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Usbek to the same

The ordinary effect of colonies is to weaken the countries whence they are drawn, without populating those where they are sent.

Men should remain where they are. There are diseases that come from trading good air for bad, others that come precisely from changing. [1]

When a country is uninhabited, that suggests some particular vice in the nature of the climate ; thus, when men are taken from happy skies to send them to such a country, the outcome we do precisely the opposite of what we intended.

This the Romans knew from experience : they relegated all the criminals to Sardinia, and had Jews taken there ; they had to console themselves for their loss, which the contempt in which those wretches were held made very easy.

The great Shah Abas, intending to deprive the Turks of means of maintaining large armies on the borders, transported almost all the Armenians outside of their country, and sent more than twenty thousand families into the province of Gilan, almost all of whom perished in very little time.

All the relocations of peoples done in Constantinople have never succeeded.

That prodigious number of Negroes of which we have spoken has failed to fill America. [2]

Since the destruction of the Jews under Hadrian, Palestine has no inhabitants. [3]

It must therefore be admitted that great destructions are nearly irreparable, because a people that falters to a certain degree remains in the same state, and if by chance it becomes re-established, it takes centuries to do so.

If in a state of decline, the least of the circumstances which we have mentioned should contribute, not only it is not restored, but it declines day by day, and tends towards its disappearance.

The expulsion of the Moors from Spain is still felt as much as the first day ; far from this void being filled, it becomes greater every day.

Since the devastation of America, the Spanish who have taken the place of its former inhabitants have been unable to repopulate it ; on the contrary, by a fate which I would better call an act of divine justice, the destroyers are destroying themselves and wasting away every day.

Princes therefore should not plan to populate large countries with colonies. I am not saying they will not sometimes

succeed ; there are climes so favorable that the species always multiplies in it, witness those islands which have been populated by the sick abandoned there by various vessels, [4] and at once recovered their health. [5]

But were these colonies to succeed, instead of increasing their power, they would merely share it, unless they not very large, like those we send to occupy some base for trade.

The Carthaginians like the Spanish had discovered America, or at least some large islands where they carried on a huge trade ; but when they saw the number of their inhabitants diminish, that wise republic forbade its subjects that trade and that route. [6]

I dare to say that instead of having Spaniards go to the Indies, all the Indians and the mulattoes should be sent back to Spain ; all of that monarchy's dispersed peoples should be restored ; and if even the half of these great colonies survived, Spain would become the most formidable power in Europe.

Empires can be compared to a tree with branches so extended that they draw all the sap from the trunk, and serve only to provide shade.

Nothing should better correct princes from the rage of distant conquests than the example of the Portuguese and the Spanish.

Those two nations had conquered immense realms with inconceivable rapidity, more surprised at their victories than the conquered peoples at their defeat, sought means of preserving them ; each went about it in a different way.

The Spanish, despairing of retaining the loyalty of conquered nations, elected to exterminate them, and to send loyal people there from Spain ; never was a horrible design more exactly executed. A people which was as numerous as all those of Europe put together disappeared from the earth at the arrival of these barbarians, who seemed, in discovering the Indies, to have tried at the same time to discover to men what was the ultimate degree of cruelty.

By that barbarity they kept that country under their domination. Judge thereby how devastating conquests are, since such are their effects. For indeed this horrible remedy was unique ; how else could they have kept so many millions of men in obedience ? How could they sustain a civil war from such a distance ? What would have become of them if they had allowed those peoples time to get over their wonderment at the arrival of these new gods, and the fear of their thunderbolts ? [7]

As for the Portuguese, they took a completely opposite path : they did not use cruelties, and were soon driven out of all the countries they had discovered ; the Dutch favored the rebellion of those peoples, and benefitted from it. [8]

What prince would envy the fate of these conquerors ? Who would want these conquests on these conditions ? Some were quickly driven out ; the others made wastelands of them, and did the same to their own countries.

It is the fate of heroes to ruin themselves conquering countries that they suddenly lose, or subjugating nations they are themselves obliged to destroy, like that fool who wasted away buying statues which he cast into the sea, and mirrors which he immediately broke. [9]

Paris this 18th day of the moon of Rhamazan 1718

[1] Edition D here adds the following paragraph : "The air becomes charged, like plants, with particles of the soil of every country. It so acts upon us that our temperament is fixed by it. When we are transported into another country, we become ill. Liquids being accustomed to a certain consistency, solids to a certain disposition, both to a certain degree of movement, can no longer tolerate others, and resist adjusting to new conditions."

[2] See letter 114.

[3] The Jewish population of Palestine was destroyed in 135 C.E. following a revolt against the emperor Hadrian, who wanted to build a Roman colony in Jerusalem.

[4] The author is perhaps referring to the Île de Bourbon [*author's note*].

[5] The anecdote is drawn from Étienne de Flacourt's *Histoire de la grande île de Madagascar* (Paris : Pierre L'Amy, 1658), p. 258-259.

[6] The source of the affirmation is not known.

[7] The indigenous peoples in some places offered little resistance, notably the Aztecs under Moctezuma : for an analysis of this wonderment and fear, see Tzvetan Todorov, "Moctezuma et les signes" in *La Conquête de l'Amérique : la question de l'autre* (Paris : Seuil, 1982, p. 68-103), and *Les Morales de l'histoire* (Paris, 1991, p. 88-98).

[8] The Dutch took advantage of the annexation of Portugal by Philip II to take Portuguese colonies at the end of the sixteenth century.

[9] This allusion has not been identified.