are at all adventures to be rooted out, and the most effectual way is to destroy all these settlements by burning down all their houses, cutting the dikes, and destroying all the grain now growing” (pp. 288-9).

In mid-1754 Morris delivered his most comprehensive report to date. The long title told the tale: “Some Reflections on the Situation of the Inhabitants, commonly called Neutrals, and some methods proposed to prevent their escape out of the Colony, in case upon being acquainted with the design of removing them, they should attempt to desert over to the French neighboring settlements . . .” (p. 289). Morris made no attempt to argue the case for removal in this report – he had done that many times

previously – but focused instead on detailing the operations necessary to put it into effect. These plans had to be kept secret, he wrote, for once the Acadians knew about them it would be impossible to prevent them from fleeing the province and contributing their capacious skills as sailors and rangers to the French enemy. The British must strike them by stealth. Morris considered a variety of stratagems by which this might be accomplished. Perhaps the inhabitants could be captured while they were at mass on Sunday or surprised in the dead of night while they were in their beds. But their scattered hamlets would make these difficult operations to man and coordinate.

The best alternative, he concluded, was to set a trap the Acadians would fall into voluntarily and on their own accord. The men could be summoned to attend a meeting, then seized and held hostage against the surrender of their families. It would be critical, he suggested, to encourage them to think they were being sent to join their French brethren: “It will much facilitate their readiness to go if a persuasion could obtain among them that they are to be removed to Canada”. In that case, others would come in voluntarily to join their captive kindred. Nonetheless, some inhabitants certainly would make an attempt to escape, so Morris drew up detailed plans for blocking “the passages by which they may desert the Colony” (p. 290). In its cold calculation, its weighing of various stratagems and its invention of tricks and lies, Morris’s logic was diabolical. Once they were in British hands, he argued, it would be necessary to disperse the Acadians in small groups throughout the empire, as far from their homeland as possible. Morris aimed at nothing less than the complete destruction of the Acadian community.

It is worth repeating that this plan was written considerably more than a year before Lawrence set it into operation in the autumn of 1755. The operational plan of removal was the logical culmination of political assumptions and implications that had been developing since the mid-1740s. Let me be explicit about why I think this is so important. The comparative history of ethnic cleansing – a field that has developed in the last ten years or so – makes it perfectly clear that most such operations are not carried out spontaneously by enraged and inflamed populations. They are typically the result of carefully conceived plans, often years in the making. They are conceived and methodically executed by states. And that was precisely the case with Morris’s operational plan, which Charles Lawrence put into effect point by point.

Moreover, the operation was carefully planned in conjunction with Governor William Shirley of Massachusetts. It was authorized by the Nova Scotia Governor’s Council, largely made up of Yankees. It was then executed by Yankee troops led (for the most part) by Yankee officers and provisioned by Yankee merchants. The Acadians were transported in Yankee vessels, with Yankee crews and Yankee captains. And the country once possessed by Acadian farmers was eventually resettled by Yankee families from Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. New Englanders were thus the principal schemers and beneficiaries of Acadian removal, making this as much an American as a Canadian story.

I’ll close by returning to the Acadians of Sainte-Anne (which eventually became Fredericton, the capital of New Brunswick). After the fall of Quebec, the refugees from Sainte-Anne, who had fled there, returned to Rivière Saint-Jean with official permission to resettle their lands. An outraged Governor Lawrence deported many of them, but a small number avoided his roundup, rebuilt their homes at Sainte-Anne (by

then renamed “Sainte-Anne’s Point” by Planter settlers) and, in 1767, after taking an unconditional oath of allegiance to the British Crown, had their presence formally authorized. But their upheaval was not yet over. After the American Revolution, they were forced to yield their cultivated lands to Loyalist refugees from New England, including many of the officers and troops who had carried out *le grande dérangement*. The Acadians of Sainte-Anne eventually found homes in the Madawaska Valley.

Lieutenant Moses Hazen, the Yankee who led the ranger raid on Ste. Anne, was promoted to the rank of captain by General Jeffery Amherst. Some time later, however, when Amherst learned that the rangers had killed and scalped Acadian women and children, he privately condemned Hazen yet failed to bring charges and allowed Hazen to keep his new rank. Hazen subsequently settled in Quebec after the Conquest and then joined American patriots during the Revolution, eventually rising to the rank of brigadier general and, after the war, retired in upstate New York.

All of this may further remind us of the interconnectedness of American history. *Le grand dérangement* is an Acadian, French, British, Canadian and American story. As Acadian historian Édouard Richard put it more than a century ago, in order to re-imagine that story “one must become, so to speak, by turns, a missionary, an Acadian peasant, an Englishman and a Frenchman, a Catholic and a Protestant. One must divest oneself of preconceived notions, narrow or broaden one’s views, penetrate into the prejudices of all. This is not always easy, nor equally easy for every one” (p. 479). Remembering this story requires that we recognize the wider realms of our history and acknowledge the darker side of our past: the evil means men used to pursue the end of continental expansion. The Acadian story indeed tells a story of North America – a story of frontiers and borderlands at the founding moment of American history, of a people born on the margins of empire who sought a peaceful way to live with two masters, of those who attempted to foster peace, and of those who, out of hatred and fear, jealousy and greed, pursued the ways of war.

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