

STRUGGLING AGAINST INDEPENDENCE: LOYALIST EXILES' VIEWS ON IMPERIAL RULE DURING AND AFTER THE SPANISH AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how the loyalist exiles of the Spanish American revolutions drew upon their experiences to debate the best ways to preserve imperial rule in the remaining colonies. Delving on the stories of José Domingo Díaz and Miguel Tacón—Intendant of Puerto Rico in the 1820s and Captain General of Cuba in the 1830s, respectively—it traces how they advocated an imperial project rooted in unrestricted obedience

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to colonial officers, the consolidation of the Captain General's power, and the opposition to local autonomies. To this end, they weaponized their experiences on the continent and in the Caribbean, claiming that the Spanish Empire should learn from royalists' mistakes in order to halt the advance of revolution and the emergence of the racial war. For them, the diagnosis was simple: the constitutional rule undermined the royalist cause, thwarting its attempts to preserve racial hierarchies and political stability. Therefore, the solution also seemed straightforward: the Spanish Empire should adopt a new colonial order in which the monarchy unapologetically decided to reinforce its power and racial hierarchies in the Spanish Antilles. Díaz and Tacón's stories shed light on the impact of the mainland's independence on the transformations experienced by the Spanish Empire during the Age of Revolution.

KEYWORDS

exile - experience - Spanish American Revolutions - counterrevolution - empire.

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In 1829, José Domingo Díaz published his memoirs about the Wars of Independence in Venezuela. A *pardo* born in Caracas, Díaz was a staunch royalist who was forced to leave his *patria* after revolutionary troops took his hometown in June 1821. After that, Díaz traveled to Puerto Rico and then to Madrid. There, he explained the situation in Venezuela to the metropolitan authorities and received the news of his appointment as intendant of Puerto Rico. Díaz returned to the island, seeking to contribute to the imperial cause in the Caribbean. In his memoirs, he reflected on these events. For him, royalists had lost Venezuela because of the reestablishment of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812 in 1820. "There is no doubt. That disastrous government lost my *patria* and covered us in its ruins," stated Díaz³. Constitutional rule destabilized the royal cause by undermining "the principles of order," separating civil governments from military authorities and giving too much power to local officials and provincial councils. His reflections on Puerto Rico were similar. Díaz believed that, during the *Trienio Liberal*, the island was on the verge of independence, since it was under "a system of government that foment insubordination, reduce the discipline, [and] unleash the passions"⁴.

Díaz therefore applauded the fall of the constitutional regime. This moment was a watershed for Díaz because it allowed him and Miguel de la Torre y Pando, Captain General of Puerto Rico after 1822, to obtain enough power to secure the island and recover its treasury. And, most importantly, they could finally leave the constitutional regime behind. "Luckily, everything changed on December 4 of that year [1823] with the reestablishment of Your Majesty's government. The Captaincy General accumulated all the political power from the towns, and the Intendency recovered the judicial authority that the constitution had stupidly deprived" stated Díaz⁵. After witnessing the revolution on the continent and serving as a royal officer in Puerto Rico, Díaz considered that the constitutional government harmed the imperial cause. For him, this type of regime could not contain what he perceived as the advance of the racial war and revo-

3 Díaz, 1829, p. 240.

4 Ibidem, p. 260.

5 Ibidem, p. 272.

lutionary movements in the hemisphere. He was not alone. Miguel Tacón thought the same. He experienced the revolution as a royalist officer in New Granada and Peru. In the 1830s, Tacón became Captain General of Cuba. Like Díaz, he believed that a robust colonial power without constitutional interference was the key to safeguarding colonial rule, racial hierarchies, and slavery in the remaining imperial territories.

Their stories reveal how exiles and royalist officers who served during the Spanish American Revolutions used their experiences to debate the best ways to preserve colonial rule in the Americas. This paper delves into how their experiences of warfare, exile, and constitutional rule, as well as their perceptions of imperial decline and anxieties about racial war led them to create a memory of the Spanish American Revolutions. The exiles appealed to their memories to justify their political stances amid governmental conflicts. I argue that they weaponized their experiences to advocate an imperial project rooted in unrestricted obedience to colonial officers, the consolidation of the power of the Captain Generals, and the opposition to any constitutional pact that diminished the authority of the colonial administration. The promise of this project was clear-cut: to preserve political stability and safeguard racial hierarchies. Royalism was diverse in the Americas. Popular royalists and liberals also defended monarchical rule in the hemisphere, and even some pro-constitutional exiles reached higher administrative positions in the Antilles⁶. However, the ideas of people such as Díaz and Tacón prevailed after the loss of the continental territories. They succeeded in promoting the containment of the revolution and the preservation of racial hierarchies as some of the most pivotal cornerstones of the Spanish imperial project in the Caribbean.

From the mid-seventeenth century onwards, Spain was a highly flexible empire that pursued different alternatives to deal with fiscal and military crises, as well as the decline of its power in the European scenario⁷. The same happened in the early 19th century. The imperial crisis triggered

6 The literature about the diversity and complexities of loyalism and royalism in the Americas is vast. To see some examples: Echeverri, 2016; Sartorius, 2013; Saether, 2005; Caso Bello, 2023 Breña, 2006; Hamnett, 1978.

7 Delgado Ribas, 2012.

by the Napoleonic invasion of the Peninsula pushed the Spanish Empire to seek solutions to its dire situation⁸. The Cádiz Constitution of 1812 was the response to the political conundrum caused by the fall of Ferdinand's regime⁹. The constitutional charter sought to build a single legislative framework and granted rights and representation to its citizens. However, the exclusion of the *castas* from citizenship rights, the limited autonomy granted to the provinces, the absolutists and Ferdinand's resistance, and the advance of the revolutionaries on the Spanish American continent undermined the constitutional cause¹⁰.

Thus, pushed by the fall of the constitutional regime and encouraged by the interests of Cuban slaveholders and planters, the Spanish Empire decided to implement a new system in 1825: the *facultades omnímodas*¹¹. The system brought civil and military authority under the Captain General's command, granting him exceptional powers to curb slave rebellions and pro-independence movements¹². It also facilitated the contraband slave trade by authorizing the Captain General to suspend metropolitan orders regarding the application of the Anglo-Spanish treaty of 1817 to abolish the infamous trade¹³. The imperial authorities ratified the *facultades omnímodas* in 1837, after they had decided to exclude the remaining colonies—Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines—from any constitutional representation. Furthermore, they proclaimed that special laws would govern the overseas territories, establishing a principle of racialized citizenship that divided the empire between “constitutional” and “nonconstitutional” zones¹⁴. By the mid-1830s, the Spanish Empire had become a reduced yet restructured colonial power in which “slavery and the slave trade, centralized, nonrepresentative rule, and protected colonial markets

8 The literature on the Spanish imperial crisis is immense. To see three key works of the development of the crisis, Portillo Valdés, 2006; Rodríguez, 2005; Hamnett, 2017.

9 Fradera, 2018, p. 70.

10 Hamnett, 2017, p. 176-208.

11 Fradera, 2018, p. 129.

12 Marques, 2017, p. 178.

13 Marques; Parron; Berbel, 2016.

14 *Ibidem*, p. 213; Fradera, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

for Spanish producers and carriers” became the foundations of its imperial endeavor¹⁵.

The Spanish Empire was not the only one experiencing such changes. As Josep Fradera explained, the Age of Revolution was a period in which empires “navigated and renewed their ambitions”¹⁶. European empires transformed their structures to counter the effects of the Atlantic Revolutions. The British entered a period of authoritarian rule and territorial expansion in which they imposed overseas despotisms and modern economic structures into their colonies¹⁷. The French decided to strengthen their power in their remaining colonies—e.g., Guadeloupe and Martinique—and collaborated with the British to expand their informal influence in the extra-European world¹⁸. Meanwhile, the Dutch, fearful of the impacts of the American and the Haitian Revolutions, chose to transform their imperial model from a company-ruled trading empire to a state-ruled colonial one¹⁹.

Historians have explored the role of exiles and royalist officers in these transformations. In the British case, the loyalist diaspora of the American Revolution helped secure and expand imperial power across the world by promoting English notions of liberty, advancing the ideas of liberal constitutionalism, and creating a memory of the war that emphasized the dangers of political seduction²⁰. Similarly, Jan Jansen has shown how counterrevolutionary exiles from the Haitian Revolution and royal officers with experience of the French Revolutionary Wars joined forces to promote ideas of irregular warfare to recover Saint-Domingue and strengthen imperial rule in the French Caribbean²¹.

15 Schmidt-Nowara, 1999, p. 17. Cf.: Fradera, 2005; Schmidt-Nowara, 2004, 2008. To see how the Spanish Empire devoted to expanding slavery in the 19th Century, Fradera; Schmidt-Nowara, 2013; Schmidt-Nowara, 2016; Marquesse; Parron; Berbel, 2016.

16 Fradera, 2012, p. 9. Cf.: Covo; Maruschke, 2021; Adelman, 2008; Paquette, 2013.

17 Bayly, 1989.

18 Todd, 2011.

19 Koekkoek, 2019.

20 Mason, 2005; Jasanoff, 2011; Knouff, 2016.

21 Jansen, 2022.

Loyalist exiles' memories and experiences also helped us to understand how the Spanish Empire embraced a new colonial pact during the Age of Revolution. Historiography has mainly emphasized that the interests of the colonial elites in preserving slavery and preventing slave revolts encouraged the Spanish Antillean possessions to keep their loyalty to the Crown during the revolutionary period²². The memories of the Haitian Revolution shaped the destiny of Cuba and Puerto Rico. Yet, the memories of the Wars of Independence in Spanish America also played a key role. Historians have recently studied the consequences of the landing of exiled bureaucrats in Cuba, Spain, and Brazil, the exiles' ideas about political and racial equality in the transatlantic public sphere, and the discussions regarding the refugees' identities within the Spanish Empire²³. However, the role of exiles and royalist officers' memories in shaping new ways of understanding imperial rule is still understudied²⁴. For instance, Josep Fradera mentions that officers like Tacón used their experience in the Americas to oppose the separation of military and civil governments in the colonies. However, he did not go into detail²⁵. Meanwhile, the work of Natalia Sobrevilla Perea and Christopher Schmidt-Nowara delves deeper into these issues. Sobrevilla Perea shows how royalist officers—the so-called *Ayacuchos*—took advantage of their experience in the Americas to achieve power in the Peninsula²⁶. Meanwhile, Schmidt-Nowara illustrates that the exiles used their background in the Spanish American Revolution to promote pro-slavery discourses in the Caribbean²⁷.

Following these works, this paper demonstrates that exiles and royal officers reflected on what they considered to be the mistakes of the Spanish Empire during the revolution. In contrast to the British and French,

22 Ferrer, 2003, 2014; González-Ripoll Navarro, 2004; Childs, 2006.

23 Chambers, 2016, 2021; Burkholder, 2011; O'Phelan, 2021; González Quintero, 2023; Mareite, 2023.

24 In a recent article, Edward Blumenthal and Romy Sánchez emphasized the importance of studying loyalist émigrés in Latin America to gain a more comprehensive understanding of exile dynamics in the region during the nineteenth century. See Blumenthal, Sánchez, 2021.

25 Fradera, 2005, p. 148.

26 Sobrevilla Perea, 2011.

27 Schmidt-Nowara, 2014.

the Spanish Empire did not have enough power to formally or informally extend its influence in other parts of the world. Nonetheless, the Spanish American revolutions and the development of plantation economies in the Caribbean encouraged the Spanish Empire to preserve and reinforce its power in its remaining possessions. Thus, analyzing the exiles' memories of the Wars of Independence in Spanish America allows us to delve into the influence of this event in consolidating imperial rule in the Caribbean²⁸. The Spanish American revolutions provided exiles and royalist officers a common space of experience and a common horizon of expectation: to preserve colonial rule in the Caribbean, the imperial government must transform itself into a counterrevolutionary apparatus capable of halting the creation of revolutionary movements²⁹.

This belief was crucial for the exiles' understanding of colonial rule in the Spanish Caribbean. The Spanish war of independence and the Spanish American revolutions created a counterrevolutionary culture in which royalists believed they had to defend the monarchical rule from internal and external revolutionary threats³⁰. War, revolution, and constitutional periods, especially in Spanish America, became learning experiences for exiles and royal officers, who sought to transfer their knowledge to the Spanish Antilles. They also witnessed the fall of the liberal regime in 1823 and the emergence of the system of *facultades omnimodas* in 1825, two events that convinced them that the Spanish Empire should establish a more authoritarian regime to preserve its remaining possessions. Therefore, exiles and royalist officers endorsed a new colonial pact in which the

28 Gabriel Paquette and Matthew Brown have highlighted the importance of not establishing a clear-between the revolutionary and the post-revolutionary periods. On the contrary, they have invited historians to study the connections, persistence, and continuities between these two periods. Cf.: Brown; Paquette, 2013.

29 Koselleck, 2005.

30 For the Spanish Wars of Independence, Cf.: Rújula López, 2007, 2012. In the case of the Spanish American Revolution, cf.: París, 2023. To see how the royalist press shaped discourses of monarchical legitimacy during the wars of Independence in Spanish America: Chaparro Silva, 2012; Straka, 2000. To see how counterrevolutionary discourses played a key role at the end of the Wars of Independence, Escrig Rosa, 2021, 2022.

Spanish Empire should enforce centralized authority and special laws to govern the remaining colonies.

This article is divided into two parts. The first delves into José Domingo Díaz's actions after he departed Venezuela and his role as Intendant of Puerto Rico during the 1820s. Díaz viewed the revolution as the catalyst for a racial war that the Spanish Empire could only quell by appointing competent officials in the colonies. Likewise, Díaz believed that obeying these authorities was the only way to preserve colonial rule in the Caribbean. Yet, for him, that was impossible in a constitutional government. Based on his experiences in Venezuela and Puerto Rico, Díaz considered that constitutional rule created insurmountable tensions between local officials and the central authorities. The second part centers on Miguel Tacón's reflections on the possibility of reestablishing constitutional power in the Spanish Antilles in the 1830s. Tacón was devoted to thwarting any attempt to diminish the Captain General's authority in Cuba. To do so, he appealed to his experience as a royal officer in the Americas and to a conservative interpretation of Spanish colonial history, emphasizing the need to confer exceptional powers upon Captain Generals as the only means of preserving imperial rule. Believing that constitutional rule and autonomist ideas caused the mainland's independence, Tacón was committed to strengthening colonial rule, securing slavery, and blocking any measure that might augment the power of local elites in the Caribbean.

Promoting obedience and celebrating the end of constitutional regime in the Spanish Caribbean

After leaving Caracas in June 1821, José Domingo Díaz sought to continue his collaboration with the royalist cause. During the war, he published the *Gazeta de Caracas*—one of the most important royalist newspapers on the continent—along with several pamphlets in which he criticized revolutionary policies and actions. For instance, during his first exile in Curaçao, in 1813–1814, Díaz printed numerous leaflets condemning

Bolívar's War to the Death against Spaniards³¹. Nevertheless, his actions extended beyond editorial enterprises. He also served as Secretary of Government and to Pablo Morillo—commander of the expeditionary army in Venezuela from 1815 to 1820. During this period, Díaz learned that colonial rule could be fragile, and that insurrection could spread quickly. For him, the reasons for revolutionary success on the continent were clear. First, the war had disrupted racial hierarchies, making the royalists' hopes of restoring political order an illusion. Second, Díaz believed that disobedience to the royal authorities and the continuous changes within the monarchical government—especially the adoption of the constitutional rule—had halted the royalists' chances of success.

Díaz therefore decided to share his experiences on the mainland with the metropolitan authorities in Madrid. The revolutionary progression in New Granada and Venezuela, the devastation of the war, and the unexpected loss of his hometown shocked Díaz. He set foot in Puerto Cabello, seeking an opportunity to return to Caracas to "take out [his] family" and "flee to the peninsula"³². Díaz was escaping from the revolutionaries but was not evading the war. On the contrary, commissioned by Miguel de la Torre y Pando—commander of royalist forces in Tierra Firme—Díaz planned to go to Madrid to notify the metropolitan authorities about Venezuela's critical situation. On July 7, Díaz abandoned his homeland along other "3000 émigrés from Costa Firme"³³. The convoy reached Puerto Rico eighteen days later. It was a tragic trip for him. One of his daughters died at sea. Despite this, Díaz and his family traveled to Cádiz five days later. They landed in Spain in mid-September, reaching Madrid after sixteen days of an arduous trip.

In Madrid, Díaz conveyed to the Crown of the situation in Venezuela. One day after his arrival, Díaz, together with Morillo, presented a memorial to the *Ultramar* and War ministers. The ministers received the memorial,

31 To see some of Díaz's writings during the revolution, Díaz; Straka, 2009.

32 José Domingo Díaz to Miguel de la Torre, Puerto Cabello, 21 May 1821, Archivo Histórico Nacional (hereafter AHN), Estado, 8737, 119.

33 Informe de José Domingo Díaz, venezolano comisionado por La Torre para exponer en la corte española el estado militar y político de Costa Firme, Madrid, 28 Jan 1821, AHN, Estado, 8733, 40.

telling Díaz to provide “verbal explanations” within a few days³⁴. Díaz had at least two meetings with the king and the court. “Sir, I have not crossed many seas, nor suffered inexplicable efforts, nor made invaluable sacrifices, nor exposed myself and my family to become prey of my enemies to hide or distort the truth to Your Excellency,” claimed Díaz³⁵. He sought to convince the king and the court that he could provide valuable and truthful advice based on his experiences during the revolution.

The memorial portrayed Venezuela as a place torn apart by a fratricidal war that has fractured the social fabric. Díaz emphasized two key issues. First, he stated that war devastation had made impossible to sustain the royal troops without the support of Madrid or Havana. Díaz also depicted a population depleted by the effects of the war, conscription policies, and the growing rumors of a possible recognition of Colombia’s independence. Second, he described the revolution as an event that had obliterated social and racial hierarchies in Venezuela. Díaz criticized the revolutionary and royalist sides for recruiting “*pardos, sambos, indigenous, and black people,*” arguing that this practice had reduced many towns to ashes and “diminished the white race to its last expression with the escape of 5000 of them to Curaçao and Puerto Rico”³⁶. For Díaz, the confrontation between royalists and revolutionaries would inevitably escalate into a racial war against the white population. This grim scenario was plausible for him. “The unhappy whites plunged in distress for their imminent extermination: Your Excellency, this is how my homeland is today,” underlined Díaz³⁷. For him, the revolution held no other outcome than the destruction of Venezuela and the white race.

Nevertheless, Díaz believed that the Crown could solve this challenge by appointing competent functionaries in the Americas. “Born in Caracas and affected by its loss, I am obliged to say to Your Excellency that in the wise election of functionaries lies the principal means of preserving

34 José Domingo Díaz to Miguel de la Torre, Madrid, 4 Oct 1821, AHN, Estado, 8737, 123.

35 Informe de José Domingo Díaz, AHN, Estado, 8733, 40.

36 Ibidem.

37 Ibidem.

those distant countries," claimed Díaz³⁸. He stated that, previously, royalists had appointed people who were incapable of governing. Díaz also timidly criticized the Cádiz Constitution of 1812. He argued that the constant misreadings of that "celestial code" had turned the Venezuelan government into a mockery for revolutionaries and royalists. Díaz and his allies decided to act. The Crown had already appointed Díaz as Intendant of Puerto Rico before he left Venezuela. Morillo was his primary supporter. The former commander of the expeditionary army recommended Díaz for the position, stressing that he had a vast knowledge about the "resources and productions" of the island and the "necessities of Costa Firme's army"³⁹.

However, Díaz and his allies sought to expand their influence in Puerto Rico even further. Therefore, Díaz, Morillo, Francisco González Linares, and Don Manuel—Torre y Pando's brother—lobbied for the commander of the royal forces in Venezuela to be appointed the new Captain General of Puerto Rico. They succeeded. In a letter directed to Torre y Pando, Díaz accentuated that, following Mexico and Peru's proclamations of independence in 1821, the Crown had decided to make a last effort to retain New Granada, Panama, Quito, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and Cuba under imperial rule⁴⁰. He left Spain and traveled to Puerto Rico in April 1822. Díaz perceived his and Torre y Pando's appointment as part of the Crown's strategy to recover the continent's lost possessions and preserve the Caribbean royalist strongholds.

At the time of Díaz's arrival, Puerto Rico was facing significant challenges. First, revolutionary privateers were planning to invade the island and install a cosmopolitan republican regime⁴¹. The attempt failed, but the threat over Puerto Rico remained latent. Second, the arrival of Mexico's *situados*, one of the most critical revenues for Puerto Rico's treasury

38 *Ibidem*.

39 Pablo Morillo to Secretary of State, Madrid, 2 Jun 1821, Archivo General de Indias (hereafter AGI), Ultramar, 441, 16.

40 José Domingo Díaz to Miguel de la Torre y Pando, Madrid, 18 Dic 1821, AHN, Estado, 8733, 242.

41 Mongey, 2020; Mareite, 2023.

before the war, came to a halt⁴². Furthermore, the losses of the royalist armies exacerbated the influx of émigrés, intensifying the financial pressures on the island. Although the *Real Cédula* of 1815, which promoted liberalization reforms in Puerto Rico, helped to develop plantation agriculture and attract new settlers, the island's treasury still struggled to increase its revenues. Responsible for acquiring resources to safeguard the island and support the royalist armies in Venezuela, Díaz believed that bureaucrats' obedience to the royal cause was crucial to securing these funds. This discussion was particularly significant during the *Trienio Liberal* (1820–1823), when the constitutional rule granted more autonomy to local corporations, causing many conflicts between them and the island's central authorities⁴³.

Therefore, following his advice to the Crown, Díaz decided to stop any "rebellious" behavior within the administrative ranks. His conflict with Juan Sayol, administrator of the island's eastern part customs and an émigré from Venezuela who arrived in Puerto Rico in 1813, illustrates this issue⁴⁴. After his appointment, Díaz commissioned José Antonio Medina, an accountant of the national *cajas* of La Guayra and an émigré from Venezuela, to collect information about the state of the local treasuries. Medina's report stunned Díaz. Medina discovered that the local administrators and *vecinos* were collaborating to allow contraband⁴⁵. Sayol was one of the administrators under suspicion, since many people complained about his increasing fortune. Yet, these accusations were not the primary cause of the conflict. Sayol defied Díaz by disregarding the intendant's directive to register all foreign ships entering Puerto Rico in the port's customs within the initial 24 hours. Instead, Sayol requested the ships' captains to present their registers to him. Sayol's actions enraged Díaz. He

42 To see the importance of Mexico's *situados* for the imperial economy before the Spanish American Independence, Marichal, 2007.

43 To see some of the conflicts during the Trienio Liberal in Puerto Rico, Navarro-García; Espinosa-Fernández, 2022.

44 The case is mainly located in AGI, Ultramar, 436, 10.

45 To see the impact of contraband in Puerto Rico before the Spanish American Revolutions, Espinosa Fernández, 2015.

suspended Sayol, named Medina as his replacement, and instructed Sayol to send him the archives of his office. Sayol refused. He claimed that Díaz had no authority to suspend him, arguing that, according to the constitution, local courts should judge him.

The conflict escalated when Francisco de Torres, a local judge in Huamacao, determined that Díaz had exceeded his authority and therefore ordered Sayol's reappointment. Torres stated that the intendant had "spread discontent within the public treasury employees" by creating regulations, suspending personnel, and appointing his people in administrative positions⁴⁶. He also claimed that local judges had jurisdiction to handle cases like Sayol's. Lastly, arguing that Díaz was a physician, Torres casted doubts on the intendant's qualifications for the position. Accusations of nepotism, arbitrariness, and incompetence encouraged Torres to declare that Díaz was not "the most appropriate director for Puerto Rico's treasury"⁴⁷. The situation deteriorated further in the following months, as allegations of corruption against Sayol grew. Additionally, Sayol and Medina began to print pamphlets accusing each other of fraud. Díaz asked Sayol to respond to the accusations. Sayol had ten days to answer, but he did not show up for a month. Instead, after selling many of his properties, Sayol traveled to Martinique. Consequently, Díaz suspended him again from his position, and Puerto Rico's treasury confiscated Sayol's remaining properties.

In Martinique, Sayol sent a letter to the Spanish authorities criticizing the Spanish Antillean authorities for their political beliefs and actions. He dispatched the letter in November 1823, after French troops had entered Spain to overthrow the constitution and restore Ferdinand's absolutist rule. The letter shows how the bureaucrats and royal officers adapted their strategies to the political changes on the Peninsula. In order to legitimize his statement, Sayol claimed that he had never pledged allegiance to the constitution. In contrast, he accused Francisco Dionisio Vives, Captain

46 Don Francisco de Torres Feliciano' Representation, Humacao, 25 Jan 1823, AGI, Ultramar, 436, 10.

47 Ibidem.

General of Cuba, of being “too constitutionalist”⁴⁸. Yet, Sayol directed his most pointed barbs at Torre y Pando and Díaz. He blamed Torre y Pando for the loss of Venezuela, claiming his incompetence could lead to Puerto Rico’s independence. Regarding Díaz, Sayol accused him of corruption in Costa Firme. He also insulted Díaz for his racial origins, describing him as “the bastard son of a dark mulatto called Francisco Castro from Caracas”⁴⁹.

This was not the most astonishing thing about the letter, though. Fearing that the supposed deceitfulness of Spanish authorities in the Antilles would lead to independence, Sayol made a bold proposal: Francisco Morales, commander of the remaining royalist troops on the continent, should take power in Cuba, while 3,000 French soldiers from Martinique should invade Puerto Rico. Sayol invited the Crown to employ the same strategy used by Ferdinand to recover his throne in Spain. He stated that he could contribute to this cause with his geographical knowledge of the island, his experience of “seven years and six months” in Puerto Rico, and his military training in Costa Firme⁵⁰.

Sayol’s actions amazed Díaz, who considered them an act of “insubordination” and “rebellion” against his authority⁵¹. Torres’ decision to reinstate Sayol in his position also infuriated Díaz. He explained his arguments in a letter sent to the Secretary of State some months before Sayol’s travel to Martinique. The communication reveals, once again, that royalist officers used every card at their disposal to convince their counterparts. Despite Díaz’s criticisms of the constitutional regime, he did not hesitate to rely on the Cádiz charter to support his arguments. He stated that Torres’ judgment violated the separation between the judicial and the government apparatus established by the constitution. Based on a decree of the Cortes, Díaz claimed that the Intendency had the power to suspend its functionaries without the authorization of a judge. Therefore, for Díaz, Torres’ verdict undermined his authority, creating a bad precedent

48 Juan Sayol to the Spanish Ambassador in France, Martinica, 1 Nov 1823, AGI, Ultramar, 439, 14.

49 Ibidem.

50 Ibidem.

51 José Domingo Díaz to Secretary of State, Puerto Rico, 27 Dec 1822, AGI, Ultramar, 436, 10, f. 6r. Underlined in the original.

in which local judges could overturn the legitimate decisions of Treasury officers.

Nonetheless, Díaz's main argument against officers' insubordination was that it could encourage the formation of pro-independence movements in Puerto Rico. Strict obedience to the royal authorities was the only way to stop revolutionary endeavors. "[It is] necessary to avoid the division between authorities," stated Díaz, arguing that conflict within the establishment was the perfect catalyst for the success of "political revolutions"⁵². Díaz appealed to his experience of the upheavals on the mainland to make that claim. "I witnessed Costa Firme's bewilderment and the subversives' intrigues for twelve years. I believed that a hidden hand seeks to disrupt the order by promoting insubordination and discord between the island's authorities," stressed Díaz⁵³. He also underscored that, in the 1810s, the revolutionaries took advantage of the friction between the "Audience, the government, and the Intendency" to promote their cause in Costa Firme⁵⁴. Díaz sought two things: first, he tried to defend his authority; second, he aimed to persuade metropolitan authorities that the Spanish Empire must learn from the royalists' mistakes on the mainland, halt the advance of the revolution, and avert the emergence of a racial war in the Caribbean.

Díaz's arguments persuaded the metropolitan authorities to promote strict obedience to safeguard imperial power in the Caribbean. The *Ultra-mar's* accountant supported Díaz, stressing that Torres, Humacao's judge, had exceeded his authority. Local justices could not interfere in treasury matters, an order ratified by the imperial administration in September 1823. The General Accountant highlighted Díaz's argument to proclaim that the employees' disobedience could lead to insurrection. Therefore, he instructed Díaz to remove any disobedient or corrupt employee under his jurisdiction.

52 Ibidem, f. 9v.

53 Ibidem, f. 16r.

54 Ibidem, f. 13v.

Díaz's claim regarding employees' compliance persisted over the years. In 1829, the metropolitan authorities discussed Sayol's case again. Díaz was in Madrid. Meanwhile, Sayol was still in Martinique, requesting a post in Cuba and pressing for Díaz's imprisonment. The new *Ultramar's* accountant defended Sayol, claiming he was a "victim of [Díaz's] abusive and dictatorial power"⁵⁵. The Fiscal disagreed. First, he contended that Sayol had to respond to the corruption charges against him. Second, the Fiscal rejected granting Sayol any position due to his derogatory comments about Díaz. Lastly, the Fiscal highlighted that accepting Sayol's claim "would fuel the insubordination that we still note in some employees and not employees as a consequence of the past liberties"⁵⁶. Instead of rewarding Sayol, the Fiscal suggested they should "reinstate the submission to the authorities, keeping the decorum and the respect they deserve"⁵⁷. The Council of Indies endorsed the Fiscal's claim. Díaz's argument triumphed once again. Madrid's officers steadfastly promoted obedience to the authorities as a critical element in safeguarding colonial rule.

Sayol's case highlights Díaz's insistence on making obedience and subordination to the central authorities a significant cornerstone of the Spanish imperial project, mainly when colonial rule was crumbling in the mainland. Although Díaz condemned Sayol's alleged corruption, his main concern was Sayol's disobedience. The intervention of Humacao's local judge also reinforced Díaz's convictions. He considered that the Humacao judge's verdict weakened the Intendancy's power by disregarding the authority of Treasury officers to remove insubordinate employees. Reducing the intervention of local judges and securing the agreement of the authorities in relation to insubordination became a goal for Díaz. His experience and exile from Costa Firme shaped this belief. Arguing that the divisions within powers on the continent had undermined the royal cause, Díaz advocated an imperial governance model in which local officials and judges could not challenge the authority of superior officers.

55 Summary of Juan Sayol's file, Madrid, 16 Feb 1829, AGI, Ultramar, 439, 14.

56 Ibidem.

57 Ibidem.

Díaz's crusade to promote obedience as a crucial foundation of the colonial regime led him to condemn the *Trienio Liberal's* institutions and policies. Although Díaz obtained his position during this period, his experiences in Venezuela and Puerto Rico convinced him that the autonomy granted by the Cádiz Constitution to local authorities and corporations could undermine imperial rule. Therefore, Díaz celebrated the fall of the constitutional government in the Peninsula in 1823 in a letter to the Secretary of State. Just as in his dispute with Sayol, Díaz complained about the power of local officers to challenge the treasury's authorities. According to Díaz, the Cortes decree of June 28, 1822 stripped the Intendency of its functions, leaving "its faculties and administration subjected to the Provincial Councils"⁵⁸. Díaz despised these institutions. For him, the local constitutional councils were "vicious corporations in their origin and formation," as they were elected by a population that was not ready to choose their authorities by popular vote⁵⁹. Díaz believed that, instead of facilitating, the constitutional councils and local judges were hindering the Intendency's ability to collect revenues. "The events seem to suggest that these corporations were invented, apparently, to disrupt the operations of the Royal Treasury", stressed Díaz in the letter⁶⁰.

Thus, Díaz accused the constitutional government of creating discord and disorder among the administrative branches of Puerto Rico, undermining the efforts of the royal officers to preserve the Spanish Antilles under imperial rule. For Díaz, the solution to this problem was simple: institutions such as the Intendency should have more power than any local authority, since autonomy and "civil liberty" had caused "a disorganizing insubordination"⁶¹. The imperial apparatus created by the constitutional government, according to Díaz, was unable to establish a harmonious regime in which different institutions did not overstep the jurisdictions of other authorities. For Díaz, this precedent was dangerous, especially since Puerto Rico was in a dire geopolitical situation:

58 José Domingo Díaz to Secretary of State, Puerto Rico, 4 Dec 1823, AGI, Ultramar, 436, 14.

59 Ibidem.

60 Ibidem.

61 Ibidem.

The island of Puerto Rico is only ten leagues away from Santo Domingo, whose barbarous government has sworn to destroy the white race and whose ambitions are upon these regions. It is also only 160 leagues away from the convoluted continent, whose cruel regimes have solemnly sworn [Puerto Rico's] perdition. [Finally] it is in the middle of an archipelago dominated by different European nations that have openly supported the rebels' cause, sheltering many men who expect to earn enormous fortunes by promoting the disruption of public order in this island⁶².

Díaz concluded that, within this context, a constitutional government could not provide security and order to Spanish Antillean populations. For him, promoting obedience and centralized power was the best choice to protect Puerto Rico from his most profound fears: the annihilation of the white race, the emergence of revolution, and the destruction of Spanish imperial rule in the Caribbean at the hands of other European powers. His experience in the mainland and Puerto Rico taught him that. "I have seen thousands of unburied skeletons, burned towns, ruins everywhere, society dissolved, and the collapse of my *patria*. I have seen this horrific spectacle, and the only cause is the lack of blind obedience and absolute respect to the royal authority", highlighted Díaz in a letter to the Secretary of State a couple of years later⁶³. For him, political innovations and the constitutional rule were detrimental to the imperial cause, since they could open the door to revolutionary movements and the extermination of white people. Therefore, Díaz crafted a memory of the revolutionary period that convinced him that strict monarchical rule and obedience were the only options to preserve imperial power, order, safety, and racial order in the Caribbean.

62 Ibidem, acréscimo nosso.

63 José Domingo Díaz to Secretary of State, Puerto Rico, 11 Dec 1825. AGI, Ultramar, 438, 8.

Preserving the Antilles under the power of the Captain General

Miguel Tacón followed some of Díaz's arguments during his reign as Captain General from 1834 to 1838. However, his experiences during the Spanish American Revolutions were different. Tacón was the governor of Popayán when the revolution started in New Granada. Pressured by the formation of autonomist movements in Quito and Valle del Cauca, Tacón decided to assemble an army partly composed of indigenous and enslaved populations⁶⁴. Despite this strategy, autonomist troops defeated Tacón's army in January 1812, forcing him to leave Popayán and travel to Lima. In Peru, Tacón served in the royal army. There, he played a crucial role as a military commander in the battles of Vilcapugio and Ayouma. Tacón's actions both in Peru and Popayán impressed Viceroy Abascal, who recommended his appointment as Governor and Intendant of Potosí in March 1814⁶⁵. In the following years, viceregal authorities also appointed him as Governor of Charcas and Cochabamba. In these positions, Tacón helped to reorganize local treasuries and armies, as well as to recover royalist spots and evacuate cities that had fallen under the revolutionaries' hands⁶⁶. His services earned him the rank of Field Marshal. Tacón stayed in Peru until 1818, when Viceroy Pezuela sent him to Spain to "inform His Majesty about the state of all the branches of [Peru] and Buenos Aires' viceroalties" and to propose the government a "judicious plan for the general pacification of South America"⁶⁷. His service record states that Pezuela commissioned Tacón to do so because of the "knowledge" that he had acquired during his service in Peru.

Tacón's luck shifted in Spain. On the Spanish American continent, he was an officer well-known for his fight against the pro-independence for-

64 Echeverri, 2016.

65 Virrey José Fernando Abascal to Julián Fernández, 28 Mar 1814. AGI, Lima, 747, 63.

66 To see some of Tacón's actions in Perú, De La Pezuela, 2020. Cf.: Hoja de Servicios del Mariscal de Campo Miguel Tacón, Archivo Histórico Militar, Caja 160, Exp. 2.

67 Ibidem; On Tacón's task to propose a pacification plan, De La Pezuela, 1866, p. 576.

ces. However, his influence on the Peninsula was much less. In 1819, the Crown appointed Tacón as Captain General of Puerto Rico. Nevertheless, health issues prevented him from taking office. Consequently, he was named the political and military governor of Santa Maria and then of Málaga⁶⁸. In 1822, Tacón became the military chief of the district of Granada and Jaén⁶⁹. Nevertheless, after the fall of the liberal regime in 1823, Tacón's importance decreased. According to Fernando Rodríguez de la Torre, the absolutist government punished Tacón for his services during the *Trienio Liberal* and sent him to serve as an officer in Seville's barracks⁷⁰. Tacón stayed there until the death of Ferdinand VII in 1833. Later, on March 7, 1834, he was appointed Captain General of Andalucia. His reign was brief. A few months later, the Queen named him Captain General of Cuba. He landed on the island on June 1, 1834. Tacón did not see the definitive defeat of royalist troops in Spanish America. Nevertheless, he possessed extensive experience in the Americas fighting against autonomist movements in New Granada and Quito, as well as against revolutionary armies in Peru. This experience turned him into an asset to keep Cuba under colonial rule.

The scenario that Tacón had to navigate in the 1830s differed from the one Díaz faced in Puerto Rico in the 1820s. Before the Spanish imperial crisis, multiple slave rebellions had occurred in Cuba⁷¹. Thus, interested in preserving a burgeoning slave-plantation economy, the island elites maintained their loyalty to the Spanish Crown during the Spanish American Revolutions⁷². Nonetheless, this loyalty did not imply that Cuba did not experience political conflicts. Cuban factions engaged in fierce debates, especially during the constitutional periods, about autonomist proposals and the role of the sugarocracy in leading the island⁷³. These debates subsided after the fall of the liberal regime and the establishment of the

68 Pérez De La Riva, 1963.

69 Rodríguez De La Torre, 2018.

70 Ibidem.

71 Chira, 2022.

72 Cf.: Childs, 2006; Piqueras, 2008.

73 Jensen, 1988; Santos Fuentes, 2022.

facultades omnímodas system. Instead of insisting on autonomist projects, Cuban elites focused their attention on preventing the formation of pro-independence movements. However, debates regarding autonomy, citizenship, and slavery resurfaced after the death of Ferdinand VII and the convening of General Cortes in 1834.⁷⁴ The Cuban liberals began to push for reform, expecting to take advantage of the election of *procuradores* and representatives to the Cortes to advance their ideas of reforming the administration of justice, limiting the power of the Captain General, and creating a provincial *junta* with veto power over legislation coming from the metropolis⁷⁵.

These calls captured Tacón's attention, who, supported by a powerful group of merchants, Spanish enslavers, Spanish liberals in the Peninsula, and part of the Cuban sugarocracy, decided to defend the *facultades omnímodas* system⁷⁶. Drawing on his experiences on the continent and his readings of the Spanish colonial history, Tacón opposed the implementation of constitutional rule and promoted a form of government that further strengthened the power of the Captain Generals.

In his correspondence to Madrid's authorities, Tacón repeatedly emphasized that Cuba and Spain should not eliminate the *facultades omnímodas*'s system. For Tacón, keeping this system was the sole means colonial rule in Cuba could survive. Several geopolitical and local circumstances in Cuba and the Peninsula led him to believe that. The consolidation of republican regimes and abolitionist campaigns across the Atlantic concerned Tacón, who thought that the pro-independence and anti-slavery movements were seeking to destroy colonial rule in Cuba. Yet, he had two more significant concerns. The death of Ferdinand VII caused enormous political instability in Spain, sparking a conflict between the pro-liberal supporters of his daughter, Isabel, and the absolutist followers of his brother, Don Carlos. Tacón therefore considered that Spain should not pursue any colonial reform at that time, let alone implement a constitutional regime.

74 Marquese; Parron; Berbel, 2016.

75 Fradera, 2005, p. 142.

76 Fradera, 2005, p. 159; Marquese; Parron; Berbel, 2016.

Furthermore, Tacón deemed that the presence of heterogeneous populations and plantation economies should deter any plan to adopt equal policies for the Peninsula and the Antilles. Spanish liberals in the Peninsula shared this concern, arguing that it was unreasonable to introduce a constitutional rule in a colony where slavery made equality among its inhabitants impossible⁷⁷. These arguments inspired Tacón to resist change, claiming that any political innovation could jeopardize “the conservation of the trans-Atlantic dominions”⁷⁸.

Tacón's fears regarding the institution of constitutional rule and the potential elimination of the *facultades omnímodas* system increased with the proposal of autonomist policies raised by the *Junta de Fomento* and the election of Cuban representatives to the Cortes. For instance, the *Junta* criticized the unification of the military and civil governments, the lack of urban militias, and the political and administrative differences between the island and the Peninsular provinces. Thus, the *Junta* recommended the establishment of urban militias, the separation of military and executive powers, and the inclusion of local elites in discussions about the island's treasury and tax collections⁷⁹. All these critiques and proposals upset Tacón, who condemned them in his correspondence. Tacón stated that he supported a liberal government in the metropolis, but found it impossible to establish such a system in the colonies.

His argument was simple: any modification to the colonial administration on an island surrounded by republican regimes and where slavery had boomed would lead to independence. “The island cannot be governed in any other way than by granting full power to the military authority,” stated Tacón, emphasizing that Cuba was “full of element of dissolution and disorder; [and] surrounded and in contact with the dissident Americas”⁸⁰. Tacón found the *Junta de Fomento's* proposals deeply troublesome. For instance, he considered creating urban militias too dangerous, mainly

77 Cf.: Fradera, 2005, p. 120–140; Marquese; Parron; Berbel; op. cit., p. 200–211.

78 Miguel Tacón to Secretary of State, Havana, 31 Dec 1835, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 47, 8.

79 To see some of the *Junta de Fomento's* proposals, Wenceslao de Villa to the Queen, Havana, 2 Jun 1835, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 47, 32.

80 Miguel Tacón to Secretary of State, Havana, 30 Jun 1835, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 47, 31.

if they were composed of people of color. He argued that the black populations were the majority on the island and that arming them could unleash a wave of violence against white inhabitants. Tacón shared Díaz's fears. Although he had armed the indigenous and enslaved populations in the Cauca region in the early 1810s, Tacón deemed it unfeasible on an island where slavery had expanded massively. Bringing back the fear of Haiti, he claimed that people of color had "an irresistible propensity to imitate their brothers of the ill-fated Island of Hispaniola"⁸¹. Consequently, he suggested to the Crown "not to introduce any substantial novelty regarding the governmental order of the Island" and to "maintain this Government's legal faculties that would allow keeping the order, public safety, and the union with the Metropolis"⁸². For him, there was no other option to stop the Spanish Antillean population from following the example of the former colonies.

Tacón's readings of the spirit of the Spanish American populations and of Spanish colonial history also shaped his fierce defense of the Captain General's power. For Tacón, *Americanos* were people prone to freedom and therefore the Crown should not take any measures that could ignite the spark of liberty. "American locals exhibit, in general, an irresistible propensity inherent to the mass of their blood to get rid of the dependency of our government," highlighted Tacón⁸³. For him, the revolutions on the continent were undisputable evidence of that. Therefore, he stated that the colonial power should not cede to the demands of local *Americano* populations. Tacón justified his argument by embracing a highly conservative vision of Spanish colonial rule. He believed that Spain's success as a colonial power for 300 years was the result of the "almost supreme" power vested in the Viceroy and Captain Generals. This power provided these authorities "the necessary force to get [people's] obedience" and the "honor and prerogatives to suppress the distance of the Sovereign, creating a true simulation of the Royal authority"⁸⁴. Tacón, however, forgot

81 Ibidem.

82 Miguel Tacón to Secretary of State, Havana, 31 Dec 1835, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 47, 8.

83 Ibidem.

84 Ibidem.

that the alliances of these authorities with the local elites and part of the indigenous population played an essential role in consolidating Spanish imperial rule in the Americas⁸⁵. He employed a similar strategy in Popayán. Visualizing an imperial power closer to the pro-consular despotism established by the English in Asia rather than the colonial pact forged by the Spanish in the Americas, Tacón advocated an imperial model in which the Captain General would exercise his power without any constitutional ties⁸⁶.

Tacón evoked his experiences during the Spanish American Revolutions to defend his vision of colonial rule. In his correspondence, Tacón did not mention his experience in Spain. In a certain way, it makes sense. His role in Spain was minor, and as we have seen, he had no problem implementing the constitutional rule in the Peninsula. Conversely, his experience in the Americas was more significant, and, for him, the rise of autonomist movements and the establishment of the constitutional government had ruined imperial power in the former Spanish colonies. Tacón claimed that the constitutional system "was incompatible with the ancient colonial regime," since it "promulgated principles of absolute equality" and invited *Americanos* to be part of "the national representation"⁸⁷. Furthermore, just like Díaz did in the 1820s, Tacón criticized the formation of provincial councils and the election of local political chiefs, claiming that these institutions eroded the authority of colonial officers. For him, that decision was a grave error since it modified the nature of the colonial system. First, he argued that provincial councils and revolutionary *juntas* "usurped Royal authority by pretending to be their most zealous defenders"⁸⁸. Second, he asserted that the election of representative bodies was an exercise of independence, providing *Americanos* with the opportunity to proclaim their freedom. "The extensive application of these political principles caused the loss of the colonies and the sacrifice of many Spanish *Peninsulares* and

85 The literature on the topic is vast. To see some remarkable examples Cañeque, 2004; Owensby, 2008; Yannakakis, 2008.

86 To see this model of proconsular despotism, Bayly, 1989, p. 193–215.

87 Miguel Tacón to Secretary of State, Havana, 31 Dec 1835, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 47, 8

88 Ibidem.

their fortunes," stressed Tacón⁸⁹. The constitutional rule and offers of political autonomy did not stop the *Americanos'* demands for independence. For him, it was quite the opposite: the constitutional government only encouraged the *Americanos* to promote their natural claims for freedom.

Hence, Tacón believed that the Spanish Empire should learn from its mistakes and embrace an imperial pact in which the colonies had no representation and were governed by special laws. Tacón said that his advice was a "result of [his] experience and loyalty"⁹⁰. For him, the discussions regarding the status of the colonial territories—whether they were part of the monarchy or colonies—were the same that the mainland regions faced at "the beginning of the dissident countries' revolts"⁹¹. Thus, Tacón considered that the Spanish authorities in the Peninsula were playing with fire by revitalizing these debates. According to him, Spain had the right to reinforce its power in the face of the ingratitude of its *Americano* vassals. He therefore suggested that the Spanish Crown should emulate the French and the British Empires. "Neither France nor England have given Congressional or Parliamentary seats to any person born in their colonies," Tacón highlighted in one of his letters to the Secretary of State⁹². Tacón also emphasized the necessity of establishing special laws to govern the colonies, reinforcing the notion that a different set of regulations should rule the metropolis and the overseas territories. "The European powers that have colonies govern them based on particular codes appropriate to its circumstances," accentuated Tacón⁹³. His experience in the Americas shaped his belief that the Spanish Crown should create a new model of government that relied not on constitutional rule, but on special laws and authoritarian power.

Tacón defended this new model in response to the growing rumors of a possible restitution of the Cádiz Constitution of 1812 within the Pe-

89 Ibidem.

90 Ibidem.

91 Miguel Tacón to Secretary of State, Havana, 30 Jun 1835, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 47, 8

92 Miguel Tacón to Secretary of State, Havana, 31 Jan 1836, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 32, 5.

93 Miguel Tacón to Secretary of State, Havana, 30 Nov 1835, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 47, 4.

ninsula in 1836. The Captain General reinforced his idea that the constitution would jeopardize colonial rule in the Antilles, since reestablishing the constitutional charter would embolden *Americanos* to pursue independence. Once again, Tacón appealed in his correspondence to his "vast experience of the revolutions that caused the loss of both Americas" to highlight the importance of not "altering the administrative and traditional" forms of governance⁹⁴. For him, the possible establishment of popular institutions could undermine the prestige of the Captain General, ruining the position's legitimacy to unify civil and military governments. Tacón's concerns were such that he resigned as Captain General in October of 1836. However, the Crown did not accept his resignation. This fact persuaded him to continue blocking any effort to reinstate the constitution in the Spanish Antilles.

The rebellion of the governor of Santiago, Manuel Lorenzo, was the main challenge Tacón faced in his defense of the colonial model of *facultades omnímodas* and special laws. In late September 1836, Lorenzo, who had also participated in the Spanish American Revolutions, proclaimed the constitution in the eastern part of Cuba upon learning of its reinstatement on the Peninsula. The Constitutional Council of Santiago supported Lorenzo's actions, arguing that Tacón "was compromising the luck and destiny of the wealthiest and most interesting of the Antilles solely to keep the last pulses of an agonizing absolutism"⁹⁵. Lorenzo also criticized Tacón, emphasizing that his "oppressive regime, violent measures, offensive distrust, relentless severity, and countless arbitrariness" were incubating a revolution within the island⁹⁶. "Your Majesty has exorcised the storm in both hemispheres. Now, Cubans could enjoy a fair freedom, a freedom feared with horror and terror by General Tacón; now, all excuses and envious have vanished, and the union between the Daughter and the Mother,

94 Miguel Tacón to Secretary of State, Havana, 3 Oct 1836, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 6, 4.

95 Santiago de Cuba's City Council to Queen Doña Isabel, Santiago de Cuba, 31 Oct 1836, Archivo Nacional de Cuba (hereafter ANC), Asuntos Políticos, 36, 43, 19v.

96 Manuel Lorenzo to the Queen Doña Isabel, Santiago de Cuba, 20 Oct 1836, ANC, Asuntos Políticos, 36, 43, 39v.

between the island and the metropolis is now secured," stated Lorenzo⁹⁷. Unlike Tacón, Lorenzo believed that establishing an imperial constitutional pact was the best way to ensure the island's loyalty to the Crown.

Tacón opposed Lorenzo's arguments and decided to crush the rebellion. He condemned Lorenzo's resolution, arguing that the governor of Santiago had disobeyed the royal orders of August 19, 23, and 25 that forbade the "introduction of any novelty in the current form of government"⁹⁸. For Tacón, Lorenzo was instituting a dangerous precedent by questioning the power of the Captain General, reestablishing the constitutional charter, and encouraging the creoles and people of color to revolt against the island's authorities. Tacón was not alone. Other leaders and local councils supported him. For instance, the local council of Puerto Príncipe stated that the constitutional system was "incompatible in some way with the [island's] situation," emphasizing that "every election seems like a revolution, fostering relentless discord and animosity, even among people of the same family"⁹⁹. Likewise, Santiago Fortín, an Artillery Colonel, questioned Lorenzo's revolt, arguing that it could inspire "blacks and *castas* to raise their heads as soon as they saw any division within the whites"¹⁰⁰.

However, Tacón himself presented the most significant critiques against the revolt. He considered it an insurrection that challenged royal authority and an uprising that followed the example of the former colonies. Tacón's proclamation to address the soldiers he dispatched to suppress the rebellion reveals this point. Moreover, it shows his keenness to inspire his troops by reminding them of their experience in the Spanish American revolutions:

SOLDIERS: Your mission is the most honorable and patriotic; protect your comrade, demand obedience to the throne, stop the brutal tyranny that [Lorenzo] had begun to practice, and reestablish peace, order, and public

97 Ibidem.

98 Miguel Tacón to the Secretary of State, Havana, 18 Nov 1836, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 47, 51.

99 Ayuntamiento de Puerto Príncipe, 21 Oct 1836, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 47, No. 67.

100 Santiago Fortín to Manuel Lorenzo, Santiago de Cuba, 20 Oct 1836, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 57, No. 52.

tranquility in all the island. Many of you had witnessed the catastrophic loss of the Spanish American continent and the means used by our treacherous enemies [...] I know your discipline and how much the Queen and the Nation are expecting from you, and it will always be an honor to command you as Captain General.¹⁰¹

Tacón's victory over Lorenzo's rebellion solidified his vision of what colonial rule should be. In December of 1836, Lorenzo's uprising crumbled after Tacón established a complete naval blockade on the eastern part of the island, coupled with the discharge of Lorenzo and the loss of support from local populations¹⁰². Furthermore, in June of 1837, the Spanish Cortes excluded the colonies from the constitutional pact, declaring that, as Tacón had suggested, they should be governed by a set of special laws. In his quest to preserve the power of the Captain General, Tacón invoked his experience in the Americas to advocate a new colonial pact wherein Spanish authorities would regard the colonies as territories with heterogeneous populations to which constitutional rule should not apply.

Thus, Tacón effectively employed his experience to thwart liberal reform and reduce the power of local elites and officials in Cuba. Nevertheless, his efforts to manipulate the elections of representatives, the exile of renowned liberals such as José Antonio Saco, and the clashes with Claudio Martínez de Pinillos, the powerful Intendant of Cuba, angered some Cuban elites and his associates in Spain and the island. They successfully allied to remove Tacón from his post¹⁰³. Yet, Tacón's ideas endured. A publication launched by part of Havana's elites to defend Tacón's legacy shows how entrenched his ideas were in these circles. For instance, Havana merchants stressed that Tacón's actions were crucial for stopping Lorenzo's revolt and preventing the rise of a new Haiti in Cuba. They even portrayed

101 "El Capitan General, a las leales tropas que componen la expedicion pacificadora de la Provincia de Santiago de Cuba," Havana, 4 Dic 1836, AHN, Ultramar, 4603, 57, No. 80.

102 To see a detailed account of Lorenzo's rebellion, Navarro García, 1991, p. 81–175.

103 Fradera, 2005, p. 173–177.

Tacón as an example for future Captain Generals¹⁰⁴. Likewise, José Antonio de Olañeta, Tacón's lawyer, argued that Tacón was only following an Iberian tradition which recognized that "the almost absolute authority" of the Captain General was necessary to "stop any seditious enterprise, correct any abuse, avoid any external attack, and especially to keep the bonds of subordination"¹⁰⁵. Moreover, just like Tacón did, Olañeta emphasized that the breakdown of this power during constitutional periods caused the independence of the Americas. These arguments demonstrate that several Cuban elites endorsed Tacón's beliefs, showing how his memories of the Spanish American revolutions permeated part of Cuban society and encouraged them to support a new colonial pact within the Spanish Empire.

Conclusions

José Domingo Díaz and Miguel Tacón understood that they had to weaponize their experiences in the Wars of Independence in Spanish America to advocate a new colonial pact in the Spanish Antilles. Although they departed the mainland at different moments, Díaz and Tacón shared a common belief: that the independence of the continental territories could have been averted. For them, the royalists made many mistakes, providing revolutionaries with all the tools to succeed. They believed the Spanish Crown was wrong to establish a constitutional system amid the conflict. According to Díaz and Tacón, this decision led to insubordination, vested too much power to local authorities, and promoted calls for independence and freedom. They also considered that the constitutional rule could not handle the racial tensions stemming from the war on the continent or the expansion of slavery in the Spanish Antilles. Thus, Díaz and Tacón committed themselves to preventing the reinstatement of this system in the Spanish Antilles and championing a strict colonial rule. Drawing

104 "Al General Tacón, Habana, 1 de enero de 1839" en *Juicio de residencia del Esceletísimo Señor Don Miguel Tacón, vizconde de Bayamo, Marqués de la Union de Cuba*. Filadelfia, Imprenta de A. Walker, 1839, pp. 6-9.

105 "Contestación a la demanda promovida por el Sr. Don Domingo de la Herrera" en *Juicio de Residencia*, p. 30.

on their experiences from the mainland, they cautioned the metropolitan authorities about the dangers of political experimentation. The circumstances were too fragile for them. Although Spain was consolidating its power in the Caribbean, the threat was too great. The Spanish Empire had already lost its continental territories. Now, the danger was to risk the remaining of its colonial possessions.

Within this scenario, Díaz and Tacón mobilized their memories of the Wars of Independence in Spanish America to consolidate imperial power in the Caribbean. Losing had to count for something. At the very least, they believed that the Spanish Empire could benefit from their insights and considered themselves experienced enough to offer advice to the Crown. Individuals like Díaz and Tacón were convinced that their expertise could enlighten metropolitan officials, and, therefore, they did not hesitate to condemn any initiative that sought to promote local autonomy or the establishment of constitutional government in the Americas. Likewise, they fiercely considered that the Spanish Empire should adopt a new colonial order in which the monarchy would unapologetically decide to reinforce its power and racial hierarchies in the Spanish Antilles. For them, that was the only way for the Spanish Empire to demonstrate that it had learned from its mistakes and from the experiences of the people who witnessed the revolution first-hand. Their efforts were not in vain. Their ideas played a crucial role in safeguarding colonial power and advancing counterrevolutionary notions, revealing the significance of the exiles' experiences to understand the changes and transitions undergone by the Spanish empire during the Age of Revolution.

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