

## Was Napoleon a racist?

The delicate question “Was Napoleon a racist?” was first suggested to me when I read on [page 231 of Hibbert's book \*Napoleon's Wives and Women\*](#) that Napoleon's favourite younger sister Pauline had defended her use of a slave brought back with her from San Dominigue to her new province in Italy after her first husband Leclerc had died there by saying that a negro was not a man. In looking for a book about Pauline's time in San Dominigue, I discovered [C. L. R. James' book \*The Black Jacobins\*](#). On p.269 (at the start of chapter 12) of that work, James bluntly states “Bonaparte hated black people,” and on p.271 cites Napoleon as saying to Vincent that he “would not leave an epaulette on the shoulders of a single nigger in the colony,” cursing the “gilded Africans.” I also noticed that in [this documentary on Youtube](#) entitled “The Rejected Capstone,” Napoleon is cited as saying: “my decision to destroy the authority of the blacks in San Domingue is not so much based on consideration of commerce and money, as on the need to block forever the march of the blacks in the world.” This is unfortunately an unsourced citation. All this is in direct contradiction with what Napoleon says in his autobiography; clearly, the source(s) of all these quotes needs to be traced.

To this end I attempted to locate a copy of the English translation of [Claude Ribbe's \*Napoleon's Crimes\*](#) published with some controversy in French in 2005, and according to [the ISBN database](#) published in English translation in 2007 by [the UK publisher Oneworld](#). Unable to locate either a new or a second-hand copy of this work in English translation, I contacted the publishers, who explained that although advertised as “coming soon” on page 24 of [their catalogue for January – June 2008](#), the book was in fact never published. No details were forthcoming as to why the publication process got as far as advertising the book, and then apparently ground to a halt. I won't speculate as to why that might have been – my French copy has just arrived, but as I read French at a rate of about a page an hour, it could take me some time to get through Ribbe's 201 pages, which are however mercifully small with large print. Shall post a precis in translation once I get through it. For any Francophones, here's the publisher's page for the book: [http://www.michel-lafon.fr/livre/333-Le\\_crime\\_de\\_Napoleon.html](http://www.michel-lafon.fr/livre/333-Le_crime_de_Napoleon.html) , which says:

Plus d'un million de personnes vouées à la mort selon des critères «raciaux», un génocide perpétré en utilisant les gaz, des milliers d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants dévorés vivants par des chiens, deux cent cinquante mille citoyens enchaînés et mis en esclavage, un plan de déportation meurtrier incluant d'anciens parlementaires, des escadrons de la mort pour traquer les résistants et les brûler sur place, des camps de triage et de concentration, des «lois raciales». Cent quarante ans avant la Shoah, un dictateur, dans l'espoir de devenir le maître du monde, n'hésite pas à écraser sous sa botte une partie de l'humanité. Ce n'est pas de Hitler qu'il s'agit, mais de son modèle, Bonaparte. Comment les exactions de ce despote misogyne, homophobe, antisémite, raciste, fasciste, antirépublicain, qui détestait autant les Français du continent que les Corses, ont-elles pu, jusqu'à présent, rester ignorées du grand public? Pourquoi une certaine France, au XXIe siècle, s'acharne-t-elle à faire du boucher des «noirs» un héros national? Deux cents ans après, Claude Ribbe dénonce enfin, pour la première fois, preuves et témoignages à l'appui, Le Crime de Napoléon.

Sacre bleu!!

Meanwhile, here's another documentary worth watching (in several parts):

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOWiQetfzXM>

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=yxm-CfaCs\\_o](http://www.youtube.com/watch?NR=1&v=yxm-CfaCs_o)

and trailers for a couple of French films for any francophones: “Last days of Toussaint Louverture”:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iEIUeKOjKdQ>

et une film sur Toussaint Louverture, héros de la lutte contre l'esclavage, précurseur de l'indépendance d'Haïti

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sqn8peSpwPk>

and [there's lots more on Youtube](#)