Chapter 1

Sugar and Slavery in an Age of Global Transformation, 1791–1848

Sugar was the foundation of the golden age of West Indian prosperity during the eighteenth century. Probably the most sought-after commodity of the period, it was the largest single English import and the most valuable item in the French overseas trade. Its consumption increased steadily throughout the century as its use and that of its complements, coffee, tea, and cocoa, were incorporated into the diet of ever-broader strata of the European population. The movement toward sugar monoculture grew on an unprecedented scale in the Caribbean as sugar consumption expanded in Europe. The "sugar islands," as the West Indies came to be known, were by far the most important suppliers of this product to Europe and dominated world production. They nourished the trade in slaves from Africa and gave impetus to European manufactures and commerce. Accordingly, the Caribbean colonies were of central importance for economic development during the eighteenth century and became a focal point of international political conflict as the colonizing powers vied with one another for domination over the region and control of its sugar industry.

The eighteenth-century world sugar market was constituted by means of competing colonial empires. Each metropolitan power maintained an exclusive sphere of production in its colonies. The division of labor between metropolis and colony and the nature and direction of commodity flows were defined through politically enforced monopolies, privileges, and restrictions determined in the metropolis, while slavery and the slave trade forcibly concentrated laborers and forced them to engage in commodity production. Each metropolis reserved for itself the produce of its own colonies, monopolized colonial shipping, and used the colonies as a sheltered market for its industry. By means of these mercantilist policies, rival nation-states forcibly expanded their markets, stimulated production, and promoted the accumulation of national wealth. This system, known as the *exclusif* in France and the mercantile system in Britain, expressed not only the limits of commodity production and exchange but also the weak integration of the world market during this period. As a result of this form of market organization, world sugar production grew slowly but steadily within a more-or-less stable structure, and colonial producers were relatively insulated from direct competition with one another by their reliance on the political conditions of their monopoly of their respective metropolitan markets.

The Haitian Revolution, together with the ascendance of British capital between 1792 and 1815, signaled the beginning of a structural transformation of this form of organization of the world sugar market. These changes in the international sugar economy were part of broader processes restructuring the world-economy as a whole. The unparalleled expansion of world sugar production and consumption during the first half of the nineteenth century provoked the development of new producing areas and hastened the decline of old ones. (See Table 1.1.) There were shifts in the centers of production within the Caribbean, together with the appearance of substantial amounts of sugar from areas outside the Caribbean. This transformation of the world sugar market included not only the spatial redistribution and quantitative increase of international sugar production but also the qualitative restructuring of the social and political relations and processes organizing the market. The world market was no longer constituted through direct political domination over the sources of colonial production. Rather, the key to power under the emerging conditions of world-economy was, as David Brion Davis has emphasized, economic control over the flow of commodities: "Even before Britain had won full naval supremacy . . . it was clear that the economic struggle would center not on the control of colonial production but on the control of colonial commerce to European markets. By 1804, Britain had no need to fear a rival slave

Table 1.1. International Sugar Production, 1791–1842

Location	1791		1815–19 (avg.)		1838–42 (avg.)	
	Metric tons	**(%)**	**Metric tons**	**(%)**	**Metric tons**	**(%)**
British Colonies	100,015	(37.9)	173,822	(47.4)	160,046	(24.8)
French Colonies	102,891	(39.0)	39,279	(10.7)	84,414	(13.1)
Cuba	16,731	(06.3)	44,734	(12.2)	150,603	(23.4)
Brazil	21,000*	(08.0)	75,000*	(20.4)	82,000	(12.7)
Dutch Colonies	13,550	(05.1)	8,140	(02.2)	64,256	(10.0)
Danish Colonies	9,429	(03.6)	26,000	(07.1)	9,000	(01.4)
U.S.A. (Louisiana)	—		—		51,712	(08.0)
France**	—		—		30,536	(04.8)
Germany**	—		—		11,688	(01.8)
Total	263,616		336,975		644,255	

Source: Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio. Complejo económico social cubano del azúcar* (Havana, 1978), I, pp. 40–42; II, p. 173.

*Estimate.

**Beet sugar.

trade augmenting the production of her competitors. The crucial problem was not the supply of labor but how to control the flow of commerce to Europe."[1]

The nexus of colonial control was broken, and the relation of sugar producers to the growing markets no longer corresponded to the old lines of imperial domination. Increasingly the market became the mediation between producers and consumers, and supply, demand, and price appeared as the determinants of the division of labor and of the flow of commodities within the international circuit of sugar. The character, meaning, and function of formal colonial domination was transformed in a variety of ways as peripheral sugar producers and metropolitan elites contended between and among one another in the new and changing circumstances of the world-economy. The new pattern of markets and the emergence of new forms of social labor fundamentally altered the conditions of slave labor in the world-economy and challenged its hold on world sugar production. The previous identity of sugar, slavery, and colonialism that had characterized the Caribbean during the eighteenth century was dissolved. Within the processes of development of the capitalist world-economy, each of these elements was dissociated from the others, and the relations between them were recast under new conditions as part of an emerging global mosaic of capital and labor.

The Destruction of a Sugar Empire

Saint Domingue was at the vortex of the international economic and political currents of the eighteenth century. It occupied a position of strategic importance in the century-long struggle between England and France for domination of the world-economy. The international rivalry between these two competing empires as well as the stresses and contradictions within France and Saint Domingue generated the conditions for the Haitian Revolution. The revolution in Saint Domingue developed as a part of the French Revolution and was inseparable from it. The two revolutions developed in tandem, conditioning, influencing, and reinforcing one another. C. L. R. James, in his classic study of the Haitian Revolution, writes: "Men make their own history, and the black Jacobins of San Domingo were to make history which would alter the fate of millions of men and shift the economic currents of three continents. But if they could seize the opportunity they could not create it."[2]

The Haitian slaves were dependent on the French Revolution to create the political conjuncture that made their struggle possible. However, once the revolutionary movement developed among the slaves, it both strengthened the revolutionary process in France and went beyond it. Although constrained by the course of events both in France and internationally, the struggle of the Haitian slaves to secure their own emancipation added new dimensions, ideologically and practically, to the struggle to overthrow the ancien régime, and was a decisive blow to the French colonial empire. It precipitated the dramatic transformation of the world sugar market between 1792 and 1815, had a significant impact on the outcome of the Anglo-French rivalry, and altered the character and conditions of slavery throughout the hemisphere for the remainder of its history.

Saint Domingue had been the world's foremost sugar producer and the most valuable of Europe's overseas colonies since the mid-1740s. It provided France with a large and expanding sugar frontier, and the costs of production there were lower than in the older and more settled British Caribbean colonies. Between 1760 and 1791, sugar production in Saint Domingue increased by almost 40 percent, from 56,646 to 78,696 metric tons. Even though world production rose significantly during this period, Saint Domingue's share of the total increased slightly, and in 1791 it accounted for nearly 30 percent of the world's commercial supply. Sugar was supplemented by rum and molasses exports as well as by substantial amounts of coffee, cotton, and indigo. In 1791 the colony's slave population numbered 480,000, the majority concentrated on the sugar estates of the fabled North Plain; an estimated 25,000 new slaves, more than to any other colony in the Caribbean, were imported in that year alone.[3]

Saint Domingue was the fulcrum of the French colonial system. Even though sugar production in the British West Indies increased more rapidly than it did in the French colonies as a whole between 1760 and 1791, the growth of Saint Domingue enabled France to maintain its supremacy in the world sugar market and to attain nearly the same total output as its rival. French colonial sugar production increased from 80,646 to 102,891 metric tons while that of the British West Indies rose from 70,593 to 100,015 metric tons during this period. The British gain was due to the acquisition of the ceded islands of Grenada and the Grenadines, Dominica, and Saint Vincent—all formerly French—as a result of the Seven Years' War, and to the remarkable growth of the Jamaican sugar industry, whose production increased by 53 percent during these years. Nevertheless, Jamaica lagged well behind its French rival. In 1791, it exported 60,900 metric tons of sugar and had a slave population of 250,000 compared to the nearly 79,000 metric tons and 500,000 slaves for Saint Domingue. The expansion of the British West Indian sugar industry, swift and impressive though it was, was not sufficient to displace Saint Domingue from its preeminent position, and the British colonies remained unable to compete with the cheaper French product in the continental European market.[4]

The productive advantage provided by Saint Domingue, aided by a commercial policy favoring sugar reexports, allowed France to dominate the world sugar market and to control the entrepôt trade in colonial produce to Europe. French domestic consumption of sugar was extremely limited, particularly outside the urban centers, and, although Mathiez reports that an increase in the price of sugar touched off a riot in Orléans in 1792, sugar does not appear to have been a regular item in the diet of the mass of the French population. France only consumed about one-fifth of its sugar imports on the eve of the revolution and reexported the rest. In 1791, France reexported nearly 80,000 metric tons of sugar, which accounted for 65 percent of the world free market in sugar. Saint Domingue alone supplied 50 percent of this free market. In contrast, British sugar reexports averaged only 16,186 metric tons per year during the period 1788–92, barely 13 percent of the world free market. Sugar production in the British Caribbean was dependent on the British metropolitan market. Britain was the largest consumer of sugar in Europe both in absolute terms and per capita. Sugar was woven into the pattern of British industrial life from the beginning. Either by itself or in combination with tea, sugar supplanted traditional foods and drinks. It was considered a basic part of the diet of even the very poor in Britain by the end of the eighteenth century and linked them to the market in consumer goods. It was estimated that sugar and tea accounted for between 8 and 11 percent of the budget of working class households. British sugar consumption rose from six to eight pounds per person in the 1750s to twenty-five pounds per person in the 1850s. (By 1900, British annual per capita sugar consumption would reach seventy-eight pounds. Small wonder that T. S. Ashton in his study of the standard of living of the English working class during the Industrial Revolution comments that his index seems to have been drawn from the diet of a diabetic.) Nonetheless, despite growing domestic consumption, the potential expansion of British commerce and of sugar production in the British Caribbean was constrained by French superiority in the continental market.[5]

The trade with the colonies and the reexport of colonial produce stood behind the rapid growth of French overseas commerce during the eighteenth century and enabled France to challenge Britain in international commerce and politics. Led by West Indian sugar, the colonial trade was the most dynamic sector of the French economy. It increased tenfold between 1716 and 1787 and was in large measure responsible for propelling French foreign trade to a level comparable with that of England by the end of the century. The importance of the Antilles for France increased throughout this period. In 1730, the French West Indian colonies accounted for one-sixth of the commerce of France. The value of this trade was 30 million livres, of which 20 million were imports into France and 10 million were exports. By 1789, French imports from the colonies were worth 185 million livres, and France's exports to them were worth 78 million livres. About two-thirds of French maritime exports went to its West Indian colonies. But even more significantly, the value of colonial products, principally sugar, reexported from France rose from 15 million livres in 1715 to 152 million livres in 1789. The reexports of colonial produce made up one-third of total French exports, and they alone allowed France to maintain a favorable balance of trade. In the 1780s, Saint Domingue alone was responsible for three-quarters of the total French trade with the colonies and supplied most of the reexports.[6]

The trade with the West Indian colonies enabled France to offset the growing commercial and productive superiority of Britain's more diversified economy between the end of the Seven Years' War and the outbreak of the French Revolution and to achieve a rate of economic and industrial growth surprisingly similar to that of England during this period. The centers of French industry were located on the Atlantic seaboard and oriented toward seaborne trade and colonial markets. The traffic in sugar and slaves was the basis of the wealth of Nantes, Bordeaux, Le Havre, La Rochelle, Saint Malo, and Marseille. Through a system of monopolies and privileges, the merchants of these cities, backed by the power of the French state, controlled the transport, processing, and marketing of colonial produce as well as imports into the colonies. The colonial trade stimulated a wide variety of industrial and commercial activities that were concentrated in these cities and their hinterlands. These included shipping, shipbuilding, sail and rope making, sugar refineries, distilleries, textile manufactures, metallurgical industries, the manufacture of trade goods, glassworks, wheat and wine production, and coal, iron, and lead mining. The West Indian colonies promoted the development of large-scale, specialized production, increased the volume of trade, encouraged the centralization of markets, and made possible the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of the merchant class. As a result of their domination of colonial production and trade, these maritime cities were the most dynamic centers of industry and commerce in France. In their drive to accumulate wealth and augment their power, the bourgeoisie of these port cities aggravated the conflicts within French society and deepened the divisions of race and class in the colonies. In so doing, they unleashed social forces beyond their control.[7]

The bonds of colonial domination that made the West Indies one of the crucial pivots of the world-economy during the eighteenth century also brought the slaves of Saint Domingue into contact with the most advanced political ideas and developments of the epoch and made possible the emergence of a slave revolution there. In 1794, the National Convention in Paris, struggling to preserve the revolution from its enemies at home and abroad, and under the radical influence of the Parisian *sans-culottes* and the blacks and mulattoes of Saint Domingue who had declared their allegiance to the Republic, proclaimed slavery abolished in all French colonies and decreed that "all men, without distinction of color, domiciled in the colonies, are French citizens, and enjoy all the rights assured by the Constitution." This act, all too often overlooked in the rich and complex history of the revolution, had profound and far-reaching consequences for the subsequent development of slavery and the sugar industry in the Caribbean and their place in the international economy.[8]

The doctrines of *liberté*, *égalité*, and *fraternité* became powerful weapons in the hands of the slaves of Saint Domingue who had revolted. However, neither the ideology nor the practice of the Haitian Revolution was simply a French export to the colonies. Rather, both were appropriated and interpreted by the slaves in accordance with their own needs and experiences. For the slaves, the revolutionary principles of the French Republic were inseparable from the abolition of slavery. They waged an uncompromising struggle against the enemies of the revolution and gave practical significance to the decrees of the Convention. Under the leadership of Toussaint L'Ouverture, they found both ideology and allies and transformed their revolt into a revolutionary movement. Even after the course of the revolution had been altered by the counterrevolution in France, the exslaves of Saint Domingue continued to defend its principles. Only when Napoleon's threat to restore slavery made compromise impossible did they throw off the chains of European domination and establish the independent republic of Haiti. They defeated both the French and British forces sent to reconquer them and to reimpose slavery. With their victory, Saint Domingue, the most lucrative colony in the world during the eighteenth century and the keystone of colonial slavery in the Caribbean, disappeared from the European imperium.[9]

The turmoil of war and revolution touched the other major French colonies as well and further weakened the condition of the French Empire. In Guadeloupe, slavery was abolished in 1794. A revolutionary army of exslaves led by Victor Hugues defeated the English expeditionary force sent to occupy the colony and attempted to spread the revolution to neighboring islands until they were defeated and slavery reimposed by Napoleon in 1802. In Martinique, the proudly aristocratic planters, hostile to the revolutionary government in France and threatened by events in Saint Domingue and Guadeloupe, preferred to desert the nation and turn the island over to the British to preserve their property and guarantee the maintenance of chattel slavery. British occupation from 1793 to 1801 spared Martinique the upheavals visited on Saint Domingue and Guadeloupe, but it was a period of political chaos, civil conflict, and economic uncertainty that seriously prejudiced the island's sugar industry.[10]

Both Martinique and Guadeloupe were occupied a second time by the British from 1809 to 1814. The consequences of this second occupation were almost fatal for the sugar industry in the two colonies. French West Indian sugar was effectively excluded from the European market during this period. Britain, concerned to protect its own colonies from competition, prohibited sugar from the occupied French colonies from entering its domestic market. It was classified as foreign sugar and could only be sold in Britain for reexport abroad. At the same time, the Continental blockade was in full force and cut off nearly all cane sugar imports to the Continent. Prices fell so sharply because of the restricted market that planter revenues were unable to cover the costs of production. Sugar cane was almost abandoned during this period, and most planters concentrated on cultivating provision crops. This difficult condition was aggravated by the hurricane that devastated Martinique in 1813.[11]

The Haitian Revolution and the collapse of the French colonial sugar industry between 1792 and 1814 precipitated the dramatic transformation of the world sugar market. The destruction of the world's largest and most efficient producer and the withdrawal of Haitian sugar from the market opened the way for rival producers. Sugar cultivation was intensified in existing areas and expanded into new ones as planters rushed to fill the void left by the exit of Saint Domingue. Aided by population increase and stimulated by an expanding consumer market in Europe, world sugar output grew rapidly, despite the loss of Haiti.

At the same time, the decline of France as a colonial power in conjunction with Britain's triumph in the revolutionary wars and the Napoleonic Wars broke down the previously existing structure of the market. War and political rivalry between France and Britain played a vital role in this reorganization of the world sugar market. British naval superiority accelerated the destruction of France as a maritime and colonial power and allowed Britain to control colonial trade. During the wars between Britain and France from 1793 to 1814, the French navy and merchant marine were decimated by superior British sea power. Britain severed the lines of communication and trade between metropolis and colonies and ruined French maritime commerce, while British control of the sea lanes and occupation of the colonies of its enemies in the East and West Indies gave it a virtual monopoly of colonial produce. Britain was also able to assert its control over the continental European market despite being excluded from the sphere of French political and economic domination. The resale of colonial products, especially sugar, allowed Britain to expand its foreign trade. Control of European overseas trade augmented

Britain's commerce and stimulated its industry. It proved to be a decisive advantage in its war with France for domination of the world-economy. By 1815, France was definitively defeated, and the main obstacles to British expansion were eliminated. Britain moved into the vacuum left by France, and the process of reintegrating the world market began under the aegis of British capital.[12]

The Emergence of British Hegemony and the Reintegration of the World Sugar Market, 1815–1848

With the collapse of the French colonial empire, there was no power that could rival Britain in the international arena, and a process of reintegration of the world market began under the hegemony of British capital. Britain's position during the first half of the nineteenth century was not due simply to technological superiority. Rather, British commercial, financial, and maritime supremacy sustained its industrial development, and in turn, as Britain's productive advantage over its rivals widened, its control over the market strengthened. British economic expansion depended on international trade for raw materials, foodstuffs, and, to a lesser extent, as an outlet for manufactured goods. Britain's commercial and technical advantages enabled it to establish trade with the periphery on the basis of complementarity—peripheral raw materials and agricultural products for British manufactures (and other services such as capital, shipping, banking, and insurance).[13]

The establishment of this division of labor between core and periphery was organized by the City of London, whose position as center of world trade was both instrument and expression of British hegemony. The extension of commodity production in the periphery and the expansion not only of British trade with the periphery but also that of its rivals relied on the financial power of London banks. As McMichael has argued, British loan capital extended the scope of the world market for all states. A system of multilateral trading emerged that depended on sterling balances and the credit of London banks as well as the City's ability to settle trade balances among states indirectly. Bills of exchange drawn on London banks replaced the transfer of precious metals in organizing international exchanges, and sterling balances were used to adjust the status of national currencies in world trade. The centralization of banking enabled Britain to maintain and extend world exchange and to achieve financial supremacy beyond its commercial and industrial supremacy. The creation of these global exchange relations centered on Britain established a world division of labor dependent on and responsive to an integrated world market. Within this new configuration the conditions of sugar production and trade, colonialism, and slavery in the world-economy were altered.[14]

The advance of industrialization resulted in a diversification of the pattern of demand in the world-economy. New raw materials were required on an unprecedented scope and scale, and an international network of supply was established that went beyond the limits of the old imperial boundaries. Britain extended its commercial penetration of Africa and Asia and attempted to break Spain's hold on Latin America (here and there, as in Argentina and Uruguay, successfully). Over the course of this period, industrial raw materials, fibers, minerals, grain, timber, fruit, and meat came to replace sugar, tobacco, furs, and naval stores as the key commodities in world trade. The amount of raw cotton consumed by British industry was unparalleled, and by 1831, it supplanted sugar as Britain's leading import. The cotton crop of the U.S. South multiplied sixty-fold from 1790 to 1810 and by 1860 accounted for two-thirds of U.S. exports. Egypt, India, and Latin America also developed into major centers of cotton production during this period.[15]

While its relative significance in world trade may have declined, in absolute terms sugar consumption and production, underpinned by demographic growth, urbanization, and industrialization, rose steadily and rapidly throughout the nineteenth century. The development of mass middle and working classes in Europe was associated with new patterns of consumption of food and drink. Sugar increasingly entered the diet of all sectors of the European population as a sweetener in coffee, tea, and cocoa, in jams and preserves, and as a confection, while the expansion of world output, improved production techniques, and reduced duties resulted in a marked decline in prices. Britain emerged as the keystone of the international sugar trade. It was not only the world's largest consumer of sugar, but it also commanded the reexport market and was the only purchaser that could absorb increased New World sugar production. On the other side of the coin, it was the only country that could supply the credit, machinery, and manufactured goods to support this expansion. British commercial and industrial superiority enabled it to penetrate the markets of the other colonizing powers. World sugar production and consumption were progressively shaped around the conditions imposed by the requirements of British capital accumulation and integrated into its rhythms and cycles.[16]

The immediate beneficiaries of the destruction of the sugar industry in Saint Domingue and Britain's rise to hegemony were the British West Indies. Between 1791 and 1815 sugar production in the British Caribbean rose more rapidly than at any other time in its history. The old colonies increased their output and new sugar territories were added to the empire. By 1815–19, the British colonies accounted for nearly half of the world's supply, which had risen by 38 percent in spite of the collapse of Saint Domingue. However, the impact of the transformation of the sugar market was felt differently among the various British colonies (See Table 1.2). The small islands of the Lesser Antilles, intensively exploited since the seventeenth century, expanded rapidly during these years. Between 1792 and 1816, sugar production rose from 9,025 tons to 14,431 tons in Barbados and from 3,676 tons to 9,634 in Antigua, while St. Kitts went from 6,958 tons in 1792 to 9,685 tons in 1807 (but fell back to 6,237 tons in 1816). Sugar cultivation was increased in the islands conquered during the Seven Years' War as well. Although production in Dominica actually declined during this period, sugar production in St. Vincent went from about 6,000 tons in 1792 to over 13,000 tons in 1816, and Grenada and the Grenadines expanded rapidly and in 1816 had one of their largest harvests ever: 13,302 tons. However, despite such increases, these islands rapidly reached the physical limits of expansion as well as the technical limits of the slave plantation. The capacity of planters in these islands to respond to the new market opportunities was severely restricted, and increases in the amount of sugar produced were marginal at best. After 1814–18, sugar production ceased to expand in the British Lesser Antilles, and they accounted for a progressively smaller share of the output of the British Empire.[17]

Table 1.2. British Colonial Sugar Production, 1792–1843 (long tons)

Years	British Lesser Antilles[a]	Jamaica	Trinidad	British Guiana	Mauritius	Total
1792	45,527	54,644				
Index	66	70				
1800	47,486	70,100	3,300			
Index	69	90	47			
1807	52,971	89,800	9,400			
Index	77	115	135			
1814–1818[b]	68,591	78,094	6,955	17,416	2,538	173,594
Index (base)	100	100	100	100	100	100
% total	39.5	45.0	4.0	10.0	1.5	100.0
1819–1823[b]	64,696	78,943	8,302	29,058	8,905	189,904
Index	94	101	119	167	351	109
% total	34.1	41.6	4.4	15.3	4.7	100.0
1824–1828[b]	66,221	67,432	10,409	46,173	17,117	207,352
Index	97	86	150	265	674	119
% total	31.9	32.5	5.0	22.3	8.3	100.0
1829–1833[b]	65,256	69,502	14,234	57,197	33,158	239,347
Index	95	89	205	328	1306	138
% total	27.3	29.0	5.9	23.9	13.9	100.0
1834–1838[b]	61,525	54,165	15,287	51,276	32,750	215,003
Index	90	69	220	294	1290	124
% total	28.7	29.0	7.1	23.8	15.2	100.0
1839–1843[b]	49,822	33,403	14,054	32,636	33,713	163,628
Index	73	43	202	187	1328	94
% total	30.4	20.4	8.6	19.9	20.6	100.0

Source: Noel Deerr, *The History of Sugar* (London, 1945), I, pp. 193–201.

[a]British Lesser Antilles: Barbados, Nevis, Antigua, Montserrat, Saint Kitts, British Virgin Islands, Grenada and the Grenadines, Saint Vincent, Saint Lucia, Dominica, and Tobago.

[b]Average.

There was still room for new investment and territorial expansion in Jamaica at the time of the Haitian Revolution. Sugar output there nearly doubled between 1792 and 1805. In the latter year, Jamaica exported 110,158 metric tons of sugar, more than Saint Domingue on the eve of the French Revolution. By means of this enormous increase, Jamaica regained the position it had enjoyed at the beginning of the eighteenth century as the Caribbean's premier sugar producer. However, Jamaica never again attained this level of production using slave labor. Much of this new wave of expansion was into the fertile inland valleys, and the high cost of overland transport raised the cost of the Jamaican product in relation to other new sugar areas. Erratic wartime markets, fluctuating prices, changing sugar duties, and the abolition of the slave trade all had their effect on Jamaican production, while debt and falling profit margins took their toll on the planters. After the downturn of the sugar market in 1806, a quarter of Jamaica's new plantations were abandoned. Nonetheless, even though sugar production stagnated, Jamaica continued to produce substantial amounts of sugar until the plantation system was undercut by slave emancipation in the 1830s. In 1820, Jamaica still produced 97,832 metric tons of sugar. Production gradually declined thereafter, and Jamaica was replaced by Cuba as the world's largest single supplier during the decade of the 1820s. Despite the gains made in the international market between 1792 and 1815, the expansion and intensification of sugar production during this period pushed the old British Caribbean colonies to their limits, and they were surpassed by newer sugar-producing areas in an expanding market.[18]

Wartime conquests also augmented the supply of sugar under British control. The incorporation of a new and fertile frontier for colonial products into the empire offset the stagnation of the older West Indian colonies and enabled Britain to continue to dominate world production until the 1820s. Britain temporarily occupied several foreign sugar colonies at various times between 1807 and 1814. These included not only the French colonies of Martinique, Guadeloupe, and Cayenne (French Guiana), but also the Danish colonies of Saint Thomas and Saint John, and the Dutch colonies of Surinam, Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo. Britain was able to use this opportunity either to encourage or to disrupt the development of sugar production in these areas, depending on what it saw as its own advantage at any given moment. But more important than these temporary occupations were the new territories permanently acquired after the peace in 1815. Berbice, Demerara, and Essequibo had been continuously occupied by Britain from 1803 onward and were united as the colony of British Guiana in 1829. Led by Demerara, the Guianese colonies were the most important acquisition of the British Empire during this period. They provided Britain with seemingly vast tracts of virgin land and excellent soil and climatic conditions for sugar and cotton production. Although sugar monoculture distorted the overall promise of the colony and confined its development to the coastal strip, British Guiana grew rapidly and became a valuable addition to the empire. Guianese production rose from 3,000 metric tons under the Dutch in 1791 to 16,521 metric tons in 1816 under the English. Its annual average production for the period 1829–33 was more than three times that of 1814–18; after this, British slave emancipation (1834–1838) limited its further development. In contrast, the progress of the sugar industry in the Crown colony of Trinidad, captured from Spain in 1797 and ceded to Britain in the Treaty of Amiens in 1802, was retarded by the struggle over land and labor policies between pro- and antislavery forces in Parliament. Sugar production in Trinidad went from 2,700 tons in 1799 to 9,500 tons in 1805. By 1834, it had reached almost 17,000 tons, a substantial increase but far below its potential. Of the colonies gained from France in the Peace of Paris, the output of Tobago reached 6,958 tons of sugar in 1816 and remained relatively stable for a decade before declining, while production in Mauritius in the Indian Ocean jumped from 4,000 tons in 1816 to 38,483 tons in 1832. However, while Trinidad, Mauritius, and above all British Guiana compensated for the stagnation of Jamaica and the Lesser Antilles, the British Caribbean could not keep pace with world production and demand.[19]

The changes in the world sugar market initiated by the Haitian Revolution thus brought the British West Indian colonies to the apogee of their development. Their rapid expansion both resulted from the emergence of British hegemony over the world-economy and contributed to the consolidation of British supremacy. But these changes were part and parcel of broader processes quantitatively and qualitatively reshaping the world-economy as a whole around the dominance of British capital. Within these processes, sugar, slavery, and colonialism were being redefined, and the place of West Indian colonies themselves was shifting both in the politics and economics of the British Empire and in the world-economy as a whole.

Britain's position in the world-economy put it on the path toward a policy of free trade. To the extent that it came to control commerce outside the bounds of its own empire, Britain became relatively indifferent to formal colonialism as the means of defining the nature and direction of commodity flows and the division of labor between core and periphery. The control of international finance by London and the establishment of the pound sterling as the international money of account, prefiguring the international gold standard, represented new levels of integration of the world-economy and new channels for economic domination. Britain's industrial development accentuated the differential between industrial and agricultural prices in the world-economy, while the transformation of class relations reinforced the tendency toward free trade. With the formation of a wage-earning proletariat there was systemic pressure to lower the value composition of the wage bill. In Britain this could be most readily accomplished by free trade and lay behind the campaign for "the cheap breakfast table" and the abolition of duties on grain during the 1840s.[20]

The effect of these developments was not to destroy archaic forms of social organization and establish the general mobility of capital and labor in a universal free market. Rather, previously existing social relations were recast within the new constellation of political and economic forces. The former interdependence of sugar, colonialism, and slavery was dissolved, and the conditions of the existence, the function, and the significance of each were modified. Colonial policy and economic protectionism had now become the means for altering politically the economic processes that integrated peripheral producers into the world-economy and defined the world market and the international division of labor. They no longer constituted them. Colonialism, protected markets, and slave labor did not disappear; they assumed new and diverse relations to the processes reconstituting the world market. They now existed as a part of new and different relations and processes of the world-economy and helped to shape the mode and limits of its integration. The world sugar market formed the axis along which these new and varied relations of colonialism and slavery developed.

Rather than the generalization of free trade, the very success of Britain in establishing its hold on the world market provoked a protectionist response on the part of its rivals. C. E. Labrousse calls this process "a second continental blockade," as the second-rank European powers sought to protect their "national economies" from British economic power and world market competition through high duties or outright prohibition. The world sugar market was especially notorious for the tariff barriers, export subsidies, rebates, and other measures that shaped its development throughout the nineteenth century. State protectionism was responsible for the growth of the European beet sugar industry as continental nations sought an alternative to the onslaught of cheap New World sugar and dependence on British commerce. The transformation of the world sugar market created new conditions for colonial domination and sugar production, as well as for the relations between the two. New poles of attraction and repulsion were created between core and periphery that did not coincide with old imperial boundaries. As British economic power undermined old colonial empires, rival powers were forced into greater reliance on their colonies and tried to strengthen their control over them. At the same time, colonial producers were increasingly brought into competition with one another in an expanding market. Those in a strong competitive position were compelled to struggle against the limitations of the colonial policies of their own metropolitan centers and against protectionism in general. Under the conditions of the new market, they were often able to gain some advantages for their sugar industries. In contrast, the demand of producers in a weak position was that colonial policy and market preferences be used to protect them from world competition.[21]

In like manner, the transformation of the world-economy created new conditions for slave labor internationally. As Britain extended its domination over the world-economy—and, in this instance, the world sugar market—the particular form of social labor became largely a matter of indifference. The British interest was in cheap sugar, and therefore in cheap labor. To the degree that Britain was able to exercise influence over world production through its control of the market, it moved toward the emergence of a whole gamut of forms of labor, ranging from slaves, to tenants, sharecroppers, and peasants, and from indentured laborers to free wage laborers. This proliferation developed slowly but steadily during the first half of the nineteenth century, and the availability of such diverse forms and sources of labor allowed Britain more flexibility in developing a global economic and political strategy.[22]

These structural shifts in the world-economy contributed cumulatively to the effectiveness of the antislavery movement in Britain. However, this movement was not simply a function of economic factors, but added another dimension to those processes leading to the destruction of slavery, and imposed different paths of development on British and non-British colonies. The abolition of the slave trade not only cut off the labor supply to the British slave colonies, but, as Paula Beiguelman has emphasized, destroyed the commodity market most intimately linked to the slave form—the market in slaves. Meanwhile, British slave emancipation disrupted the sugar industry in both the declining and the vital British slave colonies alike.[23]

The interplay of market forces and the antislavery movement pushed Britain toward free trade and undercut the competitive position of the British West Indian colonies. The high price of British West Indian sugar and the protective tariffs it required risked the dampening of British domestic consumption and seriously weakened Britain's position in the reexport market. By 1815, British territorial expansion in the Caribbean had come to an end. The abolition of the slave trade limited the labor supply to the British colonies, and, with the exception of Trinidad and Guiana, British Caribbean sugar production had reached its saturation point. British West Indian planters were faced with rising costs and the inability to expand production. As cheaper Latin American and Caribbean sugar invaded European markets, reexports of British West Indian sugar had to be subsidized by the government by means of drawbacks and export bounties to make them competitive with sugar from countries that were often substantial customers for

British manufactures. British West Indian reexports dropped from about 100,000 tons in 1802 to 27,000 tons in 1827.[24]

As their competitive position in foreign markets was weakened, the British Caribbean colonies were compelled to place ever greater reliance on the British domestic market and preferential duties. But the high cost of British West Indian sugar and the demand of Caribbean planters for protection from both foreign and East Indian sugar restricted the growth of per capita British consumption, prejudiced the development of the British refining industry, and hindered the development of the British East Indian colonies. Nonetheless, by the 1820s, the East Indian sugar industry appeared to many observers to be a powerful and viable competitor to West Indian sugar within the empire. With the support of the antislavery forces, who were enthusiastic about the "free" labor of India, a campaign was waged to extend privileges to East Indian sugar and encourage its development. In 1825, sugar from Mauritius was admitted into Britain under the same conditions as West Indian sugar.[25]

At the same time, British domestic consumption was growing rapidly despite the obstacles it faced. It nearly doubled between 1815 and 1840, going from about 100,000 tons per year to nearly 200,000 tons. By the 1830s, the British West Indies were unable to supply British domestic consumption. They had lost their stranglehold on the metropolitan market. Emancipation gave the fatal blow to the social organization of the West Indian sugar industry and was quickly followed by the equalization of duties between the East and West Indies. But preferential treatment for British colonial sugar still inhibited the full development of the British sugar trade. With its former antislavery foes as allies, "free" British West Indian sugar now received protection from foreign "slave-grown" sugar in the British market. This restriction on foreign sugar resulted in the massive growth of "spot markets" as British merchants carried Latin American and Caribbean sugar directly to European markets instead of reexporting it from Britain. Finally, in 1846, the preferential duties for British colonial sugar were removed and a policy of free trade in sugar was established.[26]

In contrast to Britain, rival producers were made more dependent on slave labor by the expansion of demand, the competitive nature of the market, and the lack