

BLACK MASSES IN THE SAN DOMINGO
REVOLUTION: 1791-1803

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ABSTRACT

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The present thesis is a study of the black masses in the San Domingo revolution (1791-1804). The first section presents the background to the revolution by which the slaves won their own freedom, as well as national independence. Special attention has been given to marronage (the flight of slaves, and later, the black workers from their plantations) as a form of resistance that persisted throughout the colonial and the revolutionary periods. Other forms of resistance, such as voodoo and poisoning, are also discussed in terms of their relevance to the black struggles at various stages. From 1791 on, the thesis is concerned mainly with the changing nature of these struggles within the broader context of the ongoing development of the revolution itself. A final section is devoted almost entirely to the popular movements in one province--the South. Some attempt has been made, however, to integrate the events that occurred

in the other two provinces throughout the course of the revolution insofar as they bear directly upon developments in the South.

From the outbreak of the northern slave revolt in 1791 to the war for independence (1802-04), I have relied chiefly upon primary sources to individualize the black masses, while the secondary sources have provided the basis for the more general framework of the revolution within which the popular movements emerged.

TO HAITI,

her people, her obscure leaders
and her future

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AN	Archives Nationales (Paris)
Arch. Col.	Archives Coloniales (at AN, Paris)
BSL	Bibliothèque St. Louis de Gonzague (Port-au-Prince)
HCA	High Court of Admiralty (at PRO, London)
NYPL	New York Public Library
PRO	Public Record Office (London)
UFL	University of Florida Libraries (Gainesville)

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And it is to C. L. R. James that I owe not only a personal debt, but also a particular note of thanks for having suggested the topic of the present study. His profound concern for and appreciation of the political

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importance of the "masses" in the world today, combined with his admiration for the pioneering work of George Rudé on "crowds" in history, led him to propose that I attempt a study along roughly similar lines in relation to the black masses of San Domingo. I must also thank him for having made preliminary contacts with various Haitian historians and writers on my behalf.

I should also like to thank for their services the directors and staff of the Archives Nationales and the Société Française du Microfilm in Paris; the Public Record Office in London; and the Inter-Library Loans Office at Concordia University. In addition, Mrs. Jean Hutson, curator of the A. Schomburg Negro Collection (New York Public Library); Ms. Carmen Williams, head librarian of the Rare Books and Manuscripts Department at the University of Florida Libraries; and Frère Lucien, in charge of the Bibliothèque St. Louis de Gonzague have all made a special effort to accommodate my research needs. I also wish to acknowledge the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris for numerous photographic reproductions of maps of San Domingo. (Xerox copies of a few of these are included at the end of the present volume for the convenience of the reader.) Mr. Don McKay graciously offered the services of the Montreal Gazette for the Xerox reproductions.

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INTRODUCTION

Every form of enslavement dictates by necessity the struggle for liberation. It is impelled by the very simple and fundamental human desire for freedom. For thirteen strife and blood-ridden years the black masses of San Domingo were engaged in a life and death struggle to rid themselves not only of their immediate oppressors, the white colonists, but of the imperialist powers of France, Britain and Spain as well. Thus, once the revolution was clearly under way, the struggle of the slave for freedom converged with and necessitated the struggle for national independence, for without independence, the re-establishment of slavery and the rule of the white master were imminent. In this two-fold struggle, the mass of black workers played not only an instrumental, but a leading and often a decisive role.

To date, very little has been written which focuses specifically on the activities, the organizational capacities, the aspirations and the particular character of the masses themselves. Yet this is perhaps not so surprising. It is a difficult enough task in itself, only compounded by the obvious fact that the slaves, the principal actors of the revolution, left no written records of their own. For the majority of them, the ability to read or write was an unknown luxury. They left no memoirs, tracts, pamphlets, nor accounts

of events. Their participation in the revolution was written rather in fire and blood and by the sacrifice of their own lives--by whatever means they could find within their power to devastate and overthrow their white masters. Until recently, historians of the Haitian revolution have treated the masses in a vague, summary fashion, almost as a mere footnote to the roles played by the more distinguished and prominent leaders of the revolution, such as Toussaint Louverture, Dessalines or Christophe. The difficulty and even impossibility, in some cases, of securing precise, conclusive, "statistically valid" information about the activities of the black masses has naturally turned historians of a more scientific bent away from a study which they might consider, at best, an interesting, but precarious venture.

However, this is an aspect of the Haitian revolution that can no longer be brushed aside or ignored, and enough evidence does exist to warrant such a study. Insofar as it has been possible, whether through correspondence, court interrogations, prison records or contemporary accounts of events, I have attempted to individualize the masses, to show who they were, what their aspirations were, and how they were able to organize themselves in active rebellion. In so doing, I have attempted to remove the masses from the abstract realm of mere concept and allow them to emerge as a living reality.

The black masses of San Domingo were, from the moment of their enslavement, in a state of constant rebellion.

Their resistance to the brutality and human degradation of the slave system took many forms, not all of them overt, as in the great armed revolt of 1791, and some of them even self-destructive. Within the system, slaves continually resisted the conditions of their oppression, whether through acts of petty theft, the sabotage of farm implements or the killing of animals on the plantation--an act aimed as much at causing economic loss to the master as the destruction of work equipment which represented for the slave the direct and objective form of his oppression. On another level, however, slave resistance took on more highly organized forms, involving individual as well as collective acts of poisoning, marronage,¹ and the practice of voodoo as a

¹The French word marronage, denoting desertion, is derived from the adjective marron (also used as a noun) used in reference to a runaway or fugitive slave. The actual origin of this word remains disputed. However, the most widely accepted explanation is that it is derived from the Spanish cimarron which means savage (and by extension denotes a primitive state) and is itself derived from the name of an Indian tribe of Panama, les Symarons, that revolted against Spanish domination. Equally plausible is the explanation claiming the derivation of the word from the Spanish marro, meaning flight or escape, or from the French verb marroner, to desert or maroon. For a fuller discussion of other hypotheses printed in Les affiches américaines, in 1786, see Jean Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole, 1972), pp. 381-82. See also, Yvan Debbasch, "Le marronage: essai sur la désertion de l'esclave antillais," Année sociologique 3 (1962 and 1963):1, and Gabriel Debien, Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises: dix-septième au dix-huitième siècles (Basse-Terre: Société d'histoire de la Guadeloupe, 1974), p. 411. For the purposes of this thesis, the word "maroon," as the nearest English equivalent, will be used in reference to les marrons. For the act or state of desertion, the French marronage will be retained.

concerted means for carrying out such acts. In these cases, the slave who rebelled did so not only against the conditions of slavery, but against slavery itself, with the conscious aim of securing his own freedom.

Regarding acts of this nature, a serious point of contention exists between certain historians of the French "school" who maintain that, statistically speaking, the desire for liberty counted for very little among the real causes of marronage, and the Haitian "school" which takes the opposite position by claiming that, although factors relating to the brutal conditions of slavery did play a role, the most basic motive for marronage was the desire of the slave to escape the bondage of slavery itself and thereby to obtain his own freedom. Yvan Debbasch, a French sociologist and one of the first apologists of the former point of view, tried to prove conclusively that the causes which motivated slaves to escape were almost invariably related to the conditions of slavery and rarely, if ever, had anything to do with the lofty, "European," ideal of liberty.

Debbasch based his arguments upon the analysis of a mid-seventeenth century French historian, Dutertre, who, in explaining the causes of marronage, had made a clear distinction between the newly arrived slaves and those born into slavery, and hence already acclimatized to the system. For the newly arrived blacks, one of the major causes of marronage was the nature of the work itself. Not only was it work with which the slave had had little or no previous familiarity, but work imposed upon him by brutal shocks without

transition. Another factor that impelled the new slave to flee was his nostalgia for the land from which he was uprooted. However, the marronage of the creole slave who was born in the island is explained as the effect of either cruel treatment by the master or overseer or of a lack of food and proper nourishment.²

In explaining the feeling of nostalgia, uprootedness and alienation of the new slave who leaves the plantation and becomes a maroon, Debbasch goes beyond Dutertre by treating the phenomenon as a psychotic sickness: "The maroon is a sick person--and he is a maroon precisely because he is sick. His detribalization brought about in him disorders of a psychic nature . . ."³ This state of depression thus impelled the slave to flee and, finally, to end his anguish by committing suicide.⁴ If one accepts Debbasch's argument, one must deny that the fugitive slave who escaped did so of his own accord, that he had an autonomous will, that he was intelligent enough or "civilized" enough to conceive of the idea of liberty and personal freedom. If we were to extend Debbasch's claim, does this mean then that the "acclimatized" slave who does not flee the master and the plantation is psychologically well adjusted and normal? Normal by whose

²Debbasch, "Le marronage," Année sociologique, p. 4.

³Ibid., p. 10. (My translation. Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of French passages throughout the thesis will be those of the present writer.)

⁴Ibid., p. 11.

standards if not those of the slaveholder?⁵

It is by accepting as valid only that liberty which carries with it responsibility and a stake in society that Debbasch is able to deny a true desire to be free on the part of the African maroon who risks his life to flee the shackles of bondage. He is fleeing only because of bad treatment at the hands of a cruel master or overseer, or because of a lack of food, or because he feels uprooted and nostalgic. In short, he is psychotic.

Debbasch also criticized what he saw as a confusion in the Haitian school of thought regarding the question of liberty, a confusion between the initial act of marronage and the actual state of marronage, between the maroon leaders and the masses who left the plantation for reasons other than a desire for liberty and who were often recruited by leaders of maroon bands in order to increase their force in numbers. In other words, it was only after his entry into the community that the fugitive might experience a mental transformation that would enable him to conceive of personal freedom. However, Debbasch assures us that many never even reached that point, often regretted their adventurism and

⁵In only one instance does Debbasch admit to the desire for liberty as a motive for marronage. This is in the case of blacks with a trade and the day laborers who both worked outside of the plantation and therefore held a marginal status between the field laborer and the affranchis, or free blacks and free mulattoes. Thus, their motive for marronage was simply to complete the process of freedom already begun within the slave system and, by gaining a stake in society, could then achieve a socially recognized form of liberty--not "this primitive, uncivilized freedom in the woods or in the mountains . . ." Ibid., p. 21.

ended up by returning to their former state of slavery.⁶

Similarly, in slave conspiracies such as poisoning, he acknowledges the desire for liberty on the part of the leader, but "the evidence indicates that the masses see in the leader less the apostle of liberty--which he surely is-- than the crafty sorcerer from whom they can obtain effective amulets."⁷

It is questionable, however, whether this assertion is entirely correct. To be sure, many a slave who followed such maroon leaders did so out of religious superstition to obtain various amulets believed to endow the possessor with special powers of protection from any evil that might befall him while carrying out his acts. Of the slaves who followed and believed in a maroon leader like Macandal, for example, one may ask, to what end and for what purpose they risked their own security in obtaining the poisonous herbs and potions?⁸ In the general correspondence of the period, one finds evidence that acts of poisoning by slaves were as often carried out against their own kin as against the masters. Yet, these were acts aimed ultimately at damaging the master economically or at preventing the expansion of his operations and thereby controlling their own work conditions. In a letter addressed by a colonist to the Comte

⁶Ibid., pp. 38-39.

⁷Ibid., p. 39.

⁸Macandal was the chief architect of the mass poisonings that ravaged the North during the 1750s. See Ch. 2, pp. 57-60 below.

de Langeron, these motives are clear:

. . . the hatred which slavery aroused in them against us has given rise to extraordinary thoughts of vengeance, the sad effects of which we have suffered in seeing three-quarters of our laborers perish from sicknesses of a cause unknown even to doctors. When we discovered who the followers of Macandal were, they admitted that they had put to death a large number of whites and an even larger number of blacks, and that the only reason they did this was to restrict their masters to a small number of slaves in order to prevent them from undertaking production that would cause them to be overworked.

To this end, many acts of poisoning were carried out against work animals on the plantation as well as against other slaves or against the master and his family.¹⁰

Even in the most extreme case of suicide, one finds a motive which is directed consciously against the master. Regarding slave suicides, Père Labat wrote in 1701: "They destroy themselves, they off-handedly slit their throats for trivial reasons, but most often, they do this to cause trouble for their masters."¹¹ M. de Gallifet, one of the wealthiest slave holders in the North Plain, also observed the same motive: "Last night a slave choked himself to death with his tongue while his master was having him whipped. This happens quite often, as there are slaves who are desperate enough to kill themselves in order to inflict loss upon their masters."¹²

⁹AN, Arch. Col., C9^A 115.

¹⁰See Pierre de Vaissière, Saint-Domingue, 1629-1789: la société et la vie créoles sous l'ancien régime (Paris: Perrin, 1909), p. 245.

¹¹Cited in *ibid.*, p. 230.

¹²AN, Arch. Col., C9^A 5. Also cited in de Vaissière, La société, p. 230.

On the other hand, there is also sufficient evidence that points to a conscious and calculated desire on the part of slaves who obtained various poisons from maroon leaders to secure their own personal freedom. A letter written in 1758, the year in which Macandal was executed, revealed the motive of four slaves arrested for having poisoned their master. These slaves were prompted by "the expectation of enjoying their freedom sooner than they could have hoped for in the testament that their masters had left, and that is what prompted them to cut short their masters' lives by poisoning them."¹³ In the opinion of the colonist writing the letter, this practice, if left unchecked, would lead to the destruction of the colony. The problem, then, could only be remedied by passing a law that, except in the case of a slave noted for "distinguished services," would annul all future acts of liberty granted to slaves by testament.¹⁴ In yet another letter, written one year earlier, additional evidence of the desire for personal liberty in the poisoning of masters is provided, but the blame for this widespread practice is placed upon the decadence of colonial lifestyles: creole women afraid to die with the reputation of being poor if they did not grant freedom to their slaves; or the concubinage of the masters with their negress slaves which eventually assured the freedom of the latter. Thus, given the promises of freedom that were "lavishly accorded

¹³AN, Arch. Col., C9^A 102.

¹⁴Ibid.

by the masters," many a slave was prompted to poison his master and become free by virtue of his testament.¹⁵

In light of these observations, the conclusion reached by Debbasch remains as unsatisfactory as it is one-sided. It is not enough to say that, while some maroon leaders were motivated by the desire for liberty and may even have conceived of plans for a general conspiracy aimed at overthrowing the white masters by poisoning them, nevertheless the mass of slaves who followed them did so only out of religious superstition and without any design for gaining their own freedom. That many slaves did enter marronage to escape inhuman conditions does not negate the desire for liberty which surely existed.

Finally, one concluding remark in Debbasch's discussion of marronage deserves attention. He states that only in the nineteenth century, with the repercussions of philanthropic ideas regarding servile labor, could the concept of liberty have such an effect on the blacks as to push them to desertion and marronage. But here, he says:

We are dealing with a phase of the slave system which we could call pathological. During the normal period of its long existence, it does not seem to us, statistically speaking, that the will for freedom counted for very much as a cause of marronage.¹⁶

One must ask, then, by whose standards and in whose interests one judges slavery as "pathological" or "normal"? If, indeed,

¹⁵AN, Arch. Col., C9^A 100.

¹⁶Debbasch, "Les marrons," Année sociologique, p. 40 (my emphasis).

the desire for liberty was part of the consciousness of the fugitive slave prior to the nineteenth century, can this be anything but a normal reaction to a fundamentally pathological system?

The French historian, Gabriel Debien, has written widely on slavery and plantation systems throughout the French West Indies and provides a far more balanced view of the causes of marronage than his colleague, M. Debbasch. His conclusions remain, nonetheless, tentative and non-committal. In his most recent book, Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises: XVII^e au XVIII^e siècles, Debien summarizes the principal and most evident causes of marronage along the same lines as Debbasch and Dutertre, i.e., cruel treatment on the part of the master as well as the overseer; the fear of punishment following an act of theft against the master; lack of food and a proper diet; insufficient health care; overwork; and, although less frequently, the removal of a slave from one plantation to another.¹⁷ In an earlier work, Plantations et esclaves à Saint-Domingue, he went even further to say that one must look at things as did the planters who, far from considering marronage as a protest against slavery or as a nascent form of social revolt, saw it, rather, as one of the recurrent problems of industrial manpower. In this sense, marronage would be merely an economic liability of slavery, the inevitable effect of unskilled, gang labor. While admitting that marronage could take on the aspect of armed

¹⁷Debien, Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises, p. 463.

revolt, Debien affirms that "this was rare and was by no means its primary characteristic."¹⁸

A few observations may be made here. First, if some colonists saw marronage chiefly as a manpower problem, it was in their own interests to define it as such. They could not afford to admit that the fugitive fled to free himself of slavery and thereby to negate that condition--the very essence of his existence as a slave. To do so would require both a fundamental re-evaluation and a consequent rearrangement of the entire economic base of their wealth and power. No ruling class ever does this gratuitously. It was only when circumstances and events had reached an irreversible stage by 1791 that the colonists were finally, and violently, stripped of their absolute power over the slaves. At that moment, what they never saw, or refused to see in marronage as an impelling desire for freedom, suddenly became a shocking, naked reality.

Secondly, if some colonists saw marronage merely as a manpower problem, an equal number saw it as a force which, if unchecked, threatened to destroy the colony. The contemporary literature, correspondence and administrative records of the colony all reflected this latter fact either implicitly or explicitly. In an extract from the register of the Upper Council of le Cap, one finds this statement, written in 1767:

¹⁸Debien, Plantations et esclaves à Saint-Domingue no. 3 (Dakar: Section d'Histoire, 1962), p. 69.

The slave . . . , inconstant by nature and capable of comparing his present state with that to which he aspires, is incessantly inclined toward marronage. It is his ability to think, and not the instinct of domestic animals who flee a cruel master in the hope of bettering their condition, that compels him to flee. That which appears to offer him a happier state, that which facilitates his inconstance, is the path which he will embrace.¹⁹

Thirdly, to speak of marronage simply in terms of economic liability, or as an inevitable problem of industrial manpower, or to reduce it to "temporary absenteeism," is to patently superimpose the nature of nineteenth and twentieth century industrialism upon the colonial plantation system, virtually to make the slave into a modern industrial worker. The latter is a legally free person; the slave was a slave for life and had no legal status outside that which defined him as property. Thus, marronage was one means of negating that condition and of attaining at least a de facto freedom.

What remains inexplicable for Debien is the flight of slaves from reputedly humane or just masters. These masters often had more maroons than the very harsh ones: "It seems that slaves left without knowing why, without a motive, without a plan, without a forethought--to our eyes. But what do we know about what went on in the slaves' quarters--the hatred, the anger, the vengeance?"²⁰ The question only begs a too obvious answer.

Among the causes of marronage cited by another French

¹⁹AN, Arch. Col., C9^A 131.

²⁰Debien, Les esclaves aux Antilles françaises, p. 465.

historian, François Girod, one finds little more than a simplified repetition of the Dutertre-Debbasch thesis. Girod makes a distinction, delineated more fully in the works of Gabriel Debien, between "small" marronage, i.e., "flights lasting only a day or two, or a week, and which involve only one individual or very small groups," and "big" marronage--"the real thing, the flight of an entire plantation work force with the firm intention of never coming back."²¹

This academic obstinacy and refusal, in the name of "scientific objectivity" to come to terms with marronage in its totality, has been severely criticized by Jean Fouchard, a recent writer of the Haitian "school." His Marrons de la liberté flies directly in the face of such tendencies and, using statistics, provides abundant evidence found in archival sources, contemporary newspapers, literature and correspondence to support his argument that the fundamental desire for liberty was, indeed, among the important causes of marronage. He brings to light the pointlessness of making a distinction between "small" and "big" marronage. In his view, whether marronage was the result of a sudden change of temper in the slave or an actual rebellion against the colonial regime, in each case it came down to nothing less than continual resistance to slavery, under one form or another. Therefore, "how and why dissociate the two?"²²

²¹ François Girod, De la société créole: Saint-Domingue au dix-huitième siècle (Paris: Hachette, 1972), pp. 168-69.

²² Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, p. 38.

In his chapter entitled "Les marrons de la liberté," Fouchard goes to great lengths to defend the Haitian position against the onslaughts of the more scientific pretensions of the French "school." Curiously enough, the type of rigorous statistical analysis and presentation of precise figures that one is led to expect from a writer like Debbasch never appear in his work. Is it not perhaps that the desire for liberty is, by its very nature, an unquantifiable factor? But if unquantifiable, is it therefore to be eliminated a priori from the long history of slave resistance? And by whose justification? Were it not for a long tradition of marronage, motivated out of necessity and by a desire for freedom, how, indeed could the black slave revolution ever have erupted? It is a rhetorical question that Fouchard poses and, the evidence permitting, it is a question that the present study will attempt to answer. One of the purposes of this study, then, is to demonstrate how this revolt was organized and to examine the role of marronage as a significant factor in the stages leading up to the August rebellion and in its execution. The long history of marronage, in addition to other integrally related forms of slave resistance and the events surrounding the 1791 revolt speak for themselves.

It is here that Debien questions a fundamental tenet of the Haitian school regarding the role and nature of marronage, i.e., that this phenomenon contained both the antecedents and general form of the great uprising of 1791

in the North. Debien relies upon a distinction made by contemporaries between "maroons" and the armed slaves that they called "brigands," "rebels" or "insurgents." Yet, if some fugitives were considered maroons, as opposed to brigands, there is no proof that they did not leave the plantation in order precisely to join the brigands. Certainly the brigands or insurgents were themselves maroons. The problem of terminology, it seems, remains a purely academic one. In addition to treating various forms of slave resistance other than marronage, one aim of this study will be to go beyond the limitations imposed by Debien by examining the actual activities of the slaves, be they maroon or brigand, who fought throughout the revolution and to determine whether such a distinction is a valid or merely an artificial one.

* * *

While this study will principally focus on the independent activities of the black masses and the various forms of rebellion which they used both to resist and finally to overthrow the rule of the white masters, to destroy slavery itself and to achieve independence, I have felt it important, nonetheless, to begin with a brief background summary of the social and economic structure of San Domingo. The first chapter of Part One will include a brief discussion of the class and caste relationships that existed prior to the revolution, as well as a general discussion of the plantation system, followed by a section characterizing the black slave

culture at the outset of the revolution (1789-91). Chapter Two will deal almost entirely with the continuity of slave rebellion throughout the eighteenth century. Finally, Part One will end with a short chapter discussing the role of the French revolution in the opening events of the colonial revolution. Here, the French revolution provided the political context within which erupted the revolt of the colonists, the ensuing revolt of the affranchis, or free blacks and free mulattoes, and the continuing struggle of the black slave masses.

From then on, the study will be concerned mainly with the activities--both individual and collective--of the slave masses who participated in and carried out the revolution. Thus, Part Two will begin with a narrative of events in the North and West, and with a shorter account of the South, from the outbreak of the revolt in August 1791 to early 1792.

Part Three will give a more detailed analysis of the masses in a single province and will present a particular picture of the popular movement in the South. Although in much less detail, the politically significant activities of the masses in the North and the West will be chronologically integrated into the discussion of the popular movement in the South from 1792 onward.

The sources used for the general background of Part One consist mainly of manuscript materials, contemporary printed sources and secondary literature which are found in abundance not only at the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris but at the Schomburg Collection of the New York Public

Library, the Bibliothèque St. Louis de Gonzague in Port-au-Prince, as well as at many university libraries throughout North America. In addition, the general correspondence in Series C9^A and C9^B and the F³ series of the Bibliothèque Moreau de St. Méry at the Archives Nationales in Paris provide numerous accounts of slave conspiracies, poisonings, infanticides and other forms of resistance to the slave system. In addition to the manuscript sources mentioned above for the period from 1789 to 1791, one can find an overwhelming mass of primary materials, including the correspondence of the civil commissioners, colonists and affranchis, as well as records of the Colonial Assembly and contemporary pamphlets, in Series DXXV (Colonies) of the Archives Nationales.

I have chosen, however, to devote an entire section of this thesis to a detailed study of the South, and for two main reasons. First, one of the major sources of primary materials relating to the masses (Series DXXV at the Archives Nationales) contains an abundance of documents providing detailed information on the particular activities of individual slaves in the South, be they correspondence, prison records, court interrogations or contemporary eye-witness accounts of specific events. While similar documentation can be found for the North and West, it does not always include the type of information that I used in Chapter Seven, for example, where I was able to analyze the reactions of the black workers to emancipation in the South. Furthermore, the London Public Record Office contains a

wealth of correspondence that gives detailed day to day accounts of the mass uprisings at les Platons in 1792 and the early months of 1793, an insurrection by which some seven hundred slaves achieved their own emancipation. In addition to descriptive accounts of their activities, this correspondence provides us with valuable insights into the general mentality and political attitudes of the slave participants and indicates in many cases the plantations to which they belonged. The second reason for devoting special attention to the South lies in the fact that, while events in the North and West (especially the northern revolt of 1791) have been amply and graphically treated by almost all historians of the Haitian revolution, no adequate or systematic analysis has yet been made of the revolutionary movement of the masses in the South.

To complete the study, I have used military correspondence and, wherever available, official reports and interrogations of the black plantation workers during the war for independence (1802-03). Most of this material is found in the Rochambeau Papers, located at the University of Florida Library.

Finally, the Conclusion will provide a general evaluation of the changing character of the masses throughout the revolution. I will discuss such aspects as: the changing forms of resistance throughout the revolution; the relationship of the masses to leadership; the developing aspirations of

the masses within the context of the overall movement and development of the revolution; changes in allies at various stages of the revolution; and the changing nature of the revolution itself. Wherever possible, similarities and differences between the masses of the South and those of the other two regions will also be treated.

It is my hope that a study of this nature will help not only to fill what has been until very recently a regrettable gap in the overall history of the San Domingo revolution, but that it may also be of some significance to an understanding of the popular revolutionary movements which we in the twentieth century have been witnessing throughout the world.

PART ONE
BACKGROUND TO REVOLUTION

CHAPTER 1

PLANTERS, MULATTOES AND BLACKS

On the eve of the revolution, the island of San Domingo was by far the most flourishing of slave colonies in the Caribbean. The great fortunes amassed by the white colonists, as well as the merchant bourgeoisie of that era, were created by the relentless labor of over half a million black slaves, driven by the whip and controlled by constant fear.

The whites numbered roughly 30,000 people, a mere 5 to 6 percent of the total population.¹ As diverse in their

¹Given the wide degree of variance from one source to another, it is extremely difficult to arrive at statistically precise population figures for San Domingo prior to the revolution. While the most conservative figures place the white population at 30,000, other sources cite the number of whites from 40-42,000. Similarly, population figures for the affranchis vary from the lowest estimate of 24,000 to 37,800, giving a range of variance of well over 10,000. For the black slave population, discrepancies between sources are even more apparent, ranging anywhere from 452,000 at the lowest end to 700,000 at the highest. M. Placide-Justin, in his Histoire politique et statistique de l'île d'Hayti (Paris: Briere, 1826), was inclined to consider the figures for 1789 of the French writer, Ducoeurjoly, as the most accurate: 30,826 whites, 27,548 affranchis, and 465,429 slaves (p. 144). With regard to the black slave population, most figures, taken from official census reports, average between 450,000 and 500,000. Those historians whose estimates of the slave population significantly surpass 500,000 have most likely taken into account a general practice among planters who, for the purposes of tax evasion, never declared the exact number of slaves in their possession, thus rendering official figures far below the reality. See Henri Castonnet des Fosses, La perte d'une colonie: la révolution de Saint-Domingue (Paris: Faivre, 1893), p. 8. See also Michel Descourtilliz, Histoire

origins as in their social and political functions, they dominated in various ways every aspect of colonial life in the island. By virtue of the common bond of superiority which race alone accorded them, the diverse categories of whites in San Domingo formed a distinct and privileged social caste whose authority and control extended not only over the entire mass of black slaves--ten to fifteen times their number, but, as well, over the intermediate sector of colonial society, the affranchis, or free persons of color, whose number nearly equalled that of the white masters.²

Among the whites, the most significant element was that of the colonial planters, for it was upon the plantation system and slave labor that the entire economy and wealth of San Domingo was founded. They were, for the most part, members of the old French rural nobility who, stripped by the monarchy of their traditional political and administrative authority, began emigrating to San Domingo by the mid-eighteenth century. Thus drawn to the island with hopes of replenishing their diminished fortunes, the San Domingo planters constituted, as it were, a transplanted, colonial

des désastres de Saint-Domingue (Paris: Garney, 1795), p. 52. Here, the author also mentions the false declarations made by many colonists in order to reduce their contributory payments, or droits municipaux, thus making it almost impossible to know the exact number of slaves.

²The universally accepted and juridically enforced maxim governing race relations in San Domingo, that "a white is never in the wrong vis-à-vis a black," was equally applied to the affranchis. Descourtilliz, Histoire des désastres, p. 78. See especially, Auguste Lebeau, De la condition des gens de couleur libres sous l'ancien régime (Poitiers: Masson, 1903).

aristocracy. Yet, within this class there were those who were far from noble, either by birth or by title, but who in a society as decadent and disorganized as that of San Domingo, where prestige was paramount, easily usurped noble status by inventing a fictitious past to hide their lowly origins.³

Rarely did one come to San Domingo with the desire to stay any longer than it would take to make a quick fortune. Of the eight thousand plantation owners, as few as three thousand actually resided in the colony.⁴ Simply stated, the first and foremost aim of the planters was to make money, and to make it as quickly as possible, in order to return to France to enjoy the luxuries and comforts that their overseas investments ensured them. Few were the planters who came to San Domingo with the clear intention of permanently settling in the island. Most of the colonists considered themselves as mere travellers in the colony and spoke continually of revisiting or of returning to France within the following year. In fact, a significant portion of the planter class seldom, if ever, set foot on the island.

These planteurs d'occasion, as it were, were represented in the colony either by their agent or a plantation

³M. L. E. Moreau de St. Méry, Description topographique, physique, civile, politique et historique de la partie française de l'île de Saint-Domingue, eds. Blanche Maurel and Etienne Taillemite, 3 vols. (Paris: Société de l'histoire des colonies françaises, 1958), 1:33.

⁴Pierre de Vaissière, La société, p. 300.

manager who kept them more or less informed of production levels, profits, expenses, and the general operations of the plantation. The agent, or procureur, generally a permanent resident in the colony, thus took over full administration of the plantation and assumed all the rights and prerogatives of the owner.⁵ This almost invariably meant harsher treatment for the slave than if the master were present to check the excesses of an over-zealous or often sadistic overseer.⁶

For the colonial planter, life was generally one of monotony and isolation, compensated by sheer dissipation and indulgence.⁷ The arrogance and conceit of the white planter was sustained by surrounding himself with a swarm of domestic slaves to satisfy his every need, want or caprice. Indeed, the most visible sign of wealth and the most flagrant

⁵Descourtillat, Histoire des désastres, pp. 76-78.

⁶Relations between master and slave were broadly regulated by the Edict of 1685, known as the Black Codes, which attempted to provide minimal protection for the slave against the unwarranted barbarism and inhumanity of a master or overseer. Although provision was made for the slaves to bring such cases to court, rarely did the local government intervene in such matters, leaving relations between master and slave, or between overseer and slave, to the discretion of the master. The Church, the only other institution potentially capable of exercising a civilizing influence in the treatment of slaves, was equally as corrupt and irresponsible as the courts. See C. L. R. James, The Black Jacobins (New York: Vintage, 1963), p. 32. The Church itself was among the largest of slave-owning landholders in the colony. (Placide-Justin, Histoire politique, pp. 132-33.)

⁷de Vaissière, La société, p. 216 passim.

indication of superiority consisted in the number of domestic slaves at one's disposal, for, "the dignity of a rich man consisted in having four times as many domestics as he needed."⁸ Yet, this extravagance merely contributed to the boredom and social alienation of the typical planter, separated by some ten to thirteen miles of deplorable roads from the nearest plantation.

Whatever social life existed in San Domingo was to be found in the two principal cities of le Cap and Port-au-Prince where the cultural and intellectual activities of the colony were centered. Although attempting to imitate French culture, the cities were nonetheless vulnerable to local habit, debauchery and decadent life styles. For the rural planter, social life thus centered invariably around his business: his slaves, his sugar, his cotton, his coffee, his profits.

These planters, as well as their white counter-parts in the cities--the great merchants of the French maritime bourgeoisie and the French-born bureaucrats--were collectively known in the island as the grands blancs. At the head of the bureaucracy were the Governor and the Intendant, both appointed by the King as his official representatives and charged with the functions and control of colonial administration. Together they represented the absolute authority of the King, against which there was no recourse, and thus created a constant source of bitterness for the

⁸Moreau de St. Méry, Description topographique, 1:33.

colonists. The planters hated them for their arrogant, despotic pretensions and were only further frustrated by the special privileges and protection accorded to the merchant bourgeoisie.

Alongside the grands blancs in city and country were the lower and middle class whites who, as plantation managers, procureurs and overseers in the country, were known as petits blancs. In the towns, they occupied positions as small lawyers, shopkeepers, retail merchants, grocers, and tradesmen, the latter usually being carpenters or masons. Also among the urban "small" whites were a whole host of vagabonds, petty criminals, debtors, and soldiers-of-fortune who flocked to San Domingo where, whatever their background or origin, the single privilege of race could elevate the most despicable to a position of social respectability.⁹

One historian has argued that, despite the social and economic differences which separated the planters from the petits blancs, these differences played a relatively minor role since they were subsumed under the one unifying factor of race prejudice, tying together all the diverse sections of the white population.¹⁰ This is perhaps an over-

⁹It was within this section of white society that the official bureaucracy sought support as a counter-balance to the planter aristocracy. Although neither birth, function nor tradition made them an integral part of San Domingo society, they nonetheless periodically served the interests of the royal bureaucracy in maintaining its political control over the rural planters. Thus, where political questions of jurisdiction and administration came into play, a mutual contempt persisted between grands blancs and petits blancs. James, The Black Jacobins, p. 36.

¹⁰Castonnet des Fosses, La perte, p. 10.

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simplification. Race prejudice was fiercely practiced by all whites against the mulattoes and the blacks, but this in itself did not produce a coherent and solid white bloc, either before or during the revolution. The petits blancs hated the planters for their wealth and prestige. The planters hated the bureaucrats for their political power, and when the interests of the two groups clashed, it was the petits blancs who provided the support for the bureaucrats. Moreover, the colonial planters bitterly despised the metropolitan bourgeoisie by whom, because of their special commercial privileges, they felt unjustly exploited.

But beneath them all were the free mulattoes and free blacks who constituted an intermediary caste between the whites and the slaves. Although declared legally free, in San Domingo society they existed in a state of public bondage, or as "public property, and, as such, [were] exposed to the whims of every white."¹¹

Due to the widespread practice of concubinage by the white masters with their female slaves, followed by the eventual grants of freedom to the offspring of such unions, the gens de couleur libres were, by the mid-eighteenth century, nearly as numerous as the whites. Through industry and thrift, they had made tremendous economic gains and had accumulated fortunes which rivalled and in some cases even surpassed those of the whites. They imitated white manners, became plantation owners, were often educated in France and

¹¹Placide-Justin, Histoire politique, p. 143.

in turn, sent their own children abroad to be educated. Only through repressive social legislation could the whites of San Domingo hope to maintain their privileges and prerogatives against the encroachments and social advancement of the affranchis.

By 1776, at least three hundred white planters were already married to women of color. The following year a memoir from the King sent to the Intendant and the Governor of Martinique clearly stated the policy of the metropolis concerning the state of the affranchis in the French colonies:

The gens de couleur are either free or slave: The free are affranchis and descendants of affranchis: however far removed they may be from their origins, they retain forever the imprint of slavery.¹²

Such were the general principles preventing any possible assimilation of the affranchis with the whites.

Strictly forbidden to hold any public office in the colony, they were equally forbidden to practice law, medicine, pharmacy and certain privileged trades such as that of goldsmith.¹³ Through repressive legislation of this sort, whites sought to establish insurmountable barriers to frustrate the social aspirations of the gens de couleur libres

¹² Cited in Lebeau, De la condition, p. 4.

¹³ The restriction of the affranchis in the case of practicing medicine or pharmacy obviously arose from the white colonists' fears--at times reaching hysterical proportions--of poisoning, a common practice among slaves anxious to exact vengeance on their masters. Equally forbidden for women of color was the practice of midwifery, given the shocking incidence of infant mortality due to "mysterious" causes when childbirth was undertaken by a slave midwife.

and prevent their assimilation on an equal basis. Yet, at the same time, they exploited the affinity of the affranchis to white society and their consequent contempt for their black origins by requiring that all gens de couleur libres serve for three years in the maréchaussée, a local law-enforcing body chiefly occupied with hunting down and capturing runaway slaves.¹⁴

Given colonists' fears of slave conspiracy, they were denied the right to freely assemble in public for any reason whatsoever, be it for a wedding, for a public dance or any other festivity. This was punishable by a fine of 300 livres for the first offense and the loss of freedom for subsequent offenses. The gens de couleur libres also risked losing their freedom if caught sheltering or in any way aiding a fugitive slave.

The mulattoes and free blacks were equally forbidden to engage in games of chance, to travel to or enter France. They were forbidden to take the name of their former master and natural parent. Fear of assimilation even went to the extent of severely regulating their mode of attire in the colony. Nor did this fear of assimilation end here. So intense was race prejudice and white supremacy that it carried over even after death, as mulattoes and free blacks were buried in separate cemeteries or a special section of a

¹⁴AN, C9^B 29. Extrait d'une mémoire sur la création d'un corps de gens de couleur levé à Saint-Domingue en mars 1779.

cemetery reserved for the gens de couleur libres. In short, about "the only privilege the whites allowed them was the privilege of lending white men money."¹⁵

Yet, they were legally obliged to display the utmost respect for the arrogance and contempt which whites not uncommonly displayed toward them. A mulatto who publicly struck a white person whether in retaliation, in self-defense or for any other reason, could be punished by having his right arm cut off. For the same offense, a white would get off with a small fine.¹⁶

The social dictum governing race relations in the colony, that "a white person is never in the wrong vis-à-vis a black", applied equally to mulattoes who, in spite of their freedom from the institution of slavery, never escaped the opprobrium of their black origins.

But the great mass of the population were the black slaves, and it was upon them and their labor that the tremendous wealth of the colonial planters, as of the wealthy French bourgeoisie, was built. It was upon their continuing labor, as slaves, that this wealth depended.

Figures for the exact number of plantations vary from

¹⁵James, The Black Jacobins, p. 41. For a detailed and fully documented study of the wide range of social and political restrictions against the affranchis, restrictions embracing nearly every conceivable aspect of society, see Lebeau, De la condition. See also Beauvais Lespinasse, Histoire des affranchis de Saint-Domingue, 2 vols. (Paris: Kugelman, 1882), vol. 1.

¹⁶Thomas Ott, The Haitian Revolution (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1973), p. 12.

one source to another; the average is somewhere around 7,000, including nearly 800 sugar plantations, 2,434 coffee, 3,265 indigo, 747 cotton, and some 50 cocoa plantations.¹⁷ According to one source, the total property value of San Domingo surpassed 1.6 billion livres.¹⁸ Official government reports reveal that, by 1789, the value of colonial exports to France, i.e., sugar, coffee, cocoa, indigo, cotton, and some hides, reached roughly 218 million livres, while that of imports from the metropolis to the islands, such as flour, meat, wine and textiles, totalled 78 million livres.¹⁹ However, of the 218 million livres which France imported from her colonies, only 71 million were domestically consumed, the rest being exported to the markets of Europe and elsewhere after having been turned into finished goods.²⁰ Thus, one may safely say that the colonies not only contributed to the development of French industry, but supported a sizeable portion of her international trade, as well.

To assure maximum economic benefits for the metropolis,

¹⁷See Gabriel Debien, Les colons de Saint-Domingue et la révolution (Paris: Armand Colin, 1953), p. 50. Castonnet des Fosses, La perte, p. 8. See also Jean Jaurès, Histoire socialiste de la révolution française, ed. Albert Soboul, 7 vols. (Paris: Editions sociales, 1968), 1:126. The figures given above are an average of those cited in these sources.

¹⁸Castonnet des Fosses, La perte, p. 8.

¹⁹Debien, Les colons, p. 50. See also Castonnet des Fosses, La perte, and Jaurès, Histoire Socialiste.

²⁰Léon Deschamps, Les colonies pendant la révolution (Paris: Perrin, 1898), p. 5. Also cited in Jaurès, Histoire socialiste, 1:127.

the colonial trade was carefully and rigorously controlled by a French mercantile policy known as the Exclusive. Under the Exclusive, all manufactured goods consumed by the colonists were imported from France. By the same token, all exports of raw materials from the colony were to be sold exclusively to France and to be sent exclusively aboard French ships.

Sugar, one of the chief colonial staples, supplied and supported the sugar refineries of Orléans, Dieppe, Bordeaux, de Bercy-Paris, Nantes and Marseilles. In the Bordeaux suburbs alone, some sixteen refineries had been in operation by the mid-eighteenth century and, as early as 1740 were refining a yearly average of 50 shiploads of raw sugar weighing roughly 200 tons each.²¹ Thus, in addition to sugar refining, shipbuilding rapidly became one of the most flourishing of Bordeaux' industries, particularly after mid-century. Between 1763 and 1778 an average of sixteen ships per year, representing a total cargo capacity of 4,900 tons, were being built to furnish not only direct trade between the colonies and the metropolis, but the highly lucrative and equally odious slave trade, as well.²² This whole state of affairs may be summed up in the famous observation of Jaurès:

Sad irony of human history! The fortunes created at Bordeaux or at Nantes by the slave trade gave to the bourgeoisie that pride which demanded liberty and contributed to human emancipation.²³

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid., p. 130.

²³Ibid., p. 141.

In 1787 alone, the French slave trade involved some 92 ships, carrying 30,889 African blacks and producing nearly 42 million livres in profits from a total investment in goods of only 17 million.²⁴ Even as early as 1666, figures ran roughly parallel. According to Jaurès, in this year 108 ships were sent to the Guinea coast carrying 37,430 blacks at an average of 1,000 livres each, representing a market value in human merchandise of 37 million livres.²⁵

Yet the most important source of wealth for the maritime bourgeoisie lay in the area of finance capital. The huge banking houses of Bordeaux, Nantes and Marseilles provided the needed capital for shipowner and colonial planter alike. Indeed, most of the colonial planters established themselves in San Domingo only through loans from the négo-
ciants and remained almost perpetually in debt to them.²⁶ As creditors to the San Domingo planters, the finance bourgeoisie of these commercial centers provided perhaps their most substantial source of economic activity.

Strongly favoring the maritime bourgeoisie, the mercantile policy of the Crown thus both encouraged and sustained the growth of what Jaurès loosely called a "colonial capitalist aristocracy", leaving the San Domingo planter virtually in a state of political and economic

²⁴Deschamps, Les colonies, pp. 19-20.

²⁵Jaurès, Histoire socialiste, 1:141.

²⁶Deschamps, Les colonies, p. 25. See also Gaston-Martin, L'ère des négriers: 1714-1774 (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1931), p. 375.)

dependence upon the metropolis. From this situation arose deep hostilities between planter and négociant. Generally speaking, relations between the négociants and the colonists might, on the surface, be cordial when their interests happened to coincide, but basically, these two groups remained on bad terms, and their relations marked by hostility.²⁷

By 1789, every sector of colonial society was in a state of unrest--slave against master, mulatto against white, "small" white against "big" white, both of the latter, at various times, against the local administration and especially the French bourgeoisie. While alliances might be made between groups against a common enemy, such alliances were occasional and of short duration, to serve only immediate interests. On the eve of the revolution, each group had its own demands, and each represented its own interests which arose out of the specific conditions and contradictions of class and caste.

But once the revolution had opened, it was the great mass of black slaves themselves who would deliver the decisive death blow to colonial San Domingo. When they revolted in full force, in 1791 and onward, the whole system as it stood crumbled into pieces impossible to put together again. Seventeen nintey-one was the climax of a long and deep-rooted tradition of resistance under many forms, some overt, some covert, some individual, and some collective, some even potentially self-destructive. In conjunction with the impact

²⁷Ibid., p. 370.

and influence of the French revolution which provided the historical conditions for the opening of a full scale revolution in San Domingo, the traditional resistance of the black masses reached a new and irreversible stage in its development. It was through their efforts and their often spontaneous activities throughout the revolution, far more than the legislative decrees of France, that they won their own freedom and became a politically independent nation.

* * *

Legally, the slave was the private property of his owner, nothing more nor less than an economic unit of production--subject at all times to the needs, wants, desires and often unpredictable temperament of the master, upon whom his life and death ultimately depended. Simply stated, slavery was a system of forced labor for life, regimented by the whip and controlled by fear.

For the slave, work on the plantation began at sunrise--in general this meant at five or six o'clock in the morning--and did not end until well after nightfall. Day after day, the slave continued to labor under the blistering sun with the terror of the whip as an ever-present reminder of the master's tyranny. Girod-Chantrons, a Swiss traveller of the time, relates that

On one sugar plantation the slaves numbered roughly one hundred men and women of all ages, all engaged in digging ditches in the cane fields [in preparation for the planting of the sugar cane], most of them naked or dressed in rags. Their arms and legs,

worn out by excessive heat, by the weight of their picks and by the resistance of the hardened, clayey soil that continually caused their tools to break, nevertheless made tremendous efforts to overcome all obstacles. A dead silence reigned among them. In their faces, one could see the human suffering and pain which they endured, but the time for rest had not yet come. The merciless eye of the plantation steward watched over the fields and, armed with whips, viciously lashed out at those who, too weary to sustain the pace, were forced to slow down. Men, women, young and old alike--none escaped the crack of the whip if they could not keep up the pace.²⁸

What little time the slave had for rest was consumed by other types of work. By law, the slave was granted two hours per day for rest at noon, as well as Sundays and holidays. On most plantations, slave families were allotted a small piece of land on which to grow their food. Cultivation of their garden, upon which they were often totally dependent for their subsistence, could only be undertaken on Sundays and holidays, or in the meagre time remaining after preparation of the midday meal. On plantations where a piece of land was not provided, slaves were generally required to work Sundays in addition.

At two o'clock, the slaves were promptly brought back to the fields by the menacing crack of the overseer's whip and continued the same excruciating labor until sundown, and sometimes even long after. On many plantations, slaves were forced at the end of the day to gather feed for the draft animals, often having to travel considerable distances from the plantation. Finally, the day's work for the master

²⁸Cited in de Vaissière, La société, pp. 167-8.

over, firewood had to be gathered and dinner, consisting of beans and manioc, or a few potatoes but rarely, if ever, any meat or fish, had to be prepared. The workday was thus prolonged to nearly midnight before a semblance of rest finally came, creating an average of 14 to 16 hours' work per day on some plantations, and 18 to 19 on others.

On the sugar plantations, work followed an almost complete 24-hour schedule and continued throughout the night. Organized in shifts, weary-eyed slaves tended to the mills and watched over the boilers in which the sugar cane was melted down. Maintenance of the boilers was perhaps the most dangerous of all the operations on the sugar plantation. Undertaken at night, it was not uncommon that a slave, already physically exhausted and unable to stay awake, would lose a hand or an arm, either in the fire, or while placing bundles of cane into the boiler.²⁹ However, the type of work, the rhythm of production and the severity of labor in which a slave was involved varied both according to seasons and the type of plantation on which he worked. While the sugar plantations were by far the worst, the fate of the slave, wherever he worked, depended entirely upon the will and whims of the master.

From the age of fourteen, youths were enrolled in the regular work of the large plantation, where they continued their labor until the age of sixty. Rare, indeed, was the

²⁹M. Frossard, La cause des esclaves nègres, 2 vols. (Lyons: Aimé de la Roche, 1789), 1:322-23.

slave that ever survived long enough to reach that age!

Women were treated no differently, except for a brief reprieve when pregnant or while nursing a new-born.³⁰

Herded together in what were known as the cases à nègres, or slave quarters, families lived in mud huts, one next to the other, row upon row, at some distance from the master's mansion. The huts were, on the average, no more than 25 feet long, 12 wide and 15 high, with one or two partitions in the interior. There were no windows and no ventilation, with the exception of a single door. Narrow straw cots of a rudimentary, makeshift sort, only slightly elevated above the bare earth floors, served as beds. Crowded together in these confines, father, mother and children all slept indiscriminately.

Sundays and holidays, for those slaves fortunate enough to have produced a small surplus from their gardens, meant market day, and they were allowed to sell their produce in town, if a town happened to be nearby, usually at a distance of several miles, if not more, from the plantation. However, the practice of allotting small pieces of land for personal cultivation to the slaves was never a legally recognized system and was not necessarily the rule on all

³⁰Generally a woman worked in the fields until the sixth month of her pregnancy, after which she was allowed to perform somewhat lighter tasks. Shortly after childbirth, she returned to the fields and resumed her work as before, albeit at an interrupted pace for the eighteen-month nursing period. See Albert Savine, Saint-Domingue à la veille de la révolution: Souvenirs du Baron de Wimpffen, ed. Louis Michaud (Paris: 1911), p. 95.

plantations. In this case, the master would be required to supply the minimum food rations stipulated in the Black Codes of 2-1/2 pots of manioc and either 2 pounds of salt beef or 3 pounds of fish per week.³¹ Rarely, if ever at all, were any of the Codes governing the conditions of the slaves enforced in San Domingo. In reality, an average slave's diet provided by the master to sustain an entire day's work amounted to little more than seven or eight boiled potatoes and a little water.³²

Under slavery ". . . all is a question of practice; the will of the master is everything. It is from his will, and his will alone, that the slave may expect misery or well-being."³³ In general, slaves were both underfed and undernourished. It was a common practice for slaves to steal chickens or a few potatoes from the master, even at the risk of severe punishment. One historian notes how a slave woman, for having stolen a duck, received fifty lashes of the whip, had spiced lemon juice rubbed over her wounds, was chained to a post and remained there to expiate her "crime."³⁴ M. de Gallifet, one of the wealthiest planters of the North Plain, stated the case bluntly when he wrote, in 1702, that "Negroes steal at night because they are not fed by their masters."³⁵ By 1784,

³¹ de Vaissière, La société, p. 172.

³² Adolphe Cabon, Histoire d'Haïti, 4 vols. (Port-au-Prince: Editions de la Petite Revue, 192?-1940), 2:537.

³³ Ibid., 1:176.

³⁴ Frossard, La cause, 1:341.

³⁵ Cited in Savine, Sainte-Domingue à la veille, p. 30.

over eighty years later, nothing had changed. The Baron de St. Victor, in a prophetic statement, related that

... three quarters of the masters do not feed their slaves and rob almost all of them of the time provided them by law for rest. It is too much, and sooner or later these unfortunates will be driven into the horror of desperation."³⁶

Slavery was a system controlled and sustained by fear. Punishment, often surpassing the human imagination in its grotesque refinements of barbarism and torture, was often the order of the day. Only with the advent of the Black Codes in 1685 were certain written restrictions placed upon the masters to limit the extent of their brutality. It recognized whipping as the single right of the master over the slave in administering punishments and left other forms, such as torture, mutilation, hanging, and the like, in the hands of the courts.³⁷ It was not until 1786, one century later, that the number of blows a master could deliver or have delivered by the overseer or the slave driver, was limited to fifty.³⁸ This, moreover, was heralded as an enlightened, humanitarian measure and a step forward in master-slave relations. The Black Codes also gave the slave the right to bring his master before the court in

³⁶Ibid., p. 30, n. 1.

³⁷The French used a more precise term for whipping: tailler, which means to cut, to hew, or to cut to pieces: ". . . and, effectively, the whip gashed open (entaillait) the skin." de Vaissière, La société, p. 190.

³⁸See ibid., pp. 182-86.

cases where he failed to fulfill his obligations to him or where he surpassed his legally defined authority in administering a punishment. In reality, however, law remained as it always had been, in the hands of the individual slaveholder: The fate of the slave depended entirely upon the character and personality of the master, and slaveowners commonly and consistently flouted the limitations--odious in themselves--prescribed by the Black Codes.

The barbarism of the white masters left nothing to the imagination. Some, while administering the whip, would stop, place a burning piece of wood on the slave's buttocks, rendering the subsequent blows all the more painful, and then continue. Common was the practice of pouring pepper, salt, lemon, ashes or quicklime on the slave's open and bleeding wounds, under the pretext of cauterizing the skin, while at the same time increasing the torture. Other examples exist of slaves being thrown into hot ovens and consumed by fire; or of being tied to a skewer above an open fire, there to roast to death; or of having white-hot slats applied to the soles of their feet and ankles, this being repeated hour after hour. There were masters who would stuff a slave with gunpowder--like a cannon--and blow him to pieces. Women had their sexual parts burned by a smouldering log; others had hot wax splattered over hands, arms and backs or boiling cane syrup poured over their heads.

Some masters preferred the art of direct mutilation. They would hang a slave by his ears, mutilate a leg, pull

his teeth out, open his side and pour melted lard into the incision or mutilate his genital organs. Still others used the torture of live burial, whereby the slave, in the presence of the rest of the slaves who were forced to bear witness, was made to dig his own grave. Some would have a slave buried up to his neck, his head coated with sugar and left to the flies to be devoured, while others managed to invent insidious variations.

Less refined cruelties, but none the less ghastly, included locking up slaves in barrels, dragging them by horses, making them eat their own excrements and drink their urine. Those slaves who dared to run away faced having a foot cut off or being whipped to death when caught and returned. The insanity of those masters who engaged in such cruelties was limitless. One young planter cut the ears of six slaves that his father had given him in such a way as to be able to tell them apart; another literally precipitated himself upon a slave, like a mad dog, tearing his skin apart with his teeth.³⁹

Of course, not all masters indulged in such excesses of cruelty and sadism. There were good masters, and there were bad ones. But the point is not to determine whether slavery was, after all, a good or bad system. The unalterable fact remained that a master, no matter how benevolent, was

³⁹ All of the above examples are cited and amply documented in *ibid.*, pp. 190-94. Frossard, *La cause*, 1:335-42. Cabon, *Histoire d'Haïti*, 2:534-36. They are also cited and discussed in James, *The Black Jacobins*, pp. 12-14.

still master, with absolute rights over the slave, his property. And as property, slaves could be indiscriminately sold, bartered, purchased, families broken up, wives separated from husbands, mothers and fathers separated from their children. It was a system which robbed them of the most basic of all things--their own freedom before law and before society as human beings.

Even on those plantations where slaves were reasonably well cared for by eighteenth-century standards and where masters were less barbaric in their treatment of slaves, there reigned nevertheless the imperative element of fear. St. Foäche, one of the largest and wealthiest plantation owners in the colony, makes this clear in his Instructions to the managers of his several sugar plantations.⁴⁰ The Instructions set down basic minimum standards of health care, hygiene, nutrition and housing relative to the slaves, as well as specific instructions regarding methods of working the slaves and of administering punishments.

Given the excessive indulgence in cruelty of many masters, his guidelines on punishment might even seem humane by comparison. Basically, however, they reveal a highly calculated, highly rationalized kind of madness and underscore

⁴⁰The Instructions cover the last two decades preceding the revolution and date from the 1770's, excerpts of which are included in Debien, Plantations et esclaves, pp. 117-31. The Instructions also provide clear and abundant insights into the various aspects of plantation organization as well as the particular role and relationship of the commandeurs (slave drivers) to the mass of slaves. The commandeur was himself a slave.

the master mentality. Concerned with the smooth and disciplined functioning of the plantation, it was necessary that one develop the "art" of executing punishments:

Slow punishments make a greater impression than quick or violent ones. Twenty-five lashes of the whip administered in a quarter of an hour, interrupted at intervals to hear the cause which the unfortunate always pleads in his defense, and resumed again, continuing in this fashion two or three times, are far more likely to make an impression than fifty administered in five minutes and less a danger to his health. This objective is especially important for serious punishments. Woe to him who punishes with pleasure. He who does not know how to punish is unfit to command.⁴¹

While defenders of slavery claimed that those masters who indulged in sadistic and barbaric treatment of their slaves were the rare exception in San Domingo and were, in any case, socially and politically ostracized by their class, the facts prove otherwise. The most blatant example is that of the Le Jeune case in 1788.

Le Jeune was a wealthy coffee plantation owner from Plaisance, in the North Plain. He believed that his slaves were being killed off by poison and had put to death four of his slaves who he suspected were responsible. Two other women were mercilessly tortured by fire while being interrogated. Le Jeune thereafter threatened to kill all of his slaves who spoke French if they tried to denounce him before the courts. But, in defiance of these menacing threats, fourteen of Le Jeune's slaves went to le Cap to register an official complaint against their master's barbaric behavior.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 119.

Two magistrates of the state went to the plantation to investigate the matter, only to find the allegations of the fourteen confirmed. The two slave women, barely alive, were still in chains, their legs so badly burned they were already decomposing.

All the evidence pointed against Le Jeune, and the case against him was even further strengthened by the subsequent death of the two women. Le Jeune took quick measures to flee before he could be arrested. The fourteen slaves were again called upon to testify and insistently stuck to the letter of their original accusations.

Support for Le Jeune came swiftly. Every influential sector of white society was solidly ranged behind him. The concluding remarks of the Governor and Intendant summed up the case: ". . . it seems, in a word, that the security of the colony depends upon the acquittal of Le Jeune." Not a single judge or magistrate wanted the responsibility of condemning Le Jeune, regardless of the incontrovertible evidence against him. Finally, after a long delay, the judges rendered a negative verdict, acquitting Le Jeune and rendering the case against him null and void.⁴²

Was this merely an isolated case? Or was it but one example among a multitude of crimes committed and condoned by the whites against slaves? In the first place, the government of the colony, on principle, rarely intervened in

⁴²The full account of the Le Jeune case is presented in de Vaissière, La société, pp. 186-88.

master-slave relations. Moreover, slaves were held in fear of punishment and torture if they dared to publicly denounce their master. Thus, official cases on record were few. In addition, the dossiers of such cases were conveniently burned every five years.⁴³

The Le Jeune case provides insight into the class and race interests at stake in San Domingo society and belies the precarious position in which the masters found themselves, a position which necessitated and invariably evoked white solidarity in its defense, especially in the most shocking and incriminating of cases. Not only did the Le Jeune affair exonerate those masters whose inhumanity flew in the face of already inhuman practices and standards, but it gave further proof of the utter futility of slave attempts to bring a master to account for his deeds. The Black Codes remained, as they always were, a dead letter. The generally accepted and practiced principle in the colony was that a white can never be in the wrong vis-à-vis a black, thus placing absolute authority over the slaves in the hands of the masters and sanctioning this tyranny through the complicity of the legal and judicial system.

What limited freedom the slaves enjoyed was to be found within their own popular culture. At night, or on Sundays or holidays, when not working, slaves freely expressed another side of their personality. The Baron de Wimpffen, who took the trouble to observe and to listen to slaves when

⁴³Ibid., p. 189.

they were assembled together, away from the master and the overseer, remarked with astonishment the dynamic nature of the slave personality:

One has to hear with what enthusiasm, with what precision of ideas and accuracy of judgement, this creature, gloomy and taciturn during the day, now squatting before his fire, tells stories, talks, gesticulates, reasons, expresses opinions, approves or condemns both his master and all those around him.⁴⁴

As workers, slaves knew their own inherent worth. One anecdote, cited by de Wimpffen, reveals in all its utter simplicity this self-recognition and self-affirmation. Preaching from the pulpit in front of a large congregation of slaves, one priest declared that everything they had came from God. As he went on to enumerate vegetables, fruits and all other crops for which they were indebted and owed thanks to God, an elderly black rose up and shouted out: "That's mockery, Father Boutin. If I hadn't planted them myself, they would never have grown."⁴⁵

Slaves brought with them to the New World their natural and acquired capacities. Many were highly educated and skilled members of their communities in Africa; some even were of African royalty. Farmer, instructor, craftsman, priest, artist, serf and king alike--all were reduced to the common status of slave in San Domingo. Numerous slaves, considered illiterate by the undiscerning white, could read

⁴⁴Savine, Saint-Domingue à la veille, p. 147.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 94, n. 1. De Wimpffen's only comment was that this was the extent of their intelligence.

and write their own language and were fully educated in their own culture.⁴⁶ It was this heritage that managed, in spite of all, to survive the onslaughts of slavery that led the colonist Hilliard d'Auberteuil to write of the slaves in 1784: "No species of men has more intelligence," after which his book was banned.⁴⁷

One of the favorite leisure-time activities of slaves, practiced with passion and fervor, was dancing. The calenda, the most popular dance, involved young and old alike, even small children barely able to walk.⁴⁸ The various dances which slaves so voraciously indulged in had their origins in Africa and were a fundamental part of the cultural heritage they brought with them to the colony. The dances served, first, as cultural ties, uniting all those of common origin: "Each nation displayed its own originality, and the dancer, eager to sustain the prestige of his race, would solicit the approval of the spectators in its favor."⁴⁹

But not all dances went on openly. Voodoo, both a dance and a religion, was expressly forbidden in the French colonies, and, from the very beginning, the colonists tried

⁴⁶See Jean Fouchard, Les marrons du syllabaire (Port-au-Prince: Imp. Henri Deschamps, 1953), pp. 15-18.

⁴⁷James, The Black Jacobins, p. 18. See also, Gabriel Debien, "Gens de couleur libre et colons devant la Constituante", Revue d'histoire de l'Amérique française 4 (sept. 1950): 228, n. 50.

⁴⁸de Vaissière, La société, p. 178.

⁴⁹Cited in Cabon, Histoire d'Haïti, 2:538.

in vain to crush it.⁵⁰ It had survived under slavery for over two hundred years and had become, by the eve of the revolution, a far more volatile and formidable force than ever before. Practiced and sustained in secrecy, voodoo was a cult into which one could enter only by initiation. Among the initiated, it served to bind more closely the loose psychological ties arising out of the common experience of organized plantation labor and the material conditions of their existence under slavery, raising them to a form of collective consciousness.

One voodoo dance which held a particularly prominent place in the general practice of voodoo was the danse à Don Père, introduced into the colony around 1768 and bearing the name of its originator.⁵¹ Coming from the Spanish part of the island, Don Père established his sect at Petit-Goâve, in the South Province, which served as a base from which to propagate his influence throughout the colony.⁵² The dance was far more violent in its movements than other voodoo dances. With eyes fixed downward while drinking tafia reputedly mixed with gunpowder, the dancers would enter into a state of frenzy, producing what observers described as epileptic-like contortions, and would continue dancing until near or total exhaustion. During the ceremony,

⁵⁰ For a more detailed description of voodoo as religion, see p. 30ff. below.

⁵¹ Also referred to as Don Pedro, Don Petro, or even, Dompète.

⁵² Hénock Trouillot, Introduction à une histoire du vaudoo (Port-au-Prince: Imp. des Antilles, 1970), p. 46.

a pact was made among all participants, committing them to secrecy, solidarity and the vow of vengeance.⁵³

Voodoo was, however, more than merely a ceremonial dance, bent on vengeance. It was a religion, and, as such, played a vital role in the daily lives and general world view of its adherents. During the ceremonies, slaves often called upon the various gods, or loa, for spiritual comfort, guidance, protection from misfortune and cures for their sicknesses, as well as vengeance against their oppressors.⁵⁴ The French anthropologist Alfred Métraux relates, in the words of a present day Haitian peasant woman, a statement which sums up for him what voodoo devotees expect from their gods:

The loa love us, protect us and watch over us. They show us what is happening to our relatives living far away, and they tell us what medicines will do us

⁵³This blood pact was most likely of Dahomean origin. As practiced in ancient Dahomey, the Danhomènou would never confide secrets, provide mutual assistance, engage in important commercial affairs or covert plots, would never sacrifice themselves for another "unless they had first sworn their trust, discretion, sincerity, loyalty and devotion in contracting the blood pact." Moreover, this pact obligated those who partook to subordinate the interests of family and friends to those of the circle of "blood friends." Finally, the blood pact, far from producing the mysterious effect generally attributed to various potions, created, rather, a spirit of unshakeable solidarity, unlimited trust and utmost discretion regarding agreements made in the name of the pact. Paul Hazoumé, Le pact du sang au Dahomey (Paris: Institut d'Ethnologie, 1937), Ch. 1.

⁵⁴Voodoo, generally referred to as the worship of these deities, is actually a word of Dahomean origin, meaning "spirit" or "god." Alfred Métraux, Haiti: Black Peasants and Their Religion, trans. Peter Lengyel (London: Harrap and Co., 1960), p. 59.

good when we are sick. If we are hungry, they appear to us in a dream and say: "Don't despair, you will soon earn some money," and the money comes.⁵⁵

Métraux hastens to suggest that "she might, however, have added: 'The loa inform us of the plots being hatched by our enemies.'"⁵⁶

Although Métraux' study is based on twentieth century practices in Haiti, it nevertheless provides useful insights into a religion whose basic elements have largely remained unaltered and which occupied such an important place in the lives of most slaves. It has the further advantage of treating voodoo from a purely anthropological point of view, thus removing it from the romanticized and denigrating category of "fanaticism", "orgiastic frenzy", or "collective hysteria" to which it was relegated by almost all seventeenth and eighteenth century observers (and even by many psychiatrists of today).

In a voodoo ceremony, dancing plays not only a prominent, but an essential role as a ritualistic act and is carried out in precise rhythm to the drumbeats which govern the steps and movements of the dancers. The drums themselves are a religious symbol and are viewed as the very vessel of a deity. The drumbeats, in unified interaction with the dancers, thus evoke numerous families of gods and release certain "mystic forces" which are believed to "work"

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 67.

⁵⁶Ibid.

on those who are summoned. The climax of the ceremony occurs with the blood sacrifice, wherein a goat or fowl is offered to the loa. The killing is preceded by a ritualistic act embracing both divination and communion, after which a sacred kind of food or drink is given to the animal. If consumed, it is deemed acceptable to the gods, and those making the sacrifice attempt to identify themselves with it or to "'infuse' their own bodies with the mystic powers invested in it." The blood is collected in a gourd and tasted by the houngan, or priest, and then successively by the assisting hounsi, or "servants of the gods."⁵⁷

Communication between the gods and mortals is then established through the phenomenon of possession which

. . . is nothing more than the descent of a god or spirit come to take possession of a chosen person. . . . The god uses the body of a man or a woman to manifest himself to his worshippers, share their amusements, make known his wishes or his will, wreak vengeance or express gratitude, as the case may be.⁵⁸

The possessed thus becomes both the vessel and the instrument of the god, through which the latter expresses his personality. Possession is therefore a fundamental element in the religious experience of the initiated. Moreover, "[it] is a controlled phenomenon obeying precise rules . . . [and] every god is expected to appear in his turn when the devotees summon him by songs in his honor."⁵⁹ The psychological

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 82.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 84.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 89.

implications of possession for the Haitian peasant; as for the slave living under dehumanized conditions and the terror of the whip, cannot be overemphasized:

The very real satisfaction to be gained by a poor peasant woman who becomes the vessel of a god and is able to parade about in silken dresses acknowledging marks of respect from the crowd has not been sufficiently underlined by studies of possession as a phenomenon. What a release for repressed bitterness and prisoned hatred!

While voodoo constituted for the slave a unique and autonomous cultural form, it would nevertheless be wrong to assume that its development and proliferation in San Domingo occurred in total independence of other influences. All religious practice, except Catholicism, was outlawed in the colony, and, in accordance, all slaves were to be baptized in the Catholic Church. However, the religious, as the educational, instruction of the slaves was never seriously or widely undertaken, either by the masters or by the Church. Thus, superficially, many of the ritualistic aspects of Catholicism appeared in voodoo, but consciously adapted and re-interpreted by the slaves to accord with their own religious beliefs.⁶¹ In this way, Catholicism served as a kind of mask, or façade, behind which their own beliefs and

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 89 (my italics).

⁶¹ Even the Christian notion of a Supreme Being parallels the voodoo belief in the "Great Master" or "Good Lord", creator of the universe, whose force reigns above any and all of the loa. In voodoo, however, he is seen as a distant godhead, a vague kind of impersonal force to which humans and gods alike must yield. This "idea" of God more precisely corresponds to what is commonly referred to as fate, nature or destiny. Ibid., p. 60.

practices could flourish. One might even say that, under the Black Codes, the prohibition to practice voodoo and the obligation of membership in the Catholic Church provided "an external structure for the voodoo consciousness, a consciousness which arose out of slavery itself."⁶²

For the slave, voodoo was a psychologically liberating force which, in its spiritual aspects, provided a reaffirmation of that self-consciousness acquired both through labor and fear, upon which slavery was built and sustained. Hegel examines this state of consciousness in his discussion of "lordship and bondage." It is a relationship within which is contained the very essence of all social struggle.

Since the master held absolute rights of life and death over the slave, and could and did exercise these at will, existence under slavery was, for many slaves, one of total fear--fear for one's own entire being. Out of this state of fear, in which slaves constantly faced the possibility, and often the reality, of a brutal death at the hands of the master or his agents arose the consciousness of pure self-existence. It was only through labor, activated by fear, that this realization could assume an objective existence. The sugar cane, the cotton, the indigo, the cocoa, the coffee, along with all the secondary products which the slave produced through endless toil under the threat of the whip--all, consciously moulded through work,

⁶²Laënnec Hurbon, Dieu dans le vaudoo haïtien (Paris: Payot, 1972), p. 77.

were the embodiment of his own labor and his own self:

Thus, precisely in labor where there seemed to be merely some outsider's mind and ideas involved, the bondsman becomes aware, through this re-discovery of himself, of having and being a "mind of his own."⁶³

Slaves knew their own worth and, although treated as animals, the irreducible fact remained that they were human beings. Slavery, for all its barbaric and cruelly dehumanizing aspects, had nevertheless produced in the slave an independent self-consciousness, directly opposed to that of the master, which sought only to free itself of the bonds inhibiting its full realization.

Despite its rigid prohibition by colonial law, voodoo was one of the few areas of totally autonomous activity for the African slaves. As a religion and a spiritual force, it enabled them to express and re-affirm that self-existence which they objectively recognized through their own labor. It further enabled them to break away psychologically from the very real and concrete chains of slavery and to see themselves as independent beings; in short, it gave them a sense of human dignity and enabled them to survive.

Voodoo was, without a doubt, of African origin, but its development and proliferation in San Domingo arose out of slavery. It is thus hardly surprising that it was the potential for vengeance, among the many other aspects that voodoo contained, which dominated the clandestine ceremonies.

⁶³G. W. F. Hegel, The Phenomenology of Mind, trans. J. B. Baille (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), p. 239.

especially during the last quarter-century before the outbreak of the revolution, and which was so awesomely evident in the African refrain:

Eh: Eh: bomba! Heu! Heu!
 Canga, bafio té!
 Canga, mouné dé lé!
 Canga, do ki la!
 Canga li!

"We swear to destroy the whites and all that they possess; let us die rather than fail to keep this vow."⁶⁴ Or, as Hegel put it in another way, "it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained."⁶⁵

But, insofar as voodoo for the slaves was simply a means of self-expression and psychological release from their material existence, their acquired consciousness as autonomous beings remained imprisoned within themselves. It was only when slaves were able, at various times, to translate thought into active rebellion and, finally, into the life and death struggle of revolution aimed at nothing less than the destruction of the masters and the chains of slavery, that freedom could become reality.

In this struggle, voodoo played a prominent and a highly political role.

⁶⁴ Cited in and translated from the French by James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 18.

⁶⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 233.

CHAPTER II

SLAVE RESISTANCE

When the slaves took up arms in collective, widespread revolt in 1791, they were acting out of a long and deep-rooted tradition of resistance against slavery and the colonial order, a resistance which spanned nearly three centuries. They rebelled from the very moment of their captivity. Torn from their homeland, their families, their friends, chained like beasts one to another and herded like cattle onto the slave ships, thousands sought refuge in committing suicide, thereby refusing to submit to a life of degradation, forced labor and unimaginable cruelty, a life in which all but a few would never again be free. By committing suicide they refused to be slaves.

While some succeeded in throwing themselves in the sea, others, less fortunate, attempted to starve themselves aboard the ships, hoping to die before the end of the voyage and avoid a fate next to which death was a blessing. To force recalcitrant slaves to eat, some ship captains would have the slaves' lips burned by hot charcoal; others would try to make them swallow the coals if they persisted. One captain even reportedly had molten lead poured into the

mouths of those who stubbornly refused all food.¹ One young African girl of sixteen, having been taken captive aboard a slave ship, was so profoundly affected that she categorically refused everything given her to eat. In a short time her physical and moral condition deteriorated to the point where death was imminent. The captain, concerned chiefly with the loss of potential revenue which her death would incur, had her returned to land to be taken care of until the boat was ready to leave. Upon seeing once more her native village and friends, upon re-experiencing the state of freedom, she rapidly regained her health. When, however, she learned that she was to be taken back aboard the ship she killed herself.²

In response to those who sought to justify the slave trade by claiming that they were saving the blacks from a life of hunger, misery and mutual destruction in primitive Africa, a white colonist, himself creole, remarked with astonishment:

If the blacks were so undernourished and so miserable [in Africa] . . . how is it that they are so well-proportioned, strong and in such vigorous health when

¹Frossard, *La cause*, p. 263. For an exhaustive description of conditions aboard the slave ships, see *ibid.*, pp. 261-306. See also Lucien Peytraud, *L'esclavage aux Antilles françaises avant 1789* (Paris: Hachette, 1897), pp. 95-121 and Gaston-Martin, *Histoire de l'esclavage dans les colonies françaises* (Paris: PUF, 1948), pp. 50-80.

²Frossard, *La cause*, pp. 274-75. Although far less frequent than suicide, armed revolt by slaves was, nonetheless, not an uncommon practice aboard slave ships, even if such attempts were doomed to fail and punishable by torture and death. *Ibid.*, pp. 277-83.

they arrive in the colonies? And how is it that at the end of one year here their health diminishes, they become weak, thin and unrecognizable--a state from which, if they do not die, they never completely recover? . . . Likewise, if the blacks were so miserable and without feeling in their native land, why are they driven by despair to commit suicide, one of the chief reasons for which they are so scrupulously kept in chains on the boats? . . . How is it, then, that their yearning for freedom is so insatiable?

Once sold and introduced into the plantation system, slaves continued to resist individually and collectively by means of suicide. For the slave, death was seen not only as a liberation from the extreme conditions of slavery, but according to popular African beliefs, a means of escape, permitting the dead to return to their native land.⁴ However, the feeling of despair which slavery imposed upon the slaves was not the only factor provoking suicide. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, contemporary observers became aware (as we have seen) of a calculated motive on the part of slaves who committed suicide either individually or collectively, to inflict serious economic damage, if not ruin, upon the master.

Slave women often resorted to abortion and even infanticide as a form of resistance, rather than allow their children to grow up under the abomination of slavery. In

³Milscent, Du régime colonial (Paris: Imp. du Cercle Social, 1792), pp. 26-27, 39. The above cited passage was kindly forwarded to the author by M. Jean Fouchard in a letter from Port-au-Prince, 14 April 1976.

⁴Savine, Saint-Domingue à la veille, p. 94. Slaves never expressed the loss of a comrade through death by saying that the person had died, but rather: "Ly Allé," meaning he has gone or left.

the latter case, the death of the child resulted from a sickness referred to by contemporaries as mal de mâchoire, or lock-jaw, a sickness which struck only newborn babies and only those delivered by black midwives. Invariably, death occurred within the first few days. One slave woman from the Rossignol-Desdunes plantation in the district of Artibonite admitted having poisoned or killed in this manner over seventy children in order to tear them out of slavery.⁵ Although other considerations may have played an additional role in the motivation of such acts--vengeance against a master for cruel treatment; the desire to inflict pain upon a master when the child was in fact his own; jealousy; retribution--in all instances, the net result was the decimation of a potential work force.⁶

Suicide, abortion, infanticide--all were extreme, even self-destructive, measures, and if slaves resorted to these measures, it was because slavery itself was an extreme. Hilliard d'Auberteuil, himself a colonial planter and slave-owner, remarked that

⁵Descourtillz, Histoire des désastres, p. 185. Also cited in de Vaissière, La Société, p. 252, n. 3 and in Savine, Saint-Domingue à la veille, p. 91. One of the methods used was to insert a needle into a certain part of the brain, thus resulting in severe jaw impediments and finally total incapacity. Unable to eat, the slave child inevitably died within a matter of days. de Vaissière, La société, p. 252. The practice had apparently become so widespread that in 1757 the Upper Council of le Cap found it necessary to pass an ordinance forbidding all women of color to practice midwifery. Lebeau, De la condition, p. 109.

⁶de Vaissière claimed that infant mortality resulting from mal de mâchoire, amounted roughly to one in three of all newborn slave children. La société, p. 252.

If slave women often abort themselves, it is almost always the fault of their masters; they have no right to punish [these women] because there is nothing except the excess of tyranny that can suppress in them the maternal instinct. . . . [Moreover], if they see the earth as a place of torment and pain, is it not those who are dearest to them who will be the first to be sacrificed by their deadly compassion?

Far more characteristic of slave resistance, however, was its aggressive rather than passive nature. In fact, the first organized and armed revolt of black slaves occurred in 1522 while the island was still in its earliest stage of development as a slave colony under the Spanish.⁸ Within the twenty-five years between 1679 and 1704, four other armed conspiracies had been planned by slaves in different parts of the colony, all aimed at the total massacre and annihilation of the white masters.

Collective armed revolt remained, however, a limited form of slave resistance until the revolution and, with the one notable exception of the revolt of Macandal in 1757, did not again occur before 1791.⁹ Moreover, the revolt of 1757, as well as that of 1791 which opened the black revolution,

⁷d'Auberteuil, Considérations, pp. 66, 70.

⁸A narrative account of this revolt is cited in Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, pp. 467-69. In this book, Fouchard has provided an exhaustive chronological synopsis of slave resistance in San Domingo from 1499 to 1793 (pp. 445-557). This historical survey of slave resistance in all its forms is based on primary as well as secondary source materials, passages from which are often quoted in full. It is not only a useful, but an indispensable guide for any study of the nature and continuity of slave resistance inherent in which was the struggle for freedom.

⁹For an account of the Macandal revolt, see pp. 56-60 below.

occurred within a different context. The revolt that was planned by Macandal in the North and which subsequently was to have spread to all corners of the colony, was both conceived and organized in marronage.¹⁰ Equally, it was within marronage that the basic groundwork and general form of the massive outbreak of 1791 emerged. Of the many and diverse forms of resistance, marronage proved to be the most viable and certainly the most consistent. From the very beginning of the colony under the Spanish and throughout its long history under the French until the abolition of slavery two years into the revolution, slaves defied that system which denied them the most elementary and the most essential of social and human rights, the right to be free. They claimed that right in marronage. But it was not until 1791 that this form of resistance, having by this time acquired a distinctively collective form, would converge with the general political climate of the time and open the way to the revolution which would guarantee that right.

For the colonial observer who bothered to question the motives of slaves that left the plantation to eke out an existence for themselves in the mountains or in other secluded, inaccessible areas, however, the chief causes of marronage invariably amounted to undernourishment, cruel treatment, overwork; in short, the living and working conditions of slavery.¹¹ To be sure, all of these factors played a

¹⁰ See Introduction, pp. xiii-xiv above.

¹¹ See Introduction, pp. xii and xviii above.

contributing role in the slave's decision to escape. But it leaves the question unanswered as to why slaves equally fled reputedly humane masters. For colonists to admit that slaves desired their own freedom and sought to achieve it by escaping would frankly be to admit to the unjustifiability of slavery itself and of the plantation system--the very foundation of the colonial economy to which their own survival was irrevocably tied. As a class, the planters were governed by economic interests which necessitated when it was a question of the slaves, the subordination of simple truth. On the one hand, they tried to crush marronage through a long series of rigorous, punitive laws. On the other hand, some planters preferred a more humane form of treatment. Nevertheless, marronage persisted.

When slaves left the plantations, they left with no knowledge of what their future would be, nor did they know how long their marronage would last, nor whether they would be recaptured. What is certain is that once having decided to leave, they had made a consciously planned and determined break from slavery, from the plantation, from the master, and were prepared to face the unknown. They carried out their escape with the bare minimum of clothing and food, often taking with them a few tools, a horse, a mule, or a canoe and, frequently, arms. Rarely, if ever, did the Africans live in marronage alone. Many went off to join other slaves already established and subsisting in bands in the heavily wooded mountains, often living in entrenched camps closed

off by walls of woven liana and surrounded by ditches of some twelve to fifteen feet deep and eight or ten feet wide, lined at the bottom with sharpened stakes.¹² Others, fortunate enough to find some long abandoned piece of property in an isolated region, attempted to assure their survival off the land. Once established, some even risked their newly acquired freedom by going back to the plantation at night to secure the escape of their wife or children, left behind under circumstances rendering the collective flight of the family impossible to realize.¹³

The most frequent refuge for the field slave was the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo or the extensive range of mountains in the South, extending eastward to form the border between the two colonies. Here, since the beginnings of slavery, slaves had formed permanent and collective maroon communities. The very first of these communities was in fact established in the eastern Bahoruco mountains by the last survivors of the indigenous Caribs, brutally massacred and enslaved under the genocidal practices of the Spanish.¹⁴ Under the French, the Bahoruco remained, throughout the

¹²de Vaissière, La société, pp. 234-35.

¹³Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, p. 390.

¹⁴By 1519, only twenty-seven years after Columbus' arrival, the Indian population of the island known to the Caribs as Hayti, numbering roughly one million in 1492, had been ruthlessly reduced to a mere one hundred thousand. Ibid., p. 470. The history and struggles of the Caribs, or Caciques, is also fully treated by Thomas Madiou, Histoire d'Haïti, 2nd ed. (Port-au-Prince: Imp. Ed. Chenet, 1922), Ch. 1.

entire colonial era until independence, a constant refuge for black slaves seeking to free themselves of the bonds of slavery.

Since the beginning of the eighteenth century, the authorities of San Domingo had attempted to reach an accord with the Spanish for the return of the fugitives from the French colony and to join efforts in capturing and dispersing the maroons along the border, all without much success. In 1785 the French authorities, finally comprehending the futility of their aims, yielded. A peace treaty was signed granting pardon and according independence to the remaining maroons. Each family was to receive a small plot of land and, to assure their subsistence until their farms became productive, provisions for eight months.¹⁵

Within the perimeters of these mountains, of which Bahoruco comprised only the eastern limits, other well-known maroon communities existed, notably in the southern region of Plymouth which provided asylum for the periodic marronage of different groups of slaves, and in Maniel, stretching from the western limits of Jacmel in the South and extending well into the Spanish part of the island.¹⁶

In addition to these long-established and well-known communities, other bands, smaller in number and perhaps lesser known, waged similar struggles throughout the colonial

¹⁵AN, Arch, Col., C9^B 35.

¹⁶Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, p. 424.

era and in all parts of the colony to defend and protect their precariously acquired freedom. Establishing themselves in the forests or in the thickly wooded foothills of the mountains, they maintained a marginal but independent existence. They, too, had their chosen leaders whose decisions governed the organization and functioning of the group. Many maroon communities were armed. When conditions no longer permitted them to subsist off the land, it became necessary for them to descend at night upon neighboring plantations in organized raids, pillaging, ransacking, sometimes even totally devastating the plantation to secure food, animals, additional arms or other necessary supplies for their survival. These marauding maroon bands often created such terror as to cause certain planters in relatively isolated areas to sell out or simply to abandon their holdings.

It was precisely this aggressive, intrepid nature of marronage which necessitated, from the beginning of slavery, the adoption of repressive, punitive measures to eliminate what contemporaries considered a continual plague and a continual danger to the security of the colony.¹⁷ The first comprehensive legislation dealing with marronage appeared in the Black Codes of 1685. Slaves of different plantations were now forbidden to assemble together, be it in celebration of a marriage, to organize a calenda or for any other

¹⁷In fact, the first official report dealing with the problem of marronage among black slaves as a threat to the colony appeared in 1503, under the Spanish Governor, Ovando, merely a decade after the arrival of Columbus. Ibid., p. 464.

reason whatsoever, under punishment of the whip or the burning brand of the fleur de lys. For those who persisted, it would mean death. Slaves were forbidden to carry anything which might be construed as an offensive weapon. They were forbidden to circulate without a written pass from the master. A fugitive slave in flight up to one month from the date of his reported escape would have his ears cut off and the fleur de lys branded on one shoulder. If his flight should span another month, the back of his knee would be cut, in addition, and the fleur de lys stamped on the other shoulder. After that, the punishment was death. Any affranchi providing asylum to a fugitive slave was fined three hundred pounds of sugar for each day of protection given.

In spite of these restrictions, as well as subsequent ordinances of similar consequence passed by the local municipal assemblies, marronage persisted as a constant, well-entrenched mode of resistance to slavery; so much so that in 1707 the maréchaussée, a special permanent militia, apart from the regular army, was created in the North to pursue and capture fugitive slaves. In 1706 the Upper Council of Léogâne published an official report on the movement and activities of the maroons in the South:

They gather together in the woods and live there exempt from service to their masters without any other leader but one elected among them; others, under cover of the cane fields by day, wait at night to rob those who travel along the main roads, and go from plantation to plantation to steal farm animals to feed themselves, hiding in the living quarters of

their friends who, ordinarily, participate in their thefts and who, aware of the goings on in the master's house, advise the fugitives so that they can take the necessary precautions to steal without getting caught.¹⁸

The history of pre-revolutionary maroon activity is almost inexhaustible. Marronage was a constant reality of colonial life and came to be considered, among other things, as one of the liabilities of slavery. Maroon activity never ceased, nor did the white masters' attempts to stamp it out. Their economic survival depended upon the elimination of this nightmare. The French government tried to persuade the masters to treat their slaves more humanely, to feed and clothe them adequately in order to prevent rebellion and revolt. In 1741, following a maroon attack on the city of Mirebalais, the severity of punishment for marronage was increased. Captured fugitives were put in chain gangs for life or for a specified period of time and forced to labor on public works. Two years later the punishment for maroons caught with arms of any kind was death. None of these measures produced the least effect upon marronage as an established mode of resistance, upon its proliferation, or upon those slaves who having made an irrevocable break from slavery were determined never to return to their former condition and were prepared to defend with their lives their newly acquired existence, however meagre, however difficult, or however precarious.¹⁹ Charlevoix wrote of the maroons

¹⁸ Cited in *ibid.*, pp. 479-80.

¹⁹ In 1751 official estimates brought the number of French slaves living in marronage in the Spanish colony alone to three thousand. Cabon, Histoire d'Haiti, 1:206.

that "once they see that they will die, it matters little how they will die, and the least success renders them practically invincible."²⁰

The administrators of the colony passed a new ordinance in 1767. The affranchis were now forbidden to purchase arms or munitions without the express permission of the crown prosecutor. The attempt was made to cut off all sales of arms between the free persons of color and the maroons.²¹ By the eve of the revolution marronage had in fact increased.²² During the two decades before the massive revolt of 1791 new groups and new leaders had appeared. During the 1770s, the colonial correspondence, official reports and administrative ordinances continued to underscore the threat of marronage to the general security of the colony. A memoir of 1775 on the state of the maroons in San Domingo declares that:

. . . marronage, or the desertion of the black slaves in our colonies since they were founded, has always been regarded as one of the possible causes of their destruction. . . . The Minister should be informed that there are inaccessible or reputedly inaccessible areas in different sections of our colony which serve as retreat and shelter for maroons; it is in the mountains and in the forests that these tribes of slaves establish themselves and multiply,

²⁰ Cited in Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, p. 482.

²¹ Cabon, Histoire d'Haïti, 1:308.

²² In answer to those historians who claim the contrary, Fouchard points out that what had decreased was not marronage, but simply the number of references to fugitive slaves in newspapers and journals. The entire discussion of this problem is dealt with at some length in Les marrons de la liberté, pp. 257-69.

invading the plains from time to time, spreading alarm and always causing great damage to the inhabitants.

The collective marronage of fugitive slaves living in small groups, forming armed bands or even large organized communities constituted, however, only one of its aspects. It predominantly involved the newly arrived African, non-creole field slaves, and certainly characterized its most openly aggressive form. The domestic slave, on the other hand, profited from the numerous avenues of escape available to those slaves whose particular position in the plantation system afforded them greater mobility and freedom of movement than the field slave.

Many took advantage of the situation when sent by the master on a day-time errand and never came back. Others, having learned to read and write, fabricated their own passes indicating that they were on an errand for the master. The practice had become so common that it was nearly impossible for the authorities to distinguish--at the market place, in the street, at the crossroads--between free blacks and those who, using passes to escape from the plantation, gave themselves out to be free.

In 1764 the Chamber of Agriculture of Port-au-Prince proposed that all legitimately free blacks fourteen years and over be forced to wear a standardized medallion indicating their name and the nature of their enfranchisement.²⁴ To

²³AN, Arch. Col., F³ 94.

²⁴AN, Arch. Col., C⁹ 15. The same year, M. Berton, a former royal councillor, went even further by proposing

escape detection some slaves would carefully change names; most were dressed in their best clothing to project the outward appearance of a free black. Some even pushed their audacity to the extreme and attached a pair of stolen pistols in holsters onto the saddle of their stolen horse as a surer guarantee that they would be recognized as a free black.²⁵ They fabricated false documents of enfranchisement, baptismal certificates, or any other type of attestation to legitimize their assumed status. Others, having stolen a horse or mule upon leaving the plantation, would travel considerable distances to reach an isolated town or bourg where they were unknown, sell the animals and establish themselves in the community as free. Unless pure chance should bring the master or a neighbor to the area for some unwonted reason, it was nearly impossible for the fugitive to be discovered. Moreover, his security was further safeguarded by the fact that the masters, upon discovering the flight of a slave, generally assumed that the slave had taken refuge in Spanish territory without considering the possibility of other regions within the colony.²⁶ Thus,

that all persons of color above twelve years of age be required to wear the identifying medallion. Those found without it would be condemned to prison for three months and fined twenty-five piastres. Those who lent their medallion to another slave would suffer whipping and be branded, in addition to a fifty-piastre fine. Those who repeated the offense would, if men, be sent to the galleys for life; if women, they would lose their status as a free person. Arch. Col., C9^a 120.

²⁵ Ibid.

once having established himself for two or three years in a given town, working and living as a free black, the slave was accepted by the community as free, and his status thereafter remained unquestioned. For example:

. . . a hard working slave will pass from this region to that of Port-au-Prince; for greater security he can take a name more closely resembling that of a free black . . . he will work at his trade; at the end of a few years he will marry, have children; and there you have a whole family which has become free through the effrontery of its head and yet which has no other rights than those usurped by a plausible tongue.²⁷

If circumstances should arise which might cause a slave to be detected, he was prepared to move on to another area, take on another identity and establish himself elsewhere. Thus by ingenuity, intelligence, audacity, skill, cunning, the fugitive slave's freedom became a fait accompli.²⁸

Whether practiced individually or collectively, whether in small groups or in larger, established communities, whether in armed, organized bands or as a free tradesman in some remote town, marronage constituted, throughout the

²⁷AN, Arch. Col., C9^A 120.

²⁸While some may have succeeded indefinitely, most managed to remain in open marronage for at least a considerable number of years. The memoir of M. Borthon indicates: "One slave woman, maroon for two years and calling herself free, was recognized by chance and arrested. A griffe from Dondon, maroon for three years, has just been recognized and arrested. One slave, a mason by trade and working publicly for fifteen years as a free black, has just been recognized as a slave. A cook, maroon for four to five years, has also recently been discovered and a host of other examples like these which suffice to prove the abusive practice." Ibid. (In colonial terminology, a griffe was the offspring of a mulatto and a black.)

entire colonial history of San Domingo, the most persistent form of active resistance against slavery. It was practiced by slaves of all occupations; it involved men, women, children of all ages and from every sector of the slave system.²⁹ Engendered by the institution of slavery itself, marronage had become a permanent, irreversible feature of slave society and a force which would in time contribute to the utter destruction of the wealthiest slave colony of Europe and seal the doom of the white planter class.³⁰

²⁹A breakdown of the maroon population derived from archival and newspaper sources and which considers such factors as age, sex, status, origins, occupation, types and sizes of plantations from which slaves fled is presented in Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, pp. 283-89, 373-78, 433-41.

³⁰It was this diversified nature of marronage in San Domingo, embracing all sectors of slave society and practiced in a myriad of different forms, that allowed it to become the revolutionary force that it later was and that distinguishes it from the maroon movement in Jamaica. The early stages of Jamaican marronage were characterized by factors common to all maroon movements: the inaccessibility of their settlements, skill at guerilla warfare, harsh discipline demanded by their military organization and the partial dependence upon colonial society for recruits, arms, ammunition and other supplies. However, the period of independent political maroon development was ended when the Jamaican maroons signed a peace treaty with the colonial authorities in 1739. Their communities were supervised by the white authorities, and these maroons were then used to track down new fugitives. (Barbara Kopytoff, "The Early Political Development of Jamaican Maroon Societies," William and Mary Quarterly, 35, ser. 3 [April 1978]: 287-307.) This was never the case with San Domingo marronage. Even in the instance of the peace treaty signed with the maroons of Bahoruco in 1785 (p. 45 above), these slaves refused to re-enter French territory to cultivate the land allotted them by the treaty. They were convinced, and rightly so, that the French wanted to lure them back only to destroy them; they preferred to live in the mountains, as they had for nearly a century, independent of either the French or the Spanish governments and would rather die than return to French San

Not only was marronage in itself a mode of slave resistance, but it also facilitated other forms of resistance by providing the general framework and conditions within which they emerged and were sustained. One of the first collective forms of resistance, as both a cultural and--in its practical applications--an incipient political force, was voodoo. Since it was severely outlawed in the colony and therefore forced into clandestinity, its development and proliferation occurred largely in the context of marronage.³¹

It was in the voodoo ceremonies that certain African traditions--language, dance, religion, world view--were most evident. Indeed, the words of the sacramental voodoo hymns were almost all if not entirely of African origin.³² For the

Domingo. AN, Arch. Col., C9^B 36. Concernant les nègres marrons et leur refus de profiter de l'amnistie qui leur a été accordée, Port-au-Prince, 6 fév. 1786.

³¹Not only was the strict practice of voodoo forbidden, but also the calendas which sometimes served as a cover for voodoo gatherings. Père Labat observed that "they have passed laws in the islands to prevent the calendas, not only because of the indecent and lewd [sic] postures which make up this dance, but especially to prevent too many blacks from assembling and who, finding themselves thus gathered together in joy and usually inebriated, are capable of revolts, insurrections or raids. However, in spite of these laws and all of the precautions which the masters are able to take, it is almost impossible to suppress [the dances], because of all the diversions this is the one which [the slaves] enjoy the most and to which they are the most sensitive." Cited in Trouillot, Introduction, p. 84. In a later ordinance of 1758, slaves were to be punished by whipping and masters by a fine of three hundred livres, the former for having participated in, and the latter for having tolerated this dance. Ibid. Needless to say, these laws were largely to no avail.

³²Ibid., pp. 10-17. See especially Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, pp. 188-89.

maroons, the various African languages constituted in themselves a form of protest against the colonial order, as well (as we have seen) as a means of reinforcing a self-consciousness and a cultural identity independent of the white masters. The voodoo practiced in San Domingo--and especially its linguistic diversity--constituted in effect a broad synthesis of the various religious beliefs and practices of all the African nations forming the slave population.³³ It was precisely this pluralistic nature of San Domingo voodoo and its disinclination to separate into ethnic cults, as was the case in Brazil for example, which caused it to become the formidable and far-reaching collective force that it did.

The maroon leaders of African origin were almost without exception either voodoo priests or fervent voodoo adepts. Thus, a popular religion on the one hand, voodoo constituted, on the other, an important organizational tool for resistance, facilitating secret meetings of slaves, providing a network

³³Ibid., p. 189, especially n. 2. Here the author cites certain conclusions of an essay by Lilas Desquiron, "Evolution historique d'une religion africaine: le Vaudou" (Université libre de Bruxelles pour l'année académique 1967-1968): "The heart of voodoo embraces and unifies in one and the same structure the whole wealth of the various cultures which maintained it . . . The Dahomeans gave to voodoo its general framework, its structure; moreover, the Bantous [which comprise several cultural groups] of central Africa . . . took this basic stimulus, enriched it and transformed it; in short, [they] provided the most significant input into Dahomean voodoo. Again, in the voodoo songs which evoke the gods of Africa, whether they be of the rada or petro rites, these gods are all part of a single invocation without the least concern for establishing the predominance of either Guinean or Bantou groupings."

of communication between slaves of different plantations and securing the pledge of solidarity and secrecy of those involved in plots against the masters. The most extraordinary and the most feared of these pre-revolutionary baron leader was François Macandal.

Born into an illustrious family in Guinea, Macandal's education was undertaken at a very early age.³⁴ He was brought up in the Moslem religion and apparently had an excellent command of Arabic.³⁵ As a young man, he possessed a remarkably inquisitive mind and, introduced to the arts, displayed a keen interest in music, painting, sculpture and medicine.³⁶ Very little else is known about his background or his childhood, for, at the age of twelve he was captured as a prisoner of war, sold as a common slave to the European traders and shipped to San Domingo. Here he was sold again, this time to Lenormand de Mézy in the district of Limbé, whose plantations were among the largest and wealthiest in the North. While tending the sugar mill, a job usually undertaken during the night, his hand was caught in the machinery and had to be amputated, after which he was made caretaker for the animals.³⁷ It was shortly after this incident that he became a fugitive, retreating into the

³⁴It is difficult to know precisely to which nation Macandal belonged since, at the time, nearly the entire west coast of Africa was often loosely referred to as "Guinea."

³⁵Madiou, Histoire d'Haiti, 1:35.

³⁶Trouillot, Introduction, p. 46.

³⁷See Ch. 1, p. 17.

mountains by day and descending onto the neighboring plantations by night, establishing contacts and communications among the slaves. He lived and worked in this manner for eighteen years. During this time he carefully built up an extensive network of resistance with agents in nearly all points of the colony.³⁸ Their weapon was poison.

Having acquired considerable knowledge of herb medicine, he instructed his followers in its uses and developed, according to one writer, an "open school of this execrable art."³⁹ His qualities of leadership, his sense of organization and his stature as a voodoo priest afforded him an immeasurable influence and command over the slaves in his following. Every contemporary account of Macandal substantiates this point.⁴⁰

In de Vaissière's opinion one thing is certain:

³⁸AN, Arch. Col., C⁹B 29. Extrait d'une mémoire sur la création d'un corps de gens de couleur levé à Saint-Domingue, mars 1779.

³⁹Ibid. There is no indication that those who followed Macandal were necessarily permanent maroons or that Macandal ever established a permanent maroon community. Many of his followers were in fact slaves on the plantations who may or may not have been fugitive for short periods. In this sense and in terms of slave resistance, the distinction made by the French school between grand marronage and petit marronage is an invidious one. Those who may have been reported "maroon" for only a few days and who left in the interest of procuring certain quantities of poison, or even those who never left the plantation but who participated in the poisonings, all contributed to the broader goal conceived by Macandal, that of eliminating the whites and of becoming masters of the island.

⁴⁰Ibid. BSL, Relation d'une conspiration tramée par les nègres dans l'isle de Saint-Domingue, nrd. (?1758). Moreau de St. Méry, Description topographique, 2:629-31.

Macandal was more than simply a leader of maroon bands. Not in that he condoned the pillaging and ransacking of plantations, the theft of cattle and other ordinary exploits of fugitive slaves; but he seemed at the same time to have sensed the possibility of creating out of marronage a center of organized black resistance against the whites.⁴¹

Moreover, he had an understanding of the racial origins and development of San Domingo, as well as their broader implications. To illustrate this before a large gathering of slaves, he had a vase full of water brought to him, in which he placed three scarves--one yellow, one white, and one black. Pulling out the yellow scarf first, he told his listeners: "This represents the original inhabitants of San Domingo. They were yellow." "These," he said, pulling out the white scarf, "are the present inhabitants. Here, finally, are those who will remain masters of the island; it is the black scarf."⁴²

Having persuaded many a slave that it was he whom the Creator had sent to carry out the destruction of the whites and to liberate his people, Macandal was able to extract not only the most unyielding allegiance from his fugitive followers, but to extend his influence over vast numbers of slaves on the plantations of the entire le Cap region. With extraordinary audacity, he went from plantation to plantation, each time risking his own life to stir up the zeal of his partisans, to proselitize, to politicize. For over six

⁴¹ de Vaissière, La société, p. 237.

⁴² Cited in ibid.

years he remained completely unknown to the white masters while he and his followers, taking advantage of this anonymity, cautiously and ceaselessly pursued their ultimate plan. The day and the hour were set when all of the water of all the houses in le Cap was to be poisoned. He had disciplined agents--captains, lieutenants and various other officers--operating and organizing clandestinely on the plantations. He knew the names of every slave on each plantation who supported and participated in his movement. He had an exact list of those slaves who, once the poison had struck panic throughout the town, were to organize in bands from le Cap and spread out into the countryside to massacre the whites.

The blacks were to become the new masters of San Domingo. It was the first real attempt in the long history of slave resistance of a disciplined, organized revolt aiming at the total destruction of slavery. It never came to fruition, and unfortunately, we have no way of knowing what the outcome might have been. It was, ironically, an inopportune and unfortunate carelessness on the part of Macandal which led to his capture. He managed to manoeuvre a spectacular, but short-lived escape and was promptly recaptured when dogs were finally sent upon his trail.

Macandal had once declared that if ever he were captured by the whites, it would be impossible for them to kill him, for upon breathing his final breath, he would escape in the form of a mosquito, only to return one day more terrifying.

than ever. As chance would have it, either the stake to which he was tied was rotten or else his iron collar was insecurely attached. In any event, writhing violently in torment from the flames, he managed to dislodge the stake and tumble past the burning log at his feet. Terror seized the assembled crowd. The slaves, believing their leader to be immortal, cried out: "Macandal is saved. Macandal is saved." The royal troops guarding the execution place had the area evacuated. Macandal's jailor wanted to kill him on the spot with his sword. The whole town was in a state of alarm until orders came from the attorney-general to have him tied to a board and thrown directly into the fire.

But for many blacks Macandal was still alive and would return some day to fulfill his prophecy. For others, his memory was sufficient to feed the long and bitter struggle which would one day lead to their liberation. As a legendary figure, his name became identified with almost all forms of fetishism, with poisoning, sorcery and slave dances. Thereafter, the houngan, or voodoo priests, were often referred to as "macandals"; to possess certain powers or simply to practice voodoo was to be a "macandal."⁴³

Who were the masses who followed Macandal, who joined him in marronage, who poisoned their masters and members of their family, who poisoned other slaves who could not be trusted? The prison records available for 1757 and 1758 in le Cap indicate only the names and status (slave or free

⁴³Trouillot, Introduction, p. 47.

black) of the accused. There is no indication as to their status as a slave (domestic or field worker), and while the names of their masters are in most cases given, the plantations to which they belong and their ages are rarely and only sporadically given. However, certain indications revealed in a letter dated 24 June 1758 and written from le Cap suggest that the majority of those arrested after Macandal were in fact house slaves:

We are alarmed to discover that almost all the guilty are those who work in the master's house and in whom was placed the greatest confidence--the coachman, the cook and other domestics at our disposition . . . Note that all of the guilty ones are highly priced slaves, and even at four to ⁴⁴five thousand livres each, they are not spared.

To these can be added a considerable proportion of free blacks, arrested either for acts of poisoning or, most frequently, for the composition, the trafficking or distribution of poison to the slaves.⁴⁵ Evidence exists which suggests that free blacks, who were only one step removed from slavery, but who enjoyed a greater freedom of movement than their compatriots in slavery, often acted either as intermediaries between the maroons and slaves on the

⁴⁴BSL, Relation.

⁴⁵One le Cap prison report for November 1757, two months prior to Macandal's capture, indicates eighteen prisoners arrested on charges relating specifically to poison. Of these, twelve were slaves and six, or one half as many, were free blacks. Among the rest were seventy-eight maroons; one slave from Martinique passing as a free black; two accused of attempting to murder a white master--one a slave, one a free black; one slave accused of homicides; one free black accused of stealing a horse; five slaves accused of stealing farm animals and a handful of English prisoners of war. AN, Arch. Col., C9ⁿ 102.

plantations or as direct agents in distributing poison to the slaves. Some of them were apothecaries, while others had access to drugs kept by pharmacists and doctors in the colony. Hilliard d'Auberteuil mentions an apothecary whose property and supplies were sold at auction upon his death. Among the possessions sold were arsenic and other drugs. A free black purchased certain quantities of these and had more purchased by others. According to d'Auberteuil, he worked in liaison with Macandal and was himself a distributor of poison.⁴⁶

Among those arrested for crimes relating to poison was Assaim, a young slave woman belonging to the planter M. Valette of la Souffrière, and Pompée, a free black and farmer on the plantation of Sieur Deseuttres, who served as intermediary. The official interrogation of Assaim, dated 27 September 1757, offers certain insights into the attitudes and motives, as well as the methods used by slaves in their covert operations.⁴⁷ Upon reading and evaluating the interrogation, it seems clearly evident, in spite of her protests to the contrary, that Assaim knew full well it was a sort of poison which she administered to two slaves of the plantation who had fallen ill and who finally died shortly after the treatments. Her reactions to Pompée's attitudes toward the white masters and even his offer to purchase her freedom

⁴⁶ d'Auberteuil, Considérations, 1:137-38, n. 2.

⁴⁷ See Appendix A, pp. 329-336 below.

were nominally negative. She declared that she had nothing against the whites and got along well with her master. Was she sincere in her declarations? Was she lying in a possible plea for clemency? Or was she a willing and conscious participant in the use of poison, yet at the same time, unable to overcome a certain ambivalence and, caught in torment, menaced by torture, felt inclined to express a sympathy toward her master? During her trial in December 1757, it was only as she was being threatened with torture by fire that she agreed to tell all she knew, not wanting to "suffer the fire twice." At this point, she finally divulged the names of some fifty accomplices, both men and women. According to one source, she admitted to the poisoning of three of her master's children whom she had nursed, as well as a certain number of slaves on his plantation.⁴⁸

M. Courtin, the seneschal of le Cap, had spent two days and two nights with Assaim to extract information from her. During this time, she also declared that the Jesuit priest, Father Duquesnay, a curé des nègres charged with the religious instruction of slaves, had come to visit her in prison for confession. He had forbidden her, under punishment of eternal damnation, to reveal the names of her accomplices, advising her that it was far better to endure the torments which could be inflicted upon her rather than succumb to the whites and risk the torments of damnation. This type of complicity was not uncommon among the Jesuits.

⁴⁸BSL, 'Relation.

Some even offered protection and asylum for maroons. Others were closely associated with revolutionary maroon leaders. The reputation which the Jesuits had acquired for supporting marronage and at least tacitly condoning poisoning and other acts of resistance was not entirely unfounded. This reputation was, however, due chiefly to the acts of certain individual priests who took the personal responsibility for fostering the ideal of liberty among slaves. As an official body the Church generally worked hand in hand with the white masters and the colonial administration. It was itself one of the largest slave-owning landholders. The Jesuit order, however, was suppressed in the colony by royal edict in 1764 after having been accused in 1763 of "being in complicity with the slaves."⁴⁹

The institutional role of the Catholic Church in the slave community was in fact one of utter domination and spiritual terror aimed at breaking the slave's spirit of rebellion and liberation. By virtue of a special regulation issued by the French government and addressed to the priests of the French colonies, slaves who committed acts of marronage, abortion, poisoning or arson were threatened by the priests with being refused the sacraments of the Church, ex-communication and eternal damnation. In addition, the regulations ordered the priests to deliver specially prescribed sermons to these slaves designed to infuse them with

⁴⁹Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, p. 505.

a sense of worthlessness and self-hatred for their acts.⁵⁰ Voodoo, on the other hand, provided slaves with amulets and talismans believed to protect the holder against any harm while committing an act of resistance. Because voodoo was practiced clandestinely, it provided an important organizational vehicle for revolt and also helped to create and sustain an atmosphere of terror that tended at times to lock the planter in a state of psychological insecurity.

Were the poisons that slaves obtained and used with such alarming proficiency actually toxic herbal potions derived from certain plants and prepared by those blacks who had brought with them from Africa the knowledge and highly guarded secrets of herb medicine; or were they simply compositions of an arsenic base, disguised by the presence of various colonial herb substances? For the colonists, the problem remained a matter of dispute.⁵¹ What is most significant, however, is the effect which the use of poison, in the context of voodoo and marronage, had upon the colonial mentality, at times producing collective panic and hysteria among the white population. Thus, in addition to the countless fatalities resulting from the use of poison as a weapon of slave resistance, this practice contributed greatly

⁵⁰Excerpts of these sermons contained in AN, Arch. Col., R³ 90, Règlement de discipline pour les nègres, adressé aux curés dans les isles françaises de l'Amérique, n.p., n.d. (?1776) are printed in Fouchard, Les marrons du syllabaire, pp. 45-46. See also by the same author Les marrons de la liberté, p. 503.

⁵¹See de Vaissière, La société, pp. 240-42.

toward maintaining the master class in a constant state of fear from which there seemed to be no recourse. It placed the master in a position of uncertainty and dependence, for his economic survival, as well as his life or death, were matters which could ultimately be determined by those he oppressed. For whatever motives poison was used by slaves, the consequences of such acts struck, economically speaking, at the very base of the slave system.

To what degree were these fears justified? The correspondence of local administrative officials gives some indication as to the extent of popular involvement in the use of poison. In the words of du Millet, lieutenant-judge of Port-de-Paix, situated at a considerable distance from le Cap along the northern coast of the colony:

This colony is swarming with slaves, so-called soothsayers and sorcerers who poison and who, for a long time, have conceived the plan of insensibly wiping out all the whites . . . These blacks are of a sect or a new kind of religion formed by two leaders, old Negroes, who for many long years have been fugitive and whose names are Macandal and Tassereau: These two sectarians have fortunately been arrested . . . but unfortunately they have a considerable number of sectarians and disciples; there are presently over two hundred in the prisons of le Cap: We have roughly a dozen in those of Port-de-Paix since instructions have been delivered a fortnight ago, and twenty-two more have been denounced; and I have reason to believe that those who remain to be discovered in the various quarters of this department are equal in number to those at le Cap.⁵²

Another letter written from le Cap two months later, reveals that since the execution of Macandal, four or five were burned at the stake every month. Already, twenty-four

⁵²AN, Arch. Col., C9^A 102.

slaves, both men and women, and three free blacks had suffered the same punishment. The author goes on to state that

. . . as soon as they are put to questioning, the maréchaussée arrests nine or ten others as declared accomplices. Thus the number of criminals increases in proportion as one is executed. . . . There are now 140 accused in prison.

Of the blacks who have been executed, some have admitted to killing by poison thirty to forty whites, even their masters, their wives, their children; others, two to three hundred slaves belonging to various masters.

There are some planters who had fifty to sixty slaves working on their plantation. In less than two weeks, they had only four or five remaining and sometimes not even one. I know many who have had this misfortune befall them.⁵³

What was particularly alarming was that, "for every one unfortunate that [Macandal] instructed, a hundred more can likewise be instructed . . ." ⁵⁴ Another letter written the same month, states that

. . . there are hardly any slaves--especially those of the nations from the Gold Coast, who in our colonies, do not have knowledge of various plants containing poisons or the necessary elements with which to compose them. There have always been those who have used this knowledge, but for two or three years, the practice had become so common in the North that, in addition to a very large number of whites who . . . have perished by poison, one can add at least six to seven thousand slaves who were destroyed by this wretched practice. . . . A considerable number of accused still remain in the prisons of le Cap, as well as those of Fort-Dauphin and Port-de-Paix.⁵⁵

Admittedly, Macandal and his followers did not succeed in 1758 in exterminating the whites nor in becoming

⁵³BSL, Relation.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁶AN, Arch. Col., C9^A 101.

"masters of the island," a fact which led some observers to conclude that these never were the clear intentions of the slaves who engaged in acts of poisoning and which, rather, caused them to interpret such acts purely in terms of individual interest--vengeance; jealousy; reduction of the work load; the economic ruin of a master; the elimination of inheritance rights by poisoning the master's children; the hastening of the day of liberation provided for a given slave in the master's testament, etc.⁵⁶ That these motives may have existed for some slaves does not, however, exclude the collective desire for liberation among others, nor does it undermine the principal objective of the Macandal revolt. Moreover, the poisonings which slaves committed were all acts of sustained resistance against the system of slavery and the nature of the colonial order. Such resistance contributed to the creation of a state of fear, uncertainty and even to some extent paranoia within the master class. One must remember that it was only after eighteen years of constant maroon activity, six of which were spent slowly building a slave network and establishing contacts on the plantations of the North Plain, that Macandal could finally organize a rudimentary sort of guerilla army and crystallize a precise plan of attack.

One letter, written from le Cap and dated 8 November 1758, suggests even after the arrest and execution of Macandal and the other leaders, along with hundreds of their

⁵⁶ See Introduction, pp. xiv-xvii above.

followers, that the operations and plans for revolt had still not been crushed:

The principal leaders of these rebels have been burned and, of late, eight others have been arrested at the source which supplies water to the military barracks; their plan was to inject poison in the canal that carries the water to the fountain and thereby kill off the troops who proved to be the only obstacle holding them back and preventing them from exterminating the whites.⁵⁷

The evidence indicates that, however loose, it was nevertheless an organized plan of revolt.

By 1757 the use of poison had become a generally established practice among many slaves, and they carried out their acts with impunity:

What alarms us further is to see how little these unfortunates are touched by the fate of those that are executed and how little an impression their punishment makes upon them.⁵⁸

The reporter gives as an example the case of one master from Limbé who had obtained a writ from the judge allowing the execution of the accused slaves belonging to him to take place on his plantation. Three days after the execution, the commanding officer, M. de Gondy, went to the plantation with a contingent of fifteen whites. Three of M. de Gondy's slaves found the means to poison the whole contingent. As they began vomiting, an antidote was promptly administered and they were saved. The three slaves were arrested and executed.

Other contemporary observations further attest to the

⁵⁷BSL, Relation d'une conspiration. An extract of this letter is included in the editor's postscript.

⁵⁸Ibid.

intrepidity with which slaves continued to resist. M. de Rochefort wrote that "the very day scheduled for the greatest number of executions of [Macandal's] accomplices, other domestic slaves were poisoning their masters and guests."⁵⁹ Another relates:

In fact, the frequent punishments and torture which their compatriots suffer before their eyes creates no fear in them whatsoever, and it must be said that the victims endure the most cruel torments with an unequalled steadfastness, appearing on the scaffold and at the stake with ferocious courage and tranquility.⁶⁰

Moreover, slaves who administered poison did so in a highly calculated manner. Of the poisons used, some were so dangerous and so violent that when given to dogs, they inflicted immediate death. Others had a much slower effect, causing the victim to languish five to six months before finally dying. Some slaves would consciously administer small doses of poison in their master's food or drink as an initial warning. If the master persisted in his cruelty, the doses could be increased and finally induce death.⁶¹

Macandal's plan was a precarious attempt at revolution. It was, nevertheless, a forecast of what was to come in full force some thirty years later. It signalled what had become at this stage an incipient movement of the masses, not yet conscious of itself as a revolutionary

⁵⁹ de Vaissière, La société, p. 249.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 249.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 250-51. In this sense, poison could be used both as an offensive and as a defensive weapon.

force, but one which tended toward general liberation and the eventual abolition of slavery.⁶²

It was in May 1757, only eight months before Macandal was captured, that a widespread, almost epidemic use of poison was uncovered in the le Cap and Fort-Dauphin regions. The first arrest was made on the Lavaud plantation where countless numbers of slaves had perished within an astonishingly short period of time and where Lavaud and his wife were left in a hopelessly languishing state of health. Again, it was a domestic slave, Médor, who was suspected as chief perpetrator of the poisonings.⁶³ While it is possible that Médor may have had established links with Macandal, unfortunately no documentary evidence exists to prove or disprove the supposition. For, following his arrest, Médor killed himself before he could be brought to the tribunal for extensive questioning. What is certain, however, is that both leaders operated within the le Cap - Fort-Dauphin region and shared a common vision of general emancipation as well as the belief in its imminence. Médor's final declaration, although vague in some respects, tends nonetheless to underscore the attitudes and motives of the slaves who used poison as a means of resistance:

⁶²Perhaps James stated it most accurately when he wrote in 1938, in reference to the San Domingo slaves, "an un instructed mass feeling its way to revolution usually begins by terrorism, and Macandal aimed at delivering his people by means of poison." James, The Black Jacobins, p. 21.

⁶³AN, Arch. Col., C9^A 100.

If slaves commit acts of poisoning, they do it in order to obtain their freedom. . . . There is also a secret among them which can only lead to the destruction of the colony, of which the whites are totally unaware and of which the free blacks are the principal cause, using all possible means to increase their numbers in order to be in a position to confront the whites whenever necessary.⁶⁴

With the onslaught of arrests, interrogations and executions following the Macandal affair, colonial opinion tended to discount the existence of an organized plot or even a general tendency among the slaves toward liberation and the eventual extermination of the masters.⁶⁵ Yet the impact of the whole affair upon the colonial mentality and upon subsequent legislation suggests at least that the fears of the white masters of continual slave rebellion were entirely real and far from unfounded. On 11 March 1758, the Council of le Cap declared illegal the fabrication or distribution of "macandals," or talismans which reputedly protected the possessor from any harm that might befall him while carrying out his acts, as well as the casting of evil spells, under the pretext that these constituted a profanation of holy artifacts.⁶⁶ The same ordinance equally forbade

⁶⁴Cited in de Vaissière, La société, p. 247.

⁶⁵AN, Arch. Col., C9^B 15. Mémoire sur les poisons qui règnent à Saint-Domingue. d'Auberteuil, Considérations, 1:137, n. 1. Lespinasse, Histoire des affranchis, pp. 271-72. See also de Vaissière, La société, pp. 246-47.

⁶⁶In fact, Macandal had been arrested and sentenced on charges relating neither to his marronage nor to a general conspiracy against the whites, but rather "for having mixed holy artifacts with the use of reputedly magic packets to cast evil spells and, in addition, for having composed, sold and distributed poisons of all kinds." Lespinasse, Histoire des affranchis, p. 272.

slaves to compose or to distribute any sort of remedy to other slaves without the master's permission. Another ordinance of 7 April 1758 prohibited any slave ceremony involving a death prayer for one of the members. The prohibition against "macandals" was also extended to free blacks and mulattoes. For the slaves, prohibitions were reinforced against the bearing of arms, the sale of foodstuffs in the towns, and assemblies after 7 p.m., even in churches. An affranchi providing asylum to a fugitive slave would, along with his entire resident family, lose his freedom. All affranchis, whether black or mulatto, were forbidden to wear sword, sabre or manchette unless they were members of the maréchaussée.⁶⁷

The Macandal affair was not simply an isolated episode in the history of slave resistance. On the one hand, 1758 marked the climax of slave resistance by means of poison; but its use as a weapon against slavery hardly began, nor did it end here. Throughout the eighteenth century planters were periodically plagued by the ravages of poison on their plantations.⁶⁸

During the 1760s, it became clear that actually only a minority of the slaves who engaged in poisoning had been

⁶⁷A further act of the Council of le Cap ordered, in 1761, that churches be closed after sundown and between noon and two o'clock--the periods accorded slaves for free time. As well, the activities of the curés des nègres were severely circumscribed in an attempt to minimize their direct contact with slaves. Ibid., p. 272. Cabon, Histoire d'Haïti, 1:228.

⁶⁸See de Vaissière, La Société, pp. 238-39.

eliminated. Cabon relates that during this period, some plantations had even been decimated due to massive executions of suspected slaves.⁶⁹ Yet the poisonings continued, and the general feeling was that the principal culprits, as well as the rest of their leaders, remained untouched by the combined campaigns of planters and administrators to torture, to inflict a multitude of cruelties, to burn alive suspected slaves from whom they attempted to extract confessions and denunciations of accomplices. One legislator wrote that

Punishment by fire to which the criminals have been condemned is totally incapable of frightening them, of making them admit to their crimes and of preventing those who wish to imitate them from continuing the intrigues of their secret undertakings.⁷⁰

It was the horrors and crimes of slavery itself which led slaves to commit such acts, but the colonists were ready to go to any lengths to preserve their economic interests. Some suggested suppressing grants of freedom by testament altogether. Others proposed their retention, but only in very special cases, thus keeping alive a virtually illusory hope of eventual freedom in order to maintain the docility and obedience of slaves. A few of the more enlightened minds proposed humane treatment and sufficient food as a palliative to stimulate respect among slaves for their masters. Neither punitive nor reform measures ever succeeded in eliminating the use of poison as an arm of resistance.

⁶⁹Cabon, Histoire d'Haïti, 1:251-52.

⁷⁰AN, Arch. Col., C9^B 15.

The notoriously cruel Nicolas le Jeune related in 1788, three years before the massive outbreak of revolution in the North Plain, that his father had lost through poison over four hundred slaves in twenty-five years and fifty-two more in only six months. In less than two years, he himself had lost forty-seven slaves and thirty mules.⁷¹

Perhaps unconsciously forecasting the black revolution which would break out among the masses eight years later, M. de Rouvray, a colonial planter and brigadier in the royal army, observed in 1783 that "a slave colony is as a city threatened by attack; we are treading on powder-kegs."⁷² By 1786, some slaves were already spreading the concept of independence.

The mulatto, Jérôme, called Poteau, and his black companion, Télémaque, inspired by the contemporary vogue of mesmerism, were holding nightly assemblies. At some distance from the plantations and the master's house, these assemblies drew large crowds usually numbering up to two hundred slaves from the neighboring plantations around Marmelade. The two leaders distributed cabalistic objects while preaching independence. They instructed others in the same practice. One colonist from the area of Marmelade revealed frequent gatherings of two hundred slaves grouped together in the slave quarters, in the banana groves or in other secluded spots--and always at night. Inspired by Jérôme and his

⁷¹dé Vaissière, La société, p. 186, n. 2.

⁷²Cited in ibid., p. 230.

preachings on independence, they distributed amongst themselves iron bars, in addition to other cabalistic objects.⁷³

Jérôme and Télémaque were arrested and sentenced to the galleys for life in December 1787. The presiding magistrate believed that this public punishment "would prove once and for all the impotence of their practices" and the empty powers of their talismans "to protect them from the punishments which justice must always deal out for brazen-faced charlatanism."⁷⁴ What this magistrate did not see, or did not want to see, wrote Cabon, was that these superstitious practices had gone beyond the limits of what the colonists deemed the narrow consciousness of the slaves, to attain the concept of an independence, embracing perhaps even the entire race.⁷⁵

From 1783 until the revolution, the collective marronage of slaves in groups and even entire plantations, sometimes including the commandeur (the head man, or foreman of the field slaves), became far more prevalent than before.⁷⁶ Partial revolts, conspiracies, suicides, mothers killing their own children to tear them away from the nightmare of slavery, voodoo, poisonings, marronage, its long history and diverse forms--all constituted the unending continuity of

⁷³ Moreau de St. Méry, Description topographique, 1:275-76. See also the text cited in Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, p. 523.

⁷⁴ Cabon, Histoire d'Haiti, 2:452.


⁷⁵ Ibid., 2:453.

⁷⁶ Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, pp. 406-07.

slave rebellion against an inhuman system of which they as slaves were the mainstay.

Yet these acts of resistance, while occurring throughout the entire epoch of colonial history, from one end of the colony to the other, and practiced by all types of slaves, did not converge into any sort of widespread, sweeping revolt. They remained largely localized, and the individual participants were eventually crushed. In some cases the latter were even betrayed by other slaves whose denunciations aided the authorities in their discovery and capture.

If undercurrents of a consciousness toward general emancipation had become evident in the half decade or so before the revolution, it was not until 1791 that this consciousness became manifestly collective, when entire plantations of slaves, one after another, in all the provinces, deserted to join what had become a massive revolutionary movement. For nearly three years, between 1789 and 1791, the slaves witnessed the revolts of the propertied classes. The white colonists began by revindicating their rights and demanding the abolition of the economic and commercial restrictions laid upon them by the ancien régime. They were followed by the affranchis who demanded an equal footing with the whites. New forces had burst open in the colony. Talk of "liberty, equality and fraternity" fell upon the receptive ears of domestic slaves as they perfunctorily served their white masters.



One colonist, Begouën-Demeaux, wrote in 1789:

Everyone has made a habit of arming himself and of grouping together to patrol the roads and the large savannas. These precautions seem to make an impression on the slaves, but the work is going badly, and it is easy to perceive that something is being conspired and will break out in mutiny on one plantation: This will be the signal for all the others.⁷⁷

Another adds that "what preoccupies us most at this time are the menaces of a revolt."⁷⁸

It was the French Revolution that provided the opportunity for that revolt.

⁷⁷Begouën-Demeaux, Mémorial d'une famille du Havre: 1743-1831, 4 vols. (Le Havre: M. Etaix, 1957), 2:137.

⁷⁸Cited in Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, p. 524.

III

THE COMING OF THE BLACK REVOLUTION

Once the news of the convocation of the Estates General was announced in 1788, colonists in San Domingo, as well as those in France, began rapidly organizing committees and clubs, establishing a network of communication between the spontaneously formed bodies and set out to determine how best to make their claims and grievances known to the national assembly which would convene the following year.

In San Domingo the aristocratic planters of the North were the first to take the initiative. During 1788 a small party had coalesced around the issue of colonial representation in the Estates General and by August had formed, illegally and with the utmost secrecy, a committee to propagate its views and rally support among the planters of the outlying parishes. This committee, along with the propaganda emanating from the Chamber of Agriculture in le Cap, had sparked the creation of similar committees in the two other provinces. They all were actively engaged in preparing official lists of grievances, or cahiers, as well as the eventual election of deputies who would present these claims and specific interests to the Estates General.

They wanted an end to what they called "ministerial

despotism" and reserved for themselves alone the right to legislate on the internal structure and administration of the island. The Governor and Intendant were to become mere figureheads representing the King but remaining under the influence and control of colonial authority. They wanted an end to the prohibitive measures of the Exclusive and demanded the right of free trade and the opening of colonial ports to merchant ships of other countries, especially for the unrestricted importation of grain and slaves. Land distribution, jurisprudence, finances, legislation--all were matters which for the colonists could best be decided upon by themselves. By declaring that only the colony could act in its own best interests, they saw themselves not as subjects of the French crown, but rather as a French province, distinctively different from the others by virtue of climate, agriculture, the specific nature of its slave-based economy and the particularity of its social structure.

Their aim was to stabilize and to increase their colonial possessions and productivity, and for this they explicitly excluded the mulattoes and free blacks from the primary electoral assemblies. By the end of the year, they had elected their own deputies to France in the belief that the members of the Estates General, because of their unfamiliarity with the specific needs of the colonies and general ignorance of colonial affairs, would accept them as experts and, with little debate, adopt whatever they proposed. They were themselves unaware, however, of attitudes prevalent

among some of the more liberal leaders of the revolutionary movement in France who, influenced by the ideas of the philosophes, depicted the slaveowning colonists as a "breed of political leeches and violators of human dignity."¹

The colonists had not yet even obtained the right of representation. Since their petitions for admission into the Estates General had already been rejected by the King and the royal bureaucracy, and subsequently by the nobility, their last refuge was in the Third Estate which, by June, had come to the forefront of the revolution in France. Assembled in the Tennis Court at Versailles, the Third Estate had declared itself the nation, the true representatives of the people and swore, as a body, never to disperse. Almost all the colonial deputies had also participated in this oath, and in the general euphoria and enthusiasm which surrounded the event, the Third Estate recognized the principle of colonial representation.

Given the wealth and economic importance of San Domingo to France, the provisional deputies brazenly requested twenty colonial representatives. At this point, Mirabeau, a liberal bourgeois and member of the French abolitionist society, the Amis des Noirs, indignantly intervened and maintained that the principles of proportional representation followed in France only allowed the colony four deputies.

¹Blanche Maurel, Cahiers de doléances de la colonie de Saint-Domingue pour les Etats-Généraux de 1789 (Paris: E. Leroux, 1933), p. 101.

Moreover, he continued, with biting irony:

You want representation in proportion to the number of inhabitants. But have the blacks and free persons of color competed in the elections? The free blacks are property owners and taxpayers. Yet they could not vote. And, as to the slaves, either they are men or they are not; if the colonists consider them to be men, let them free them and make them eligible for seats; if not, have we, in proportioning the number of deputies to the population of France, taken into account the number of our horses and mules?²

A compromise was reached and the colony was allowed six deputies.

Colonial representation in a metropolitan assembly was an audacious innovation. It was contrary to the established theory of mercantilism and had never before been granted by a European power. In essence, the idea of colonial representation embodied the general principle of "no taxation without representation" over which the American colonies had already fought a revolution. It was a victory for the San Domingo deputies, but a precarious one for which they would in the end pay dearly. Without realizing it, the colonists had seriously compromised their future and their fortunes by demanding representation in a parliamentary body in revolution. They were caught in the trap of their own ambitions and would now have to find a way to separate their own private interests from those of France, from the principles guiding

²Cited in Léon Deschamps, La Constituante et les colonies: la réforme coloniale (Paris: Perrin, 1898), p. 69. This entire debate is graphically presented in P. Boissonade, Saint-Domingue à la veille de la révolution et la question de la représentation coloniale aux Etats-Généraux (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1906), pp. 233-73.

the revolution and embraced in the Declaration of the Rights of Man which proclaimed that "all men are born and remain free and equal in their rights."

At the same time as the white deputies from San Domingo were seeking admission to the Estates General, the mulattoes residing in Paris had organized a parallel movement for representation under the leadership of Julien Raimond. Their cause was hopeless in the colony since they were excluded from the electoral assemblies. In Paris at least, they had allies and, with the help of the Amis des Noirs whose leading spokesman, Abbé Grégoire, was a member of the Constituent Assembly, were allowed to present their case in October. The Assembly was hard pressed to make a decision, but remained ideologically consistent with its own revolutionary principles and declared that no part of the nation would ever claim its rights in vain before the elected assembly of the French people. The mulattoes had also succeeded in obtaining a recommendation from the Credentials Committee, of which Grégoire was a member, for two representatives.³ Their cause was filled with new hopes. Yet reaction and fear were now stronger than ever among the white colonial forces:

The Massiac Club, a group of notable and influential colonists in Paris, had already organized themselves in

³Ruth Necheles, The Abbé Grégoire, 1787-1831: The Odyssey of an Egalitarian (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1971), p. 59.

opposition to colonial representation. They had foreseen the imminent dangers of the whole debate. Officially founded in August 1789, they had set themselves the task of coordinating a system of pressure to block the aspirations of the pro-representation party.⁴ They strongly contested the powers of the six deputies who had already been admitted provisionally, as the question of mulatto representation began taking on wider proportions. It was, incidentally, to the absentee planters of the Massiac Club that the mulattoes first addressed their petitions, seeking at least some support from their allies in property. By intrigue and intimidation, the members of the club, now in alliance with the colonial deputies, attempted at every opportunity to suspend all discussion of colonial affairs and prevent the re-emergence of the mulatto question in the National Assembly.⁵ Thus, Grégoire's recommendations were never heard.

By now, events in San Domingo had taken their own course. News from France was slow in coming, and the colonists had already taken the initiative of electing district and provincial assemblies months before the arrival of the

⁴ Although staunchly opposed to the representation of colonial interests in France, the fundamental goals of the Massiac Club were no different from those of the San Domingo colonists, i.e., the preservation of a slave-based economy and system of production, the stabilization of their landholdings and the continued growth of profits. So, with common economic interests, the two groups remained politically divided on the problem of strategy. Blanche Maurel, Saint-Domingue et la révolution française: les représentants des colons en France de 1789 à 1795 (Paris: PUF, 1943, p. 2. Debien, Les colons, p. 151.

⁵ Debien, "Gens de couleur libre," Revue d'histoire 4 (déc. 1950): 419.

the convocation orders promised by the Minister of the Marine. The Provincial Assembly of the North accused Peynier, the Governor, of hiding the orders and began stealing ministerial mail. Peynier was forced to act and finally decided to issue the orders of convocation. The general colonial assembly was to be located at Léogâne. This only infuriated the provincial assembly further, as it meant to retain control of the revolution in the North and began delegating itself both legislative and executive powers in the name of the colony.

The gens de couleur, as free persons and as property owners, continued to demand full and equal rights of citizenship with the whites. They were richer, more numerous and far more militant than elsewhere in the French West Indies. In San Domingo, they outnumbered the whites in the South and constituted an equal force in the West. The planters, aware of the activities of the mulatto delegation in Paris, became increasingly fearful and determined at all cost to undermine their movement. They kept the mulattoes under strict surveillance, issued curfews and tried to intimidate them through arrogance and brutality. If they allowed the free persons of color to vote and hold office, it would, they believed, open the way to and encourage insurrection among the slaves. It would be the end of white supremacy and of their fortunes.

At le Cap, they had already executed one mulatto, Lacombe, for having submitted a petition to the Provincial

Assembly of the North requesting political rights for free persons of color. In November, a white, Ferrand de Baudières, sénéchal of Petit Goâve, had written a similar petition. He was arrested at his residence, dragged through the streets and brutally killed by a furious mob of small whites who cut off his head and paraded it through the town on a pike. At Aquin, Labadie, an elderly respectable mulatto and close friend of Raimond, was suspected of having in his possession a copy of the petition which prompted the death of de Baudières. Shot down at his home, he was then tied to a horse and left to be dragged to death, though his life was spared by the intervention and aid of his slaves and some neighbors. A notary at Petite-Rivière nearly missed being killed for having drawn up a petition claiming the political and civil rights of the mulattoes and free blacks.⁶

By February 1790, the planters began organizing elections for the new colonial assembly. Rejecting the instructions of the Minister, la Luzerne, they decided upon St. Marc as the site of the assembly and, in a special ordinance issued by the provincial assemblies, explicitly excluded the mulattoes and free blacks from the primary electoral committees. By the end of March, the deputies from the three provinces met in St. Marc and on 14 April, avoiding any reference to their colonial status, declared themselves the General

⁶Pauléus Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint L'Ouverture, 3 vols. (Port-au-Prince: A. Héraux, 1920), 1:40. Deschamps, La Constituante, p. 83. Lespinasse, Histoire des affranchis, 1:305.

Assembly of San Domingo.

While all this was going on in the colony, the National Assembly in France had not yet determined the official constitutional status of the colonies. The San Domingo deputies realized they could not introduce measures concerning the colony without reopening the debate on the mulatto question. Conscious of the precarious position in which they now found themselves, a deputy from Martinique, de Curt, proposed in November 1789 the creation of a special Colonial Committee in order to remove all colonial questions from the floor of the Assembly, where debate would merely focus troublesome attention and publicity upon the racial interests of the planters.

The committee was to be composed of an equal number of colonists and wealthy port merchants whose role would be, among others, to present a plan for a constitution of the colonies. Strong opposition came at this point from Abbé Grégoire. In his speech on 3 December, he maintained that the question of a constitution for the colonies could not be considered so long as the question of the rights of the free persons of color had not been settled.⁷ It was an issue that had plagued the colonial deputies from the very moment they had begun agitating for representation in Paris.

In spite of Grégoire's efforts to settle the mulatto question first, and in view of the recent events in the

⁷Nescheles, Abbé Grégoire, pp. 63-64.

colony, the proposal for a colonial committee was accepted on 2 March 1970. Although only two colonists and two port merchants were named to the committee, the other eight, including Barnave, who was chosen to head the committee, were solid supporters and allies of the colonists, as of the merchant bourgeoisie, and susceptible to the influence and manipulation of the Massiac Club.⁸

The committee had less than one week to come up with a constitutional plan for the colonies. Drawing from work that had already been underway in the Massiac Club, Barnave submitted his report to the Assembly on 8 March. The report officially recognized the already existing assemblies in San Domingo, authorized each colony to submit its own proposals for a constitution and finally, with the Amis des Noirs in mind, declared guilty of crime against the nation anyone attempting to undermine or to incite agitation against the interests of the colonists.⁹ Not a word was mentioned on the burning question of mulatto rights. By sanctioning the already elected assemblies which excluded the mulattoes, the decision as to who was and who was not a citizen was left entirely to the prejudices and dispositions of the white planters.

The report quelled the fears of the colonists as it gave nearly complete local autonomy to the colonies.

⁸Deschamps, La Constituante, p. 80.

⁹Debien, Les colons, p. 192. Deschamps, La Constituante, pp. 91-92. Debien, "Gens de couleur libre," Revue d'histoire 4 (mars 1951): 540.

reassured the maritime bourgeoisie by postponing revisions of the Exclusive, thus avoiding any mention whatsoever of the slave trade and left only a glimmer of hope for the mulattoes. The Assembly received Barnave's proposals, incomplete as they were, with an overwhelming ovation, raucously subverting all discussion. The vote was taken and the report of 8 March approved by what was for the liberal opposition an extortionate majority.

The instructions which followed, outlining the application of the 8 March decree, gave full legislative powers to the Colonial Assembly which by now was acting in the colony as a miniature Constituant Assembly, but whose laws, in spite of its declared intentions to circumvent the National Assembly, still needed the approval of the latter and the perfunctory sanction of the King.¹⁰ The Colonial Assembly was free to propose modifications of the commercial relations between the colony and France and, in short, would hold virtual sovereignty over its internal regime. But the instructions remained ambiguous on the explosive question of the political rights of mulattoes and free blacks. Article 4 merely stated that the right to vote and hold office be accorded to all persons twenty-five years of age who owned property or paid the requisite amount of taxes and who fulfilled a two-year residence requirement.

Virulent opposition came both from the colonial deputies

¹⁰Deschamps, La Constituante, pp. 95 and 176.

and from the pro-mulatto forces led by Grégoire. Were not the mulattoes and free blacks persons? Did they not own property and pay taxes? Grégoire demanded a clarification of Article 4. He understood that the word "persons" meant mulattoes and free blacks, as well, and insisted that they be expressly included in the wording. The colonial deputies wanted Article 4 suppressed altogether or rewritten to specifically exclude the former. The Assembly refused to face the issue, closed the debate and dispatched the instructions, along with their inherent ambiguity, to the colony.

The news of the 8 March decree and the instructions of the 28th did not arrive until the end of May. In the meantime, the assembly at St. Marc had already assumed supreme legislative authority in the colony, declared itself permanent and had begun a thorough reorganization of the colony's administrative structure. On 28 May, it issued a decree serving as the constitutional basis of the colony. The decree declared that if urgency dictated, its laws, as those of the National Assembly in France, were subject only to the sanction of the King. Moreover, any law passed by the National Assembly on affairs of common interest between the colony and France were subject to colonial veto. Henceforth, San Domingo was to be a federative ally rather than a subject of the French government.¹¹ By the same decree,

¹¹ Gabriel Debien, Esprit colon et esprit d'autonomie à Saint-Domingue au XVIII^e siècle, 2d ed. (Paris: Larose, 1954), p. 46.

it suspended all functions of the colonial deputies in the National Assembly who were now to be no more than commissioners charged with presenting its decrees for official sanction.¹² In July, it passed a law contravening the Exclusive to open up the ports for the unrestricted importation of certain foodstuffs.

In the face of this insurrectionary activity which had gone far beyond the moderate intentions of the 8 March decree and which seemed to be driving the colony toward virtual independence, the Governor issued a proclamation denouncing the General Assembly as a traitor to the nation and amassed his troops to dissolve it by force. San Domingo was now divided into two distinct camps. On the right were the pompons blancs, the royalists and all those who had occupied military or administrative posts in the colony. The Provincial Assembly of the North, dominated by the wealthy aristocratic planters and commercial bourgeoisie, believed the St. Marc assembly had gone too far for its own good and for the good of the colony. They recalled their deputies and for the time being sided with the royalists and aimed to regain control of the revolution. On the left were the patriots, or the pompons rouges, who supported the constitutional reforms of the St. Marc assembly and for whom the revolution had opened up certain avenues of advancement. Both sides bid for the support of the mulattoes, extending hypocritical overtures and promises to win them over.

¹²Maurel, Saint-Domingue et la révolution française, p. 3.

The St. Marc assembly rebutted the Governor's denunciation by declaring Peynier a traitor, as well as the officers of his staff, and issued a call to arms of all citizens. The Provincial Assembly of the North offered its services to the Governor. It was decided that colonel de Mauduit would leave Port-au-Prince on 5 August with his royalist regiment to collaborate with de Vincent, commander of the forces in the North; both would converge at St. Marc and force the Assembly to dissolve. Upon the arrival of the troops, a twenty-four-hour ultimatum was issued. The Assembly was left defenseless and faced certain defeat. The eighty-five remaining members took advantage of the presence of a ship, the Léopard, docked in the Port-au-Prince harbor, and with the aid of a sympathetic crew who manœuvred it to St. Marc all eighty-five jumped aboard, sailed to France and tried to plea for justice in the National Assembly.

In France, the mulattoes had attempted ever since the adoption of the 8 March decree to obtain a clarification of their rights implied in Article 4 but with no success. De Joly, a lawyer and member of the Amis des Noirs, intervened on their behalf to solicit an explanation from the Colonial Committee which remained non-committal. The National Assembly had effectively washed its hands of the whole problem by delegating to the Colonial Assembly the sole initiative for its constitution and its laws governing the state of persons.

It was clear that the aspirations of the mulattoes were now a lost cause in France. Vincent Ogé, a close friend

and colleague of Raimond, understood this. He had already made it known to Barnave and the Colonial Committee that if the whites persisted in refusing to recognize persons of color as free citizens, he would force them, by arms if necessary, to recognize their rights. The activities and agitation of the mulattoes in Paris had caused the colonists' fears to reach an unprecedented stage. The Massiac Club issued directives to all the major ports advising ship captains to refuse passage to any person of color leaving for San Domingo. In spite of these measures, Ogé managed to escape. He went first to England, where he was secretly received and aided by the abolitionist leader, Clarkson. With an advance of thirty pounds, he left for the United States, purchased some arms and arrived in San Domingo on 21 October.¹³

When the planters of the St. Marc assembly had received news of the March decrees, along with the equivocal provisions of Article 4, they vowed that they would never accord political rights to a "bastard and degenerate race" and expressly excluded them from the primary assemblies.¹⁴

When a group of mulattoes appeared before the Provincial Assembly of the South at les Cayes requesting a clarification of their rights, they were told that "nothing can destroy nor even alter the line of demarcation which both nature and

¹³Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, p. 64.

¹⁴Pamphile de Lacroix, Mémoire pour servir à l'histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Pillet aîné, 1820), 1:32.

our institutions have irrevocably fixed between you and your benefactors." The Assembly further warned them against taking any action that would be "incompatible with the state of subordination in which you must remain and continue."¹⁵ The new colonial assembly prescribed by the March decrees had been elected without a single mulatto or free black vote.

Ogé's plan upon arriving in San Domingo was to secure by force the application of these decrees for his people. Having managed to elude the police who had been warned of his arrival, he went on to Dondon where he had family and friends and organized a common front of gens de couleur against the forces of white supremacy. Among his supporters were his brother, Jacques, and Jean-Baptiste Chavannes, a close friend and associate who had already proven his military capacities as a soldier in the American war for independence. With an armed following of over two hundred men including some free blacks, they advanced to Grande-Rivière, joined with additional forces to take over the city and disarmed the white population without incident. Ogé then dispatched letters to the Governor, to de Vincent, and to the Provincial Assembly of the North. In the letters, he demanded the just application of the March decrees, stated that they would proceed to elect their own representatives and if thwarted in their endeavors would meet force with force.¹⁶ The Provincial Assembly immediately countered their demands

¹⁵Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, p. 46.

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 66-67.

by sending its forces to defeat the insurgents. Vastly outnumbered and overpowered, they were forced to disband. Ogé and a number of his companions fled to Spanish territory but were soon extradited.

The trial did not take place until February 1791 when on the 25th, Ogé and Chavannes were both sentenced to a merciless death. They were led by the executioner to the parish church where, with a cord around their necks and on bended knee, they were to repent their "crimes", after which their bodies were broken on a scaffold--opposite the execution place for whites--and then tied to a wheel where they died. As a reminder of the written and unwritten laws of white supremacy for all to see, their heads were cut off and exposed on stakes, Ogé's on the road leading to Dondon and Chavanne's on the one leading to Grande-Rivière. Two days later, Ogé's brother, along with some twenty-one others, were also condemned to death and thirteen more sentenced the following month to the galleys for life.

Such were the consequences of the ambiguous March decrees designed to leave to the colonists

. . . the merit and option of exercising an act of generosity toward mulattoes and free blacks, an act which would inspire in them sentiments of affection and gratitude and establish the most perfect harmony among the different classes composing the population.¹⁷

In France, the National Assembly listened to the patriotic protests of the deputies who had arrived the

¹⁷Cited in Maurel, Cahiers de doléances, p. 113. Also cited in Debien, Les colons, p. 194.

previous September from St. Marc. They claimed to be a democratically elected body and the legitimate representatives of the entire colony, but they constituted only a minority of the original 212 members. As an assembly they had lost all credibility. The Massiac Club remained neutral, as well as the colonial deputies whose powers they themselves had stripped, while the National Assembly turned a deaf ear. Its decree of 20 September made it illegal for the eighty-five to leave France until further notice. On 12 October, it declared the dissolution of the St. Marc assembly, promised future elections and at the same time reaffirmed the exclusive right of the colonies to initiate legislation on the state of free persons of color. For the moment, all did not seem lost, at least for the colonists.

However, by November news had arrived of similar troubles in Martinique, while in San Domingo Ogé and his companions had organized and led the mulattoes into open revolt. Determined to reassert its authority over the colonies and to re-establish order, the National Assembly voted on the 29th to send additional troops to the colonies to be accompanied by civil commissioners and suspended, as it did for San Domingo in October, those assemblies in rebellion against French authority. These resolutions, however, were only definitively adopted in February 1791. The National Assembly had already rescinded its right to legislate on the political status of the mulattoes by its decrees of March and October 1790, and the promised instructions for

the future San Domingo assembly were still unwritten as news arrived of Ogé's martyrdom.

Grégoire was bitterly attacked by the colonists who held him personally responsible for the revolt and wanted legal proceedings brought against him. In March and April, the eighty-five members of the defunct colonial legislature were admitted before the National Assembly where they repented their insubordination, declared they never sought independence and affirmed their submission to the laws of France. The whole debate was once again opened and thrown on the floor of the National Assembly. It was now forced to deal with the issue that it had refused to confront a year earlier by adopting the contradictory decrees of March.

The report of the Colonial Committee was presented on 7 May, but it contained nothing new and merely reasserted under another form colonial jurisdiction over the mulatto question. In the heated debate which ensued, Grégoire took the stand to demand an adjournment; the opposition called for an immediate vote but was defeated. When the debates resumed on the 11th, it was Robespierre who laid the issue squarely before the members of the Assembly. The colonial supporters were undermining the very foundation of those principles upon which their own rights and liberties were founded. If the colonies were to be preserved at the price of acquiescing in colonial threats by adopting legislation contrary to the most basic principles of humanity, they should perish:

. . . we will sacrifice to the colonial deputies neither the nation nor the colonies nor the whole of humanity . . . I ask the Assembly to declare that the free persons of color be allowed to enjoy the rights of voting citizens.¹⁸

The question was settled on 15 May. Political rights were granted only to those persons of color born of free parents. The existing colonial assemblies, which excluded mulattoes and free blacks, were to remain; those persons of color, born of free parents and possessing the requisite qualifications, could be admitted to all future assemblies. It was in fact a conservative measure which enfranchised only a small minority of the mulattoes and free blacks in San Domingo.

The colonists were infuriated. The deputies, the members of the Colonial Committee, the Massiac Club--all forgot their former differences and joined forces to organize a united front to subvert the application of the 15 May decree. By July, the legislative powers of the colony were reinstated. Most of the colonists in France had by now returned to San Domingo where they were fortified by the planters in a movement of white solidarity and white supremacy. The Governor, Blanchelande, managed to postpone the

¹⁸ Maximilien Robespierre, Oeuvres de Maximilien Robespierre, eds. M. Bouloiseau, G. Lefebvre, A. Soboul, 10 vols. (Paris: PUF, 1930-1967), 7:362-63. A full discussion of Robespierre's famous "perish the colonies" speech, as well as a presentation of the numerous deformations it underwent at the hands of his opponents, both contemporary and subsequent, is found in the appendix to Léon Deschamp's La Constituante. Although a champion of mulatto rights, Robespierre was no abolitionist. See George Rudé's Robespierre: Portrait of a Revolutionary Democrat (New York: Viking, 1975), pp. 140 and 210, and James' The Black Jacobins, pp. 76-77 and 141.

arrival of the civil commissioners, and elections were held that summer for the new colonial assembly without the participation of those newly enfranchised by the 15 May law.

Nearly all of the eighty-five deputies of the former St. Marc legislature, pardoned in June by the National Assembly, had returned to the colony and were re-elected.

But it was not the few hundred mulattoes and free blacks included in the law that the planters feared. The entire social and economic structure of the colony--slavery itself and the precious fortunes which they derived from it--were at stake. To allow even a few mulattoes to vote would immediately open the whole question of those mulattoes still in slavery or born of only one free parent, and from there the abolition of slavery would be but one step away. The new colonial assembly opened at Léogane on 1 August, and within a fortnight the black revolution had begun.

The slaves had depended neither upon France nor upon the success or failure of the mulatto struggle. They were organizing for something which did not figure in any of the political debates, either in France or in the colony. But for the past three years, they had witnessed the events, the agitation, the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary ferment which was throwing the colony into a multitude of disorders.

When news of the French revolution reached the colony, slaves heard talk of liberty and equality, and they interpreted these ideals in their own way. Domestic slaves listened to their masters argue over independence while they

perfunctorily served them their meals and drinks. Some had even travelled to France with their masters who could not get along without their servants. They were exposed to new ideas, to the principles upon which that revolution was being built, and they carried this experience back with them. In the ports, newly arrived French soldiers brought news of the recent events in France and spoke of them with great enthusiasm. Sailors aboard the merchant ships did the same as they worked side by side with the slaves loading and unloading cargo in the harbors.¹⁹

News had arrived by the fall of 1789 of a slave uprising in Martinique. At the end of that year, plantations everywhere in San Domingo were afflicted by a devastating drought; the hardest hit by the famine were the slaves, left largely to shift for themselves to find something to eat. Marronage was increasing, becoming far more aggressive and slaves far more audacious.²⁰ On some plantations, the entire work force had deserted along with the black slave driver, himself a slave.

In October of that year, one plantation manager wrote the owner that his slaves were beginning to let things to to

¹⁹Félix Carteau, Soirées bermudiennes (Bordeaux: 1802), p. 77.

²⁰In 1788, the marquis de Najac wrote to la Luzerne; Minister of the Marine and former Governor of San Domingo (1786-1787), concerning the state of marronage in the colony: "During your administration, over four thousand slaves fled into Spanish territory; since your departure, the Spanish hardly returned any of them, and I am convinced that there are now six thousand in the Spanish colony . . ." AN, Arch. Col., C9^B 39. See also Ch. 2, p. 49, n. 22, above.

their heads: "The sight of the cockade is giving them ideas, and even more, the news from France which is flaunted indiscreetly." Another observer wrote:

Many [slaves] imagine that the King has granted their freedom and that it is their master who does not want to consent to it. Your plantation [in Jean-Rabel] has subjects who can only be restrained by fear of punishments. . . . One must lend a deaf ear and pretend not to hear what they are saying to avoid a general uprising.²¹

They saw the whites lynch and torture mulattoes, free blacks and white sympathizers alike for daring to advocate the civil rights of free persons of color. When Ogé and his followers had taken up arms to secure those rights, many slaves had come spontaneously to offer their aid. They witnessed once again the merciless justice of the white authorities.

During the months of June and July, just preceeding the massive outbreak of violence in the North, the slaves of several plantations near Port-au-Prince in the Cul-de-Sac plain left the fields and began holding frequent gatherings in the woods. Those of the Fortin-Bellantien plantation near Croix-des-Bouquets had assassinated their commandeur whom they considered overly loyal to the whites and therefore dangerously untrustworthy. They then deserted en masse during the night to assemble in the woods. At the same time, groups of slaves from five nearby plantations, numbering roughly fifty in all and including a commandeur,

²¹Maurice Begouën-Demeaux, Mémorial d'une famille, 2:135 and 137.

in addition to the entire slave force of two others, were reported maroon. The following day, as the maréchaussée, accompanied by neighboring planters, arrived to break up the meetings, the slaves resisted with unrestrained courage and determination. Thirteen were captured and a number of others mortally wounded. Some sixty of them, armed with rifles and machetes, had retreated to the coast but were pursued by the maréchaussée who took one of their leaders and killed a second. Eight other leaders had been executed, as well; two of them were broken alive on a scaffold and six were hanged.

The planters and the authorities thought that an example such as this would bring the rest of the slaves, who had dispersed, back to their masters from whom they would presumably seek pardon and thereby avoid the tragic fate of their leaders. But, as one colonist wrote, ". . . we have not yet seen any of them come forward."²²

The planters were forced to increase their surveillance over the slaves, organize nightly patrols and search the slave cabins for arms. In spite of these measures slaves managed to communicate and consort with those of other plantations in the districts. The domestic slaves, as well as those who practiced a trade and therefore worked

²²AN, DXXV 46, 432. Copies de différentes lettres sur les événements de Saint-Domingue extraites de la gazette anglaise et transmises à Paris, Kingston. Extrait d'une lettre du Port-au-Prince en date du 20 août 1791. The above account is based on information contained in this letter. Garran-Coulon also presents an account of this incident in his Rapport sur les troubles de Saint-Domingue, Commission des Colonies, 4 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1795), 2:215.

largely off the plantation, were in continual contact with whites and consequently in the best position to receive and disseminate information. At the market place, in the port towns, at the crossroads, they spoke with one another, exchanged ideas and information, overheard the discussions and arguments of the whites and communicated what they knew, either directly or through contacts, to their black compatriots in the fields.

The whole structure of colonial San Domingo was rapidly being transformed. The traditional antagonisms and hostilities between the planters and the bureaucracy had reached their peak and were now fought out in the open. The planters were divided amongst themselves in the early days of 1788. They wanted certain reforms but were uncertain as to how they should proceed. It was a small minority of the planters of the North that took the lead and pushed for representation in France, and it was the same planters whose troops joined the counter-revolutionary royalist forces a year later to smash the patriot legislature at St. Marc. The "small" whites had deserted their former allies, the royal bureaucrats, and now sided with the planters to lynch and kill mulattoes and free blacks whose aspirations and energies were unleashed by a revolution the planters themselves had begun.

The colony had never been in such a state of social and administrative chaos. Not only was the old colonial regime shattered to pieces, the Governor and the bureaucracy stripped of their former powers, the prerogatives of the

merchant bourgeoisie dismantled with the opening of the ports, but the new regime had no centralized power. Authority shifted regionally back and forth between the Provincial Assembly of the North and the Colonial Assembly in the West, each attempting to concentrate control in its own hands and in its own interests.

Planters were far too preoccupied with these problems to worry too much about the effects their words and actions might have upon their slaves. They had come to San Domingo to make a fortune out of slavery, and they intended to keep things that way. Although a few might have foreseen the dangers that lay ahead, most generally assumed that slavery was as inviolable as it was enduring. It had lasted for over two hundred years. Slave rebellions had occurred in the past, and marronage had been a constant plague. But the revolts were always isolated affairs, and maroon bands were invariably defeated along with their leaders. For the planters, there was no reason to believe that slave activity was any different from what it had been in the past.

They would soon learn, but only by the raging flames that, within minutes, reduced their magnificent plantations to ashes, how wrong they were.

PART TWO
REVOLTS OF 1791

CHAPTER IV

SLAVES IN THE NORTH

The slaves in the North had been consciously preparing their insurrection for weeks before that fateful night of 22 August which marked the beginning of the end of the most flourishing and by far the most opulent of slave colonies in the Caribbean--"the pearl of the Antilles," as it was called.

On the night of 14 August, the final plans were drawn up and the instructions given. Some two hundred slaves, consisting of two delegates each from the plantations extending throughout the central region of the North Province assembled on the Lenormand de Mézy plantation in Morne-Rouge to fix the date. All were commandeurs who, within the slave-labor system, held a certain degree of influence and authority over the field slaves. A statement to the effect that the King and the National Assembly in France had decreed three free days per week for every slave, as well as the abolition of the whip as a form of punishment, was read to all those who had gathered there. They were told that it was the white masters and the colonial authorities who refused to consent and that royalist troops were on their way from France to execute the decree by force. The news was, of course, false, but it represented the nearest thing to freedom the slaves had ever known and served as a rallying point around

which the aspirations and determination of the slaves could be solidified and channeled into open rebellion.

According to the declaration of one slave, François, who was arrested on 20 August a few days before the insurrection broke out on a full scale, they had nearly reached an agreement to begin the war that very night, but upon reflection and further discussion had considered it inopportune to carry out, on the spot, a general insurrection, the plans for which had been concluded only that evening. The majority of the slaves had decided to wait, and the date was fixed for the 22nd.¹

The leader of this movement was Boukman. He had been a commandeur and later a coachman on the Clément plantation, among the first to go up in flames once the revolt began. This latter post undoubtedly enabled him to follow the ongoing political developments in the colony, as well as to facilitate communication links and establish contacts among the slaves of different plantations. As his predecessor, Macandal, Boukman was a revered voodoo priest and therefore exercised an undisputed influence and command over his followers, only to be enhanced by the overpowering impression projected by his gigantic size. He was to give the signal for the revolt.

Once the accord was reached, it was solemnized by a voodoo ceremony held in a thickly wooded area of the

¹Documents relating to the events up to 22 August 1791 are presented and discussed in Appendix B, pp. 337-342 below.

plantation known as Bois-Caïman. The ceremony was officiated by Boukman and a voodoo high-priestess, an elderly negress, equally as terrifying as her counterpart. Amidst raging streaks of lightning and violent bursts of thunder, accompanied by high winds and the torrential rains of the storm that had broken out that night, the high priestess raised her knife to kill a sacrificial pig, the blood of which was passed around for all to partake. As she began to invoke the voodoo deities, Boukman rose to deliver a prayer to the assembled slaves. It was, in essence, a call to arms.²

The significance of the 14 August assembly was both ideological and political. It was an organized affair and constituted in every sense a revolutionary political meeting, where issues were discussed and points of view presented, where a final agreement was reached and a call to arms issued. That agreement was then confirmed during the voodoo ceremony by a blood pact committing the participants to utmost secrecy, solidarity and a vow of revenge.³ Voodoo

²"The Good Lord who created the sun which gives us light from above, who rouses the sea and makes the thunder roar--listen well, all of you--this god, hidden in the clouds, watches us. He sees all that the white man does. The god of the white man calls him to commit crimes; our god asks only good works of us. But this god who is good to us orders revenge! He will direct our hands; he will aid us. Throw away the image of the god of the whites who thirsts for our tears and listen to the voice of liberty which speaks in the hearts of all of us." (Translated by author from the French translation of the original creole, in Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:89.) This ceremony was undoubtedly a celebration of the petro rites, introduced into the colony from the Spanish part of the island by the slave, Don Pedro. It was within this voodoo sect, more than any other, that the potential for vengeance was particularly characteristic. See Ch. 1, pp. 29 and 35 above.

³See Ch. 1, p. 30, especially note 53 above.

thus provided a vehicle for the political organization of the slaves, as well as an ideological force, both of which contributed directly to the success of what became one week later a virtual blitzkrieg attack on the plantations across the province.

It was an ingenious plan and would have been perfect were it not for the premature activities of a few slaves in the Limbé district who either misunderstood the final instructions or who impatiently insisted upon beginning the revolt before the designated date. On 16 August, two days after the Bois-Caïman affair, some slaves set fire to a cane field on the Chabaud estate. The commandeur from the Desgrieux plantation was arrested and, upon questioning, revealed that the commandeurs, coachmen, domestics and other slaves whom the masters trusted from the neighboring plantations had formed a conspiracy to burn down the plantations and kill off all the whites. He named as leaders a certain number of slaves from the Desgrieux plantation, four from the Flaville plantation in Acul and Paul, a commandeur on the Blin plantation in Limbé.⁴

⁴One must remember that the customary procedure for interrogating a slave "caught in the act," so to speak, or even suspected of having committed some crime, was a trial by torture. It is likely that the case of the Desgrieux commandeur was no different. The rapidity of the attack, the coordination of their activities and the methodical movement of the slaves from plantation to plantation is proof in itself of the secrecy and loyalty of the slaves who organized and carried out the insurrection in its first days. Debien has stated in a recent book, Les esclaves aux Antilles, that no study has yet been made of the origins, the chronology or the geographic development of the August 1791 insurrection (p. 468). The above presentation, and especially Appendix B, are a modest and, unfortunately, only a partial attempt (given the limited number of eye-witness accounts) at reconstructing and

When the slaves implicated in the matter by name were questioned, they all categorically denied any truth to the statement of the Desgrieux commandeur and swore an inviolable loyalty to their masters whose benevolence filled them with gratitude and esteem. On the 21st, the cook from the Desgrieux plantation was also arrested as one of the conspirators, whereupon he managed to escape and join the rebels. The general insurrection broke out on the following night as scheduled.

At ten o'clock the slaves of the Flaville-Turpin estate in Acul, under the direction of one Auguste, deserted en masse to make their way to the Clément plantation where they joined Boukman and combined their forces with the rest of the slaves there. Their numbers reinforced, they immediately set out to the Tremes estate; having narrowly missed the resident carpenter with their bullets, they took him prisoner and proceeded to the Noé plantation where a dozen or so of these slaves had killed the refiner, his apprentice, as well as the manager. The only whites spared were the doctor and his wife, whose services they deemed might prove to be of great value to them.⁵ By midnight the entire

providing a demographic schema of what actually happened and how.

⁵AN, DXXV 78, 772. AA 148. La partie du Nord-paroisse de l'Acul. DXXV 78, 772. AA 183. Letter from le Cap, 27 Sept. 1791. DXXV 56, 550. Discours fait à l'Assemblée Nationale le 30 novembre 1791 par MM. les commissaires de l'Assemblée Générale de la partie française de Saint-Domingue.

plantation was aflame, and the revolt had effectively begun.⁶

The troops, by now consisting of the slaves from the Turpin-Flaville, Clément and Noé plantations, returned with the three prisoners to the Clément estate, methodically assassinated M. Clément and his refiner and left the prisoners there under guard.

Armed with torches, guns, sabres and whatever makeshift weapons they were able to contrive, they relentlessly continued their devastating acts, carrying the revolt to the surrounding plantations. By six o'clock the next morning, both the Moline and Flaville plantations were totally destroyed, along with the entire white personnel; of all the plantations in the Acul district, only on two did some of the slaves refrain for the time being from participating in the revolt.⁷

From Acul, the slaves proceeded westward that same

⁶AN, DXXV 46, 432. Copies. M. Tausias à M. Camuzat, le Cap, 1 sept. 1791. Although the slaves on one of the Gallifet estates had already begun to revolt by attempting to kill the manager on the 20th, perhaps due to circumstances on the plantation beyond their control or to a misunderstanding of the Bois-Caiman directives, the general insurrection did not effectively begin until the night of the 22nd. See the statement of the slave, Ignace, quoted in Antoine Dalmas, Histoire de la révolution de Saint-Domingue, 2 vols. (Paris: Mame Frères, 1814), 1:116. It was also on 22-23 August that the three Gallifet estates in Petite-Anse went up in flames. DXXV 56, 550. Discours.

⁷The Caignet and Busson plantations. AN, DXXV 78, 772. AA 183. Letter from le Cap, 27 Sept. 1791. DXXV 78, 772. AA 148. Partie du Nord. DXXV 78, 772. KK 175. La paroisse, de l'Acul, signed by M. Caignet. The latter's plantation was burned in any event at some point before the end of the following month. DXXV 78, 772. Liste des sucreries incendiées à Saint-Domingue dont on a eu connaissance jusqu'au 30 septembre 1791, n.d. (? oct.-nov. 1791).

morning, the 23rd, toward the immediately adjacent Limbé district, augmenting their forces as they moved from plantation to plantation, and established military camps on each one as they took it over.⁸ Making their way into Limbé via the Saint-Michel plantation, they were immediately joined by a large number of the slaves of the district where the premature beginnings of this insurrection had been seen a week earlier. In a matter of minutes, the flames had devoured the richest sugar plantations of San Domingo.

Continuing westward, they attacked Port-Margot in the early evening of the 24th. By the 25th, the entire northern plain of this district had been decimated. The slaves took care to destroy, as they did from the very beginning and would continue to do throughout the first weeks of the revolution, not only the cane fields, but the manufacturing installations, sugar mills, tools and other farm equipment, storage bins, slave quarters; in short, every material manifestation of their existence under slavery and its means of production.

The residents of Quartier Port-Margot had believed for a long time that the slaves of this quarter had had no part in the revolt, but almost all of them in the lower quarter ended up participating in it."⁹ The insurgent slaves

⁸AN, DXXV 78, 772. KK 178. Renseignements sur la position actuelle du Limbé, le Cap, 7 oct. 1791. The author states that "one can count as many rebel camps as there were plantations."

⁹AN, DXXV 78, 772. KK 179. Paroisse de Port-Margot, signed by Traynier and Palmis, n.d. (? sept.-oct. 1791).

co-ordinated their forces to reach and destroy the plantations situated in the mountainous region bordering on Limbé and Plaisance, leaving the central area intact.¹⁰

As they attempted to penetrate Plaisance on the 25th, the slaves met with armed resistance, the first they had encountered, from a group of inhabitants who managed to drive them back into the Limbé plain, whereupon they divided up and returned by two different routes the following day.¹¹ Having terrorized the inhabitants upon their re-entry, having pillaged and then burned dozens of plantations, they took possession of the Ravine Champagne where they set up a military outpost and fortified their troops. They held out for over three weeks while the planters, badly armed and having suffered an infinite number of casualties, awaited aid from the neighboring parishes. Yet whatever aid the whites managed to muster remained insufficient, for when strategically encircled or militarily overpowered, the slaves would retreat into the mountains, only to attack again at different points with replenished and reorganized troops.¹²

During the very first days of the revolt, the slaves were roughly ten to fifteen hundred strong, and their numbers continued to grow with astonishing rapidity as they

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ AN, DXXV 78, 772. KK 161. Plaisance, signed by Manan, fils, Ch. Escot, A. Touvaudais, le Cap, 27 Sept. 1791.

¹² Ibid. Also, DXXV 47, 443. M. de Blanchelande à M. le président du Congrès de l'Amérique, le Cap, 24 août 1791.

were joined by slaves of one plantation after another throughout the countryside.¹³ One colonist estimated that "their numbers, unfortunately, increase one-hundred-fold in proportion to their losses."¹⁴

By the time de Touzard, commander of the local militia, arrived at the Dufour and Latour plantations where the slaves appeared to have concentrated their forces on the 24-25th, their numbers had already swelled to three to four thousand.¹⁵ Within two weeks, the number of slaves in revolt had grown to fifteen thousand, one third of them fully equipped with rifles and ammunition pilfered from the plantations, the rest armed with sabres, knives and a whole host of contrivances which served them as weapons.¹⁶

Once the revolt had begun, it spread like wildfire, and within the first days the plantations of the North Plain, Petite-Anse and Quartier-Morin which surrounded le Cap, as well as those of Limonade, all to the east of Acul, went up

¹³AN, DXXV 46, 432. Copies. M. Tausias à M. de Camuzat, le Cap, 1 sept. 1791. See also the report of M. Baynet in the same collection of letters.

¹⁴AN, DXXV 78, 772. AA 183. Letter from le Cap, 27 Sept. 1791. The facility with which the slaves were able to recruit additional forces was also remarked by Mr. Henry, a merchant captain, in a letter to his brother from le Cap, 27 Sept. 1791, in collection cited above.

¹⁵AN, DXXV 78, 772. AA 183. Partie du Nord. DXXV 56, 550. Discours.

¹⁶Fear and panic among the whites spread as rapidly as the insurrection itself, causing some to believe that there were now as many as forty to fifty thousand slaves in revolt. Garran-Coulon, Rapport, Commission, 2:215.

in flames as swiftly and as methodically as had those to the west. The slaves of le Cap, the principal city in the North and now the seat of colonial government, were to rise in revolt as the insurrection swept the countryside. Some of the slaves already in open revolt would split from the core and converge with those on the plantations surrounding le Cap to set them ablaze.¹⁷ This would be the signal for the revolt in le Cap, where there were eight to ten thousand male slaves and where many of the white refugees who managed to escape the vengeance and fury of the blacks on their own plantations had already taken shelter. The plan was to exterminate all the whites of le Cap and to burn the town to the ground. It almost succeeded. The plan was discovered on 22 August, just before the first fires of the insurrection broke out in Acul. This time, the authorities took the necessary precautions.

But they could do nothing to save the plantations. One colonist wrote from le Cap: ". . . we had learned . . .

¹⁷AN, DXXV 46, 432. Copies. M. Tausias à M. de Camuzat, le Cap, 1 sept. 1791, Blanchelande also referred to a conspiracy of the slaves against the city in a letter to M. Bertrand, Minister of the Marine, written from le Cap on 2 September 1791 and contained in the collection cited above. M. Tausias states that, having set fire to the plantations in Acul, the rebel slaves reached the North Plain and Quartier Morin to the east, that their numbers continued increasing and that he had received further news of the convergence of the entire slave forces of various plantations with the rebels. M. Baynet, whose statement is also included in this group of letters, reports that after having set fire to the Chabaud plantation (in Limbé), the slaves (or some of them) made off in the direction of le Cap and were joined by the greater part of the slaves on the other plantations along the way. Also mentioned in DXXV 79, 774. Letter from Kingston, 17 Sept. 1791.

that a large attack was afoot, but how could we ever have known that there reigned among these men, so numerous and formerly so passive, such a concerted accord that everything was carried out exactly as was declared?"¹⁸ Another wrote that ". . . the revolt had been too sudden, too vast and too well planned for it to seem possible to stop it or even to moderate its ravages."¹⁹

Within eight days, the slaves had completely destroyed 184 sugar plantations throughout the northern province; in less than one month, the count rose to over two hundred, in addition to nearly twelve hundred coffee plantations.²⁰ They attacked mercilessly, carrying their rebellion from one end of the province to the other. By September, all of the plantations within fifty miles either side of le Cap had been reduced to ashes and smoke; twenty-three of the twenty-seven parishes were in ruins, and the other four would fall in a matter of days.²¹

¹⁸AN, DXXV 78, 772. AA 183. Letter from le Cap, 27 Sept. 1791.

¹⁹AN, DXXV 56, 550. Discours.

²⁰Debien, Les colons, p. 334. Also, AN, DXXV 63, 635. Liste des habitations incendiées, dépendance du Nord, n.d. (? sept. 1791). This list includes 172 sugar, 1185 coffee and 34 indigo plantations burned during the beginning of the revolt, making a total of 1,391 plantations.

²¹AN, DXXV 46, 432. Copies. M. l'Ambassadeur à MM. les colons de l'Hôtel Massiac, 4 nov. 1791. Letter from Kingston, 17 Sept. 1791. Letter from M. Nicoleau, le Cap, 3 Sept. 1791. The four remaining districts, not including le Cap, were Quinaminthe, Fort-Dauphin (including Terrier-Rouge), le Trou and Dondon.

"During those first weeks of revolution, the slaves destroyed the whites and their property with the same ruthlessness and cruelty that they had suffered for so many years at the hands of their masters. The scenes of horror and bloodshed on the plantations, as whites hopelessly tried to defend themselves or, at best, flee from the unleashed terror and rage of their former slaves, were only too reminiscent of the brutality they had endured under the plantation regime. Yet as atrocious as they were, these acts of vengeance could hardly compare with those of cold-blooded, grotesque savagery and sadistically calculated murder committed by their oppressors over the past three centuries.

Amidst the violence and fury of the August Days, there were some slaves whose sense of humanity and range of human understanding nevertheless rose above the all-consuming forces of collective vengeance. The most frequently cited example is that of a slave who was himself implicated in the revolt, but who risked and later lost his own life to save those of his master and family. This slave was Paul Blin.²² According to one account, presented in address to the National Assembly, the black nurse of Mme. Baillon, residing

²²See p. 108 above. Bryan Edwards relates the account of these incidents as communicated by Mme. Baillon herself to a friend of his who was with him in San Domingo at the time: After leading them safely into the woods, the slave left to join the revolt and made frequent trips between the rebel camp and the white fugitives, providing them with food, a canoe, then a boat. He came back once again to lead them through the woods to Port-Margot, where after nineteen days of various hardships, they would finally be able to make their way to le Cap, and then took leave of them forever. History Civil and Commercial of the British West Indies, 5th ed., 5 vols. (New York: ADIC Press, 1966), 3:80-81.

with her husband and her father (already killed) on their plantation, told them that there was not a minute to lose and offered to accompany them. This nurse was Paul Blin's wife, and it was she who secured the food for her master and mistress. Paul had promised to find them a canoe, but when they came to the spot where it was to be, it turned out to be nothing more than a dilapidated skiff with no oars. As Paul's wife reproached him for the manner in which he fulfilled his promises, he answered that he provided these means as a sort of fate preferable to that which the rebels had prepared for these unfortunates.²³

The uncontrolled explosions of vengeance and pent-up hatred which marked the beginning of the revolution constituted, however, only a temporary stage. Once expiated, these destructive energies were progressively channeled into military strategy, tactical manoeuvres and political alliances as the slaves gained territory and began to stabilize their positions. They had no experience in the use of

²³AN, DXXV 56, 550. Discours. It is quite probable that Paul Blin had participated in the Bois-Calman ceremony and had, along with the others, taken the sacred vow of vengeance. The same address to the National Assembly portrays the agony of M. Oléduc, manager of the Gallifet estates, who pleads for his life and reminds the coachman who is about to kill him that he had always been kind to him. The slave replied: "That is true, but I have promised to kill you," and then did so. The remarkable sense of humanity on the part of Paul Blin, as conveyed in the Edwards account (p. 116, n. 22 above), is perhaps largely due to the influence, persuasion and sollicitations of his wife who, as a woman, was able to make him confront the struggle within himself--an inner struggle of any individual engaged in violent revolution--between his devotion to the cause and his sentiments toward those near to him but who were nonetheless part of the enemy class.

military weaponry, but they learned quickly enough. They ransacked the plantations for money, precious metals, furniture, clothing, sacks of coffee, sugar, indigo, indeed any article of value they could place their hands on to equip their army or to trade with the Spanish for additional guns and ammunition. When they crushed an attack by the whites on one of their outposts, they made off with cannon and other military equipment left behind with which to continue their struggle.

For the time being, they had allied with the counter-revolutionary royalist forces and, to some extent with the mulattoes, but in neither case were they directed or controlled by their allies of convenience. In the rebel camps in the east, where the mulatto population of the North was concentrated, they nearly always occupied inferior positions. Blanchelande, writing to the Minister of the Marine, observed that the mulattoes of le Trou and Grande-Rivière who had joined the rebel slaves, "have no authority over them; their leaders are all chosen from among the blacks, and not one from the gens de couleur."²⁴ A prisoner of war in Jean-François' camp at Grande-Rivière stated that although there

²⁴AN, DXXV 46, 431. Blanchelande au Ministre de la Marine, le Cap, 29 sept. 1791. The vast majority of the higher command posts in the Grande-Rivière area in fact went to the free blacks. DXXV 60, 600. Extrait des registres. Suite de la déposition du Sieur Laroque. The only prominent mulatto leader was Candy, fierce and courageous in battle, with little sympathy for the white prisoners. By November, he was closely associated with Jean-François and Biassou, but by January 1792, after the negotiations with the Civil Commissioners had failed, had left to join the whites.

were many armed mulattoes amongst the black rebels, in general they were scrupulously surveyed. One of them, Desprès, had even been suspected of collaboration with the whites and of preventing the capture of Fort-Dauphin where he had resided. Biassou issued orders on 23 December to have him killed.²⁵

The slaves were organized in bands, as European armies were organized in regiments, and although inter-band rivalry and divisions were not uncommon, the internal discipline of the bands was maintained with an iron hand by the individual leaders. The least sign of insubordination or the slightest evidence of uncertainty was met with unimaginably harsh treatment and even death.²⁶

Such was the military government at Quinaminthe under the command of Jean-Baptiste Marc, a free black, with Cézar, a recently emancipated free black, as second in command. Through intrigue, skillful deception and brilliant manoeuvring, they allied themselves with de Touzard who graciously

²⁵AN, DXXV 63, 635. Déclarations des prisonniers remis par Jean-François, 24 déc. 1791. Déclaration collective de MM. René Cossait et al. A certain segment of the mulattoes in the rebel camps had been victims of the August revolt. Their property destroyed, the only choice they had was either to join the white patriot forces against the blacks or to join--by consent or by force--the rebels, where they were closely watched. Among the mulattoes who joined the revolution voluntarily were also those condemned in absentia during the Ogé affair (see p. 95 above). DXXV 60, 600. Extrait des registres. Suite de la déposition du Sieur Laroque. Laroque lists the names of some of these mulattoes, as well as a few of the free blacks, also condemned, whom he saw at the Grand-Cormier camp. See also Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:69, nn. 1, 2 and 3.

²⁶AN, DXXV 56, 550. Discours.

supplied them with as much military armament as they needed or requested, allowing them to hold complete control for over three months. De Touzard had nothing but praise for Cézard, whom he credited with having saved the entire district from the "brigands," and promised to write the Colonial Assembly recommending that he receive a handsome recompense for his services. Cézard fled to Dondon and within two days was back fighting with his black comrades in the attack on Marmelade.²⁷

During these months, the blacks continued to defend their positions across the province through tactical guerrilla warfare. They retreated into the hills when it was to their advantage, organized their forces for counter-attacks and often continued to burn and ravage the nearby plantations in reprisal. It was during one of these attacks in the Acul plain in November that Boukman was killed while defending the post at Fond Bleu against the advancing forces of the le Cap regiment.

From these black masses emerged other leaders to coordinate the activities and assume the direction of what had

²⁷AN, DXXV 20, 198. Mémoire fait par un habitant d'Ouinaminthe sur . . . les événements arrivés à cette paroisse jusqu'au 15 janvier 1792, certifiée par Alexandre la Fosse, le Cap, 22 sept. 1792. DXXV 65, 662. Faits et événements relatifs à M. Wanderlinden, capitaine du régiment du Cap, lorsqu'il est venu au Fort Dauphin . . . , oct.-nov. 1791. In addition to the command posts held at Ouinaminthe by Cézard and Jean-Baptiste Marc, who ruled with the air of an army general (and who was also well known in Fort-Dauphin for thievery), were those held by Noël, a black slave, and Jean-Simon, a free black. Their titular general was Sieur Gérard.

become a revolutionary army fighting to destroy the very foundations of colonial slavery. The outcome of that revolution would also destroy one of France's most vital economic sources of commercial and industrial capitalism. Among the hundreds of local leaders that the revolution produced was Jean-François, who assumed the rank and responsibility of general after the death of Boukman. Biassou, lieutenant-general, was second in command, while Jeannot was in charge of the black troops in the east.

As a political leader, Jean-François was ambitious; as a general, he was outwardly pompous and unabashedly flaunted his ego by decorating his uniform with an abundant assortment of medals and other impressive military trinkets, among them, the Cross of St. Louis. Yet he was a man of exceptional intelligence for one who had spent the larger part of his life as a slave, and he had already gained the confidence of the masses.

Biassou was of a far more fiery disposition. He was a fervent voodoo adept and kept himself surrounded by houngans from whom he frequently sought advice. He was impulsive and always ready at the first sign of insult or deception on the part of his white enemies, to take revenge on the prisoners in his camp.²⁸ He would have killed them all were it not for the judicious interventions of Jean-François or Toussaint who at this stage served as Biassou's

²⁸AN, DXXV-63, 635. Déclarations. Déclaration de M. Guillaume Moulinet. See also Lacroix, Mémoires, 1: 153-54.

secretary and physician of the black army.

Jeannot, as well as being commander in the east, had also received the title of judge, giving him undisputed authority over the life or death of his prisoners.²⁹ He was a man of insatiable vengeance who thrived on torturing the white prisoners in as barbaric a manner as that of many of the former masters who knew no bounds. His tyranny did not stop here but extended equally to the blacks under his command. Following a crushing defeat by the combined forces under general Blanchelande, Jeannot immediately suspected treason, and Paul Blin was the victim. Knowing that he had helped his white master to escape, Jeannot had him burned alive on the nefarious pretext that he had removed the bullets from their cartridges.³⁰

By November, the political situation in the colony had changed with the arrival of the civil commissioners from France. Negotiations would soon be under way between the rebel leaders and the French representatives. Upon being informed of Jeannot's excesses, Jean-François, revolted by such atrocities, realized that the man was not only a serious danger to the revolution but that he could also jeopardize the negotiations. The black general had him tried and gave him a military execution at about the same

²⁹AN, DXXV 1, 2. Adresse à l'Assemblée Générale . . . par MM. les citoyens de couleur de la Grande-Rivière, Sainte-Suzanne et autres quartiers . . . n.d. (? nov. 1791).

³⁰See pp. 116-17, nn. 22 and 23 above. Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:112-13. See also Dalmas, Histoire, 1:216-17.

time that the whites who had captured Boukman in battle cut his head off and garishly exposed it on a stake at the public square in le Cap.

The negotiations which had brought about a temporary cease-fire also brought forward a set of demands formulated by Jean-François and Biassou. It was under these circumstances that the first signs of division appeared between the aims of those who had become the official leaders of the revolution and the aspirations of the black masses. Together they had practically annihilated an entire province; that they were fighting to free themselves cannot be doubted. But neither Jean-François nor Biassou, nor even Toussaint for that matter quite knew what to do at this point. While Toussaint mediated and kept the peace within their camp, the difficult and unfortunate responsibility of officially representing the revolutionary slave masses fell to Jean-François.

The whole scope of the revolution, only three months under way but rapidly taking on wider and wider proportions, had gone far beyond his capacities as the political leader of a people engaged in revolutionary struggle. To negotiate the outright abolition of slavery would be absurd; no ruling class ever negotiates to abolish the exploitation of human labor. It was an impossible situation, and the best he could come up with was to demand an unconditional amnesty for all of the slaves who had participated in the revolt, freedom for fifty of the leaders and a few hundred of their

officers, as well as an amelioration of the conditions of the slaves (the abolition of the whip and the cachot as forms of punishment). In exchange for this, he promised to use his influence over the slaves to encourage them to return to their respective plantations and to deliver the remaining white prisoners, on condition that his wife who was held prisoner by the whites in le Cap also be released. Although personally opposed to these limited demands, Biassou finally agreed to subscribe to them.

To charge Jean-François with deliberate and cold-blooded political treachery against his people at this stage in the revolution is perhaps too harsh and premature a judgement. But when asked about the real causes of the insurrection by one of his white prisoners--it was M. Gros, a le Cap lawyer who also served as secretary--Jean-François eventually answered, after brushing earlier questions aside that "they have not taken up arms to obtain a liberty which, even if the whites chose to grant it, would be for them nothing more than a fatal and venomous gift, but at least they hoped for an amelioration of their condition."³¹ He was speaking to his enemy, and an enemy who was his prisoner. The delicate problem of speaking to the Colonial Assembly and the Civil Commissioners was quite another matter, and it was here that he floundered.³²

³¹AN, DXXV 46, 439. Journal rédigé par M. Gros. Entry for 17 Nov. 1791.

³²One wonders exactly what, if anything, Toussaint would have done in Jean-François' shoes. By doing nothing, by remaining in the background, Toussaint at least had

Among the prominent leaders, it was Biassou, the fiery and impassioned voodoo adept, who in many respects best incarnated at this point the aspirations and mentality of the insurgent slaves. The black masses had fearlessly burned and ransacked the plantations for money and other necessary goods, thrusting the whites aside, retorting that "they did not give a damn about the manager or any other white, that they would take what they pleased, that they were not Ogé."³³ When they learned of the death of Boukman, they, as Biassou, were enraged to the point of threatening to massacre all the white prisoners.³⁴

The black troops and officers, already irritated by the long delay in the Colonial Assembly's response to the address their leaders had sent over two weeks before, were determined to continue the war when they learned that de Touzard, now commander of the white troops at Fort-Dauphin, had broken the temporary cease-fire to attack several of their camps. But they were under strict orders to refrain from all hostilities. They became suspicious of the frequent contacts Jean-François and Biassou had with various whites and swore they would exterminate all the

enough political wisdom to save himself from the opprobrium cast upon Jean-François as negotiator in November-December 1791. Yet someone had to do something, and Jean-François was the only one in a position to do so.

³³AN, DXXV 65, 659. Extrait des archives du comté du Fort-Dauphin, 8 nov. 1791. Déclaration du Sieur Jacobet.

³⁴AN, DXXV 48, 439. Journal rédigé par M. Gros. Entry for 11 Nov. 1791.

whites, and even their own leaders, if these men dared to come to terms with the authorities.³⁵ At the Gallifet camp in Grande-Rivière, the slave troops and especially their commander, Jean-Baptiste Godard, openly affirmed that the Civil Commissioners were répresentatives without any powers and without a mandate, that it was not the King who had sent them and that if they proposed peace, it was to trick them into submission before killing them all off.³⁶ It was not the whole truth, but it was not too far from it.

If a few of their prisoners tried to convince them that their revolt was pure folly, that the King had never granted them three free days a week and that only the Colonial Assembly could legislate on such matters, they pretended not to listen and said that the government would give them what they wanted or they would continue the war to the bitter end. Abbé de la Porte tried to frighten them by describing the might and power of the combined forces of France, Spain, Britain and all the other kingdoms of Europe that would unite to exterminate them if they did not give up their arms and go back to the plantations, but his words went in at one ear and out the other.³⁷

³⁵Ibid. Entries for 17 Nov. and 5 Dec. 1791. DXXV 46, 439, No. 300. M. de Rouvray à M. de Blanchelande, 8 janv. 1792.

³⁶AN, DXXV 60, 600. Extrait des registres. Suite de la déposition du Sieur Laroque, 21 janv. 1791.

³⁷AN, DXXV 79, 779. Extrait d'une lettre par M. Abbé de la Porte à M. l'Archevesque Thibaut, Vallière, 25 mars 1792.

The proclamation of 28 September 1791, decreed by the National Assembly and sanctioned by the King, granted amnesty to all free persons in San Domingo charged with "acts of revolution." Biassou received a copy of it and had it read to his troops who could not have cared less. They wanted war and "bout à blancs"--an end to the whites. Most of all, they wanted their three free days a week, and as for the other three days, they would see about those in due course.³⁸ At this point Toussaint rose, demanded that the proclamation be re-read and delivered such a moving speech in creole that the slaves' attitudes suddenly changed to the point where they were even willing to go back to their various plantations if that was what their leaders wanted.³⁹

Already, Toussaint's qualities of leadership were beginning to take shape, and he knew more than anyone else what they really wanted. He had been discreetly involved in the 14 August affair from the very beginning and carefully observed all that went on before finally deciding in November to join with Biassou and Jean-François.

³⁸The three free days per week had become a generalized demand throughout this early period; one version of it even claimed that the slaves would be paid an average salary of three livres per day for the other three days. AN, DXXV 78, 772. Mr. Henry, capitaine du navire la Charlotte à son frère, le Cap, 27 sept. 1791.

³⁹AN, DXXV 63; 635. Déclarations. Déclaration de M. René Guillemeton. Déclaration collective de M. René Cossait et al.

Once the agreement was reached to surrender their prisoners, Toussaint accompanied them as escort to the bar of the Colonial Assembly. Although it was agreed that Jean-François' wife be released, the assembly disdainfully refused to accede to any one of their other demands, even after the number of requested emancipations was reduced by Toussaint from four hundred to sixty.⁴⁰ He went back to the camp and told the slaves there was nothing to be gained, either from the commissioners or the assembly. From now on, it would be a war to the finish until general emancipation was finally achieved. This was what many of them had wanted in the first place.

The slaves in Jean-François' band began on 15 January by attacking and recapturing the district of Quinaminthe. On 22-23 January, the slaves under Biassou attacked le Cap to secure ammunition and to replenish their diminished resources. It would be another two years, however, before Toussaint would emerge as the one to give clear, vigorous and decisive direction to the unleashed, irreversible aspirations of the black masses who had killed their masters and burned the plantations to be free.

⁴⁰Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 3:18.

CHAPTER V

THE MULATTOES

In the West and the South, the political situation was dominated by the activities of the mulattoes and free blacks who were struggling to obtain the political and civil rights guaranteed them by the 15 May decree. They had been organizing meetings and assemblies since July in an effort to break the intransigence of the government and to secure their right to participate in the elections of that summer. The white planters, with Blanchelande on their side, had done everything in their power to sabotage the application of the May decree, and the new Colonial Assembly was of course elected without a single mulatto or free black vote.

In August, the mulattoes and free blacks held a mass political assembly in Mirebalais. They elected as their president and leading spokesman Pierre Pinchinat, a man of remarkable political talent and finesse who, like so many others of his caste, had been formally educated at one of the best schools in France. A council of forty delegates was also created with full powers to represent their claims either by formal address or by direct delegation before the National Assembly in France, the King, the colonial assemblies, the Governor-General and, upon their arrival, the Civil Commissioners. Moreover, they swore upon the last

drop of their blood to protect the elected representatives against any attack or harassment while exercising their functions.¹

Upon hearing of this assembly and the position it had taken, some of the local whites tried to incite opposition among the free persons of color not included in the May decree. When this failed, they resorted to their habitual tactics of intimidation and lynching to block the execution of the law. On 11 August, the council of forty sent to Blanchelande a copy of their constituted aims, along with a judicious and respectful letter recognizing him as the sole legal authority in the colony, reminding him of the harsh injustices they had already suffered and requesting, for the peace and prosperity of the colony, that he execute the 15 May law in its entirety. On the 22nd, as the slaves in the North began to set their torches to the plantations and massacre their masters, Blanchelande sent his reply to the mulattoes in the West. In the letter, he made clear his disapproval of their conduct and especially of their "illicit" assembly and deliberations. His reply further ordered them to dissolve, to return to their homes and wait peacefully and patiently. In due time, their white benefactors would decide upon their future condition.²

The anger and frustration of the mulattoes were pushed

¹Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:131-33. Also, Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:79.

²Garran Coulon, Rapport, 2:135-36.

even further by the additional news of violent assaults, arbitrary arrests and killings that were being committed by the whites against their compatriots in Port-au-Prince. A general assembly was immediately called and a second letter sent to Blanchelande, this time declaring their intentions to arm themselves and to take into their own hands the necessary preparations for their collective security.³

Meanwhile, the mulattoes in Port-au-Prince had organized themselves and had remained in constant communication with those of Mirebalais, with whom they now joined forces to establish a camp in the Charbonnière mountains near Port-au-Prince and to devise a common plan of action. Their military leaders were Beauvais and Rigaud. Born in Port-au-Prince, Beauvais, as Pinchinat, had received a privileged education in France where he spent his early years. He returned to the colony to teach until the revolution, during which he served the cause of his people with a steadfast and impeccable character.

Rigaud, born in les Cayes and also educated in France, was the most prominent of the mulatto leaders. He was a trained and experienced soldier who had already proven his military capabilities as a volunteer in the French army during the American revolution. Now, as commander of the mulatto forces in the South, he joined with Beauvais and Pinchinat.

³Ibid., 2:136-38.

Lambert, a free black born in Martinique, was placed second in command of the army in the West. In addition, there were nearly three hundred slaves from the Cul-de-Sac plain known as the Suisses, or auxiliaries. In their own interests they had deserted their plantations earlier in July to form independent gatherings in the woods. Having remained in marronage after they were attacked, they now joined the mulattoes who armed them and promised them their freedom, which was their evident motive for rising in July.⁴

In the meantime, the white patriots in Port-au-Prince were amassing their forces in armed opposition to the mulattoes. They had already launched one attack against them, but were severely defeated and quickly dispersed. Now, a group of sailors, adventurers, mercenaries and other déclassé elements, organized under the name of flibustiers, combined with a contingent of the national guard in Port-au-Prince and set out on 2 September with cannon and other artillery to crush the mulatto army in the Charbonnière mountains.⁵

Earlier, the mulattoes had received word of the military pressures being prepared against them at Port-au-Prince. They decided to abandon their camp and move beyond

⁴See Ch. 3, pp. 101-02 above. Pamphile Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:119. Lacroix cites as his source Débats dans l'affaire des colonies (Paris: 1799), 3:185 and 7:207. Fouchard places their number at exactly 243, 220 black and 23 mulatto slaves. Les marrons de la liberté, p. 526.

⁵Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:143. Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:116.

the Cul-de-Sac plain. As the confederate army of mulattoes, free blacks and Suisses neared Croix-des-Bouquets, they were attacked by the troops from Port-au-Prince, whereupon they set fire to the Pernier plantation, blocking off any possible escape route for their aggressors and, with a few rounds of well-aimed shots, totally decimated the enemy troops.

At this point Hanus de Jumécourt, a wealthy conservative planter at the head of a group of white royalists in Croix-des-Bouquets, proposed an alliance with the mulattoes. Jumécourt, himself a member of the former St. Marc assembly, had deserted that party when it decided to stage its mini-revolt and jump aboard the Léopord. The royalists, bitterly opposed to the St. Marc patriots who now dominated Port-au-Prince, hoped to use the support and capabilities of the mulattoes to defeat a common enemy and then re-establish the ancien régime. The confederates wanted neither a return to the old regime nor the present one as it stood. Beauvais and Pinchinat had repeatedly sworn an unyielding respect for France and her laws in all their dealings with the colonial authorities. Their one political imperative was to conquer their rights, and to do this they needed troops, arms and allies.

On 7 September, a concordat was signed between the confederates and the two municipalities of Croix-des-Bouquets and Mirebalais. Both sides agreed to abide by the duly sanctioned laws and decrees of the French National Assembly; the anti-patriot whites therefore accepted unconditionally

the execution of the 15 May legislation.⁶

The municipality of Port-au-Prince, having already suffered two crushing defeats by the mulatto army--and a third with the signing of this concordat--became even more alarmed by reports of mounting insubordination among the slaves on the plantations. Several plantations around the city had already been burned, and rumors were spreading of a slave conspiracy to burn the city.⁷ Under these circumstances, the municipality sent a commission to Croix-des-Bouquets to negotiate with the mulattoes.

On 11 September, a second concordat was signed between the confederates and Port-au-Prince, which, in addition to confirming the earlier accord, went even further by guaranteeing political equality for all free persons of color, regardless of whether or not their parents were free. The 15 May decree would be executed in advance of its arrival in the colony. Primary electoral assemblies would be held in conformity with Article 4 of the March 1790 law. The concordat also guaranteed their right to elect deputies to the Colonial Assembly, recognized the illegality of the municipal and provincial assemblies, annulled all prohibitions and sentences rendered against them, and guaranteed freedom of the press. The confederates would remain armed until these articles were executed, but both sides would proceed to an

⁶Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:81. Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:117. Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:143-44.

⁷PRO, HCA 30, 381. Insurrection dans la partie du Port-au-Prince commencée le 27 août 1791.

immediate exchange of prisoners.⁸ A few days later, the municipality of St. Marc signed a similar accord with the mulattoes and free blacks.

Yet no sooner were the 11 September agreements signed than certain factions within the patriot party began to subvert them. Caradeux, commander of the national guard in the West, the Provincial Assembly and diverse groups of white citizens in Port-au-Prince refused to acquiesce in the concordat. The Colonial Assembly, the municipality of Port-au-Prince, as well as the Provincial Assembly of the West had already sent requests to Jamaica for military aid; shipment of the food supplies stipulated in the concordat and destined for the confederates at Croix-des-Bouquets was also blocked. Caradeux demanded as a condition for negotiation with the mulattoes and free blacks that they support his project for independence. It was an obvious trap, and the mulattoes refused.

Blanchelande, whose weak and malleable personality in politics was indeed one of his most outstanding features as Governor, fell prey to the pressures and manipulations of the patriots and refused to sanction the 11 September concordat. In the wake of the slave revolt sweeping the North, the Colonial Assembly had originally revoked its unconditional refusal to accept mulatto rights. The Assembly now declared it would openly oppose the 15 May decree upon its arrival. Blanchelande issued a proclamation ordering

⁸Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:144-45.

all persons of color who had taken up arms to return to their respective districts and to help defend the common cause by putting down insurgent slaves! He ended by reminding them of the respect and obedience they owed to the militia, the national guard and other all-white law enforcing bodies. Jumécourt publicly protested the proclamation, and Blanche-lande later retracted it. The entire administration of the colony was in shambles and its government politically bankrupt, making one inept decision after another. The Civil Commissioners, whose job it was to restore order and a proper respect for the laws of France, had not yet arrived. At this point power belonged to any group or party strong enough to seize it.

By now the confederate army was nearly four thousand strong, without counting the white royalists and the several hundred Suisses, whose tremendous courage in battle proved to be a precious mainstay of the rebel forces.⁹ Already several parishes in the South had signed similar concordats with the insurgent mulattoes of that province. The authorities in the West were all the more frightened as they received reports of the progress and devastation of the slave revolt in the North which continued to spread at an alarming pace. In the West, the slaves were becoming dangerously rebellious. Some had taken up arms in open revolt, while

⁹Ibid., 2:150-51.

others deserted to join the confederates.¹⁰

Although the mass of the slaves had not yet entered the revolution as a collective, independent force, they nonetheless remained in a constant state of agitation and unrest. Already, a contingent of the national guard had been sent to Léogane in anticipation of a possible slave uprising. Some twenty-five slaves accused of stirring up the plantations around the area had been arrested and thrown into prison. The slaves from the various plantations demanded their release. The municipality refused and, with the protection of the national guard, proceeded to execute the arrested slaves.¹¹ Toward the end of September, the Port-au-Prince authorities arbitrarily arrested and hanged a few slaves nearly every day.¹²

The whites had no alternative now but to come to terms with the mulattoes on a province-wide basis. While the patriot factions in Port-au-Prince were still manoeuvring to subvert the September concordat, a commission from Croix-des-Bouquets arrived to convince the municipality of the importance of respecting the agreement it had signed. The envoys brought back only a vicious and blood-thirsty reply. Caradeux, who had been violently opposed to the

¹⁰AN, DXXV 61, 615. Extrait des pièces déposées aux archives de l'Assemblée Coloniale. Précis des faits qui se sont passés dans la paroisse de Jacmel et sa dépendance depuis le commencement de septembre 1791 jusqu'à ce jour . . . , Jacmel, 11 mars 1792.

¹¹PRO, HCA 30, 381. Insurrection.

¹²Ibid. >

concordat from the beginning, made another unsuccessful bid to the mulattoes--acceptance of their demands in exchange for acceptance of independence. When the mulattoes sent a delegation to Port-au-Prince requesting the food supplies promised them in the concordat, the soldiers, the "small" whites and other city rabble, always ready to lynch and harass the mulattoes, rose up in the streets against them. They proposed that the municipality hang them and send the others bullets instead of bread.¹³ The city was close to being in a state of total anarchy.

Finally, on 17 October, a meeting of the commune assembly was held at Port-au-Prince and delegates were chosen to meet with the mulattoes to work out a new agreement. On the 19th, representatives of the province's fourteen parishes met with the confederates on the Damien plantation near Croix-des-Bouquets, and after three days of negotiations, both parties signed a new treaty.

All of the provisions of the 11 September concordat were renewed. The local all-white police forces were to be dissolved immediately and a new militia formed, irrespective of racial origins. Although new municipal elections would not be held before the following month, the mulattoes and free blacks could send delegates to these bodies immediately, and armed with full powers. The Provincial Assembly was to be dissolved without delay; as well, all of the

¹³Ibid.

parishes of the West were to recall their deputies from the Colonial Assembly and request its dissolution; two new battalions of the national guard, composed uniquely of persons of color, were to be formed; finally, the mutually signed agreements would be sent to the National Assembly for approval and to the King for sanction.¹⁴ The following day, the whites, mulattoes, free blacks and the Suisses all marched into Port-au-Prince to celebrate the new accords with military festivities, and to solemnize the occasion, a Te Deum was sung at the main church.

There was only one problem--the Suisses. There was no mention of them anywhere in the concordat. They had fought as equals alongside the mulattoes and their allies, the royalists. They were promised their freedom, and believed, as did most of the mulattoes, that the provisions of the concordat at least implicitly included them, as well.¹⁵ For the municipality of Port-au-Prince, the mere presence of the Suisses meant trouble. They had marched into Port-au-Prince as an integral part of the confederate army to join in the festivities along with everyone else; so when the slaves on some of the plantations saw their black comrades in arms pass by, their reaction nearly provoked a general uprising.¹⁶ Insubordination and talk of revolt were

¹⁴NYPL, A. Schomburg Negro Collection. Concordat, ou traité de paix entre les citoyens blancs et les citoyens de couleur des quatorze paroisses de la province de l'Ouest de la partie française de Saint-Domingue, 23 oct. 1791.

¹⁵Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 3:65.

¹⁶AN, DXXV 62, 626. Les commissaires de correspondance

becoming rampant among the slaves of the city, and especially among the domestics.¹⁷

The white authorities of Port-au-Prince had initially considered sending the Suisses back into slavery on their respective plantations. Realizing, however, the effect that this would have produced upon the other slaves, they manoeuvred to have the Suisses deported from the colony and shipped to the coast of Guatemala, "where even the devil could not have survived."¹⁸ They were to be given three months' provisions and a few tools with which to keep themselves alive.

When the Suisses got word of this perfidious plan, a few managed to escape, but the rest, over 240, were sent off to meet their fate. Instead of taking the Suisses to Guatemala, whence the mulattoes could easily have rescued them, the captain of the ship, under the pretext of bad weather, sailed to Jamaica where he dumped them along the shore. The Jamaican government, wishing to unburden itself of all responsibility for this unwanted human cargo, sent the Suisses back to le Cap. When they arrived, the authorities in Port-au-Prince proposed to have them all sentenced to death. Finally, the Colonial Assembly had them put in chains and

de l'Assemblée Générale . . . aux commissaires de la dite assemblée auprès de l'Assemblée Nationale et du Roi, les Cayes, 12-nov. 1791.

¹⁷Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:85-86.

¹⁸Cited in Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 3:66.

left them to die aboard a ship in the Môle St. Nicolas harbor at the western extremity of the North province. Sixty of the strongest and healthiest among the Suisses were brutally murdered, their heads cut off and thrown to the sea.¹⁹ The rest died of starvation and sickness, with the exception of about twenty, who were spared and sent back by the whites to the West, to convince the blacks that the mulattoes had betrayed them.

Actually, the mulatto leaders had opposed the deportation of the Suisses from the very outset of their negotiations with the whites concerning their slave allies. After presenting numerous proposals for alternative solutions, each categorically rejected by the whites, Beauvais, Pinchinat, Rigaud and Lambert, in the interests of peace and the preservation of their newly won rights under the concordat, finally surrendered their position.²⁰

Their concession was a grave and inexcusable mistake. The concordat had been signed by the whites as no more than a temporary measure; with no military reinforcements, they had little chance of defeating the confederate army and made a bid for time. Before long, the Provincial Assembly,

¹⁹Ibid., 3: 67-68.

²⁰That the whites would use this affair to prejudice the blacks against the mulattoes was foreseen by Boisrond and other mulatto leaders in the South who opposed the deportation of the Suisses at any cost. AN, DXXV 46, 439. No. 216. Les sieurs Maigret, Boisrond, prés. de St. Louis, Depas, Medring, sec. ad hoc, hommes de couleur et blancs coalisés avec eux à Aquin au sieur Pinchinat, chef du rassemblement de la Croix-des-Bouquets, 9 sept. 1791.

Caradeux and one Praloto, a Maltese deserter, profiteer, agitator against the mulattoes and now head of the national guard artillery, all began manoeuvring to break the treaty.

In addition, a new law, the 24 September decree, had just arrived from France. The decree, pushed through the National Assembly by Barnave, the Massiac Club and the remaining members of the old St. Marc assembly, rescinded that of 15 May and once again left the political status of the free persons of color in the hands of the colonial assemblies. By now, however, most of the parishes in the West had already recalled their deputies from the Provincial Assembly in anticipation of the new elections, while the remaining members swore, as a legislative body, to remain in permanent session and to obey no other law than that of armed resistance.²¹

At the same time, the situation in Port-au-Prince had taken another turn. The date for the ratification of the concordat by the municipality had been set for 21 November. On that day, the vote was taken, and by noon three of the four municipal sections had voted almost unanimously in favor of ratification. This meant almost total ruin for the patriot faction which sought only to subvert the concordat by whatever means or pretext it could find.

Once the vote was known, a quarrel broke out in the streets between a black member of the confederate army,

²¹AN, DXXV 1, 4. Histoire de la conspiration du Port-au-Prince contre les citoyens de couleur, Croix-des-Bouquets, 28 nov. 1791..

Scapin, and one of Praloto's men. To provoke the incident, the latter had insulted Scapin who returned in kind, and the quarrel rapidly turned into a street fight. The maréchaussée arrived on the spot, arrested Scapin and took him directly to the municipal authorities.

The mulatto representatives vigorously protested these arbitrary and illegal procedures and provided proof that the black was in fact a free citizen, only to learn that he had already been tried by the military and hanged from a lamp-post.²² The mulattoes were furious, and their indignation reached the breaking point when they saw another of Praloto's men approach the town hall in front of which they were still gathered. They demanded of him an explanation for the travesty of justice that had just occurred; he lashed back with an arrogant, menacing reply and was shot down.²³

This was all the patriots needed to declare the concordat null and void and to reopen armed aggression against the mulattoes. Caradeux and Praloto lost no time in advancing their troops toward the mulatto headquarters where they opened fire. The mulattoes were considerably outnumbered, as most of them had already returned to the countryside following the October celebrations. Taken by surprise, outnumbered and overpowered by the whites, they were forced to retreat after two hours of sustained but unsuccessful defense.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

Shortly after the fighting began, fire broke out in several parts of the city. Within a few hours, the whole of Port-au-Prince was in a state of total chaos. Praloto and his gang of profiteers plundered and ransacked the homes of rich whites as the panic-stricken occupants hurriedly fled for their lives. They brutally murdered mulatto residents in their homes and on the streets--men, women, children, the sick, the aged, alike. As the fire spread swiftly from one section of the city to another, a crowd of over eighty mulatto women and children fled toward the shore, seeking shelter aboard the boats in the harbor. Pralotto opened fire on them with cannon, and all would have perished were it not for the timely aid of a charitable individual who directed them along another route. Port-au-Prince had become one huge scene of horror and devastation. Within twenty-four hours, two-thirds of the city, including the wealthy commercial quarter, was completely destroyed.²⁴

Up to this point, the mulattoes had acted with considerable moderation and restraint in their struggle for political rights, but this last betrayal by the patriots had broken the limits of their forbearance. From now on, it was open warfare. At Croix-des-Bouquets, where they had retreated to reorganize their forces, one of their leaders, Chanlatte, issued a call to arms. The tone was violent, filled with vengeance and rage. Anyone who wavered or hesitated to march in the defense of their cause was declared

²⁴Ibid.

suspect and guilty of treason. The proclamation called upon all compatriots of color to gather arms, war munitions and provisions, to unite and rally under a common banner and to annihilate the upholders of prejudice and inequality who for so long had caused them so much suffering.²⁵ They were to prepare the siege of Port-au-Prince.

In the southern part of the province, events had taken a similar course. Following the shock of the 22 November incidents in Port-au-Prince, the mulattoes and free blacks of Jacmel who had remained on good terms with the whites since the concordat, now began organizing themselves in armed defense, whereupon the whites attacked and drove them out of the city. In Léogane, the mulattoes and their royalist allies had already taken over control of the city's government when Rigaud's army marched through from the South to join with Beauvais and Pinchinat at Croix-des-Bouquets.

Meanwhile, however, a considerable number of slaves from the plantations around Léogane and Jacmel had deserted and organized themselves in armed resistance, establishing a camp in the mountains at Trou Coffy near Léogane. Their leader, Romaine Rivière, was a Spanish slave, the son of a mulatto and a black. That he was a genuine voodoo priest as is sometimes assumed is, however, doubtful. His sect was as dubious as it was bizarre. Calling himself Romaine-la-prophétesse, he claimed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit

²⁵The full text of this declaration is cited in Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:97.

and in direct communication with the Virgin Mary, his god-mother, who answered his solicitations in writing.²⁶ A self-styled prophet who preached with sabre in hand and who practiced herb medicine, he was also a husband, father of three children and, above all, the undisputed maroon leader of a large and awesomely intrepid slave army.²⁷ The influence he exerted over his followers was as formidable as that of any voodoo leader, and, in this sense, Romaine can certainly be placed in the tradition of voodoo priests and adepts who used religion for political ends.

Since September, he and his band had terrorized the planters of the entire region between Léogane and Jacmel. Periodically descending from their nearly inaccessible mountain retreat at Trou Coffy, they raided, pillaged and ransacked the nearby plantations for additional provisions, killed off the masters and other white personnel, told the slaves that the King had freed them and incited them, by force if necessary, to join their band.²⁸ Several devastating

²⁶ AN, DXXV 61, 611. Rapport de Blouet, curé de Jacmel, fait à l'Assemblée Coloniale, Jacmel, 14 fév. 1792.

²⁷ Although estimates of the actual size of his following are not given in the correspondence relating to the events at the end of 1791 (most of the correspondence covering this period was in fact written months afterward), the civil commissioner, St. Léger, estimated that by March 1792, Romaine's troops had increased to over four thousand, nearly all of them slaves. AN, DXXV 2, 19. Report of St. Léger to National Assembly, n.p., n.d. Sent to Colonial Committee on 2 June 1792.

²⁸ AN, DXXV 61, 615. Précis des faits qui se sont passés dans la paroisse de Jacmel et sa dépendance depuis le commencement de septembre 1791 jusqu'à ce jour . . . Jacmel, 11 mars 1792.

attacks were launched against the city of Jacmel itself as Romaine and his army of slaves joined with the mulattoes who had been driven out by force in November.

By December, Romaine and his troops, continually increasing in numbers and allied with the confederates of Léogane, seized control of the city and the outlying areas under its jurisdiction. Villars, a member of the royalist faction, was named mayor, and on 31 December a peace treaty was signed with the whites who, having already suffered tremendous losses, could no longer sustain even minimal resistance. By virtue of this treaty, wrote one Léogane resident,

We have recognized [Romaine] as commander of all the assembled citizens. In this capacity, he issues orders to all whites and persons of color . . . and it is by virtue of his orders alone that the slaves work and are led to abandon their masters' plantations to join the camp that he established near Jacmel; he gains proselytes all the more easily as he has liberated those slaves detained in prison or condemned by their masters to chains . . .

In spite of this treaty, Romaine and his troops continued their insurrectionary activities, spreading the revolution throughout the countryside from plantation to plantation and forbidding the slaves to continue to labor for their masters.

The residents of Léogane had all been disarmed and remained as virtual prisoners. During the raids on

²⁹AN, DXXV 3, 26. Letter from Léogane, signed by Delacroix, 4 Feb. 1792. See also DXXV 61, 615. Précis des faits.

plantations, the rebels had seized horses, mules, cows and whatever other work animals they could lay their hands on, while sabotaging sugar mills and plantation equipment. Production had ceased; all communication and transportation routes were blocked off and the port closed. In addition, the whites were required to send munitions, clothing and food supplies to Camp Bizoton, near Port-au-Prince, where Rigaud and his army were stationed. The city was helpless, and famine now began to take its toll. The citizens managed nonetheless to get a petition through to St. Léger with a desperate plea for aid. He transmitted the petition to the Provincial Assembly which replied, adding derision to its usual condescension, that surely his wisdom would provide him with the means which the assembly lacked!³⁰

Such was the San Domingo to which the Civil Commissioners, official representatives of France and the National Assembly were to restore some semblance of order and tranquillity. Stripped of all effective authority by the Colonial and provincial assemblies, which jealously concentrated power in their own hands, the commissioners were reduced to little more than titular ambassadors from the mother country. By the time they arrived, the concordats had been broken and the struggle of the mulattoes and free blacks for political equality pushed forward into open warfare, in which the slaves were now participating as well.

³⁰ AN, DKKV 2, 19. Report of St. Léger to National Assembly. DKKV 1, 11. Copie de la lettre à nous écrite par M. St. Léger du Port-au-Prince le 23 février 1792.

Thus, with no effective opposition, Romaine and his allies maintained control of Léogane and the surrounding region until the following spring, during which time the slaves continued to desert in alarming numbers. By February, not a single white was left on the plantations in the area.³¹

* * *

In the South, the struggle of the mulattoes and free blacks had been co-ordinated and integrally linked with that of their compatriots in the rest of the colony from the very beginning of the movement for political equality. By August 1791, however, the slaves in the North had taken the lead and remained in the forefront of the revolution, while in the West and South it was the mulattoes and free blacks who, with different aims, dominated the leadership of the revolutionary movement. With the exception of Romaine, whose influence--powerful as it was--remained regionally localized around Léogane and Jacmel, no indigenous slave leaders had as yet emerged from the masses to co-ordinate and organize, as they did in the North, the independent struggle for émanicipation. When, by September, the mulattoes and free blacks had armed themselves in collective resistance, most of the slaves, although agitated, restless and often dangerously insubordinate, were nonetheless reticent and chose, for the time being, to remain on the plantations.

³¹AN, DXXV 3, 26. Letter from Léogane. See also Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:493.

Yet a small, but rapidly increasing number of them had joined the ranks of the confederate army where they fought as equals and, by virtue of which, were promised their freedom.

With the news of the September concordat at Croix-des-Bouquets, the mulattoes and free blacks of les Cayes and Torbeck in the South demanded of the municipal authorities a similar concordat to implement and safeguard the rights accorded them by the 15 May decree; in the event of a refusal, they threatened to provoke a general slave insurrection.³² Fearing a repetition of the troubles that beset the West, the two municipalities acquiesced, and a number of others followed suit. By November, the Provincial Assembly of the South had accepted a province-wide concordat modelled on the one in the West, a concordat which, for the whites, was merely a temporary agreement signed out of fear and one that they had no intentions of keeping.³³

They needed only a pretext to break it, and when a quarrel broke out later that month in les Cayes between a white and a mulatto, the whites recommenced their traditional hostilities and aggression against the mulattoes, forcing them to leave the city. They retreated en masse to the Prou plantation, owned by a free mulatto, where they formed a camp in the mountainous region of the Plaine-du-Fond. From there, they marched on to St. Louis, joined with

³²AN, DXXV 61, 614. Extrait des pièces déposées aux archives de l'Assemblée Coloniale de la partie française de Saint-Domingue, signé, Fatin et al., le Cap, 5 fév. 1792.

³³Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:531-32.

the mulattoes and free blacks of Cavailon and St. Louis d'Aquin, disarmed the whites and took over the city of St. Louis.³⁴ Here, they learned of the recent events at Port-au-Prince and the massacres committed by Praloto and his gang against their comrades of color. At Aquin, Rigaud's brother issued a call to arms. As the proclamation of Charlatte in the West, it called for vengeance. In spite of the recent concordat, there was no security to be found anywhere. The proclamation urged mulattoes and free blacks to leave the cities and, at the least sign of aggression, to arm and organize themselves, to kill, pillage and burn if need be. They must fly to the aid of their slaughtered brothers.³⁵

It was now open warfare. Horrible atrocities were committed on both sides. The whites cut off the heads of their mulatto prisoners and sent them to the Provincial Assembly; mulattoes caught with arms in hand were tortured and even burned alive.³⁶ The mulattoes retaliated in kind.

The Provincial Assembly and the municipalities of the South had repeatedly requested the Colonial Assembly to send troops and provisions to defend the province, always to no avail. In desperation, they freed their own slaves. At

³⁴ AN, DXXV 61, 614. Extrait des pièces, signé Fatin et al., le Cap, 5 fév. 1792.

³⁵ The full text of this proclamation is cited in Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:194. Also cited in Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:97-98.)

³⁶ Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:536-37.

Jérémie, the whites herded scores of mulattoes onto boats infested with small-pox under the pretext of sheltering them against the armed slaves who were ready to massacre them because of the atrocities the mulattoes had committed.³⁷

The decision of the whites to arm their slaves was a perilous one which they would later come to regret. In colonial times, the institution of slavery and the rule of white supremacy had fostered certain divisions and animosities between the slaves and the free persons of color, as the latter sought to imitate the culture of the white ruling class and often rejected with disdain their black origins. Now, in the midst of revolution, these divisions were breaking down. One colonist, writing from les Cayes in July 1791, had foreseen this eventuality:

It is feared that the slave, seeing that the mulattoes and free blacks have gained everything by insurrection will come to regard insurrection not only as the means by which to free himself of slavery, but as the most sacred of his duties.³⁸

The white planters of the South had little choice. On 25 December, a free day for the slaves and one on which marronage habitually plagued the masters, the Provincial Assembly approved a decree from the towns of Torbeck and les Cayes to arm one-tenth of their slaves to defend the whites and fight the mulattoes and free blacks, as well as rebel slaves.³⁹

³⁷AN, DXXV 94, Ds. 11. Débats entre les accusés et les accusateurs dans l'affaire des colonies, pp. 13-15.

³⁸AN, DXXV 78, 772. E. Guerard to MM. P. Guerard, Rialle et cie., négociants au Havre, les Cayes, 12 July 1791.

³⁹AN, DXXV 61, 637. Adresse de l'Assemblée Provinciale

In the South, as in the West, the revolution was led by the mulattoes and free blacks, but it brought with it the participation of slaves in ever-increasing proportions. Some had already deserted to join the mulatto camps in the mountains when the November truce was broken.⁴⁰ By the end of December, the slaves on the plantations between the Grande and the Salée rivers had risen in revolt.⁴¹ In less than two months, slave insurrections became general. From Cavailon, across the Plaine-du-Fond, to Tiburon and Cap Dame-Marie at the western extremity of the province, slaves deserted to join the mulattoes and free blacks in armed struggle against a common enemy.⁴²

et provisoirement administrative du Sud, les Cayes, 23 fév. 1792. DXXV 62, 626. L'Assemblée Provinciale du Sud à l'Assemblée Coloniale, les Cayes, 5 janv. 1792. Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:102.

⁴⁰AN, DXXV 61, 612. La municipalité des Cayemittes à l'Assemblée Générale, signé, Ollivier Mareil, maire et al., Cayemittes, n.d.

⁴¹AN, DXXV 61, 613. La municipalité des Cayemittes à l'Assemblée Générale, signé Ollivier Mareil, maire et al., Cayemittes, 20 déc. 1791. DXXV 61, 613. La municipalité des Cayemittes à l'Assemblée Générale, signé, Ollivier Mareil, maire et al., 30 déc. 1791.

⁴²AN, DXXV 61, 613. Extrait des pièces déposées aux archives de l'Assemblée Coloniale. La Municipalité de Torbeck à MM. de l'Assemblée Coloniale, signé, St. Martin, maire et al., Torbeck, 15 janv. 1792. DXXV 61, 613. Conseil Général de la commune de Tiburon et de Dame-Marie réunies à l'Assemblée Coloniale, signé, Gachet et al., Tiburon, 29 janv. 1792. DXXV 62, 626. L'Assemblée Provinciale du Sud à l'Assemblée Coloniale, les Cayes, 5 janv. 1792. DXXV 61, 613. Assemblée Provinciale du Sud à l'Assemblée Coloniale, les Cayes, 26 janv. 1792. DXXV 63, 638. Adresse de l'Assemblée provisoirement administrative de la partie du Sud à l'Assemblée Nationale de France, signé, Billard, prés., les Cayes, n.d. DXXV 63, 637. Adresse de l'Assemblée Provinciale et provisoirement administrative du Sud à l'Assemblée Nationale de France, les Cayes, 23 fév. 1792.

The slaves in the South were now fighting each other in enemy camps and, at the same time, were gaining valuable military and political experience. It would only be a matter of time before they would break with both sides to lead an independent struggle, organized in their own interests and directed by their own leaders.

PART THREE

THE SOUTH

CHAPTER VI

PORT-SALUT TO LES PLATONS

In January 1791, nearly seven months prior to the outbreak of the massive slave revolt in the North, the slaves of Port-Salut in the region around les Cayes had already begun to organize an insurrectionary movement. It was not as widespread geographically, nor as tightly organized and as highly disciplined as the movement that broke out in the North, where voodoo played a politically instrumental role in its preparation and execution. It marked a beginning, however, and their demands were the same as those put forward later that year by the slaves at Bois-Caiman.

On 24 January, a band of some two hundred slaves, armed with pistols, machetes, lances, sticks and other makeshift weapons, had gathered together and went from plantation to plantation in the area of Port-Salut to agitate, to propagandize, to incite other slaves to join them.

It was at this time that the mulattoes organized themselves to defend and demand the application of the political rights granted them in the March decree of 1790. They told the slaves they were also going to fight the whites to obtain three free days per week for the slaves, whereupon those of the Plaine-du-Fond offered to join them. At this stage, however, the mulattoes refused the slaves' support.

on the pretext that if they did so, worse might befall the slaves. In all likelihood, it was not so much slave participation that they feared, as the consequences, which might well lead to a generalized slave rebellion. The mulattoes were fighting, after all, for political rights, not the abolition of slavery, an issue with which they, as even the Amis des Noirs in France, were never officially or forcefully involved. Thus, they told the slaves they must act on their own behalf.

When those of Port-Salut got word of all this, they chose district leaders on each plantation, organized themselves to gain additional recruits, and held a nocturnal meeting on 24-25 January 1791. It was decided that, on a certain date, these leaders would act in the name of the slaves they represented and demand of their masters the three free days per week. If the masters refused, the revolt would begin.¹ Unfortunately, the conspiracy was discovered and the leaders arrested and sentenced.

A few observations need to be made at this point. First, the conspiracy was initiated and organized by the slaves themselves, and although it ran parallel to the movement of the mulattoes and free blacks for political rights, the black slaves were neither directed nor controlled by them. If they offered to join them in early 1791, they did so as an independent force and with motives directly

¹Documents relating to these events are presented in Appendix C, pp. 343-45 below.

concerning themselves, as slaves. While the rumor that the King had decreed three free days per week for the slaves circulated throughout the colony, the slaves of Port-Salut accepted it as fact and demanded its application as a right. In other words, they were no longer to be entirely the property of their masters.

By the summer of that year, the mulatto revolt began to take on wider and graver proportions in the face of a common front of white colonists against the application of the more explicit 15 May decree. By September, it had reached the stage of open, armed rebellion, and now the mulattoes actively solicited the support of the black slaves, at times promising them freedom, at others, three free days per week, or even, in some instances, the sharing of colonial profits once the whites were eliminated--anything to get the slaves to join their ranks.² In general, they were convinced that once they had obtained their rights and came to an accord with the whites, they would be able to deal with the blacks and send them back to the plantations. Out of this struggle, in which the slaves participated as armed equals, grew the independent slave movement for emancipation on their own terms and by their own leaders. The origins of that movement, however, lay in the Port-Salut conspiracy.

²AN, DXXV 46, 439, No. 262. L'Assemblée Coloniale à ses commissaires en France, le Cap, 28 janv. 1792. DXXV 63, 637. Adresse de l'Assemblée Provinciale et provisoirement administrative du Sud à l'Assemblée Nationale, les Cayes, 23 fév. 1792. DXXV 61, 614. Extrait des pièces, signé, Fatin et al., le Cap, 5 fév. 1792.

The insurgent slaves of the North, under Jean-François and Biassou, had meanwhile consolidated their position and established military rule in the district of Grande-Rivière. In the West, the confederates had seized Port-au-Prince, cut its water supply and blocked all access to incoming food supplies. The arrival in the colony of the 24 September decree rescinding that of 15 May had not helped their cause and tended only to strengthen the whites' resistance to the concordats. Nevertheless, the confederates were prepared to submit and to negotiate a conciliatory agreement upon the arrival in Port-au-Prince of the civil commissioner, St. Léger. For the time being, hostilities had ceased. The confederates dispersed and retreated to the areas beyond the Cul-de-Sac plain, but left one post at Croix-des-Bouquets should further trouble break out.

St. Léger then set out for Léogane where Romaine and his troops were still in control. The mulattoes there had come to regret their initial alliance with this self-styled prophet and religious "fanatic" whose reign of terror had gone beyond their control and now merely cast discredit upon their cause.³ Since the Colonial Assembly had already refused St. Léger's request for troops, the commissioner thus turned for military support to the mulattoes and free blacks, the only sector of colonial society still respecting the laws of France. By mid-March, an expedition was organized and Romaine's band was totally dispersed.

³Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:491 and 498.

During this time, however, Caradeux' patriot forces in Port-au-Prince had been manoeuvring to prepare a counter-attack. On the false pretext of putting down a slave rebellion in the plain, the Port-au-Prince regiment, headed by a contingent of blacks that Praloto imprudently armed, set out on 22 March to take over Croix-des-Bouquets. As the troops advanced, the planters fled, and their plantations naturally fell prey to the ravages of the armed slaves.

In less than two weeks, a general insurrection of ten to fifteen thousand slaves broke out in the entire Cul-de-Sac plain. The confederates had managed to gain the support of a young slave leader, Hyacinthe. Although he was only twenty-two years old, he was already a revered voodoo leader who had gained the confidence and respect of the slaves throughout the region.

The blacks marched on Croix-des-Bouquets in their thousands, defying the onslaughts of cannon and artillery fire as they continued to advance, armed only with pointed sticks, knives, machetes and various farm implements as weapons. Hyacinthe carried with him a voodoo talisman made of horsehair which he waved before the troops to reinforce their defiance and determination, crying: "Forward! Do not be afraid; it's only water coming out of the cannon." They literally threw themselves onto the cannon, stuck their arms into its mouth, shouted to the others: "Come, come; I've got it," and were inevitably blown to pieces. But nothing could stop them, as thousands more advanced over

the dead bodies of their comrades and began fighting hand to hand with Praloto's men and the national guard, forcing them to abandon their post and to retreat to Port-au-Prince.⁴

The massive mobilization of these slaves had sparked off further slave insurrections around Mirebalais, Archaye, Petite-Rivière, Verettes and St. Marc. The slaves of nearly half the province were now in armed rebellion. To restore order to the province, St. Léger immediately tried to work out a peace settlement with Pinchinat, who demanded the absolute submission of the Port-au-Prince faction and the dissolution of the Provincial Assembly. He told St. Léger what Beauvais later confirmed in his own words to

Roume:

We were never the dupes of the white cockade; we had to conquer our rights and we needed auxiliaries. Even if the devil had presented himself, we would have enrolled him. These gentlemen offered themselves to us and we used them while letting them believe they were using us.⁵

St. Léger flew straightaway to France to inform the government of the situation in the colony. Mirbeck had left a few days earlier. So long as the patriot faction continued to agitate, the confederates would use the slave insurrections as a counter-weight, without realizing that, instinctively, the slaves were revolting in their own interests. Roume was scheduled to leave, as well, but

⁴Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:180-81. Colonel Malenfant, Des colonies et particulièrement de celle de Saint-Domingue (Paris, 1814), pp. 18-19. Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:512-13.

⁵Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:181 and 191.

primed by a member of the Colonial Assembly, he suspected a royalist plot and decided to stay in an effort to suppress it. At the end of May, news arrived from France of the 4 April decree restoring the rights of the mulattoes and free blacks that were rescinded by the decree of 24 September. They had won a major victory and could now frankly admit their allegiance to France..

Only one problem remained--the disarmament of the slaves and their return to the plantations. Blanchelande and the civil commissioner worked out an agreement with the slaves, whereby 100 of the popular leaders from Croix-des-Bouquets and 144 from Archaye were granted freedom on condition that they serve for five years in the local militia to survey and maintain order on the plantations. Hyacinthe was appointed captain of the Croix-des-Bouquets contingent.⁶

Encouraged by his success in the West, Blanchelande then set out for the South where a group of planters from the municipalities comprising the district of Grande-Anse had formed an independent confederation to openly oppose the 4 April decree. At the same time as he sought to enforce the submission of the whites to the new law, he hoped to regain the confidence of the mulattoes and free blacks and use their forces to help defeat the revolt of the slaves in the North, who by now controlled the entire eastern section of that province.⁷ The situation in the South, however,

⁶Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:109. Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:193.

⁷Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:573.

proved far more difficult for Blanchelande to handle than in the West and would soon seal his doom.

In the meantime, St. Léger had sent Rigaud to the South to work out a plan similar to that of the West for the disarmament of the insurgent slaves in this province. The 4 April decree had brought about a temporary rapprochement between the mulattoes and the whites in most of the South and a cessation of hostilities between the two groups. The slaves, however, armed by the mulattoes who promised them freedom, took advantage of their position, refused to surrender their arms and organized themselves in opposition to the various proclamations ordering them to return to their respective plantations.

By June, shortly after the arrival in the colony of the April decree, a considerable number of slaves in the Plaine-du-Fond were still armed and intended to remain so until they obtained their freedom. Whether armed by the mulattoes or by the whites, their experience on the battlefields and in the military camps had transformed them. They had fought as equals and now considered themselves free. One colonist wrote that the slave, employed in the military camps to serve one side or the other, "has lost the habit of working, and it is, thus that he got accustomed to thinking."⁸

True enough. These slaves were now thinking and

⁸PRO, HCA 30 395, 259. Dubourg to Caussé, les Cayes, 23 Dec. 1792.

planning for their own future. To return to the plantation and work as they had in the past, under the threat of the whip and a system of forced, regimented labor, would be impossible. A new stage had been reached, and it was up to them to carry it further.

When Rigaud met with the white authorities in the South, he argued that, to preserve the peace and to carry out the disarmament of the slaves, the Provincial Assembly must accord freedom to those who had fought within their ranks. Thiballier, the commander of the army in the South, refused. The law ordered him to get the slaves back onto the plantations; it did not authorize him to grant them freedom.⁹

Toward the beginning of July, two of their leaders, Armand, a commandeur from the Bérault plantation, and Martial, known as Maréchal, from the Pernerle estate, descended from their camps upon the request of Thiballier to meet with their masters. When they arrived--Armand in modest attire and Martial in uniform, complete with épaulements, sabre and a set of pistols--their masters welcomed them.¹⁰ They tried to persuade the two leaders to give up their arms, use their influence over the rest of the slaves to do likewise and

⁹PRO, HCA 30 401, pt. I, cote E. Interrogatoire de M. Thiballier, 14, 15 et 16 janv. 1793. AN, DXXV 63, 638. Journal exacte et fidèle de ce qui s'est passé aux Cayes depuis la trop fatale époque du 23 juillet 1792, certifié par Delaval, le Cap, 1 sept. 1792.

¹⁰ibid.

return to the good graces of their benefactors. That Armand was one of the principal leaders of this movement left Bérault in a stupor. Writing to his agent in Bordeaux, he stated:

The general of these rebels is my slave Armand who after twenty-five years of service with me never had any more grievances against me than I against him. Two weeks before the horrors began, I gave him my word that he would receive his freedom.¹¹

Undoubtedly, Bérault was sincere in his offer and were it not for the revolution probably would have freed Armand at a later date, or perhaps in his will. But to have offered it at this particular time was nothing more than a bribe. After twenty-five years, he, as others who knew Armand, was fully aware of the respect and influence this leader held, not only among the slaves of his own plantation, but among those of the entire Plaine-du-Fond, as well.¹² In any event, Armand had no interest in saving his own skin at the expense of those he represented.

Before returning to their respective camps, he and Martial presented their demands to Thiballier. As in the early days of the revolt in the North, they demanded the freedom of three hundred of their leaders, three free days per week for every slave and the abolition of the whip as a

¹¹PRO, HCA 30 392, 60. Bérault to Corbun, les Cayes, 17 Jan. 1793. Also, Bérault to Bérault, jeune, les Cayes, 17 Jan. 1793.

¹²PRO, HCA 30 401, pt. II, cote H. Lettre du citoyen André Rigaud au citoyen Thiballier, n.p. (? Camp Gérard), 26 juin 1792.

means of punishment.¹³ The white authorities categorically refused to negotiate with rebel slaves, rejected their demands and once again pleaded for their return to the plantations.

At this point, Armand retreated with his armed followers to establish a camp in the region of Platons, one of the highest and most inaccessible mountain chains in the colony.¹⁴ Martial rejoined his band to form a camp in the hills of Boucan Tuffy near Plymouth. Attacked and pushed back by the surrounding planters, they set out across the Plaine-de-Fond to combine forces with Armand.¹⁵

In addition to these two leaders were Jacques Formon and Félix, both military camp commanders at Platons, as well

¹³AN, DXXV 63, 638. Journal exacte. Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:570. During these early struggles, the slaves never demanded outright the abolition of slavery, but rather, freedom for a certain number of them and three free days per week for all slaves, thus proceeding tactically and by stages. In the North, Toussaint, Jean-François and Biassou had made similar demands during their negotiations with the civil commissioners and the Colonial Assembly. As a tactic, these demands created a new set of circumstances in the midst of changing political conditions and eventually led to general emancipation. See also *ibid.*, pp. 570-71.

¹⁴The word platons was generally used in the colony to refer to mountain gorges. Because of the multiplicity of gorges and precipices in this part of the South, the word was thus applied to designate it as a distinct region. *Ibid.*, 582-83.

¹⁵BSL, Mémoire de l'Assemblée Provinciale et de ses municipalités réunies du Sud à l'Assemblée Coloniale en réponse à la lettre de M. Blanchelande en date du 16 août, adressée à l'Assemblée Coloniale, les Cayes, 16 sept. 1792. AN, DXXV 63, 638. Journal exacte. PRO, HCA 30 401, pt. I, cote E. Interrogatoire de M. Thiballier.

as another slave named Bernard.¹⁶ A considerable number of minor leaders, including Bertrand, the slave of M. Perrigny, a wealthy, conservative planter from Torbeck, were in charge of the revolutionary bands.¹⁷ Their numbers increased daily, along with their courage and audacity as they carried out frequent descents upon the plantations in the area to gather additional armaments and recruits. By the end of July, they were over four thousand strong.¹⁸

Prior to the military encampment of these slave leaders, the municipality of Jérémie expelled from its district, in April or May, a contingent of three to four hundred armed slaves who had fought alongside the mulattoes and free

¹⁶While it is possible that this Félix, as Dominique Duhard (see p. 169 and Appendix C, pp. 343 and 345 below), was among the district leaders of the Port-Salut conspiracy in 1791, I have not been able to determine through available sources the plantation to which Félix, of the Platons revolt, belonged. Thus, the probability that he is the same individual as the Félix of 1791 remains tentatively speculative. However, both Dominique and Félix did become company captains in the Legion of Equality later in 1793. The captains were chosen from among those slaves demonstrating distinct qualities of leadership. Very little is known about Bernard except that, in October, he signed a communiqué with Armand, Martial and Jacques to Montesquieu Fezensac, commander-general of the South. That this Bernard was the same as the one who, in 1794, was made a regional inspector, along with Armand, is highly probable, but again, tentatively speculative, as his owner's name is not given. PRO, HCA 30 392, 214. La Gazette des Cayes, No. 82, 18 Oct. 1792, p. 339.

¹⁷PRO, HCA 30 395, 226. Duval to Coquillon, les Cayes, 17 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 394, 15. Billard, fils to Mmes. Billard, Moreau et Amand Billard, les Cayes, 16 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 393, 118. Garat to Perrigny, père, Torbeck, 10 Jan. 1793.

¹⁸AN, DXXV 66, 671. La municipalité des Cayes à M. Delaval, député de la paroisse des Cayes à l'Assemblée Coloniale et secrétaire de sa députation, les Cayes, 27 juillet 1792.

blacks in the confederate army. Driven out, they marched on foot until they reached Camp Gérard, near Platons, where they joined with eight hundred other armed slaves, not including the two companies of Armand and Martial.¹⁹ Although Thiballier claimed that orders had been issued to have them disarmed and returned to Jérémie, it is almost certain that they combined with the other rebels at Platons.²⁰

Additional forces came from the plantations in the immediate region around les Cayes. From the beginning of the armed struggle of the mulattoes and free blacks, most of the planters had fled the countryside to take refuge in les Cayes, the principal city of the South, thus leaving the slaves who remained on the plantations unattended and without surveillance. One colonist, M. Gaujon, stated that upon returning to his plantation in mid-July after the promulgation of the 4 April decree, he found several armed slaves from other plantations. Among them was one Joseph Cupidon, who had been visiting Gaujon's slaves daily and preaching revolt in their quarters. Cupidon was disarmed by M. Gaujon, but he was not arrested as he insisted that he was a free black. Instead, the colonist himself was

¹⁹PRO, HCA 30.401, pt. I, cote E. Interrogatoire de M. Thiballier.

²⁰Ibid. Also, AN, DXXV 94, Ds. 11. Débats entre les accusés et les accusateurs, pp. 16-17. DXXV 62, 628. Les commissaires de l'Assemblée Coloniale aux commissaires de la dite assemblée auprès de l'Assemblée Nationale et du Roi, le Cap, 20 août 1792. BSL, Mémoire.

arrested and charged with having disarmed a free citizen of color, even though Cupidon was known to be a slave. When Gaujon returned to his plantation, his slaves, formerly loyal and obedient, now told him: "So, they arrested you for having disarmed a black slave; we will do the same to you if you try to force us to work." The next day, fifteen of them deserted and joined the rebel bands at Platons.²¹

At the same time, the Provincial Assembly of the South wrote to the Colonial Assembly that during the retreat of Armand and Martial to Platons, several whites had been assassinated along the way and that already "partial fires have broken out on various plantations in the parish of Torbeck."²² In fact, as Blanchelande arrived in the South on 20 July, the slaves of the entire southern region from Tiburon to les Cayes were deserting and rising in armed rebellion. The South was left practically defenseless, and the few troops it had were dying off like flies under the rigors of a merciless climate that left them vulnerable to sickness, disease and constant fatigue.²³ What troops the colonial government had were concentrated in the North and reinforcements from France were still months away as slaves continued to burn and pillage the plantations along the

²¹PRO, HCA 30 401, pt. I, cote B. Déclaration du citoyen Gaujon, les Cayes, 3 janv. 1793.

²²AN, DXXV 62, 619. Extrait des pièces déposées aux archives de l'Assemblée Coloniale. L'Assemblée Provinciale et provisoirement administrative du Sud à l'Assemblée Coloniale, les Cayes, 19 juillet 1792.

²³Ibid.

southern coast to the Port-Salut peninsula, where another band of rebel slaves had begun insurrectionary activities.²⁴

At their head was Dominique Duhard, one of the district slave leaders of the Port-Salut conspiracy in January 1791.²⁵

At that time, Dominique had been arrested, whipped, branded and sentenced to the galleys for life. He managed to escape, however, and now led the revolt at Marche-à-Terre in the region of Port-Salut.²⁶

By this time, the majority of the planters saw in Blanchelande their only hope for saving what was left of their property and slaves. Upon his arrival in les Cayes on 23 July, they immediately demanded that he organize an expedition against the insurgents whose forces were concentrated in the mountains around Trois-Rivières and Platons. Strong opposition to this proposal came, however, from the wealthier, more conservative planters who, along with Blanchelande, Thiballier and Rigaud, insisted upon the futility of a general expedition with inadequate troops and munitions against bands of guerilla slaves. Experience had proved that, even if the rebels could temporarily be defeated and pushed back, they invariably set fire to surrounding plantations on their retreat.

Believing a conciliatory approach more effective than

²⁴BSL, Mémoire.

²⁵See Appendix C, pp. 343 and 345.

²⁶PRO, HCA 30 392, 214. La Gazette des Cayes, No. 87, 4 Nov. 1792, pp. 361-62. BSL, Mémoire.

a badly equipped expedition, Blanchelande set off on the 25th with a small delegation, including Thiballier and Rigaud, to meet with Armand and Martial. The two leaders persisted in their original demands for the freedom of three hundred of their leaders, in addition to three free days per week for every slave.²⁷ Blanchelande promised all of them amnesty, in spite of the destruction of property and lives they had already committed, if they would lay down their arms and return to their respective plantations. Armand and Martial requested an extra day to discuss the situation amongst themselves and to formulate their reply. The response came on the 27th, as four plantations went up in flames and a number of colonists were assassinated.²⁸ On the 29th, a violent storm broke out. Roughly two thousand strong, they seized the opportunity and attacked the Bérault plantation, now one of the colonists' major military camps.²⁹

By the time Blanchelande arrived at the Bérault post with reinforcements, all was aflame. The slaves had already divided themselves into small contingents to make simultaneous attacks on the plantations of the Torbeck region,

²⁷AN, DXXV 66, 667. Extrait des pièces déposées aux archives de l'Assemblée Coloniale. Blanchelande à l'Assemblée Coloniale, les Cayes, 28 juillet 1792. DXXV 66, 671. La municipalité des Cayes à M. Delaval, député de la paroisse des Cayes à l'Assemblée Coloniale et secrétaire de la députation, les Cayes, 27 juillet 1792.

²⁸Ibid. Also, PRO, HCA 30 392, 60. Bérault to Bérault, jeune, les Cayes, 17 Jan. 1793. AN; DXXV 63, 638. Journal exacte.

²⁹AN, DXXV 62, 621. La municipalité des Cayes à MM. les membres de l'Assemblée Coloniale, les Cayes, 1 août 1792.

whose slaves they incited to join them. Those few that refused were killed.³⁰

Upon apprehending the incendiary aims of Armand and his band, the slave Jean-Baptiste, second commandeur of the Bérault plantation, asked Armand in astonishment how he could bring himself to burn the plantation of his master. Armand replied: "'At le Cap, the slaves did not leave a single structure standing; the same must happen here in the Plaine-du-Fond.'" ³¹ That day, all but one-tenth of the Bérault slaves deserted, along with hundreds of others in the plain. As they made their retreat, fourteen of the finest plantations were reduced to ashes.³²

While Blanchelande was still trying to muster forces, a mulatto brought the reply Armand had promised him on the 25th. It was an ultimatum, already written in fire and blood, calling once again for the immediate and unconditional freedom of three hundred of their leaders.³³

The general had no choice now but to organize an

³⁰AN, DXXV 62, 621. Extrait des pièces déposées aux archives de l'Assemblée Coloniale. Copie d'une lettre écrite à Mme. Blanchelande datée des Cayes, 1 août 1792. DXXV 63, 638. Journal exacte. DXXV 62, 621. Extrait des pièces déposées aux archives de l'Assemblée Coloniale. Lettre de M. de Blanchelande à l'Assemblée Coloniale, en mer, 16 août 1792.

³¹PRO, HCA 30 392, 60. Bérault to Bérault, jeune, les Cayes, 17 janv. 1792.

³²Ibid. Also, AN, DXXV 62, 621. Extrait des pièces. Copie d'une lettre écrite à Mme. Blanchelande. Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:581.

³³AN, DXXV 62, 621. Extrait des pièces. Lettre de M. de Blanchelande à l'Assemblée Coloniale.

expedition to march against them. For almost a week he argued with the colonists over the composition of the troops as the slaves continued, day by day, to burn and ravage other plantations around Torbeck, les Cayes and in the Plaine-du-Fond.³⁴ He finally came up with three columns of troops and an additional regiment of mulattoes to be led by Rigaud. On 4 August, as they were preparing to set out for Platons, rebel slaves, torch in hand, descended upon Port-Salut from all four sides; not a single plantation was left. The reserve contingent stationed at les Cotteaux to the west hurriedly abandoned camp, leaving their munitions behind.³⁵

Blanchelande had made the mistake of rendering public his plans for the attack, so as not to be considered a traitor should he fail.³⁶ The divisions and hostilities amongst the colonists deepened, and Blanchelande was rapidly losing the confidence of those he was supposed to be leading.

³⁴AN, DXXV 62, 621. La municipalité des Cayes à MM. les membres de l'Assemblée Coloniale, les Cayes, 1 août 1792. DXXV 63, 638. Journal exacte. PRO, HCA 30 392, 214. La Gazette des Cayes, Nos. 80 and 81, 11 Oct. 1792, p. 329 and 14 Oct. 1792, p. 333.

³⁵AN, DXXV 62, 621. Extrait des pièces déposées aux archives de l'Assemblée Coloniale. DeFleury, commandant à M. le Général Blanchelande, Port-Salut, 4 août 1792. DXXV 62, 621. Extrait des pièces déposées aux archives de l'Assemblée Coloniale. Dartiguier, commandant de la garde nationale à M. le Général Blanchelande, Camp Labbaye, 15 août 1792. DXXV 62, 621. Copie de la lettre de M. de St. Léger, commandant du Camp Labbaye à MM. de la municipalité de Tiburon, Camp Labbaye, 7 août 1792.

³⁶AN, DXXV 62, 621. Lettre de M. Blanchelande à l'Assemblée Coloniale.

Under these conditions, the slaves could hardly fail to hear word of the plans, and they organized themselves accordingly. Skillfully setting one ambush after another, they successfully pushed back each column as it advanced along the mountainous cliffs, thereby destroying the co-ordination of the attack and creating total confusion and disorder among the troops.

To trick Blanchelande, Armand sent out on the 7th a young envoy from his camp with a white flag and a message that he wished to negotiate. The conference lasted two hours and proved to be a tactic to prevent Blanchelande from reinforcing his retreating columns.³⁷ By now, night had fallen; in the morning he learned of the total defeat of all his forces. Over two hundred had been killed, nearly as many by the frequent avalanches of falling rocks and other hazards of a treacherous and unfamiliar terrain as were lost in battle, without counting the wounded or the prisoners.³⁸

On the 8th, Blanchelande returned to les Cayes with his dilapidated army, having left behind two cannon and a considerable quantity of munitions and arms. The residents held him personally responsible for the disaster and,

³⁷AN, DXXV 62, 621. Lettre de Blanchelande à l'Assemblée Coloniale. BSL, Mémoire. PRO, HCA 30 392, 214. Gazette des Cayes, No. 85, 28 Oct. 1792, p. 352.

³⁸AN, DXXV 62, 628. L'Assemblée Coloniale aux commissaires de la dite assemblée auprès de l'Assemblée Nationale à Paris, le Cap, 8 sept. 1792. DXXV 63, 638. Journal exacte. BSL, Mémoire.

among other charges, accused him of collaboration with the slaves, of favoritism toward the mulattoes, and of having executed a counter-revolutionary plot. In his defense, the general castigated them for their egotism, their factionalism, their intransigence regarding the slaves' original demands which, he claimed, if granted would have brought the slaves back into submission and restored tranquility to the South. On the 10th, under a barrage of insults and cries for vengeance, Blanchelande set sail for le Cap, whence he was later deported to France.

For the next two days, the slaves continued to attack several plantations in the plain. The colonist, M. Moullin, wrote: "Sixty-two of my slaves have revolted. And on 12 August, an unforgettable day, over five hundred of the rebels descended upon my plantation, torch in hand, and burned everything."³⁹

By the following day, however, the slaves' incendiary activities had generally ceased, and they took the initiative of reopening negotiations with the provincial authorities. They sent as envoy one of their prisoners who brought with him the slaves' peace proposals. They now demanded the general emancipation of the entire band at Platons and three free days per week for every slave.

The assembly could not come to a decision and sent the prisoner, accompanied by a few of its delegates, back

³⁹PRO, HCA 30 395, 241. M. Moullin to Mlle. des Vergers, les Cayes, 15 Jan. 1793.

to Platons. When they returned to les Cayes, they reported that the slave leaders had reduced their demands to the liberation of only four hundred slaves. As a token of their sincerity, they also offered to surrender nine hundred good rifles and to induce the other slaves to return to their plantations.

The assembly deliberated for days. To grant the freedom of even one rebel slave, they argued, would be to condone armed insurrection, set an example for other slaves to follow, and would lead to the end of slavery and the total ruin of the colony. While some colonists proposed freeing a portion of the slaves armed to defend the masters against the confederates, Rigaud proposed freedom for an equal number of slaves armed by the whites but who had deserted their posts. These slaves, he suggested, should be enrolled in a special militia to police the countryside. The planters repeated their blank refusal; so once more no decision was taken.⁴⁰

On the 16th, they sent another delegation to confer with the rebel leaders who now demanded once again the general emancipation of the band, and, as did the maroons of Bahoruco in 1785, full ownership of the entire Platons region. Armand was, however, willing to allow Rigaud to negotiate with the whites on their behalf. The rank and file protested. Félix, one of their leaders, intervened and

⁴⁰AN, DXXV 2, 23. André Rigaud à M. Roume, commissaire nationale civile, les Cayes, 16 sept. 1792.

told Armand: "You don't know what you're doing!"⁴¹ Indeed, had not Rigaud led an armed contingent of mulattoes against them a week earlier? Were not his hands tied by the very interests he and his caste represented? Already, Rigaud was losing the confidence of these slaves.

Armand then made their position clear: their munitions were plentiful; they had no idea where or from whom the arms were coming, or why. Nor did it matter. If they did not receive a reply to their new demands by the next day, they would descend upon les Cayes and burn the city down.⁴²

In desperation, the assembly agreed to free seven hundred of the slaves armed by the mulattoes. They would be enrolled in contingents of one hundred to survey and maintain order among the slaves on the plantations. However, there were a number of problems with this solution. First of all, the seven hundred represented only a select few of those armed by the mulattoes and a tiny minority of the four to five thousand slaves at Platons who revolted collectively to free themselves. Many had been armed by the whites and therefore were not included in the number. Many more had not been armed by either party, but had deserted to join the revolt as active and equal participants.⁴³ It seems Armand

⁴¹AN, DXXV 63, 638. Journal exacte.

⁴²Ibid. Also, AN, DXXV 62, 628. L'Assemblée Coloniale aux commissaires de la dite assemblée auprès de l'Assemblée Nationale à Paris, signé; Delaval, le Cap, 8 sept. 1792.

⁴³PRO, HCA 30 393. Demoncour to Meunier, les Cayes, 22 Dec. 1792.

was fully aware of these difficulties when he had demanded the emancipation of the entire group without exception.

Of the seven hundred who were granted freedom, only 350-400 accepted. The rest refused to accept a piece of paper signed by Rigaud in the name of the Provincial Assembly stating that they were free. They knew that under colonial law the only valid statement of emancipation was one signed by the master himself.⁴⁴

The affidavits signed by Rigaud were, of course, legal. Yet so unshakeable was the slaves' desire for permanent freedom that half of them rejected the act emanating from the provincial legislature, an act, they felt, that might later be rescinded. Freedom was not something they could take lightly or be tricked into accepting to serve the interests of those in power. In times of revolution, when dominating interests shift from one faction to another, one cannot be too cautious. These slaves understood this in their own way. It was their first lesson in revolutionary politics and one that would serve them well in the future. Thus, they chose to remain at Platons and cast their lot with the others who were prepared to fight to the bitter end.⁴⁵

⁴⁴Ibid. Also, HCA 30 393, 238. M. Bergeaud to M. Faucher, Cayes St. Louis, 16 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 393, 248. Ferrand to Salenave, aîné, les Cayes, 30 Nov. 1792.

⁴⁵The decision to accept or refuse Rigaud's offer of emancipation, under the auspices of the Provincial Assembly, was purely an individual one that each slave had to make for himself. Two of M. Lafosse's slaves, Grégoire and Vendôme, were both on the list of seven hundred. Vendôme accepted and was put in charge of a company. Grégoire, sixteen years of age, was supposed to serve in Vendôme's company, but "he did not want to be free on Rigaud's terms." Although Vendôme accepted, he was nevertheless known in the area to

By mid-September their revolt had already spread to the region of Petit-Trou and Anse-à-Veau along the northern coast. The slaves here were demanding nothing more nor less than what had been granted the slaves at Platons.⁴⁶ Delaval, a colonial deputy from the South, foresaw this eventuality when he wrote on 8 September that if the treaty proposed by the Provincial Assembly were signed (as it was), the colony would be ruined:

. . . for, if we reward with freedom those who have burned our plantations and massacred our people, the slaves who have hitherto remained loyal will do likewise in order to receive the same benefit. Then⁴⁷ nothing more can be said: the whites must perish.

Throughout the following months, the slave forces at Platons continued to increase. The planter who in August had lost sixty-two of his slaves wrote to a friend concerning the state of her brothers' plantation: "twenty-six of their best slaves, both men and women, have deserted to follow the rebels."⁴⁸ On the Nicolai plantation, forty-one slaves had

be an incorrigible rogue. Ibid. That he suddenly became "rehabilitated" overnight and sincerely desired to serve the interests of the masters is highly improbable. It is likely that even among the 350 or so slaves who accepted Rigaud's offer, there were those who would use this position covertly to further the revolt.

⁴⁶ PRO, HCA 30 392, 214. La Gazette des Cayes, No. 88, 8 Nov. 1792, pp. 365-66. Procès-verbal de la sortie faite par un détachement de la paroisse de Cavillon à la requisition de celle du Petit-Trou, signé, F. deKrussec, lieutenant du 4^e régiment, Cavillon, 21 sept. 1792.

⁴⁷ AN, DXXV 62, 628. L'Assemblée Coloniale aux commissaires de la dite assemblée auprès de l'Assemblée Nationale à Paris, signé, Delaval, le Cap, 8 sept. 1792.

⁴⁸ PRO, HCA 30 395, 241. M. Moullin to Mlle. des Vergers, les Cayes, 15 Jan. 1793.

deserted; seven-eighths of them to join with the insurgents at Platons.⁴⁹ Another colonist wrote: "[Your slave] Hazor, his wife and two children are among the insurgents," while another lamented: "All of my slaves are with the rebels."⁵⁰ On the largest of the three Laborde estates, the procureur listed 120 slaves as being "in a state of insurrection."⁵¹ Statements such as these were typical of the planters throughout the plain.

In November, the entire slave force on one plantation rose up in revolt and assassinated their master. The national guard, stationed at Camp Gérard, was called in to smash the rebellion. Hoping to set an example and to intimidate other slaves who might be inclined to do the same, they cut to pieces those they were able to capture; among them were four from the Laborde plantation.⁵²

⁴⁹PRO, HCA 30 395, 248. Ferrand to Salenave, aîné, les Cayes, 30 Nov. 1792. Two had been killed during one of their raids on the outpost at Camp Prou; three had already received freedom following their August victory; a fourth, Mathurin, had also been offered freedom. It seems, however, that he refused, as the procureur lists him among those still at Platons. Only one returned. HCA 30 395, 152. Ferrand to Salenave, aîné, les Cayes, 3 Jan. 1793.

⁵⁰PRO, HCA 30 394, 202. Thibaut to Munier, les Cayes, 30 Dec. 1792 and HCA 30 395, 141. Sainet to Belbezo, jeune, les Cayes, 12 Jan. 1792.

⁵¹PRO, HCA 30 381. Papiers saisis sur François Lavignolle, procureur de la première habitation du banquier Laborde, Plaine-des-Cayes, oct. 1792 au 10 mars 1793.

⁵²PRO, HCA 30 392, 115. Devillé to Van Duffel, les Cayes, 7 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 381. Papiers saisis sur François Lavignolle, procureur de la première habitation du banquier Laborde, Plaine-des-Cayes, oct. 1792 au 10 mars 1793.

Increased brutality and harsher punishments, however, produced little effect upon the slaves and only seemed to reinforce their determination. Two absolutely unmanageable slaves of an absentee owner were sentenced by his procureur to the public chain gang. One of them, Jouan, was transferred with the slave to whom he was chained and sent to a hospital where additional workers were needed. He and his companion, though in chains, both succeeded in escaping and joined the rebel forces in the mountains.⁵³

As their numbers grew, so did their audacity. They descended by the thousands upon the various plantations that the colonists had transformed into military camps, in order to secure additional munitions and weaponry with which to replenish their diminishing arsenal and reinforce their position. Given the plantation tradition of independent, collective slave activity on Sundays and holidays, they chose these times to carry out their raids.⁵⁴ As they advanced, they split into groups of three or four hundred to encircle the camp, while shouting as their war cry: "Coupé tête a li; coupé bras a li; coupé jambe a li; amaré li."⁵⁵

The slaves took what materials they had and improvised,

⁵³PRO, HCA 30 392, 73. Lez to Muzard, les Cayes, 18 Jan. 1793.

⁵⁴PRO, HCA 30 393, 189. Pierre Gensterbloom to Mlle. Félicité Beaudrau, camp général, 20 Dec. 1792.

⁵⁵Ibid. In English: "Cut this one's head off; cut that one's arm off; cut the other's leg off; tie him up." (My translation.)

using pots filled with stones to create a tumultuous, frightening racket as they surprise-attacked, heightening the effect by blowing simultaneously into pieces of reed. They were unable to capture any of the major posts, however, and often suffered losses in the hundreds, but they managed as best they could. They applied their knowledge of herbs and other plants and began fabricating poisoned arrows.⁵⁶ When they retreated from an attack, they pilfered the plantations along the way for whatever supplies they could lay their hands on and set the cane fields ablaze. They pretended to be civic-minded, told the planters their horses and livestock were needed for public service, and carried them off to the mountains.⁵⁷

The slaves who, for the time being, remained on the plantations, became increasingly rebellious. The planter who, before, could keep his slaves in line with just one overseer now needed two or three.⁵⁸ It did not take much to drive into rebellion those who, up to now, had been hesitant. One procureur wrote:

Your slave, C ezar, left two months ago, and I have not heard from him since . . . I think he had a quarrel with [the overseer] who, at his patience's end gave him two or three blows with a cord But C ezar had been wavering for quite some time, and, since a considerable number of domestics from les Cayes left thereafter, [C ezar] undoubtedly joined

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷PRO, HCA 30 395, 254. St. Martin to Duplessy, les Cayes, 16 Jan. 1793.

⁵⁸PRO, HCA 30 394, 202. Thibaut to Munier, les Cayes, 30 Dec. 1792.

his friends in the city to leave with them . . .⁵⁹

A procureur advised a resident planter in France against acquiring another plantation in the area, unless at a bargain price, for ". . . it would take but a spark to make the slaves [there] desert. . . . Among them are a lot of incorrigible trouble-makers, including some from the city who will undoubtedly incite the others to revolt."⁶⁰

Bands of slaves descended regularly from Platons to agitate among them, to spread their aims, their ideas, to incite and even force them to follow. Most slaves, on these plantations simply stopped working altogether. On all but a few of the plantations from les Cayes to les Anglais, the slave labor force was practically non-existent. In fact, before the end of the year, only six or seven plantations in the entire plain were operating; even on these, half the slaves were gone and the sugar cane crop so thoroughly ruined that the most they could produce was syrup.⁶¹ As the the majority of the planters fled to les Cayes or to the various military camps for protection against the insurgent bands of black guerillas, their slaves, for the most part unsupervised, were left in a position advantageous to revolt.⁶²

⁵⁹PRO, HCA 30 392, 73. Lez to Muzard, les Cayes, 18 Jan. 1793.

⁶⁰PRO, HCA 30 393, 157. Derrecard to Muzard, les Cayes, 4 Nov. 1792.

⁶¹PRO, HCA 30 392, 232. Demaleval-Champel et Bouffart to M. Laconfourque, les Cayes, 31 Dec. 1792.

⁶²PRO, HCA 30 395, 115. Caudron Beauzamy et cie. to MM. Lallemand Beauzamy et cie., les Cayes, 4 Dec. 1792.

On one plantation whose owner had been killed, the slaves remaining were swept into the revolt.⁶³

By the end of the year, the slaves had burned over one-third of the plantations in the province and had massacred an equal proportion of the colonists.⁶⁴ The magnificent Plaine-des-Cayes, comprising nearly a hundred sugar plantations was totally destroyed; not a single one was left intact.⁶⁵ Planters began to pool their few slaves and other remaining resources in a desperate attempt to combine operations with their neighbors.⁶⁶ Some even rented out their slaves that had been left idle.⁶⁷

The planters were financially and morally ruined. Credit was virtually non-existent and was often replaced with bartering.⁶⁸ Many a colonist considered himself fortunate if he could just get out of this miserable colony with his life and a shirt on his back. Already, over half of the six thousand troops sent by France to restore order

⁶³PRO, HCA 30 394, 2. DeCoulanges to Sallonnyer de Nion, les Cayes, 16 Jan. 1793.

⁶⁴PRO, HCA 30 392, 156. Clarac, fils to Clarac, père, Cayes St. Louis, 10 Jan. 1793.

⁶⁵PRO, HCA 30 395, 13. Letter to MM. Gamba and Archdeacon, les Cayes, 20 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 392, 1. Montbrun to Desmirail, Cayes St. Louis, 24 Jan. 1793.

⁶⁶PRO, HCA 30 395, 264. Vernet to Corbun, les Cayes, 15 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 394, 36. Chavanet to Portier, Cayes St. Louis, 13 Jan. 1793.

⁶⁷PRO, HCA 30 392, 140. Letter to M. Farthonat, les Cayes, 15 Nov. 1792.

⁶⁸PRO, HCA 30 392, 1. Montbrun to Desmirail, Cayes St. Louis, 24 Jan. 1793.

throughout the colony had perished from the ravages of the tropical climate.⁶⁹ This was a war unlike anything the whites had ever known in Europe. The slaves resisted the climate; they were accustomed to living on very little and could sustain a long day's work with a few potatoes, a banana, and a little water. They were familiar with the heavily wooded, mountainous terrain of Platons and climbed its dangerously sharp precipices and gorges with astonishing agility. These slaves proved far more invincible than even the most powerful of France's enemies in Europe.

The colonist, Solon de Bénech, a wealthy sugar planter from les Cotteaux, had suffered the fate of a hundred others. His plantation was completely burned out, and 90 percent of his slaves had deserted.⁷⁰ Among these insurgents was Gilles Bénech. Knicknamed petit malice for his ability to dissimulate his thoughts and acts, Gilles later became one of the most renowned and steadfast maroon leaders of the South. He had become a principal leader at Platons, alongside Armand, Martial, Jacques Formon and others, and held command over one of the major camps.⁷¹

⁶⁹Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:223. Also, PRO, HCA 30 392, 1. Montbrun to Desmirail, Cayes St. Louis, 24 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 395, 7. A. Clée to J. Clée, Camp Laplace, 20 Dec. 1792.

⁷⁰PRO, HCA 30 395, 9. Solon de Bénech to Mlle. Gautier, les Cayes, Fond de l'Isle-à-Vache, n.d. (? Dec. 1792).

⁷¹Céligny Ardouin, Essais sur l'histoire d'Haïti (Port-au-Prince: B. Ardouin, 1865), p. 103. PRO, HCA 30 401, pt. I. Attaque des Platons, signé, Harty, commandant en chef provisoire de la province du Sud, 13 janv. 1793. HCA 30 394, 8. Dubreil to LeJeune, commissaire de la Marine à l'Orient, Cayes St. Louis, 19 Jan. 1793.

These, then, were the slaves and their leaders who, encamped at Platons, constituted an immense, highly organized maroon community of ten to twelve thousand people.⁷² Here at Platons they intended to begin a new life. They had taken possession of the region, had fought for it with their lives and planned to stay. The population had settled on the summit, where Armand, Martial and Jacques held their camps, in close proximity to one another, while Gilles' camp lay at a short distance from the others'. They protected themselves by carefully constructing entrenchments of earth or rock, below which were precipices reaching down three thousand feet or more.⁷³ Here, the slaves built homes for themselves; they constructed two infirmaries for the sick. The soil permitting, they began to plant crops and stockpile their food supplies.⁷⁴ It seems they had even

⁷²Estimates of the number of slaves comprising the community at Platons vary somewhat, ranging from eight to sixteen thousand. The most frequently cited estimates, however, place the number of slaves at ten to twelve thousand. PRO, HCA 30 393, 8. Mazarquil, fils to Mazarquil, père, Cayes St. Louis, 11 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 394, 202. Thibaut to Munier, les Cayes, 30 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 393, 234. Merlin to Simon, les Cayes, 6 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 392, 100. J. B. Rocton to Cherbonnier, Cayes St. Louis, 1 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 393, 189. Gensterbloom to Mlle. Félicité Beaudrau, camp général, les Cayes, 20 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 392, 127. Reffuveuille to Mm^e. Ridon, Camp Labiche, Cavaillon, 10 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 392, 34. H. Duvau to M. Duvau, les Cayes, 17 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 394, 184. DeJoye to Perdigon, jeune, les Cayes, 1 Jan. 1793.

⁷³PRO, HCA 30 394, 8. Dubreil to LeJeune, Cayes St. Louis, 19 Jan. 1793.

⁷⁴Each camp had eight to nine hundred homes. During the second attack on Platons (see pp. 190-92, below), one astonished soldier reported: "There are as many cabins here as there are houses in les Cayes." HCA 30 394, 15. Billard, fils to Mmes. Billard, Moreau et Amand Billard, les Cayes,

begun to form a rudimentary kind of civil government, as they called their newly acquired territory the Kingdom of Platons and chose for themselves a ruler whom they designated as king.⁷⁵

At the end of November, as the planters of les Cayes and Torbeck were preparing elections for a new municipal government in conformity with the 4 April decree, they had relaxed troop surveillance over the plain. The slaves at Platons took advantage of the situation. They knew, as well that the colonists were planning to organize another attack against them. On the 29th, two armed bands of a couple hundred each descended upon the several plantations around Torbeck with the aim of taking as prisoner, or killing if necessary, as many whites as possible.

One of the bands, led by Bertrand, went to the Perrigny estate where over fifty slaves had already deserted; some twenty of them were with Bertrand at that moment. On the pretext that their intentions were peaceful and that they wished to surrender, Bertrand held a short conference with his former master, the substance of which is unknown. It seems, however, that Bertrand's aim was to verify the news of a new attack and to extract from Perrigny additional information. While Bertrand was conversing with Perrigny,

16 Jan. 1793. Also, HCA 30 395, 143. Dubreil to citoyenne Piquot, les Cayes, 17 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 394, 8. Dubreil to LeJeune, Cayes St. Louis, 19 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 392, 146. R. Bouard to Dervillé, les Cayes, 14 Jan. 1793.

⁷⁵PRO, HCA 30 394, 8. Dubreil to LeJeune, Cayes St. Louis, 19 Jan. 1793.

some of the other slaves captured and bound the resident physician, M. Philbert, along with three others who managed to escape by the skin of their teeth. They would have assassinated Philbert were it not for the judicious intervention of Bertrand who wanted him alive, first, to take care of Martial's wounds at Platons, and secondly, as a prisoner whom they could use as an emissary. They returned the following night, after having visited several nearby plantations to propagandize and gain new recruits, this time using neither force nor intimidation, but simply ordering those who wished to remain to stop working.⁷⁶

Two weeks had elapsed when Armand and Martial sent Philbert back with a message addressed to the planters of the entire province. First, they stated that they had been misled by the mulattoes who armed them against their masters, who used them for their own purposes and who, as soon as their rights were won, hunted them down as fiercely as did the whites. In this, the slave leaders were right, but it was also a tactic. In their message, they invited the white planters to evacuate the plain so that they could settle their score with the mulattoes, after which they would

⁷⁶ PRO, HCA 30 394, 57. St. Martin to LeBourg, les Cayes, 23 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 395, 63. Gasteau to Chaillon, les Cayes, 25 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 393, 118. Garat to Perrigny, père, Torbeck, 10 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 392. Perrigny, fils to Perrigny, père, les Cayes, 8 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 392, 32. Léon de Perrigny to M. le Commissaire National Civil, la prison des Cayes, 21 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 393, 233. Caudron Beauzamy et cie. to M. J.-B. Lafosse, les Cayes, 4 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 393, 231. Philbert to Mme. Denouaudier, les Cayes, 13 Jan. 1793.

make arrangements with the whites concerning their return to work on the plantations.⁷⁷

The fundamental question, however, was not one of race. The mulattoes, as the whites, were slave-holding property owners, and they were (as we know) more numerous than the whites. The slaves had ravaged and burned the property of the mulatto masters as they had ravaged and burned that of the whites. But that they intended to return to their white masters to labor as before--as slaves--was pure nonsense. By telling the whites to evacuate, they were appealing to the race prejudice of the whites as a means by which to destroy the very foundations of their oppression, be it the property of whites or of mulattoes.

The reaction of the white colonists to the slaves' message had little to do with the 4 April decree and the fact that they now had to respect mulatto rights. Race prejudice against the mulattoes was still there, in spite of the law, but such prejudices inevitably become submerged and are subsumed by the economic necessities of the ruling class to preserve its property, and therefore its survival. Whether they liked it or not, the mulattoes, as fellow property owners, were their economic allies. The whole system of

⁷⁷PRO, HCA 30 395, 108. Letter to Dr. Smith from his student, la sucrerie paternelle . . . , 1 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 394, 201. Lezognac to Mlle. Sophie Ladurautie, les Cayes, 17 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 395, 233. Caudron Beauzamy et cie. to J.-B. Lafosse, les Cayes, 4 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 393, 262. Belloc to Mme. Azard, les Cayes, 10 Jan. 1793; HCA 30 392, 115. Deville to Van Duffel, les Cayes, 7 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 393, 248. Ferrand to Salenave, aîné, les Cayes, 30 Nov. 1792.

slavery itself was at stake, and they categorically refused to negotiate with rebel slaves. One colonist had already stated the case: "There can be no agriculture in San Domingo without slavery; we did not go to fetch half a million savage slaves off the coast of Africa to bring them to the colony as French citizens."⁷⁸

This was going to be a war to the finish. Either the slaves would win, and the structure of that society and the nature of its economic and human relations would be transformed, or the struggle would result in the mutual destruction of both sides. The colonists knew this as well as the slaves, but they could not afford to admit it.

Polverel, the new civil commissioner in charge of the West and the South, had arrived at the end of December. The slaves offered for the last time to negotiate, requesting specifically Polverel and Rigaud as representatives. Polverel reassured the colonists that he recognized only two categories of persons in San Domingo--free citizens and slaves. He told the slave emissaires that neither he nor Rigaud would negotiate with a band of rebels, but that if they wished to descend from the mountains in small groups and surrender their arms, he would assure them all an unconditional pardon by the powers invested in him.

He tried to convince the authorities of les Cayes that the best policy in dealing with these slaves was one of clemency, that since they were already suffering from

⁷⁸ PRO, HCA 30 393, 213. Gayes to Pelletan, St. Louis, 17 Nov. 1792.

hunger and sickness, and no longer had sufficient arms to defend themselves, they would be forced to come back. The colonists would not hear of it. Even if they granted the slaves a pardon, they would work submissively for three or four months, by which time the troops would be removed and then would recommence their activities, exterminate the planters and become masters of the island. This was not a war between two moderate or reasonable powers, in which differences could be settled by treaties or agreements; it was a war to the end between master and rebel slave. Such was the opinion of the distinguished Club des Cayes.⁷⁹

The inevitable clash of opposing forces, as succinctly expressed in the words of a Plaisance coffee planter, was now at hand:

Barbarians, brigands who have been armed against us, vile slaves, rebels, your agitations do not frighten me. It is true you have caused a great number of my friends to perish. I will follow them cold-bloodedly into the grave, and I swear that you will see all my blood flow before I consent to your freedom, because your slavery⁸⁰ my fortune and my happiness are inseparable.

Polverel found himself in the same situation as Blanchelande in August, with no alternative but to order a general attack against the insurgent slaves. Colonel Harty, a staunch, trustworthy republican, was placed in command of the expedition. The colonists agreed to wait, however, until after the New Year when, in the colonial days, fugitive

⁷⁹PRO, HCA 30 395, 13. Letter to MM. Gamba and Archdeacon, les Cayes, 20 Dec. 1792.

⁸⁰PRO, HCA 30 393, 227. Prudent Boisgerard to Mlle. Tasset, les Cayes, 6 Jan. 1793.

slaves traditionally returned and masters traditionally pardoned them. They knew it would be futile, and they were right. Not a single slave returned.⁸¹ On 9 January, Harty set out with an expeditionary army of nearly two thousand troops, including a strong contingent of two hundred black slaves, armed by their masters and led by Jean Kina.⁸²

The slaves at Platons were badly armed, but defended themselves until the last possible moment. They prepared ambushes to push back the advancing troops; they stretched their munitions supply by mixing coals with the powder; in a final attempt, they stuffed to the brim one of their only two cannon with cartridges, grapeshot, cannon balls, bullets--whatever they could find. When it became clear that they could not defeat the enemy troops, the slaves swiftly

⁸¹PRO, HCA 30 392, 196. Toirac, jeune to Duvau, frères, les Cayes, 12 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 392, 34. H. Duvau to M. Duvau, les Cayes, 17 Jan. 1793.

⁸²PRO, HCA 30 401, pt. I. Attaque des Platons. As early as April 1792, Jean Kina had been armed by the white planters of Tiburon who, upon his sollicitation, provided him with four hundred of their slaves to fight the mulattoes and free blacks, along with their slave allies. AN, Section Outre-Mer, RC 2, 175. La Gazette des Cayes, No. 33, 22 April 1792, p. 133. AN, DXXV 94, Ds. 11. Débats entre les accusés et les accusateurs, pp. 16-23. Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:198. After the attack on Platons, he offered to destroy the remaining slave forces that had fled to Macaya (see p. 192 below) if the planters furnished him with an army of one thousand slaves. PRO, HCA 30 395, 244. Letter to Mme. Leplicher, les Cayes, 23 Jan. 1793. Adventurer, opportunist, mercenary, Jean Kina left San Domingo to fight for England and received the rank of colonel in the British army. Yet on the other hand, in 1800, he was discovered fomenting a revolt of free blacks in Martinique. Fouchard, Les marrons de la liberté, p. 462.

abandoned their camps. Gilles' camp had provided the fiercest resistance and was the last to evacuate.

At this point, expecting to destroy Armand and Martial's camps, all four columns marched to the attack on the 13th. The previous day, however, the two leaders had spoken to the slaves, informing them of the situation. They were going to evacuate in small groups that night and retreat higher up into the mountains at Macaya. Those who chose to follow would join them. Those who chose to remain in the woods or to return to their plantations were free to do so.⁸³

A few hundred of them--women, children, the aged and the sick--unable to flee or perhaps expecting some sign of humanity on the part of the troops, stayed behind. They were brutally massacred to the very last one, their heads cut off and their bodies slashed to pieces as the women fought ferociously to protect their children.⁸⁴

The colonists celebrated this event as a tremendous victory. Among the more astute, however, the realities of the situation were all too apparent. The core of the insurgent slave movement, including the ablest, best trained and

⁸³PRO, HCA 30 393, 61. Demaleval, Champel et Bouffart to Mme. Leplicher, Cayes St. Louis, 12 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 395, 59. Caudron Beauzamy et cie. to J.-B. Lafosse, les Cayes, 14 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 394, 15. Billard, fils to Mmes. Billard, Moreau et Amand Billard, les Cayes, 16 Jan. 1793.

⁸⁴Ibid. Also, HCA 30 394, 8. Dubreil to LeJeune, commissaire de la Marine à l'Orient, Cayes St. Louis, 19 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 395, 156. Gabriel Filleux to Filleux, père et mère, les Cayes, 10 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 392, 196. Toirac, jeune to MM. Duyau, frères, les Cayes, 12 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 392, 171. Demaleval to Champel, les Cayes, 19 Jan. 1793.

most determined slaves, as well as their principal leaders, was still intact. One colonist estimated their numbers at over three thousand.⁸⁵ A considerable portion of the slaves had divided themselves into bands and remained as maroons around the plantations of the area, while others returned to their masters seeking pardon.⁸⁶ But the planters who received their slaves without administering merciless and often mortal punishments were few. Generally, the attitude of the planters was to sacrifice those who came back and, ~~whatever the cost, make~~ an example of them in order to prevent the rest from rebelling.⁸⁷

For the time being, there reigned a semblance of calm, but the vast majority of the planters would never be able to restore their devastated properties and ruined fortunes. For three quarters of them, the most pressing desire was to leave. A soldier, reporting home to his mother, wrote of the rebel slaves:

⁸⁵PRO, HCA 30 392, 34. H. Duvau to M. Duvau, les Cayes, 17 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 392, 129. Sainet to Mme. veuve Sainet, les Cayes, 19 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 395, 254. St. Martin to Duplessy, les Cayes, 16 Jan. 1793.

⁸⁶It is almost impossible to arrive at an accurate estimate of those who did return. One colonist stated that these slaves were very few in number, while another estimated that some three thousand had returned. PRO, HCA 30 393, 5. F. Peche to Mme. Peche, Fond de l'Isle-à-Vache, 17 Jan. 1793 and HCA 30 392, 55. Martin to M. Party, n.p. (? Jan. 1793).

⁸⁷PRO, HCA 30 395, 142. Guénin to Mme. Guénin, les Cayes, 24 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 394, 2. DeCoulanges to Sal-lonnyer de Nion, les Cayes, 16 Jan. 1793. HCA 30 392, 2. Deville to B. Deville, les Cayes, 27 Dec. 1792. HCA 30 392, 128. Deville to B. Deville, 19 Jan. 1793.

They come and treat us as if we were the brigands and tell us: 'nous après tandé zaute,' which is to say, 'we had expected you, and we will cut off your heads to the last man; this land⁸⁸ has not been for you what it has been for us. . . .'

Those who retreated and remained in the mountains had already formed a new camp, midway between Platons and Macaya, from which they surveyed the remaining troops, waiting and watching for a new opportunity to strike.

⁸⁸PRO, HCA 30 393, 189. Gensterbloom to his mother, les Cayes, 16 Jan. 1793.

CHAPTER VII

THE BLACKS REACT TO FREEDOM

No major expedition was ever carried out against the black maroons of Platons during the months following the January attack. Although plans for a third and presumably final expedition were in the making, those plans never materialized.¹ All the principal leaders--Armand, Martial, Gilles Bénech, Jacques Formon and Bernard--as well as a number of minor leaders including Félix and Bertrand, remained at Macaya in armed camps with their loyal comrades to preserve their hard-won but free existence. News of a new insurrection in the Cul-de-Sac plain had diverted the projected expedition, and Polverel was forced to send the Aube regiment commanded by colonel Harty to the West, thus depriving the South of its only significant military force.²

The arrival in the colony of the new civil commission in September 1792 with powers to enforce the 4 April decree throughout the colony and to establish the equality of all

¹AN, DXXV 12, 113. Le citoyen Polverel, commissaire national civil au citoyen Sonthonax, son collègue, les Cayes, 15 janv. 1793. DXXV 20, 206. Harty, commandant en chef de la province du Sud au citoyen commissaire civil, les Platons, 13 janv. 1793.

²AN, DXXV 11, 106. Le citoyen Polverel, commissaire national civil . . . à la Convention Nationale, les Cayes, 22 janv. 1793. DXXV 39, 399. Registre d'ordres et décisions, Polverel, les Cayes, 27 janv. 1793. Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 3:277.

free citizens created new problems and posed a direct threat to both the royalist and patriot factions.³ The royalists were convinced that having proclaimed equality, the French government, now strongly influenced by the Jacobin group in the National Convention, would hasten to proclaim a general emancipation, thereby carrying out the destruction of the colonists and their property.⁴ The patriots, on the other side, suspected that they, too, would fall under the stern surveillance of the commissioners for their secessionist aims. Whether royalist or patriot, both parties had a vested interest in overthrowing national authority in the colony. Borel, an influential member of the patriot faction and former deputy to the Colonial Assembly, made the first move. He held a conference with Jumécourt and proposed a coalition with the royalists, their former arch-enemies.

Since the insurrection of March 1792, the slaves of the Cùl-de-Sac plain had remained relatively tranquil under the influence and command of Hyacinthe. By the end of January, however, two new insurrections had broken out, one

³The civil commission was composed of three members: Sonthonax, commissioner for the North, Polverel for the West, and Ailhaud for the South. One month after his arrival, Ailhaud abandoned his post and returned to France, leaving the administration of both the West and the South to Polverel. Desparbès was sent as interim Governor-General to replace Blanchelande, and generals Lasalle (West), Hinisdal (North), and Montesquieu-Fezensac (South) were sent to take over command of the army in the various provinces. They were accompanied by six thousand French troops to enforce the 4 April decree and defeat the black slave insurrections throughout the colony. Within two months, over half of these troops were killed off by the climate.

⁴See Garran-Coulon, Rapport 3:264-65.

among the independent maroons of Bahoruco who descended upon the area of Fond-Parisien, and another in the region of Crochus just outside the Cul-de-Sac plain. The insurrections were secretly incited by Hyacinthe, and once they broke out, each factional party sought to profit from them to the detriment of the other. Because of Jumécourt's association with Hyacinthe, Borel accused the Croix-des-Bouquets mayor of collaboration with rebel slaves and had him arrested as a counter-revolutionary. This had been Borel's covert plan from the very beginning, and he was now in complete control of the Cul-de-Sac plain, as well as of Port-au-Prince.⁵

Through an excess of revolutionary patriotism, Borel planned to use the civil commissioners to have the royalists arrested and deported, then to manipulate public agitation against the commissioners themselves in order to overthrow French national authority in the colony. To ensure the success of these machiavellian plans, the patriot faction had already entered into secret negotiations with Britain who, by virtue of its 1 February declaration of war, was now a confirmed enemy of France and the revolution.⁶

Aware of Borel's seditious aims, Polverel and Sonthonax organized an armed march on Port-au-Prince at the beginning of April. The city eventually surrendered; Borel fled and

⁵Ibid., pp. 295-303. Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint; 1:115-16. Malenfant, Des colonies, pp. 32-39. Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:235-37. Cabon, Histoire d'Haiti, 3:128-29. Dalmas, Histoire, 2:119-20.

⁶Garrañ-Coulon, Rapport, 3:258-59.

took refuge in Jamaica.

Having pacified the West and re-established government authority, for the time being at least, the civil commissioners were now beset with new troubles that were breaking out in the North. Galbaud, sent from France to replace Blanchelande as official Governor-General, arrived in le Cap at the beginning of May. The civil commissioners had originally planned to leave the West for Grande-Anse in the South, still in open rebellion against the 4 April decree and how rapidly solidifying its ties with the British. The arrival of Galbaud in the North, combined with the enthusiastic welcome he received from the counter-revolutionary whites of le Cap, had diverted these plans, and they therefore left Rigaud and Pinchinat in charge of the Grande-Anse mission. When they arrived in le Cap, they held a conference with Galbaud and, on the pretext of an irregularity in his nomination, dismissed him and his staff from their functions and put them on a ship bound for France.

But, in the harbor were a number of ships, some of them carrying a couple of hundred political prisoners who had been arrested and deported from Port-au-Prince after the Borel affair. As they, too, were prisoners of Sonthonax and Polverel, they joined with Galbaud and his brother to gain the sympathy of the sailors, about two thousand strong. On 20 June, they made an armed landing, captured the main arsenal and then attacked the government offices, forcing Sonthonax and Polverel to flee for protection to the Bréda

plantation outside le Cap.⁷

The national guard having joined the attack, the mulattoes were called to the defense, but it was impossible for them to maintain order. Every street had become a battlefield. The prisons were opened and the prisoners, most of them rebel slaves, joined in the defense along with over ten thousand black slaves of le Cap who by now had armed as best they could and were actively engaged.⁸ Galbaud's men now turned from fighting to pillaging. Terror and panic spread like wildfire as the women and children desperately tried to escape. Without additional military support, the authority of the government, as well as le Cap itself, would be doomed.

Over ten thousand slaves in le Cap were now in open revolt. The black rebel armies under Jean-François and Biassou occupied nearly all the North province from Port-de-Paix to Fort-Dauphin under the protection of Spain who, one month after the declaration of war against England, had also entered the war as France's enemy. The salvation of the colony depended directly upon winning over these slaves to the side of the republic. So the commissioners, in their

⁷AN, DXXV 41, 406. Sonthonax et Polverel à la Convention Nationale, le Cap, 10 juillet 1793. Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:243-44. Malenfant, Des colonies, pp. 50-54. Dalmas, Histoire, 2:190-96. Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:121-23. Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 3:440-46.

⁸AN, DXXV 41, 406. Sonthonax et Polverel à la Convention Nationale, le Cap, 10 juillet 1793. Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 3:448 and 476. Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:244-45.

desperation, took a great step. On 21 June, the day of their retreat to Bréda, the civil commissioners issued a proclamation guaranteeing freedom and the full rights of French citizenship to all slaves who would fight to defend France against her enemies, be they at home or abroad.⁹

One group of insurgent slaves, encamped in the hills outside le Cap and led by the maroon leader Pierrot, responded to the call. Over three thousand strong, they presented themselves to the commissioners, took the oath of allegiance to France, and the next day descended upon the capital like an avalanche, forcing Galbaud and his men into retreat. But by now, fire had broken out and was rapidly spreading, finally consuming two-thirds of the city. The scene was as that of Port-au-Prince in November 1791. The white colonists were literally destroying each other just as their factional power struggles would destroy the colony.

On the 27th, Sonthonax and Polverel returned to le Cap, a city in near-total ruin and without defense. For the most part, the insurgent slaves remained skeptical of the commissioners' offer of freedom, even of their right to pronounce freedom in the name of France. Many who had participated in the defense of le Cap returned shortly after to rejoin the bands in the hills, and it was only with great difficulty that they retained the support of Pierrot whom

⁹AN, DXXV 40, 400. Registre servant à la transcription des proclamations, ordonnances et autres actes de la commission civile, imprimés depuis le 13 juin jusqu'au 13 mai 1794, Haut du Cap, 21 juin 1793.

they had named general.¹⁰

While most of the other maroon leaders preferred the independence they had acquired at the head of their bands, a certain number were won over by the commissioners' promises after the le Cap disaster. Apparently abandoning the banner of Spain, monarchy and royalism, Macaya, Pierrot's lieutenant; Barthélemy, who was in command of Limbé and Port-Margot and was also among the first insurgent leaders of the August 1791 revolt with Boukman and Biassou;¹¹ Zephirin, in command of Port-de-Paix; Pierre-Michel; Paul Lafrance, and a few others, all adopted for the moment the flag of the republic.¹² Only Pierrot, Pierre-Michel and Paul Lafrance remained.¹³

¹⁰Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:251. Malenfant, Des colonies, p. 57.

¹¹AN, DXXV 61, 609. Extrait des pièces déposées aux archives de l'Assemblée Coloniale. Extrait du journal du Camp des Mornets . . . , commencé le 23 août 1791, signés, Salet, Dessources et Larroque, officiers. Entry for 5 Sept. 1791.

¹²Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 4:44.

¹³Ibid., p. 50. AN, DXXV 42, 413. Correspondance avec tous les officiers militaires de terre et de mer, en date du 12 juin 1793 jusqu'au 6 nov. 1793. Les commissaires civils à Dubisson, commandant au Haut du Cap, le Cap, 6 juillet 1793. Les commissaires civils à Dubisson, commandant des postes extérieures de la ville du Cap, le Cap, 7 juillet 1793. DXXV 43, 415. Registre de la correspondance des commissaires civils en date du 12 juin 1793 jusqu'au 26 juillet 1793. Les commissaires civils à Dubisson, le Cap, 13 juillet 1793. DXXV 42, 412. Les commissaires civils au commandant Pierrot, le Cap, 13 juillet 1793. DXXV 23, 231, CQ69-CQ75; Nos. 53-59. Various letters written by Pierrot, some of them to the civil commissioners, all of them reiterating his allegiance to the republic. Also in the DXXV 23, 231 dossier are letters written by Macaya, Barthélemy, Benjamin, Michaud and Thomas, all popular maroon leaders, expressing an unflinching loyalty to Jean-François, their Grand Amiral, and a deep distrust of the French and their commissioners.

To win over Biassou, the civil commissioners played upon the growing jealousy between him and Jean-François who held a higher command and received greater favors from their Spanish protectors, but with no success.¹⁴ They tried again, using Macaya as intermediary. Macaya never returned, and Jean-François and Biassou delivered a joint response on 28 June. They reminded the civil commissioners that in 1791 they were fighting for their rights and for the King. Receiving no aid at that time, they had no choice but to ally with the Spanish.¹⁵ A week later they reiterated their position and stated that only when the French restored their king could they recognize the civil commissioners.¹⁶

The last hope for Sonthonax and Polverel resided in Toussaint. He had joined Biassou's band in the early days of the revolution as his secretary and as physician of the black army. When war broke out with Spain in March 1793, Toussaint formalized his alliance with that government, but as an independent leader with no more than five to six hundred well chosen troops. Early in June, however, just prior to the le Cap catastrophe, Toussaint had written to general Laveaux, chief commander of the republican forces in the

¹⁴AN, DXXV 43, 418. Correspondance des commissaires civils avec divers particuliers, en date du 13 juin 1793 jusqu'au 20 mai 1794. Les commissaires civils à Biassou, le Cap, 22 juin 1793.

¹⁵AN, DXXV 12, 118. Letter from Jean-François and Biassou, government de la Mine, 28 June 1793.

¹⁶This letter is cited in Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 4:48. Also cited in Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:252.

North, offering his support for France against her enemies on the one condition that full amnesty and general emancipation be proclaimed. This was, of course, refused, and Toussaint remained with the Spanish for nearly another full year.¹⁷

Almost three-quarters of the colonial whites had abandoned France and chosen the side of the foreign powers. The mulattoes, having won a tremendous victory after the defeat of the Port-au-Prince factions earlier that year, had received a considerable number of pre-eminent appointments both in the government and in the military and became the chief protégés of the civil commissioners. Now they, too, began to desert France and join the counter-revolution, abandoning their posts to the enemy powers. With the exception of Rigaud, Beauvais and Pinchinat who remained faithful to the republic, most of the mulattoes in the West were furious over the increasing number of freedoms being granted the slaves by Sonthonax and Polverel.

After the incidents in the Cul-de-Sac plain, the commissioners had freed those slaves from Port-au-Prince and Jacmel who were armed by Borel, as well as a certain number armed by the whites in the South.¹⁸ It was no longer even necessary for the armed slaves to negotiate their freedom;

¹⁷The full text of Toussaint's letter is quoted in Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:165-67, and in Victor Schoelcher, La vie de Toussaint Louverture (Paris: Ollendorf, 1899), pp. 98-100.

¹⁸AN, DXXV 40, 399. Registre d'ordres et décisions, en date du 4 mai 1793 jusqu'au 19 juin 1793, suite. Proclamations from 15 May to 3 June 1793.

Polverel recognized that it would be dangerous to send them back to their plantations and thus pronounced their freedom outright. They would be enrolled for the defense of the republic in what was to be called the Legion of Equality. From 21 June on, any slave wishing to join the republican army would be free. On 11 July, this freedom was extended to their present or future wives and children who would otherwise still be slaves.¹⁹

Among those freed after the Cul-de-Sac insurrections was a slave named Jean Guyambois. With the aid of his brother, François, he had established communication with Jean-François and Biassou to gain their adherence to a plan for the restoration of peace. Guyambois, the chief architect of the plan, Jean-François and Biassou would rule San Domingo as a triumvirate; the Spanish would cede certain territories; universal freedom for all slaves would be proclaimed; Guyambois, as military leader, would enforce the distribution of property to the blacks who would assume the payment of debts to their new creditors. All of this would occur without shedding a single drop of blood. Once the necessary accords were reached with Jean-François and Biassou, Guyambois convoked a commune assembly meeting at Petite-Rivière in the Artibonite valley, and the whites unanimously supported the plan in the name of peace.²⁰

¹⁹Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 4:53.

²⁰AN, DXXV 44, 419. Polverel, commissaire national civil à Sonthonax, son collègue, Port-au-Prince, 26 août 1793. DXXV 44, 419. Polverel, commissaire national civil à Delpech, 31 août 1793. DXXV 12, 118. Copie littérale d'une

Polverel arrived in the West only to learn of the concluded plans in which the district of Mirebalais had also participated. He immediately had the Guyambois brothers put under arrest and the municipal decrees sanctioning the plan revoked. But it was too late now for anything short of a proclamation by the commissioners decreeing the universal emancipation of the slaves. The situation was becoming increasingly critical by the day. In the North, one of the wealthiest planters in the colony, M. Artaud, who had over one thousand slaves, told Sonthonax what his own slaves had made clear to him: only universal freedom could spare the whites from being totally annihilated.²¹ Finally, on 29 August, Sonthonax proclaimed the abolition of slavery in the North.

* * *

Up to the 29 August declaration, the progression toward general emancipation in the South had taken a somewhat similar course. On 25 July, Polverel and Sonthonax issued a proclamation according freedom to slaves that fought in the defense of the republic. It began by recognizing that the insurgent slaves of the South, by virtue of their long-established practice of experienced warfare, were the most

lettre de Jean-François, grand amiral, adressée à Guyambois, commandant pour le roi en chef de l'Artibonite, en date du 10 août 1793 et trouvée à la barrière du Camp Prumer le 15 sept. 1793.

²¹Malenfant, Des colonies, pp. 59-60. Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:260.

capable of fighting France's enemies. The freedoms granted by the Provincial Assembly to the insurgents at Platons were confirmed. All the slaves from les Cayes, Torbeck, Marche-à-Terre and Tiburon who were armed by their masters of both colors were also freed, as well as those armed by the municipalities of Jérémie, Cayemittes and the surrounding towns to serve the counter-revolution. Amnesty and freedom were granted to the slaves who were still armed to conquer that freedom and who would deliver their arms, "including Armand, Martial, Jacques Formon, Gilles Bénech and the other leaders."

As these new soldiers had to prove themselves worthy of French citizenship, their freedom was dependent upon two conditions. First, they would have to be enrolled into legions or companies to fight with courage and devotion for France. Secondly, the war effort necessitated a disciplined, organized population of agricultural workers. Therefore, as an "indispensable duty," they would have to make the rest of the slaves return to their respective plantations and use appropriate methods to maintain their subordination and the regularity of their work. The wives and children of these new citizen-soldiers would also be free, and a vague promise was made to ameliorate the conditions of the slave workers.²²

Rigaud had already organized some twelve hundred newly freed blacks into "legions of equality" and hoped, with the

²²AN, DXXV 97, 849, Ds. 18. Proclamation de Polverel et Sonthonax du 25 juillet 1793; le Cap, 25 juillet 1793.

25 July decree, to double that number by winning over the mass of insurgents still at Macaya. When the slave leaders there got word of this proclamation, they sent representatives on their behalf to inform Rigaud that they were generally satisfied with these conditions.²³

Within two weeks, however, Rigaud was already complaining of insubordination among the new citizens of 25 July: "They are still given over to committing acts unworthy of their new condition; they spread themselves out over the plantations, attempting to destroy citizens' property."²⁴ All the ex-slave leaders of Platons, most of them now company captains, had accepted the government's offer of conditional freedom, but not without reserve, a certain degree of distrust and even overt defiance.²⁵ The majority of the slaves from Macaya--those who were destined to return to the plantations and who had not yet been granted freedom--were even more defiant. While promising to be submissive and obedient upon their return to work, they continued to pillage and ransack the plantations, many of them by now abandoned, and here and there even proceeded to disarm

²³AN, DXXV 21, 212. André Rigaud aux citoyens Pulverel et Sonthonax, commissaires civils, les Cayes, 1 août 1793.

²⁴AN, DXXV 21, 212. André Rigaud, colonel, commandant provisoire de la province du Sud, les Cayes, 14 août 1793.

²⁵Armand, Martial, Bernard, Jacques Formon and Gilles Bénech were all made company captains in the Legion. AN DXXV 27, 281. Prison records for les Cayes, Sept. 1793 to Jan. 1794.

the planters.²⁶

The thousands of slaves who had revolted to free themselves, who were still armed and who had sustained that revolt for over a year, could not be led back so easily. Among their leaders, Jacques Formon alone remained consistently loyal to the original goals of their revolutionary struggle and would later pay for it with his life. Rigaud referred to him as the most distrustful of the leaders:

Under the pretext of carrying out the orders I gave him to make all of the slaves from Macaya come down and return to work, he would visit various plantations and play the Tartuffe, delivering speeches to the slaves, telling them to work and not to go up into the mountains anymore. I have been assured that those under his command have incited them to do just the opposite.²⁷

Armand, Bernard, Martial and Gilles seemed the most inclined to subscribe to the conditions of freedom offered them. The majority of the rebel slaves, however; were furious. They reproached their leaders for wanting to submit and took Armand and Gilles as prisoner. Given the disposition of these insurgents, Rigaud was forced to postpone the expedition against Grande-Anse, for "they will inevitably take advantage of the absence of regular troops to agitate, stir up the other slaves, and pillage everything; all would then be lost."²⁸

²⁶AN, DXXV 21, 212. Le colonel Rigaud, commandant provisoire de la province du Sud au citoyen Polverel, commissaire civil de la république, les Cayes, 22 août 1793.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

By September, most of them had come down from Macaya, but remained organized in camps throughout the plain as was their practice in the mountains. Jacques Formon, still distrustful and still distrusted by Rigaud, held the strongest forces with four to five hundred well armed slaves in his band.²⁹ In November, Polverel summoned Jacques to account for his open resistance: "'You refuse to obey Rigaud, to serve under the banner of the republic! Well then, leave with your band; we will fight you, and the judgement of war will decide between you and us.'"³⁰ He left and forged his retreat back into the mountains. Pursued and captured by Rigaud, he was then arrested, given a military trial and shot.³¹

As late as December, there were still groups of slaves camped at Macaya or on the abandoned plantations in the Platons region, some of them armed. In addition to these was another company, composed of blacks of the Moco nation and commanded by Chérit, a fellow national.³² To induce

²⁹AN, DXXV 21, 215. Le colonel A. Rigaud, commandant provisoire du Sud au citoyen Polverel, commissaire civil de la république, les Cayes, 12 sept. 1793.

³⁰AN, DXXV 42, 413. Correspondance avec tous les officiers militaires de terre et de mer, en date du 6 nov. 1793 jusqu'au 24 mai 1794, de la commission nationale civile. Sonthonax à Beauvais, commandant à la Croix-des-Bouquets, Port-Républicain, 17 mars 1794.

³¹Ibid. AN, DXXV 12, 116. E. Polverel à Sonthonax, les Cayes, 30 nov. 1793.

³²AN, DXXV 22, 223. Petit, commandant du Camp Périn à Polverel, commissaire civil, Camp Périn, 7 déc. 1793. DXXV 22, 224. Petit, commandant au Camp Périn à Polverel, commissaire civil, Camp Périn, 16 déc. 1793. The Mocos, or Mokos, were generally considered to be taciturn and easily given

them to submit, Petit, the commander at Camp Périn, sent a black envoy of their nation to speak with Chérit who, highly distrustful, requested that he first be sent a bottle of tafia and some tobacco. When he received these articles, he gave the messenger a rifle to deliver to Petit and, as proof that the messenger was actually sent by the commander on Polverel's orders, demanded that Petit do likewise.

During this time, two other bands from the region of Plymouth had set out to attack Camp Périn, but finding this impracticable, made their way to Macaya where they sought the aid of Chérit and his company for a combined attack. Wearing the red cockade of the republican forces and identifying themselves as part of Jean Kina's company, they were rejected by Chérit, who categorically refused to have anything to do with them and sent them away.³³ Although Jean Kina had joined the Legion of Equality to fight in the name of France, he had already shown his colors during the first expedition against Jérémie.³⁴ Chérit's refusal, however,

to sickness because of the swampy marshlands throughout their country, situated at the southern end of the Gold Coast. For this reason, very few were brought into the colony by the slave traders, and if they were, were usually passed off as Ibos, a melancholy people who often resisted slavery through suicide. Moreau de St. Méry, Description topographique, 1:51-52.

³³AN, DXXV 22, 225. Petit, commandant au Camp Périn à Polverel, commissaire civil de la république, Camp Périn, 1 janv. 1794.

³⁴He was ordered to select a certain number of armed slaves for service in the Legion, but instead sent them into the enemy camp. AN, DXXV 21, 212. André Rigaud aux citoyens Polverel et Sonthonax, commissaires civils de la république, les Cayes, 1 août 1793. DXXV 21, 211. Sevré, adjudant de Tiburon au citoyen André Rigaud, commandant en chef de l'armée de la république, Tiburon, 2 août 1793.

had nothing to do with either republicanism or royalism. The fact remained that Jean Kina and his men, as part of colonel Harty's army, had vigorously attacked them at Platons during the January campaign, forcing them to retreat to Macaya where survival required the maximum of human endurance.

These were the attitudes and this the mentality of the insurgent slaves who had taken up arms in massive revolt to destroy the shackles of slavery, who now lived independently in marronage and fought with their lives to defend that independence. Their freedom was sanctioned by the civil commissioners when they agreed to join in the defense of France against her enemies, and they now formed the rank and file of the French army. They did not have the powerful Spanish allies that their black rebel counterparts did in the North. Their choices were limited, and if they agreed to accept the government's proposal of freedom, they did so reluctantly and with a good deal of reservation. Within the ranks, they continued to resist. The légionnaires, as they were called, were forever being arrested and sent to the les Cayes jails.³⁵ Insubordination, refusal to obey orders,

³⁵The insurgents from Platons and Macaya did not descend until August. Remaining in the Plaine-du-Fond in their various camps, their official enrollment into the diverse companies did not take place before September. By October, within one month, they were being arrested day by day, in numbers varying from one or two, to twenty or more at a time. During the three month period, from October to December 1793, the prison records for les Cayes indicate over three hundred entries for arrests of black soldiers from the various companies of the Legion, many of them chronic absconders. AN, DXXV 27, 281 and 282. Also, AN, DXXV 22, 220. Elie Bourg, commandant militaire de Torbeck au citoyen Polverel, commissaire civil, Torbeck, 1 nov. 1793.

agitation, horse thievery and desertion--all were forms of resistance that characterized the mood and temperament of the newly emancipated black soldier.

By first freeing the black warriors, Polverel was moving toward an eventual proclamation of general emancipation. His conception of emancipation, however, was radically different from that of his colleague in the North. Whereas Sonthonax had proclaimed the immediate abolition of slavery, Polverel was convinced that it could only successfully be achieved gradually, by stages. Two days prior to Sonthonax' proclamation of 29 August, Polverel had declared free those slaves on the sequestered plantations in the West belonging to émigré planters and deportees; in addition, all remaining insurgent maroons, including those of the Bahoruco, were also freed.

At this point, he was totally unaware of the proclamation Sonthonax was about to publish. Having unofficially received word of it early in September, his immediate reaction was to question the legality of such an act. He could hardly believe his colleague had actually done such a thing:

Did you, or did you not proclaim general emancipation in the North? Were you free not to do so? Is the approbation of a single commune assembly in a parish [le Cap] where there are practically no owners left, sufficient to justify an act of this importance for the entire province of the North, an act of which the repercussions could be terrible for the whole colony? I do not know . . . but I fear the worst.³⁶

³⁶AN, DXXV 12, 219. Polverel, commissaire civil de la république à Sonthonax, son collègue au Cap, Port-au-Prince, 3 sept. 1793.

Already, the proclamation was beginning to circulate throughout the West. New slave insurrections had begun in the bordering areas of the North, spreading rapidly through the West into parts of the South before the 29 August proclamation was even issued.³⁷ Nearly half of the slaves in the West were already free. Were it not for Sonthonax' initiative, it would have taken Polverel at least another six months before proclaiming freedom for the rest.³⁸ He had no choice now but to declare general emancipation, and he had no time to lose.

On 21 September 1793, the first anniversary of the French republic, Polverel invited the planters of the West to follow his example of 27 August and to proclaim the freedom of their own slaves, thus combining the principles of the French révolution with general emancipation. If the force of events in the colony had driven Polverel to take this stand, the manner in which he concluded the abolition of slavery was dictated by his unshakeable respect for the sacred rights of property. The acts of manumission would be signed voluntarily by the planters, and to facilitate this procedure, Polverel set up open registers in every parish throughout the province for them to sign. Under these circumstances, and with no other alternative, the planters acquiesced.

³⁷Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 4:97.

³⁸Ibid., p. 88.

The status of the slaves in the South, however, remained undefined. Delpech, as secretary to the civil commission, had been named civil commissioner of the South to alleviate the burden placed on Polverel by Ailhaud's resignation. His reaction to Sonthonax' proclamation was even more conservative than Polverel's. While hemming and hawing over the legalities of abolition, the authority of a delegate of France to impose such a measure, and over the established rights of the colonial regime and the individual property rights of the colonists, he refused to make a decision until a tri-partite conference could be held to work out a uniform policy for the colony.³⁹ The question was settled by his death on the 27th. Thus, on 10 October, three days after his arrival, Polverel's system was established in the South as in the West.⁴⁰

³⁹Letter from Delpech to his colleagues. Cited in Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 4:94-96.

⁴⁰Evidence exists which strongly seems to suggest that marronage, at least in the region around les Cayes, had increased progressively during the last half of 1793 and had accelerated rapidly during the months immediately prior to Polverel's emancipation proclamation for the South. The prison record from which this evidence is derived lists the number of nègres épaves (fugitive slaves who were neither reported as such nor claimed by their masters and who were destined to be sold at public auction) in the les Cayes jail from August 1792 to 6 October 1793, the date of Polverel's arrival in the South. In July 1793, there were ten. In August, there were twenty-seven, followed by fifty-two more in September. During the first week of October, from the 2nd to the 6th, a mere five-day period, twenty-five others had been captured. If the trend indicated a marked increase in the number of fugitives captured and not claimed by the masters from the summer of 1793 on, an increase reaching near-geometric proportions by October, it must be noted that they do not reflect the number of maroons still at large. Most of them, at least until September, were still at Macaya and

Comparing his system of emancipation with that of Sonthonax in the North, he had previously spoken in these terms to the slaves in the West:

[Sonthonax] has given you freedom without property, or rather, with one-third of the revenues of the land which is devastated, without installations, without lodging. [He has given you freedom] without the means by which to make the land productive; and I have given you liberty, either with land under production or the means with which to promptly regenerate those lands that have been devastated. He has given no property rights to those of your brothers who are armed in the defense of the colony . . . I have given the right of co-ownership to those who fight while you cultivate.⁴¹

The so-called property rights that Polverel envisaged for the emancipated blacks existed more in theory than in fact. His conception of emancipation, bound as it was to the legal abstraction of property, meant absolutely nothing to the ex-slaves. In reality, their "property rights" consisted in regimented wage-labor or, more specifically, share-cropping. They were forced to remain on their respective plantations and to continue working for their former masters as before; the plantations would remain undivided; the whip as a form of punishment was abolished and would be replaced by a future penal code; a detailed work code systematically delineating the specific hours and conditions of work, as

were now labelled by the colonists as "insurgents" or "rebels." Also included in these figures are two nègres épaves who passed themselves off as légionnaires. AN, DXXV 27, 281. Etat de ce qui est dû au citoyen l'Abbé, concière, pour nourriture et frais de géolie des nègres ci-après nommés, lesquels ont été élargis de prison en vertu de la proclamation du citoyen Polverel . . . , le 7 octobre 1793, les Cayes, 10 oct. 1793.

⁴¹Cited in Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 4:88.

well as the proportional salaries of the workers, would also be forthcoming and would be retroactive to 21 September.⁴² These codes did not come for another four months.

The demands placed upon the newly enfranchised black laborers were in part generated by the war situation in the colony and the necessity of a tightly regimented labor force to sustain the war effort against France's enemies. Nonetheless, they clashed head-on with the attitudes, mentality and conception of freedom held by the ex-slaves and expressed through their active resistance to the new system. Freedom for them, simply stated, meant freedom from forced labor; the freedom to dispose of their person as best they saw fit; the freedom to work independently for their own account or to own a small piece of land from which to sustain themselves and their families. These attitudes and aspirations expressed the very antithesis of everything they had known and experienced under slavery, and the new regime, despite the abolition of the whip and the institution of a small recompense for their work, did not seem all that different for the ordinary laborer.

How, then, did they react to their new state of freedom? In the preamble to his 7 February proclamation on wage allocations and distribution of agricultural produce between the owners and the laborers, Polverel reminded the black

⁴²AN, DXXV 41, 404. Procès-verbal de la célébration de la fête de la république française au Port-au-Prince. E. Polverel, Port-au-Prince, 21 sept. 1793. Also, Proclamation of 27 August 1793, printed in Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 4:81-85.

workers of the "errors" they had committed during the first months following their emancipation.⁴³ On some plantations, they took advantage of the absence of the owner and the relative state of abandon in which he left his plantation to expand the size of the small lots provided them under slavery for subsistence. Thus, they began cultivating portions of the plantation property for their own use.

They helped themselves to the uncultivated fruit of the land such as wood, fodder and other products that grew spontaneously and that existed abundantly in a natural state. They helped themselves to the plantation rations and sold what they could at the market. They freely used the horses and mules belonging to the plantation, both for personal pleasure and to carry their stolen goods to market. On some plantations, the workers had, in effect, taken over the land for themselves. As they were organized in brigades, each group would cultivate that portion of the land assigned to it, and the workers would then sell the products that were superfluous to their needs. The problems for the administration were even more acute on the plantations that had been sequestered from the émigré planters. In the parish of

⁴³AN, DXXV 28, 286. Règlement sur les proportions du travail et de la récompense, sur le partage des produits de la culture entre le propriétaire et les cultivateurs, petite habitation O'Sheill, Plaine-du-Fond de l'Isle-à-Vache, 7 fév. 1794, signé, E. Polverel. Unless otherwise indicated, the above section will be based on the statements made by Polverel in his 7 February proclamation. Prison records and other related documents for this period, indicating a high incidence of arrested black workers, as well as soldiers in the Legion, are found in AN, DXXV 27, 281 and 282. DXXV 37, 373 and 374. DXXV 41, 404. DXXV 44, 421.

les Cotteaux, a group of blacks had established themselves on the abandoned Condé plantation. They cut down, burned and literally devastated the coffee grove to build houses for themselves in its place.⁴⁴

On those plantations where the owner or a manager was present and where a somewhat regular work schedule was imposed, the most persistent of the workers' demands was the five-day working week. Under slavery, their only free day other than holidays was Sunday. They now expected that to change and refused to work as if they were slaves, from sunup to sundown, six days per week. They could no longer be whipped, mutilated or tortured as they were in the past. Managers now had to use the force of persuasion to get them to work. Though the fundamental relationship of these workers to the mode of production had been altered, for them, that change was only minimal. Instead of being the property of the master, to be disposed of at will, instead of having the illusory incentive of an eventual grant of freedom by a humane owner, they were now legally free persons and were given a minimal pay incentive, yet were legally bound, as share-croppers, to a specific plantation. This change had little effect upon the mentality and predispositions of the black workers. They often refused to work altogether; they would arrive in the fields late in the morning and quit early

⁴⁴AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres de décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, Plaine-du-Fond de l'Isle-à-Vache, 25 mars 1794.

in the evening. When they did work, their work was slack and unproductive. They resisted the new system as they had resisted slavery--through marronage, a term now replaced by a more innocuous one, vagrancy.

The women were now demanding equal pay for equal work. As slaves, they had worked in the fields under the same conditions as the men. Now, as laborers receiving a recompense, their role was no different, and excepting pregnancy and childbirth, they were subject to the same regulations as their male co-workers but received only two-thirds the pay: Why should we receive less pay than the men? Do we come to work later than they? Do we leave earlier? They might have added: Do we not receive the same punishments as the men for refusing to work? Simply stated, the women saw themselves as workers. Moreover, they were not fighting against the men, but against the owners, and the men raised no objections to their demands. In fact, Polverel had to try to convince the men otherwise:

It is not against the owner; it is against yourselves, against their men, that the women formulate these exaggerated pretensions. They do not want any consideration to be given to the inequality of strength that nature has placed between them and the men, to the habitual and periodic infirmities, to the intervals of rest which their pregnancies, their⁴⁵ childbirth, their nursing, oblige them to take.

Appealing to male pride in an effort to put these women in their proper place, Polverel went on to say that

⁴⁵AN, DXXV 28, 286. Règlement sur les proportions.

These men, whose advantageous portion of the revenues they covet, work, save, desire money, only to be able to lavish it on their women.

Africans, if you want to make your women⁴⁶ listen to reason, listen to reason yourselves . . .

Polverel could only explain these diverse forms of resistance by assuming that the owners, the former masters, as well as the managers, continued to treat them like slaves. He claimed that some presented a false interpretation of his proclamations or administered them wrongly, that others told the workers the commissioner did not have the authority to free them and that their freedom would only be short-lived. In some instances Polverel may well have been right.⁴⁷ However, neither the correspondance nor the prison records for this period indicate that this was in any way a widespread or common practice. With the counter-revolution now operating in full force throughout the colony, there would be no reason to assume that Polverel would have been lenient toward recalcitrant planters trying to undermine potential black allegiance to the republic. In any event, he believed that with this new work code he would be able to enlighten the workers as to their true interests. Once properly understood, the work code would create harmony between them and the owners, both parties being engaged in a collective enterprise, each having specific duties and responsibilities, the

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 18 oct. 1793. DXXV 14, 137. Declaration of Polverel, habitation Vernet, 10 Oct. 1793. Declarations of Vernet workers, habitation Vernet, 30 Oct. 1793.

whole being based on a hierarchy of labor and the unequal distribution of wealth.

Article 23 of the work code instructed the owners or the managers of each plantation to read and explain intelligibly to the assembled workers and conducteurs both the preamble and the articles concerning the work expected of them, as well as the allocated earnings due to them. If they agreed to work a full six-day week, they would receive collectively one-third of the net profits. If they chose to take one day per week for themselves, in addition to Sunday, their collective revenues would be cut by one half; if they decided upon two or more free days per week, they would get nothing at all and would be removed, by force if necessary, from the plantation. The official reports of the decisions made by the plantation workers in the parish of Cavailon, outside the Plaine-des-Cayes, indicate that in one case in three the black workers adamantly insisted upon a five-day work week, reserving Saturday for themselves, even after they were reminded that their earnings would be reduced to one-sixth.⁴⁸

To make any sort of statistically precise generalization

⁴⁸ AN, DXXV 28, 286. Procès-verbaux de la commune de Cavailon sur la lecture faite aux cultivateurs du règlement du 7 février 1794, Cavailon, 21-28 fév.; 3-5 mars 1794. In five of the twenty-three reports for the plantations of Cavailon, the workers stated they would render their decision only to the military commander or to Polverel. Of the twenty-three plantations interviewed, the final decisions of twenty are recorded. Thirteen opted to work six days per week, and seven chose five days per week.

as to worker attitudes throughout the province toward the six-day week based on the reports of one parish, would, of course, be hazardous. The type of plantation and the specific nature of the work required are factors which might influence the decisions of the workers on the number of days they would want to work. However, on the la Haye plantation in the Plaine-du-Fond, an area with the highest concentration of sugar plantations, the workers had originally decided upon a five and a half-day work week. It was explained to them, though, that instead of one-third of the net revenues, they would now receive only three-elevenths. The blacks then said that they were mistaken when they opted for a half day off and that, since a lot of other plantations were operating on five days per week, they, too, wanted an extra free day and chose Thursday.⁴⁹ Based on the evidence available, it seems the five day work week was in no way an uncommon or untypical desire, at least among the black workers in this middle region of the South, an area where insurrectionary activity was always particularly prominent.

Following the publication of the 7 February work code and the 28 February regulations on the policing of the plantations, the black workers continued to resist in great numbers and in a variety of ways. Under the 28 February police code for plantation workers, the most common form of

⁴⁹AN, DXXV 44, 421. Sonthonax à Blanchet, petite habitation O'Sheill, 22 mars 1794. DXXV 37, 374. Blanchet, commandant militaire à Aquin à Polverel, commissaire civil, Aquin, 28 mars 1794.

punishment was imprisonment and forced labor on public works without pay for a specific length of time, depending upon the offense. For example, in cases of disobedience or refusal to carry out the orders of one's superior, the sentence for a field worker was one month and, for a secondary con-
ducteur, two months. If the orders were not carried out because of simple negligence, and not because of a formal refusal, the punishments in each case were reduced by a half. If a subordinate threatened his or her superior, either verbally or by gesture, he or she would be condemned to a two-month sentence; for the same offense, a secondary conducteur would receive four months. In the case of an armed threat, the punishments were tripled. Any worker or subordinate conducteur who carried out a threat by striking the head conducteur was dismissed for the rest of the year from the plantation, arrested and tried by the civil penal code. If the majority of the workers on a plantation were guilty of any one of the above misdeeds, the entire work force would be dismissed and replaced by the owner with day laborers.⁵⁰

In cases of theft, the guilty person was required to pay into the plantation treasury the value of the stolen goods; in addition, he or she would pay the same value a second time, as a fine, half of which was given to the informer, the other half to the government. If the products stolen were from the rations storehouse or were among the

⁵⁰A majority comprised one half of the plantation workers, plus one.

uncultivated, spontaneous fruits of the land, the fines would be evaluated at the potential market value of the products. For stealing or "borrowing" an animal, the thief would have to pay a certain sum per day until the animal was returned, the fine depending upon the animal's utility. As in the case of ordinary thievery, a second fine was imposed and paid to the informer and the government. Damage to any form of plantation property was subject to the same punishments as for theft.

In nearly all instances, plantation workers that resisted the regulations of the work code never had sufficient funds to cover their fines. Thus, they were thrown into prison to labor on public works until such time as their potential earnings, based on the lower wage rate for public workers, equalled the amount they owed. If after this they repeated an offense, they would be removed from the plantation, declared unworthy of participating in the plantation community, imprisoned and sentenced to public works without pay for one year.⁵¹

⁵¹AN, DXXV 28, 287. Règlement de police sur la culture et les cultivateurs, E. Polverel, commissaire civil de la république, petite habitation O'Sheill, 28 fév. 1794. Of the hundreds of workers arrested on the plantations in the Plaine-du-Fond, roughly from the end of February to the beginning of April 1794, the cause of arrest is not always indicated. However, the sentences registered do give some indication of the nature of the offenses. In most cases, the black workers were condemned to "public works without pay until further orders," a sentence which could apply to nearly all of the offenses specified in Polverel's 28 February police proclamation. AN, DXXV 27, 281 and 282. DXXV 37, 373 and 374. DXXV 41, 404. DXXV 44, 421.

In spite of these coercive regulations, incentives and punishments, many black workers refused to submit themselves to a system of regimented labor. They resisted, as they had resisted slavery, both overtly and covertly, individually, as well as collectively.

As could be expected, the most widespread form of resistance was the refusal to work, at times practiced by the entire labor force, at others, involving individual workers or groups of workers in varying numbers.⁵² In an attempt to get out of work or to lighten the work load, they were often caught breaking up or damaging the sugar cane. For the same motives, they continually deserted their assigned plantation to attach themselves to another where, depending upon the type of plantation, the nature of the work required would be less arduous. Or simply, they would leave for another plantation, there to hide out and not work at all.⁵³

⁵²AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 19 fév.; 10 mars; 4, 8 avril 1794. DXXV 37, 373. Dalesme, gérant sequestre de l'habitation Formon au citoyen commissaire, au Vieux Bourg, 17 mars 1794. DXXV 37, 374. Petit, commandant au Camp Périn à Polverel, commissaire civil, Camp Périn, 25 mars 1794. DXXV 37, 373. Salomon, commandant militaire à Polverel, commissaire civil, les Cayes, 19 mars 1794. DXXV 44, 421. Sonthonax à Lachapelle, petite habitation O'Sheill, 24 fév. 1794.

⁵³AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 16, 24 fév.; 12, 17, 20, 21, 27 mars 1794. DXXV 44, 421. Sonthonax à Lachapelle, petite habitation O'Sheill, 24 fév. 1794. Sonthonax à Boury, petite habitation O'Sheill, 9 mars 1794. Sonthonax à Baulos, petite habitation O'Sheill, 11 mars 1794. DXXV 22, 226. Beauregard, commandant militaire à Etienne Polverel, commissaire civil, Cavailon, 2 avril 1794, DXXV 37, 373. Thiveruy, gérant de l'habitation Labiche et Dunezac au commissaire civil, au Fond, 20 mars 1794. DXXV 37, 374. Attestations of concierge, les Cayes prison, les Cayes, 28 March 1794.

While some remained errant in various regions throughout the plain, others sought refuge in the military camps in the hills and mountainous areas where they could be sheltered by their black comrades in the Legion. Some workers were even audacious enough to pass themselves off as légionnaires.⁵⁴

On the plantations, insubordination was often more the rule than the exception. The hierarchy of labor established under slavery and perpetuated by the work code placed the conducteur in a position of authority over the workers. Yet he, too, was bound by the regulations of the work code and was responsible for carrying out the orders of his superior or the decisions of the administrative council, chosen by the workers themselves. In some cases, worker insubordination was the direct result of the commandeur either surpassing his authority or being forced by the manager-steward to mistreat his charges.⁵⁵ In many instances, however, workers

Petit, commandant militaire à Polverel, commissaire civil, Camp Périn, 25 mars 1794. Salomon, commandant militaire à Polverel, commissaire civil, les Cayes, 30 mars. Poulain, économiste-gérant de la deuxième habitation Laborde à E. Polverel, deuxième habitation Laborde, 23 mars 1794.

⁵⁴See pp. 233-36 below. AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 15, 28 mars 1794. DXXV 44, 421. Sonthonax à Petit, petite habitation O'Sheill, 9, 13, 15 mars 1794. Sonthonax à Salomon, petite habitation O'Sheill, 2 avril 1794. DXXV 37, 373. Petit, commandant militaire à Polverel, commissaire civil, Camp Périn, 15 mars 1794. Lacolle, gérant de l'habitation Coderc au commissaire civil, habitation Coderc, 20 mars 1794. DXXV 37, 374. Salomon, commandant militaire à Polverel, commissaire civil, les Cayes, 30 mars 1794. DXXV 22, 226. Beauregard, commandant militaire à Etienne Polverel, commissaire civil, Cavillon, 2 avril 1794.

⁵⁵AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 2, 19 mars. DXXV 44, 421. Sonthonax à Marin, procureur de la commune de Torbeck, petite habitation O'Sheill, 16 mars 1794.

simply refused to obey the legitimate orders of the conduc-
teur and usually accompanied their refusal with verbal
threats and slanderous insults; a few even backed up their
threats with arms. Nearly every plantation throughout the
plain had agitators and proselitizers of this sort, and one
or two sufficed to disrupt the already irregular rhythm
of work.⁵⁶

On the sugar plantations, the most vociferous type of
refusal concerned night work on the mills. On the Coderc
plantation, two female workers ordered by the administrative
council to work at night, categorically refused; one of the
women, Guittone, threatened the conducteur, added insult to
invective in a most atrocious way and told him that if there
were any night work to be done, he would have to do it
alone.⁵⁷ The manager of the third Laborde plantation complained
of the same problem: "The workers categorically refuse to
operate the mills at night; they arrive in the fields no
earlier than eight or nine o'clock in the morning, in very
few numbers at that, and do very little work per day."⁵⁸

⁵⁶AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 20, 31 mars; 3 avril 1794. DXXV 44, 421. Sonthonax à Salomon, petite habitation O'Sheill, 20 mars 1794. DXXV 37, 373. François Médor au citoyen commissaire civil, au Fond, 20 mars 1794. Elie Boury, commandant militaire de Torbeck à Daniel Gellée, secrétaire à la commission civile, Torbeck, 13 mars 1794.

⁵⁷AN, DXXV 37, 373. Laçolle, gérant de l'habitation Coderc au commissaire civil, habitation Coderc, 20 mars 1794. DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 20 mars 1794.

⁵⁸AN, DXXV 37, 373. Marelot, gérant au commandant militaire des Cayes, troisième habitation Laborde, 19 mars 1794. Salomon, commandant militaire à Polverel, commissaire civil, les Cayes, 19 mars 1794. (Laborde had three plantations and

On the Gallais sugar plantation, one of the workers, Joseph Ibo, discreetly broke into a meeting of the administrative council and, as the manager, Rostand, began reading his proposal for night work, Joseph started gnashing his teeth and caused such a disturbance that Rostand was forced to stop reading. As he castigated Joseph for his insolence, the latter replied sardonically that he had a bad toothache. Furious, Rostand told him he had no business being at the meeting in the first place and that, if he disapproved of the proposal, he could leave. Joseph refused to leave, continued to disrupt the meeting and, upon Rostand's repeated order to leave, lashed back: "Yes, I'm your slave." The manager tried to tell him there were no more slaves in San Domingo when Joseph pulled out a huge knife, threatening to strike him down; he would have succeeded were it not for the intervention of a few of the workers on the council. As they escorted him out, Joseph swore he would sell everything he had, up to his last chicken, to see Rostand dead.⁵⁹

Theft of plantation products continued to be a problem. In addition to the natural products of the land, they stole surplus goods such as syrup, sugar, coffee or indigo to sell at the market, either for their own benefit or, in some cases, for the benefit of other workers not engaged on their

designated them as follows: the "first," the "second," and the "third" Laborde plantation.)

⁵⁹AN, BXXV-37, 374. Etienne Rostand au commissaire civil, habitation Gallais, 29 mars 1794. Salomon, commandant militaire à Daniel Gellée, secrétaire ad hoc de la commission civile, les Cayes, 29 mars 1794. Salomon, commandant militaire à Polverel, commissaire civil, les Cayes, 30 mars 1794.

plantation. They would steal a horse or a mule belonging to the plantation, would try to pass it off as their own and sell it to the first buyer. At other times, they simply "borrowed" an animal with which to transport and peddle their goods.⁶⁰

In his preface to the work code, Polverel tried to convince the ex-slaves that, as "co-recipients" of the plantation products, their small gardens were now superfluous to their needs. As he did not want to remove them altogether, he restricted the size of their lots to what it had been under slavery, thirty paces by twenty paces each. The manager-steward, on the other hand, was provided with a lot measuring eighteen hundred paces in area for his personal use, in addition to his regular salary.⁶¹ It is not surprising that this obvious inequality in favor of the plantation bookkeeper should prove to incite vengeance on the part of the ordinary field laborer. Poulain, the steward in charge of the Mercy plantation, wrote to Polverel to determine the proper measures to take against the conducteurs and the workers who persistently left their pigs out of their

⁶⁰ AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 10 mars 1794. DXXV 44, 421. Sonthonax à Salomon, petite habitation O'Sheill, 20, 24 mars 1794. Sonthonax à André Piqueret, gérant de l'habitation Regnier, petite habitation O'Sheill, 28 fév. 1794. DXXV 37, 373. Beauregard, commandant militaire à Etienne Polverel, commissaire civil, Cavailon, 20 mars 1794. DXXV 37, 374. Salomon, commandant militaire à Polverel, commissaire civil, les Cayes, 30 mars 1794.

⁶¹ AN, DXXV 28, 286. Règlement sur les proportions.

pens at night; the pigs, naturally, ravaged and completely devoured his garden.⁶²

Prison escapes and subsequent marronage were not uncommon among workers sentenced to public works.⁶³ Workers were sometimes openly supported by the solidarity of their co-workers who, considering that their comrades had sufficiently purged their sentences, presented themselves before the jailor to request their release.⁶⁴ On the second Laborde plantation, the petitioners promised that, if released, they would try to make sure their co-workers remained on good behavior and, if they did not, would send them back.⁶⁵ Worker solidarity often included the conducteur, as well. On the sequestered Champtois plantation in the Plaine-du-Fond, indolence, refusal to work and insubordination among the workers were seriously hindering production. Polverel sent Petit to visit the plantation and arrest the agitators. Having assembled the workers, he discovered the conducteur was absent

⁶²AN, DXXV 37, 373. Poulain au citoyen commissaire, n.p., 20 mars 1794.

⁶³AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 31 mars 1794. DXXV 37, 373. Lachapelle, capitaine à l'adjudant général au citoyen Polverel, commissaire civil, les Cayes, 20 mars 1794. DXXV 37, 374. Salomon à Duboisquéheneul, secrétaire ad hoc de la commission civile, les Cayes, 21 mars 1794.

⁶⁴AN, DXXV 37, 374. Lacolle, gérant de l'habitation Coderc au commissaire civil, habitation Coderc, 30 mars 1794. The workers of this plantation were petitioning the release of their co-worker, Guittone, who, refusing to do night work, slandered the conducteur (see p. 227 above). They felt that her loss of pay for one month was sufficient punishment.

⁶⁵AN, DXXV 37, 347. François Poulain à Salomon, commandant militaire, au Fond, 30 mars 1794.

and sent one of his soldiers to bring him back from the nearby plantation where he had spent the night. Petit demanded that the conducteur denounce on the spot the six worst troublemakers. The conducteur refused to name a single one and was arrested, along with four others that the second conducteur finally singled out.⁶⁶

The newly enfranchised slaves expressed through their acts what they thought of Polverel's type of freedom, of his work code and of the new regime. For them, now workers and free citizens, it had brought about no fundamental change in the system of production, and only insufficient change in their relationship to the products of their labor. The land did not belong to them. Polverel had made that quite clear in his 7 February proclamation. And when they took over abandoned plantations, when they took surplus crops to market, when they started using portions of the plantation to expand their own minimal plots of land, they were merely taking and appropriating for themselves what they felt rightly belonged to them by virtue of their constant labor under slavery.

Polverel tried to impress upon them that, left to themselves, they would end up plundering the land, leaving it barren and unproductive; they would end up killing off all the owners and then would begin struggling with one another for the means of survival. They would then be sufficiently

⁶⁶AN, DXXV 37, 374. Petit, commandant au Camp Périn à Polverel, commissaire civil, Camp Périn, 25 mars 1794.

divided amongst themselves and would fall prey to the first foreign power that sought to put them back in chains. Polverel used this sort of exaggerated bribery to get the ex-slaves back to work and to keep the system from collapsing. They would work, and would work cheerfully, but only if it meant that they were the independent owners of the land they cultivated, of their own labor and the fruits of that labor. For better or for worse, this was how they felt, and neither Polverel, nor Sonthonax, nor even Toussaint could ever substantially change that mentality.

When the workers pillaged the plantation rations, they used their own methods of dividing them up; if they sold stolen surplus, it was often for the benefit of other workers. They covered up for one another, organized themselves to help get a co-worker out of prison; they sheltered their comrades who had run away or who were being pursued. Their relationship to the conducteur was one generated by slavery itself and sustained under the new system. Thus, their hostility toward the conducteur was a natural consequence of the division of labor, but if disobedience and flagrant insubordination toward one's superior were common, the incidence of conducteurs being arrested along with groups of workers was equally common, despite the fact that their sentences were more severe.⁶⁷

⁶⁷AN, DXXV 37, 373. Dalesme, gérant sequestre de l'habitation Formon, au Vieux Bourg, 17 mars 1794. DXXV 37, 374. Salomon, commandant militaire au commissaire civil, les Cayes, 26 mars 1794. Attestations of concierge, les Cayes prison, les Cayes, 29 March 1794. Petit, commandant au Camp Périn à Polverel, commissaire civil, Camp Périn.

Among the former slave leaders of the Platons insurrection, many had become company captains, either in the Legion of Equality or in the local militia units that were created to police the countryside and maintain the subordination of the black workers to the new work regime. But workers and soldiers often carried out acts of resistance in mutual complicity. It was not uncommon for a légionnaire to provide shelter for fugitive workers. In a letter to Salomon, the military commander of les Cayes, Sonthonax gave orders to have three runaway workers from the Collet plantation arrested and sentenced to public works: "I have been told that you might be able to find them in the cabin of a légionnaire named Zamore, formerly belonging to the Collet plantation . . ." ⁶⁸ At the same time, Beauregard, military commander of Cavillon, wrote to Polverel concerning the effect of his 28 February proclamation on the plantations he visited. He discovered several workers who, having disrupted the working order on their own plantations, had taken cover on various others. Along with these agitators, he found two deserters from the Legion

. . . who serve as models of indolence for the rest. . . . It would be impossible for me to depict the new order of things without making mention of the runaways, and I would not be surprised at all, citizen commissioner, if before long the runaways follow one another with the same rapidity as in the

25 mars 1794. DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 25, 29 mars; 6, 8 avril 1794.

⁶⁸ AN, DXXV 44, 421. Sonthonax à Salomon, petite habitation O'Sheill, 2 avril 1794.

days of despotism. That, effectively, is the success of the regenerating principles of liberty, equality and humanity.⁶⁹

Sometimes, imprisoned workers would escape under the dissimulating eye of the black militia guards responsible for their surveillance.⁷⁰

Writing from Camp Périn, Petit asked Polverel to designate a plantation for over fifty workers who were not enrolled in two of the companies, specifying that the plantation should be a safe distance from the camp.⁷¹ In less than two weeks he wrote to Polverel again, stating that he had arrested and was sending twenty-nine black soldiers from the same two companies to be reintegrated into the plantations: "It is absolutely necessary that they be uprooted from the military milieu."⁷²

Nicolas, a dragoon in the Legion of Equality, was arrested in early April and sentenced to public works without pay "until all the plantation workers in the parish of Baynet return to an orderly, disciplined work routine." On

⁶⁹AN, DXXV 22, 226. Beauregard, commandant militaire à Etienne Polverel, commissaire civil, Cavillon, 2 avril 1794. DXXV 41, 404; Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 3 avril 1794.

⁷⁰AN, DXXV 37, 373. Lachapelle, capitaine à l'adjudant général au citoyen Polverel, commissaire civil, les Cayes, 20 mars 1794. Salomon, commandant militaire provisoire aux Cayes, à Duboisguéheneul, secrétaire ad hoc de la commission civile, 21 mars 1794.

⁷¹AN, DXXV 37, 373. Petit, commandant au Camp Périn à Polverel, commissaire civil, Camp Périn, 27 mars 1794.

⁷²AN, DXXV 37 374. Petit, commandant au Camp Périn à Polverel, commissaire civil, Camp Périn, 27 mars 1794.

the same day, thirty-one workers, including the two conduc-teurs from the La Cour plantation in Baynet, were arrested along with Nicolas.⁷³

To be forced to labor on public works, however, was not always a form of direct punishment. Plantation workers could often be called upon to leave the fields and report for corvée duty, lasting anywhere from a few days to an entire week. The black officers and soldiers in the Legion were responsible for delivering the orders issued by their superiors for a certain number of listed workers from each plantation.

The blacks at times resisted this additional form of forced labor by simply not reporting for corvée duty at all or by reporting for only a part of the required length of time. Toward the end of January, an equal number of men and women from the Bourdet plantation--thirty in all--were slated for public works for the week of the 20th. They never showed up once. In the same week, twenty-three more, ordered from the Raynaud-Charpentier plantation, did not report for duty until the Friday. And, having already missed four days' work, they did not appear until ten o'clock, well after their mid-morning meal. In both of these cases, the plantation conducteurs evaded their obligations as much as the workers did.⁷⁴

⁷³AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 6, 8 avril 1794.

⁷⁴AN, DXXV 38, 387. Etat des africains cultivateurs commandés pour les travaux des fossés et fortifications, qui ne se sont point rendus cette semaine aux dits travaux, les Cayes, 24 janv. 1794, signé, Morancy.

The légionnaires who were supposed to deliver the work orders to the plantation managers sometimes covertly aided the blacks in absconding from their required duties. During the same week in January, additional orders had been issued for 350 workers from five other plantations to report for corvée duty. Barthélemy Guilgault, a lieutenant in the Beaufils company of the Legion, claimed that he entrusted two of his dragoons, Gilles and Cada, with delivering the work orders. Since the orders were never delivered and therefore none of the workers showed up, the three Légionnaires were interrogated. Each made statements contradicting those made by the other two, so that it could not be determined with certainty which one of the three was the guilty party. An examination of their interrogations reveals that, in all probability, this was a good case of deliberate negligence.⁷⁵

Of the principal insurrectionary leaders of the Platon revolt of 1792-3, Armand and Bernard were perhaps the most diligent in carrying out their new duties as captains in the Legion and members of the French army. Given the

⁷⁵AN, DXXV 38, 387. Interrogation of citizen Barthélemy Guilgault, habitation O'Sheill, 2 Feb. 1794, signed, Barthélemy Guilgault, E. Polverel and Duboisguéheneul, sec. ad hoc. Interrogation of citizen Pierre Gilles, habitation O'Sheill, 1 Feb. 1794, signed, E. Polverel and Duboisguéheneul. Interrogation of citizen Cada, habitation O'Sheill, 2 Feb. 1794, signed, Barthélemy Guilgault, E. Polverel and Duboisguéheneul. Barthélemy Guilgault to Polverel, les Cayes, 1 Feb. 1794. Bazille Poulain, gérant sur l'habitation au citoyen commissaire civil, habitation Mercy, 1 fév. 1794. Letter to Augustin Rigaud, n.p., n.d.

high rate of insubordination, indolence and persistent resistance to his work code among the black workers of the Plaine-du-Fond, especially on the sequestered plantations, Polverel found it necessary to introduce additional measures of control. At the end of March, he established a team of regional inspectors, each inspector being responsible for the surveillance of a given number of plantations. The commissioner believed that to increase their productivity, the workers needed only to be directed by men who knew the nature of the land, the temperature, the climate, the variations of the seasons, the influence of these variations upon production, and the type of agriculture best suited to the Plaine-du-Fond. To prevent the rhythm of production from slackening on certain plantations, they needed supervisors who could stimulate the "lazy," who would denounce insubordination to the authorities, stir the zeal of the managers and reinforce the discipline demanded by the conducteurs. These men would be chosen from actual or former agricultural laborers.⁷⁶

And so, for "their zeal, talents and intelligence," Armand and Bernard were both chosen, along with six others, as regional inspectors.⁷⁷ For the time being, Martial and

⁷⁶AN, DXXV 28, 288. Proclamation of 31 March 1794, signed, Polverel, petite habitation O'Sheill, Plaine-du-Fond de l'Isle-à-Vache.

⁷⁷AN, DXXV 41, 404. Registre d'ordres et décisions, petite habitation O'Sheill, 31 mars 1794. The other six were: Bartholo, Baptiste, Jacquet, Jean Créole, Thomas and Amant. DXXV-28, 288. Tableau des habitations séquestrées dans la Plaine-du-Fond . . . distribuées en sections par ordre du commissaire civil, petite habitation O'Sheill, 31 mars 1794.

Gilles Bénéch retained the positions they occupied in the Legion. Jacques Formon, the most uncompromising of the popular leaders, had already been court-martialled and shot for perpetuating insurrectionary activity and refusing to follow Rigaud's leadership.

This, then, was the republic's new army of black peasants and soldiers, and it was upon them that the government depended to sustain the war against the counter-revolutionary forces and their foreign allies, Britain and Spain, now in control of the greater part of the colony. The defense of San Domingo depended upon the black warriors, but without the arduous and constant labor of the agricultural workers, the government, as the commissioners realized, "would have neither the rations with which to feed the soldier nor the revenue with which to pay his salary."⁷⁸ If the attitudes, aspirations and activities of a considerable portion of the blacks in the South ran counter to the pressing economic necessities of the moment, they nevertheless were the direct product of slavery itself, and the new system of freedom, in spite of its incentives, had done little to change the conditions out of which these aspirations emerged.

⁷⁸AN, DXXV 44, 421. Les commissaires civils à Simonet, préposé de l'administration à Jacmel, Port-Républicain, 6 mai 1794.

CHAPTER VIII

FROM FREEDOM TO CIVIL WAR

By the spring of 1794, the military situation in the colony spelled near-total ruin for France. The black troops fighting under the banner of Spain in the North now controlled almost the entire province, while at the western extremity Môle St. Nicolas had fallen to the British. The only areas now left to France in the North were le Cap and Port-de-Paix, where Laveaux had established his headquarters in retreat. In the West, the British-occupied territories included the better part of that province, and by the end of June would include Port-au-Prince as well, while in the South, the British remained confined to the relatively isolated regions of Jérémie and Grande-Anse.

The survival of San Domingo as a French colony hinged directly upon the support and military allegiance of the black forces to the republican cause. Sonthonax' proclamation of emancipation in August of the previous year had done nothing to win over the mass of black troops under Jean-François and Biassou, and, with the exception of Toussaint who remained nevertheless with the Spanish, the letters of the civil commissioners to the black leaders, filled with promises of liberty and equality, fell on deaf ears. Earlier that summer, Toussaint had offered to join

Laveaux on condition that he accord full amnesty to the black rebel forces and officially recognize the freedom of the slaves. Upon Laveaux' refusal, Toussaint remained with Spain until he had received word of the news from France that the National Assembly had sanctioned the abolition of slavery in all of her colonies. With this guarantee, Toussaint abruptly abandoned the Spanish government, as well as his old comrades, Jean-François and Biassou, who now became his political enemies, to fight for France. Though he asked only that he retain his rank of colonel, Laveaux made him a brigade general. By June, the territories he had conquered for Spain, as well as four to five thousand well trained and loyal troops, were now under his command in the name of the republic. Among his chief officers were the intrepid Dessalines, Henri-Christophe, Paul Louverture, his brother, and Moïse, his adopted nephew. As Toussaint, they were all former slaves.¹

If the blacks in the North had a prominent and central figure like Toussaint, whose abilities of leadership on the battlefield were no less than those he exercised in politics,

¹In his book, Christophe: King of Haiti (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967), Hubert Cole, a British historian, strongly suggests that Christophe was actually born a free black and bases his arguments upon information concerning Christophe's origins in Vergniaud Leconte, Henri-Christophe dans l'histoire d'Haiti (Paris: Editions Berger-Sevrault, 1931), p. 1. An earlier version, that of the Haitian historian Pauléus Sannon, states that Christophe was indeed a free black before the revolution, but that he had purchased his own freedom while working at the Hôtel de la Couronne in le Cap. La guerre de l'indépendance (Port-au-Prince: Ché-raquit, 1925), p. 89. In either case, the evidence, it seems, remains inconclusive.

who could provide them with disciplined direction and a clear sense of their political goals, such was not the case in the West and the South.

In the West, the major administrative and military positions were held by the mulatto leaders, a significant portion of whom had already defected to the English side after general emancipation was proclaimed in the fall of 1793. Thus, St. Marc, Archaye and Mirebalais in the Artibonite valley, as well as Léogane and Grand-Goâve, in the southern section of the province, and the bay of Port-au-Prince all fell under British control. Rigaud and Bauvais remained staunchly republican, defending the interests of France and the freedom of the slaves, but they could count only upon the Legion of Equality for black support, while the mass of black warriors and insurgents in the West had organized themselves independently into separate maroon bands, each with its own chosen leader, usually African-born. In general, they distrusted the mulattoes, Bauvais and Rigaud notwithstanding.²

It was only with the greatest difficulty that Bauvais was able to enlist the services of a few of these maroon leaders, notably Alaou--African-born, a fervent voodoo adept and chief leader of over ten thousand troops throughout the

²Sonthonax' intention was to win over these maroons to the French side and, partly as a counter-weight to the Legion, now thoroughly devoted to the mulattoes, to bring them under the banner of France as a separate corps of national volunteers. Officially, however, they would still be under the command of Bauvais.

Cul-de-Sac plain.³ They maintained their camps in the mountains near the Spanish border, whence they remained at the same time in contact with agents of the Spanish government. By doing so, they sustained a covert neutrality which enabled them to obtain from both sides the arms and ammunition needed to defend an independent position.⁴ Already Hyacinthe, perhaps the most powerful and influential of the popular black leaders in the West, was in prison on suspicions of collaboration with the British, a charge which Sonthonax found groundless and from which he later exonerated Hyacinthe.⁵ However, his imprisonment only helped to reinforce the natural hesitancy and reticence of the maroon bands toward

³AN, DXXV 20, 196 and 197. Letters from Bauvais to Sonthonax, Croix-des-Bouquets, Jan. 1794 to 24 March 1794.

⁴AN, DXXV 20, 197. Bauvais, commandant militaire de la Croix-des-Bouquets au commissaire civil de la république, Croix-des-Bouquets, 28 fév. 1794. Madiou, Histoire d'Haïti, 1:264-65.

⁵AN, DXXV 42, 413. Sonthonax to Bauvais, Port-Republicain, 11 March 1794. DXXV 40, 403. Registre d'ordres et décisions. Decision of 8 March 1794. Thus, brought to trial on 13 August 1793, he was acquitted by Sonthonax on 8 March. The Intermediary Commission, established to replace the Colonial Assembly upon the arrival of the civil commissioners in September 1792, reversed the decision of Sonthonax on 9 April 1794 and ordered Hyacinthe, as well as Guyambois, also acquitted by Sonthonax, to be deported from the colony. DXXV 40, 403. Registre d'ordres et décisions. Decision of Intermediary Commission of 9 April 1794.

Colonel Malenfant, who knew Hyacinthe well, states that the mulattoes had laid a trap to eliminate him by sending black emissaries to request a rendezvous with them. When Hyacinthe arrived at the designated place, he was captured and shot. Malenfant, Des colonies, p. 75. Madiou, on the other hand, places the blame for Hyacinthe's assassination upon Dieudonné (see pp. 244-46 below). Histoire d'Haïti, 1:282.

openly and loyally embracing the French cause.⁶

During the months of January and February, Bauvais remained in close contact with Alaou who seemed, if hesitant and circumspect, nevertheless on the point of joining the republican army, and an interview was held between him and Sonthonax in Port-au-Prince on 9 February. Because of his association with Sonthonax, rumors began to spread among the mulatto troops that Sonthonax, who openly favored the blacks, had held this secret meeting with Alaou only to entrust him with the mission of assassinating Bauvais at Croix-des-Bouquets. That there were serious misunderstandings and differences between Alaou and Bauvais is certain; that Alaou wanted to assassinate him, however, was almost certainly a fabrication, and when Alaou and his troupe finally met with Bauvais in March, they were apprehensive and knew that something terrible would result. Their suspicions were confirmed when a group of armed mulattoes broke into Bauvais' office, killing Alaou and eight of his chief officers on the spot.⁷

The death of Alaou, the subsequent reversal of Sonthonax' acquittal of Hyacinthe by the Intermediary Commission, followed by Hyacinthe's assassination, left the insurgent

⁶AN, DXXV 20, 197. Bauvais, lieutenant-colonel de la Légion de l'Égalité et commandant militaire à la Croix-des-Bouquets au commissaire civil de la république, Croix-des-Bouquets, 1 fév. 1794.

⁷AN, DXXV 20, 197. Declaration of Bauvais, Croix-des-Bouquets, 27 March 1794, countersigned by officers of the Croix-des-Bouquets garrison.

black masses bitter, confused and betrayed.⁸ While the majority of the mulattoes in the West had opposed general emancipation and allied themselves with the British to safeguard their property and privileges, telling the blacks that their freedom was worthless, that France had no authority to abolish slavery, the mulatto leaders who remained loyal to the republic inspired little or no confidence in the African masses who time and again felt betrayed. What they did understand was that only they could permanently guarantee their own freedom; and for this they must remain armed.

By the end of May 1794, combined British and French émigré forces had captured Camp Bizoton and marched with arms on Port-au-Prince. Entirely defenseless, Sonthonax and Polverel saw no alternative but to capitulate. Escorted by Bauvais and a small detachment of black soldiers, they retreated to Jacmel on 4 June. A few days later a boat arrived from France carrying a decree for the arrest of the civil commissioners, passed in the National Convention on the initiative of two members of the Massiac Club.⁹

Before leaving, however, the civil commissioners had placed Rigaud in full administrative and military command of the South. Polverel specifically instructed him to lead and co-ordinate the insurgent bands of Africans who, now led by Dieudonné and Pompée, were still encamped in full force and

⁸ See p. 242, *ibid.* above.

⁹ It was, ironically, also on this boat that the decree of 4 February 1794 sanctioning the abolition of slavery finally arrived in the colony.

armed to defend their freedom.¹⁰ Apparently, Sonthonax had met with Dieudonné on the Nérette plantation during his retreat to Jacmel in June. In a purely symbolic gesture, he placed his commissioner's medallion around Dieudonné's neck, thus nominally delegating his powers to the African leader, reminding him that, "so long as you see mulattoes in your ranks, you will never be free."¹¹

By the end of the following year, Dieudonné and Pompée, at the head of some three to four thousand insurgent blacks, were in open armed rebellion against the authority of Rigaud and Bauvais. That Dieudonné interpreted Sonthonax' parting words and gesture to the letter may partially, but only superficially, explain Dieudonné's rebellion against Rigaud. After all, the bitter fact remained that Hyacinthe and Alaou were already dead, the latter having been cruelly assassinated by a mulatto faction.

As Dieudonné was now on the point of joining the British, Bauvais and Rigaud both tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to co-operate with them and to bring himself back in line with the republican cause which he had formerly embraced.¹² Finally, Rigaud summoned Toussaint to intervene

¹⁰ Letter from Polverel to Rigaud, Jacmel, 11 June 1794. Cited in full in Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:155-57; This author also states that Dieudonné was a lieutenant in Alaou's army and held his camp at Nérette (*ibid.*, 1:182), one of the several places specifically mentioned by Polverel in his letter to Rigaud, cited above.

¹¹ Related in Madiou, Histoire d'Haïti, 1:275.

¹² AN, DXXV-50, 481. Copie de la lettre datée de Léogane le 8 nivôse An 4, écrite par Rigaud et Bauvais, généraux de brigade commandant les Républicains.

and to use his influence as a black general to regain Dieudonné's loyalty. Dieudonné had explained his resentment and mistrust of the mulattoes in this way: if freedom and equality reigned in the North and in those parts of the West under Toussaint's authority, it was not so in the places where Rigaud and Bauvais commanded. He and his men were fighting them in order that equality might reign among all colors, but that the mulattoes did not want the blacks to be their equals. As for him, he was a good republican and loyal to France.¹³

When this was reported to Toussaint, the black general personally dictated a letter to Dieudonné, to be carried by three black envoys and read aloud to his assembled troops. The acuity of Toussaint's political observations, his profound confidence in the French republic, and the deep personal concern that he--a black like them--expressed in this letter, had produced such an effect upon the assembled masses that a group of them, led by Laplume, rose up and arrested Dieudonné. But, instead of going with Rigaud and Bauvais, they joined Toussaint with some three thousand

à Etienne Laveaux, général et Gouverneur de Saint-Domingue. Extrait d'une lettre du général de brigade Bauvais au général et Gouverneur Laveaux, Jacmel, 21 nivôse An 4. Extrait d'une lettre écrite par le général et Gouverneur Laveaux en date du 20 pluviôse An 4 à Pierre Dieudonné, commandant en chef au poste et camp Nérét.

¹³AN, DXXV 50, 481. Extrait d'une lettre du général de brigade Toussaint Louverture au général et Gouverneur Laveaux en date du 17 pluviôse An 4. Etienne Laveaux, général de division et Gouverneur de Saint-Domingue au Ministre de la Marine et des Colonies, le Cap, 20 pluviôse An 4. See also, Madiou, *Histoire d'Haïti*, 1:338-39.

men.¹⁴

The charges levelled by Dieudonné against Rigaud and Bauvais, however, were most apparent in the South. Here, Rigaud ruled with supreme political and military powers. Before leaving the colony, Polverel had, in effect, named Rigaud interim Governor-General of the South. In this capacity, the latter had built up a virtual military state under mulatto control, a state in which civil and municipal functions were exercised by the military and the military posts occupied by the mulattoes, while the black ex-slaves in the army rarely ever advanced beyond the rank of captain.¹⁵

For the plantation workers, Rigaud's system was but an intensified version of that set up by Polverel whose aim was to provide the smooth transition of the blacks from slavery to freedom without jeopardizing productivity levels. Under the pretext of repressing vagrancy, or marronage, the blacks were irrevocably bound to the same plantation and, if found elsewhere, were arrested and thrown into jail. The administration of the plantations was all but tyrannical, with no legal recourse for the laborers against an unfair or overly harsh punishment. Moreover, the sequestered plantations that had been abandoned or left vacant by the émigrés were sold almost without exception to mulatto proprietors or to those

¹⁴The full text of Toussaint's letter is cited in Schoelcher, La vie de Toussaint, pp. 135-39 and in Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:182-84.

¹⁵Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 4:247-48. Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:319-20. Schoelcher, La vie de Toussaint, pp. 203-04.

aspiring to become property owners. Plantation personnel generally tended to become the exclusive domain of the former affranchis whose military, political and numerical superiority over the remaining white colonists allowed them to supplant the former as the new ruling class in the South.¹⁶

In a letter to Polverel, written in October 1794, only three and a half months after the commissioner's departure, Rigaud summed up the state of affairs in the South:

The province . . . is tranquil and in a reasonably good state of defense. . . . Work is going well; your proclamations on agricultural production are having the full effect that you anticipated.¹⁷

If indeed the black laborers were, for the time being, back on the plantations and re-adjusting themselves to an orderly work routine, this state of tranquillity can, in part, be attributed to the military-political structure of the South and to the threat and use of force to constrain the workers. This new political and economic structure also enabled the South to maintain its army without additional external financing, to sustain its defense positions and to recapture Tiburon and Léogane from the British forces. But at the same time, the mulatto rulers used and extended Polverel's work codes--which defined the basis of the new plantation economy--as an instrument of black servitude and a basis

¹⁶ Cabon, Histoire d'Haiti, 3:322 and 4:84-86. See especially, Antoine Michel, La mission du général Hédouville (Port-au-Prince: La Presse, 1929), pp. 42ff. Also, Paul Moral, Le paysan haïtien: étude sur la vie rurale en Haïti (Paris: Maisonneuve et Larose, 1961), pp. 13-15.

¹⁷ Cited in Cabon, Histoire d'Haiti, 3:294.

from which to build a virtual mulatto oligarchy.

The last independent insurrectionary movement of the black workers during this period had occurred in April-May 1794, just prior to the forced departure of the civil commissioners. Under the leadership of Apollon, a lieutenant in the local militia at Petit-Goâve, the blacks on several plantations around the area had organized mass meetings to oppose an ordinance published by Faubert, a mulatto division commander of the Legion in the South. The ordinance concerned an aspect of the work code and had originally come from Polverel, but Faubert had rewritten it so as to make it harsher than Polverel had ever intended. Apollon knew this and made it known to the workers that it was a false proclamation. However, his real purpose in organizing these gatherings was to agitate the workers, using this issue as grounds to assassinate Faubert. As a popular leader, Apollon had been actively agitating for quite some time amongst those he was supposed to police. Polverel said of him that

. . . his spirit of domination and insubordination, his influence over the Africans and the misuse he has been making of that influence, the stockpiles of powder and cartridges that he had accumulated behind the backs of his superiors, prove that he had been contemplating armed rebellion for a long time.¹⁸

With the departure of the civil commissioners from

¹⁸In addition to Apollon, two black workers, Atity and Tausia were also arrested as active instigators who, knowing that the plot was to kill Faubert, approved of it and agitated amongst the other blacks to solicit their adherence. AN, DXXV 43, 418. Les commissaires civils à Figuière, faisant fonction de commissaire instructeur à St. Louis, Port-Républicain, 20 mai 1794.

the colony and the consequent consolidation of Rigaud's authority in the South, the indigenous protest movements of the black masses had markedly subsided. The basic explanation for this apparent absence of independent popular activity on a widespread or noticeable scale must lie in the particular conditions that distinguished the South from the rest of the colony.

Since the war with Britain, normal communication links between the North and the South had effectively been severed, thus leaving the province almost completely isolated from the centers of activity and agitation in the rest of the colony. By keeping the British forces at bay, from Tiburon at the east to Léogane at the west, Rigaud managed to preserve the greater part of the South from foreign occupation. These circumstances enabled him to assume and consolidate in the South a supreme authority that remained largely uncontested. As Garran-Coulon observed, ". . . it is doubtful that the authority of the Governor [Laveaux], residing in the North, would have been respected, even if the opportunities of recourse to his authority were available."¹⁹ By the same token, the blacks were left isolated from the course of events elsewhere in the colony.

While Diudonné and his troops were in open rebellion against Rigaud and Bauvais in the West, the mulattoes in the North were plotting to overthrow Laveaux and thereby allow Villate, the mulatto commander of the le Cap area, to replace

¹⁹Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 4:248.

him as Governor-General of the colony. Villate had been in full command of le Cap since the departure of the civil commissioners in July 1794. As the war situation had kept Laveaux in retreat at Port-de-Paix, it was not until October 1795 that he moved the seat of government back to le Cap. When he arrived with Perroud, the Treasurer, he put an end to the flagrant abuses the mulattoes had made of their authority, and freed a considerable number of blacks from the prisons.²⁰

The mulattoes, already uneasy over Laveaux' close association with Toussaint and the blacks, saw these measures as a direct threat to their assumed authority, cried tyranny and began mobilizing opposition to the Governor. Things finally came to a head and exploded on 20 March 1796. They arrested Laveaux and threw him into prison along with Perroud. Toussaint was informed of Laveaux' arrest through the vigilance and initiative of two black officers, Jean-Pierre Léveillé of the le Cap regiment, and a brigade colonel, Pierre-Michel, both of whom the municipality had tried to wig over.²¹

²⁰ Schoelcher, La vie de Toussaint, pp. 156 and 160-61. Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:188-89.

²¹ AN, DXXV 45, 422. La municipalité de la ville et banlieu du Cap en séance le 30 ventôse An 4 au citoyen Pierre-Michel, chef de brigade commandant au Haut-du-Cap. Pierre-Michel aux citoyens maire et officiers municipaux, Haut-du-Cap, 30 ventôse An 4. La municipalité du Cap en séance le 1 germinal An 4 aux citoyens Jean-Pierrot, commandant général au Port-François, Barthélemy et Thomas, commandants militaires au Limbé, Pierre-Michel, commandant au Haut-du-Cap, Joseph Flaville, commandant militaire et autres chefs de l'extérieur. Also, Extrait des registres de la municipalité de la ville et banlieu du Cap, séance du conseil général de la commune du 1 germinal An 4. See Ch. 7. p. 201.

Faced with the threat of some ten thousand black troops under Toussaint's command, the municipality released Laveaux and Perroud, but Villate refused to concede authority to the Governor, while his men tried to provoke Laveaux's assassination by telling the blacks that the Governor had ships in the harbor filled with chains to put them back into slavery. Toussaint remained master of the situation and foiled their plots at every point. It was by now clear that he and his army were the strongest force in the colony. More than that, he held the undivided confidence of the black masses wherever he presented himself. Laveaux realized this, too, and proclaimed Toussaint lieutenant to the Governor.²²

In all likelihood, the ordinary black worker in the South had never even heard of Toussaint or knew of him by name only, but knew little or nothing about him. Their own leaders were by now serving as regional agricultural inspectors or as active soldiers in the Legion and, as part of the army in the South, were devoted to Rigaud and their mulatto superiors. The Legion itself was organized into four divisions of roughly twelve hundred men each and, with the single exception of Jean-Cécile, all of the division commanders were mulattoes.²³

However harsh the inequalities of Rigaud's regime, the

²² Michel, Mission, p. 35. Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:193. See in particular, James, The Black Jacobins, pp. 171-72.

²³ Madiou, Histoire d'Haïti, 1:478.

mulatto leader did succeed in keeping several ports open and free from foreign interference, thus permitting the South to sustain its commercial relations with the United States and other neutral countries and, at the same time, to provide a market for the crops produced by the black laborers and allocated to them as their portion of plantation revenues. Up to now, the South had remained for the most part unaffected by the power struggles which beset the North and relatively untouched by the treasonable activities of the mulattoes and whites who had delivered the greater part of the West to the British.

Under these circumstances, the popular activity of the black masses had effectively subsided and did not resurface until the summer of 1796. In France, Sonthonax had been tried and triumphantly acquitted of the charges brought against him by the colonists of the Massiac Club. By October 1795, the National Convention had been dissolved and replaced by two elected Councils and the Directory which sent as its agents to San Domingo a new civil commission composed of five members, among them Sonthonax, who carried far greater authority than any other.²⁴

The main purpose of the commission was to survey the administration and application of French law in the colony and thereby check the alarming tendencies among the mulattoes.

²⁴The other four were: Roume, who was placed in charge of Spanish San Domingo; Raimond, the mulatto spokesman for the affranchis in Paris at the very beginning of the revolution; Giraud and Leblanc.

toward political independence from national authority. One of the first measures taken by the commission upon its arrival in May 1796 was to open an official investigation of the attempted coup d'état of March; Villate was immediately arrested and orders issued for his deportation. However, Sonthonax was convinced that the origins and ramifications of the coup extended equally into the South, where the mulattoes held supreme power to the exclusion of both blacks and whites. Although incontrovertible proof could not be found, Pinchinat was strongly suspected as the chief instigator of the movement to overthrow Laveaux.

The civil commission therefore sent to the South three delegates, Kerverseau, Rey and Leborgne, the latter a mulatto, with a mandate to investigate any possible links there with the mulatto coup in the North. Desfourneaux, a fourth delegate, was sent as military attaché to inspect the troops and to make proposals for the reorganization of the army in the South. In addition, the delegation was given the task of surveying the administration of the South and providing for its replacement by a constitutional regime that would establish racial equality and place civil authority back in the hands of local and provincial magistrates. The delegates had also been given a specific mandate to arrest Pinchinat and send him to le Cap to account for his activities during his previous stay in that city.

Sonthonax could not have chosen four persons as politically inept to carry out such a delicate mission. Before

arriving at les Cayes to be received by Rigaud, the delegates began agitating amongst the black workers, reminding them that they were free and yet still oppressed by their mulatto rulers. They told the same to the black soldiers, emphasizing that they were kept in inferior ranks by the mulattoes. According to the report written by Kerverseau and Leborgne, the plantation workers showed the delegates the cachots that were still used as a form of punishment for recalcitrant workers.²⁵ When the delegation demolished a cachot on one of the Laborde plantations, Rigaud wrote to Raimond, stating that

. . . this prison served to punish workers who abandoned their work for a life of brigandage . . . I am not insinuating that it was wrong for the delegates to have abolished this house of correction, but the manner in which they did it made the workers understand that there were no longer any restrictions against those whom it pleased to become idle.²⁶

If the workers no longer openly protested the conditions of their existence under Rigaud's regime through organized or armed movements, the letter to Raimond does indicate, however, that a certain degree of worker discontent, and even of marronage, still existed in 1796. Why, otherwise, had Rigaud himself not abolished the cachots that were supposed to have been abolished along with slavery?

²⁵Schoelcher, La vie de Toussaint, p. 204.

²⁶Lettre confidentielle du Général Rigaud au citoyen Julien Raymond, commissaire du gouvernement français, les Cayes, 29 messidor An 4. Cited in full in Edmond Bonnet, Souvenirs historiques de Guy Joseph Bonnet (Paris: A. Durand, 1864), pp. 449-51. The extract from the letter that is presented in Schoelcher (p. 205) is incorrect and rather misleading.

As the delegates arrived at Camp Périn, just outside the Plaine-du-Fond, they excited the black soldiers to the point where the latter imprisoned their superior officer.²⁷ And when they arrived in les Cayes and were shown the prisons, they found only two mulatto prisoners out of nine hundred-- the rest being either black or white.²⁸ They immediately set out to dismantle the entire structure of the government as it stood, in addition to proposing a total reorganization of the army. As they wasted no time in carrying out the instructions given them, the abrupt manner in which they did so could only be received by the mulattoes as a direct provocation. They were bitter over the deportation of Villate and even more outraged at the orders to arrest Pinchinat who, upon learning of them, had fled. To add to it all, the delegates unscrupulously and indecently conducted their private affairs in public.

Tensions and agitation continued to build among the mulattoes who, on the one hand humiliated and provoked by the conduct of the delegation, saw, on the other, the developing threat to their political power as the delegates high-handedly executed their instructions. So, to divert attention from the measures being taken by the delegation, Desfourneaux ordered an expedition against the British at Grande-Anse, an expedition in which Rigaud would also be

²⁷Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 2:10.

²⁸Report of Kerverseau and Leborgne to the civil commission, in Schoelcher, La vie de Toussaint, p. 204.

given a command. As it turned out to be a drastic failure, Desfourneaux blamed the defeat on the légionnaires and upon returning to les Cayes arrested Gavanon, the Treasurer of the South, as well as Lefranc, military commander at St. Louis, both mulattoes. As Lefranc was being taken to the les Cayes harbor, he managed to elude his captors and join with a group of légionnaires along the route. Giving a call to arms, they marched on to take cover at the house of Augustin Rigaud, the general's brother. From there, they rang the alarm and were joined by the les Cayes garrison and their mulatto supporters from all parts of the city who together took over the two forts along the shore. Armed insurrection had now begun, and it was led by the chief political and military leaders of the South against French authority.

Bauvais, provisionally in command of les Cayes, intervened as negotiator and tried to achieve a temporary reconciliation between the rebels and the French delegates. The mulattoes refused to listen and said they would only speak to Rigaud who at this time was still encamped at Tiburon. During the night, Augustin Rigaud left the fort to call to arms the blacks of the plain, the latter having already been alerted of some impending danger by three cannon shots discharged as a signal from one of the forts. To mobilize their support, the mulattoes and their black allies in the Legion were telling the workers that the delegates were there as agents of the European-born French to suppress the

mulatto caste and restore slavery.²⁹

By now, the insurrection was in full force as the mulattoes, the légionnaires, and a considerable number of blacks from the plantations began systematically massacring the white property owners and city dwellers, burning their property, pillaging and ransacking their stores. The whites, naturally, had welcomed the delegates as "liberators." Even those blacks known to have supported the delegation were not spared. In the midst of all this, Desfourneaux and Rey fled for their lives and managed to escape safely to Spanish San Domingo, now under the jurisdiction of the civil commissioner, Roume. Leborgne and Kerverseau, under close protection by Bauvais, remained.

Rigaud, the only person capable of restoring order, was not there. Finally, the remaining delegates agreed to summon Rigaud who had secretly been informed of the events by emissaries of Lefranc. Leaving Tiburon with his division of five to six hundred soldiers, Rigaud summoned the blacks on the plantations along the way and especially those of the Plaine-des-Cayes. By the time Rigaud entered les Cayes, his combined forces were three to four thousand strong.³⁰ His presence, however, only seemed to intensify the killings, the pillaging and the incendiary activities of

²⁹Report of the civil commission to the Directory, in Michel, Mission, p. 63.

³⁰AN, DXXV 45, 427. Joint declaration of citizens Sental, captain of La Soutien, and Gernigon, Santo-Domingo, 6 vendémiaire An 5.

the rebels. On the day of his arrival, sixty more persons were killed.³¹

Totally incapable of reasserting their authority, the remaining delegates finally authorized Rigaud to adopt whatever measures he deemed necessary to bring an end to the chaos and destruction. With this carte blanche, he proclaimed he was taking over the reins of government in the South until further instructions from France. When all was over, close to three hundred persons, the majority of them whites who had sided with the delegation, had been killed and their property destroyed.³²

A few points should be made here concerning the participation of the black laborers in this revolt. First, aside from those in the Legion, the insurrection was neither organized nor was it led by the blacks. Themselves unaware of the specific political purpose of the delegates' mission, they were left vulnerable to the agitations and instigations perpetuated by both sides. While the delegates told them the mulattoes were their oppressors, the mulattoes were convincing them that the delegates came to restore slavery. Out of this confusion, most of them opted to support the mulattoes in what they believed to be a defense of their freedom and thereby unknowingly served the particular interests of Rigaud and mulatto rule. In the North, Toussaint

³¹Ibid. Also, Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 2:13.

³²See Michel, Mission, p. 59.

had put an end to the base intrigues of the mulatto rebels who tried to use the "return to slavery" argument to gain black support; here in the South, there were no independent black leaders of Toussaint's stature and influence to make them understand exactly where their own interests lay in the midst of this power struggle. When Kerverseau and Leborgne left, Rigaud reinstated his own people in office, reduced the power of the municipalities to that of merely certifying the civil status of individuals, and placed political authority back into the hands of the military apparatus.

Although Rigaud and the mulattoes of the South had been provoked and humiliated by the actions of the delegation, he and those who led the insurrection had nonetheless committed a serious act of rebellion against the authority of France. The civil commission in le Cap condemned as leaders and chief instigators of the revolt both the Rigaud brothers, Lefranc, Pinchinat, as well as the municipal auditor and another mulatto military commander. Upon learning of the les Cayes insurrection, the Directory specifically excluded from amnesty those who had been designated by the commission as the principal leaders. The Directory did not, however, formally remove Rigaud from office. Thus he remained in power and the social inequalities of his regime kept virtually intact for yet another four years until the civil war between the South and the forces under Toussaint would irrevocably seal his doom.

The events leading up to that fratricidal war involve

a long and tangled series of political and diplomatic manoeuvring on all sides and can only be dealt with here rather summarily.

By the end of the summer of 1796, primary electoral assemblies were formed in accordance with the Constitution of the Year 3 to elect colonial representatives to the new legislative body in France. The outcome of those elections, facilitated by Toussaint, secured a seat for both Laveaux and Sonthonax as deputies to the French legislature. While Laveaux left for France in October, Sonthonax had decided to remain in the colony to continue exercising his functions as civil commissioner rather than assume his duties as deputy in France.

Having recaptured the Mirebalais valley from the British, Toussaint was rapidly proving himself a formidable force with which Sonthonax would have to contend in the imminent power struggles for which the situation now opened the way. As Rigaud and the mulattoes were still strongly entrenched in the South, Sonthonax needed a counter-weight against any further threat on their part to eventually take control of the colony. To solidify his own position and to reinforce his ties with Toussaint, Sonthonax conferred upon the black leader the title of commander-in-chief of the army in San Domingo, a post left vacant since the departure of Laveaux. Without knowing it, however, he was playing directly into the hands of Toussaint who kept to himself his own plans and who kept a keen eye on the political developments in the colony and abroad.

Even before Toussaint's nomination as commander-in-chief in May 1797, Sonthonax had begun prodding Toussaint on the question of independence, proposing that they unite, chase out the white colonists and declare the island independent. Toussaint repelled Sonthonax' treasonable advances, each time with mounting impatience, and finally arranged to have him sent back to France to assume his role as deputy. Toussaint knew of the direction in which the revolution in France was now going, of the growing strength of the counter-revolution and of the steps that certain colonists were taking toward the eventual restoration of slavery. While the Directory itself had no intentions of restoring slavery, it would not, on the other hand, remain forever. In the struggles that lay ahead, Toussaint probably saw Sonthonax as a cumbersome accessory; he bore him no ill will but made it clear that he must leave. With Roume in Spanish San Domingo, the civil commission was now effectively reduced to one member, Raimond, the other two members having already left, and the Directory did not send its official agent until March 1798.

During this time, most of British-occupied San Domingo had been reconquered by Toussaint's army in the West and by Rigaud's in the South, at Jérémie. By March, Toussaint had already entered into negotiations with general Maitland, the commander of the British army in San Domingo, for the total evacuation of the British. Full amnesty was accorded to all French citizens in the occupied areas who had not served in the ranks of the British army, to all black troops who had

been enrolled into the British army, whether by force of arms or by the force of circumstances, as well as the émigrés who had abandoned the British prior to the opening of negotiations.³³

This was the political and military situation when the Directory's agent, general Hédouville, arrived in the colony on 28 March 1798.³⁴ As official representative of the French government, his mission was to promulgate the laws of the legislative body, to entrench respect for French national authority, to prevent abuses against the freedom of the blacks and to strictly enforce French law against the émigrés. His functions, however, were to remain purely civil. In addition, he was given the authority to arrest Rigaud--if he deemed it necessary.³⁵

But it was no longer Rigaud that the French bourgeoisie feared; it was Toussaint and the blacks. Both Sonthonax and Kerverseau had delivered reports to the French government about Toussaint. Sonthonax falsely accused him before the Council of Five Hundred of having fallen under the influence of the counter-revolutionary priests and the émigrés and denounced his coalition with Rigaud in spite of the latter's rebellion against the French delegation. While Kerverseau praised Toussaint's remarkable abilities, he nonetheless

³³Michel, Mission, pp. 179-80.

³⁴Having gone first to confer with Roume in Spanish San Domingo, Hédouville did not arrive in le Cap until some time in April.

³⁵Michel, Mission, p. 79.

warned the Minister of the Marine that Toussaint

. . . would support any delegate of the government, push him to take actions for which he [Toussaint] would reap all the advantages if they succeeded and, if they failed, would again turn them to his advantage and his ambitions by virtue of the disfavor they would cast upon national authority.³⁶

Actually, such an observation was not too far from the truth. Yet, Toussaint did not create the situations; he took advantage of them and mastered them, and at this point had no ambition to sever the colony from France.

Earlier, however, he had written to the Directory warning France of the consequences should ever France succumb to the machinations of the counter-revolutionary elements that sought only to restore slavery and thereby revoke the very principles upon which the revolution had been built. It would, in Toussaint's words, ". . . be to attempt the impossible."³⁷ And with these words, he fully embodied the will, the determination and the driving force of the black masses to be and to remain free. Hédouville would have to find some way of either removing the black general altogether or of rendering innocuous the authority and prestige that he now wielded.

After receiving Hédouville in le Cap, Toussaint immediately set off for Port-au-Prince, met with Rigaud to inform him of the agent's arrival, and the two of them, mutually

³⁶Cited in *ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁷This letter is reprinted in part in Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint*, 3:34-36. See James, *The Black Jacobins*, p. 194, n. 11 (Toussaint's emphasis).

agreeing to support one another against any intrigues that Hédouville might attempt, then rode back to le Cap to confer with him. At this point, the agent tried to win Rigaud over to his side. Overwhelming him with high esteem and government favor, he proposed they unite their efforts to remove Toussaint from his position of supreme authority.

Profoundly, but in many ways blindly loyal to France, Rigaud allowed himself to acquiesce and fell into the trap. He could not see that Hédouville was using him to defeat Toussaint only to turn on him afterwards. If he felt that such a coalition would favor his own political ambitions, Rigaud did not realize that it would also lead to his ruin.

Hédouville carefully nurtured a series of humiliating insinuations, unjust accusations, political, diplomatic and even outright personal insults against Toussaint, causing him finally to submit his resignation to the Directory. Hédouville neither formally accepted nor rejected the resignation, but systematically began to replace black troops with white ones along the coast, arranged with the Directory to have Toussaint replaced by three European generals, issued a decree tying the black workers to the same plantation for six to nine years, and by so doing provoked tensions and unrest to the point of driving the blacks to near insurrection.

In the southern area around Petit-Goâve, the black laborers began to form illegal gatherings, as they had in May 1794, this time to protest Hédouville's regulations

which they saw as a practical step toward slavery. As could be expected, Faubert was incapable of containing them, and Rigaud had to be called in to persuade them to return to work.³⁸

Finally, when a simple quarrel broke out in the North between two soldiers of the 5th regiment commanded by Moïse, Hédouville played his last card and lost. He arranged to have Moïse--the idol of the black workers and Toussaint's own adopted nephew--arrested and to place a black municipal official in command. As the official began fulfilling his mandate, Moïse staunchly resisted; the national guard opened fire, forcing Moïse to escape. As soon as Toussaint got word of what was happening, he ordered Dessalines to march on le Cap with his troops and place Hédouville under arrest, while Moïse had swiftly called to arms the black plantation workers throughout the plain. Hédouville was finished and, in spite of a few final blundering attempts at reconciliation, was forced to leave the colony, taking with him a great number of his functionaries.

Prior to his departure, however, Hédouville had taken care to plant yet another seed of contention between Toussaint and Rigaud, one which would instrumentally contribute to the outbreak of civil war. In a secret letter to Rigaud, he had officially absolved Rigaud from Toussaint's authority as commander-in-chief and reinstated Léogane and Jacmel under Rigaud's jurisdiction as commander-in-chief of the South.³⁹ For the time being, however, Rigaud did not insist

³⁸Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 2:114-15.

³⁹Ibid., 2:127.

upon the integration of these areas into his jurisdiction and remained within the limits of his command as far as Miragoâne. At the same time Toussaint knew that Hédouville intended to return to the colony, this time with troops. And if such were the case, he would no longer be able to count on Rigaud who, despite the tremendous services he had already rendered and the sincerity of his principles in favor of emancipation, would inevitably welcome a French expeditionary force to solidify his own precarious position in the colony. If control of the colony thus fell to Rigaud and the mulatto élite, even under the auspices of French authority, it would mean the end of the black revolution and all that it was still striving to achieve.

It was from this state of affairs, kindled from the very beginning by the machinations of Hédouville, that relations between Toussaint and Rigaud degenerated to the point where their differences had become irreconcilable. The bitterness between the two leaders was often expressed in racial terms, but it was not because Toussaint was black and Rigaud a mulatto. Such feelings stemmed from the material foundations and the corresponding social relationships of the class and caste to which each belonged. Sannon very aptly put the case this way:

Toussaint did not detest the mulattoes any more than Rigaud hated the blacks . . . [but] each of them needed the united force of a party, sustained by the force of commonly shared attitudes, in a society where the parties were⁴⁰ confounded with the classes and the classes with color.

⁴⁰Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 2:141.

Rigaud, for his part, cast his lot and that of his people with the French bourgeoisie. By now mulattoes were leaving from all points of the colony to coalesce around Rigaud, and Toussaint began reorganizing and strengthening his own army.

It was Rigaud who made the first move by publicly declaring that he was taking over command of Léogane and Jacmel as authorized by Hédouville, even though Roume had rescinded that mandate nearly six months before. Two of Rigaud's men precipitously led an attack on Petit-Goâve and took over command by force of arms. Civil war had now burst out.

During the course of this fratricidal war which lasted for over a year, the black masses of the South showed few signs of rallying to support Rigaud. If in the North the immediate mass mobilization of the black workers under Moïse, combined with Dessalines' march on le Cap had saved Toussaint and forced the departure of Hédouville, any such direct participation and decisive intervention of the masses in the South was singularly absent. Only during the first moments of the war following the attack on Petit-Goâve by the southern army, did the blacks in the region around Léogane rise up in support of Rigaud or, as Adolphe Cabon put it, "perhaps more precisely, against Toussaint and the northern troops."⁴¹ Already Rigaud had sent emissaries to penetrate the areas around Port-Républicain and the Cul-de-Sac plain in an attempt to create unrest and rebellion amongst the black workers. His only arm was to spread word

⁴¹Cabon, Histoire d'Haiti, 4:51.

that Toussaint was a traitor, that he had sold out to the British and would lead them back into slavery. Effectively, insurrections did break out in the hills around Léogane and Grand-Goâve,⁴² but they never developed into any sort of organized, widespread or co-ordinated movement.

During the first campaigns, the mulatto forces fought with tremendous vigor and optimism, pushing onward to capture Grand-Goâve and then Jacmel, holding out at Jacmel against Dessalines' troops and a total military blockade for nearly five months before starvation forced them to evacuate across enemy lines. Bauvais, who could have made all the difference in the outcome of this struggle had he pronounced himself vigorously in favor of Toussaint, thus leaving Rigaud politically defenseless, could not bring himself to take sides. During the siege of Jacmel, he remained faithful to his own inner principles and moral standards, gave up his command and left for France. Rigaud, for his part, remained noticeably inactive as he waited for troops from France that never came.

After the fall of Jacmel, the southern army was left in near shambles and, with no clear sense of direction or strategy, fought desperately against Dessalines' advancing troops who forced them successively into retreat. Already the town of St. Louis had deserted Rigaud's cause by welcoming Dessalines and his officers, offering a banquet at which

⁴²Ibid.

officers of both armies began fraternizing. At Miragoâne, the black plantation workers refused to follow Rigaud's army into retreat.⁴³

When Rigaud received word of the reception accorded to the conquering troops, he suspected a plot to deliver him personally into enemy hands, rode back to les Cayes and, in a last desperate effort, rang the tocsins as a signal and call to arms of the black laborers throughout the Plaine-des-Cayes. No one came forward to answer the call.

If in 1796 they had come forward in great numbers to help drive out the delegation sent by Sonthonax to reorganize the South, they had also been persuaded by the mulattoes that the delegates were there as a threat to their freedom. In spite of the harshness of his regime, he could still mobilize support in his favor. This time, they had deserted him altogether. They had no reason to support a man who was leading them into disaster, causing them to suffer the privations of a war in which, as far as they were concerned, they had no apparent stake.

The political intrigues of Hédouville, the resulting conflicts, power struggle and, finally, civil war between Toussaint and Rigaud did not touch them directly. The outcome of that tangled and tortuous series of events did. And when France's expeditionary army landed in the colony two years later, they were the first to rise up against it in

⁴³Ibid., 4:56. Madiou, Histoire d'Haïti, 2:38.

the South, using the same methods and guerilla tactics they had used to win their freedom during the early years of 1792-93.

CHAPTER IX

CIVIL WAR TO INDEPENDENCE

Toward the beginning of July 1802, roughly five months after the arrival of the French expeditionary forces, the popular movement in the South had re-emerged, this time with clear and concise objectives. The French had come to restore slavery, and once the black masses realized this, their resistance proved to be the driving force in what became for them a war for independence. However, before discussing the role they played in defeating the French and in contributing to national independence, it is necessary to examine briefly the sequence of events leading up to that struggle.

If the necessity of defeating Rigaud was largely dictated by Toussaint's apprehensions of the emerging political situation in France and the very real possibility that France would send an expeditionary army to the colony, the same considerations made it imperative that he also bring Spanish San Domingo under his control.¹ Using as a pretext

¹Although ceded to France in 1795 under the terms of the Treaty of Bâle, the French government had not yet officially undertaken the administration of the Spanish colony. Thus in 1799, with Rigaud still in control in the South, an expeditionary army landing simultaneously and without resistance at these two points could easily encircle the rest of French San Domingo and thereby attempt to force Toussaint's defeat.

the fact that Spain had already reopened the slave trade and that Spanish colonists were now stealing French blacks from the bordering regions to sell them as slaves in the eastern colony, Toussaint requested permission from Roume to take possession of Spanish San Domingo in accordance with France's treaty rights. Roume of course refused, and so for the time being, Toussaint left the matter alone.

At about the same time, he sent to France colonel Vincent, a white officer and close friend, to obtain government approval of his position in the civil war against Rigaud. By the time Vincent arrived in France, the Directory had fallen and was superceded by the consular regime of Napoleon Bonaparte, to whom the "bourgeois republic" now looked to strengthen its control. Instead of writing directly to Toussaint, Bonaparte made his intentions known by way of a new commission composed of Vincent, Julien Raimond and general Michel. In addition to a confirmation of Toussaint's rank as commander-in-chief and Governor, the commissioners brought with them a proclamation signed by the consuls, informing the population that the old Constitution of the Year 3 was now abolished. According to France's new constitution, the colonies would henceforth be governed by a set of "special laws" that would take into account the particularities of each colony. What this meant was that San Domingo would no longer be represented in a French legislative body, nor would she be subject to the same laws as those governing French citizens in France. Napoleon took caution, however, to include in the proclamation a carefully worded statement

to the effect that, as to their freedom, the blacks had no need to worry. The commissioners did not arrive until May 1800.

In the meanwhile, Toussaint concentrated his efforts on terminating the civil war in the South and arranged for Rigaud to leave the colony and stay temporarily in France. Following his departure, Toussaint re-established the former limits of the South at Miragoâne and divided the province into four military districts, each to be commanded by an officer of his army.² He had also proclaimed a general amnesty for all who had taken sides with Rigaud to fight him, with the exception of Pétion, an outstanding mulatto officer who had deserted from the ranks of Bauvais during the civil war, and three others. In spite of his amnesty and insistence upon drawing a curtain over the past, horrible acts of reprisal were committed by the lesser officers of the occupying army, for which both Christophe and Toussaint took their share of the blame.³ Dessalines, however, displayed a remarkable sense of humanity and equity as his troops marched through the South and saved a good number of Rigaud's

²The four districts--les Cayes, Jérémie, Tiburon and Anse-à-Veau--were commanded respectively by Laplume, Dommage, Desravines and Mamzelle, the former independent maroon leader of Bahoruco.

³Popular rumor had it that some ten thousand mulattoes were assassinated in this manner. Lacroix, *Mémoires*, 1:394. Cabon, *Histoire d'Haïti*, 4:60. Beaubrun Ardouin, *Etudes sur l'histoire d'Haïti*, ed. F. Dalencourt, 11 vols. (Port-au-Prince: 1948), 4:livre 5, p. 58. The figure was a gross exaggeration. On this point, see Sannon, *Histoire de Toussaint*, 2:203.

men from certain death.⁴

Yet as chief military commander, and therefore chief agricultural inspector of the South, Dessalines ruled over the black laborers with an iron hand and often dealt out punishments to undisciplined workers that were far harsher than those they had ever suffered under Rigaud. He had neither the education nor the political insights of a Toussaint, nor did he have the worldly cosmopolitan manners of a Christophe, both of whom as slaves had enjoyed relatively privileged positions in colonial slave society. He still bore the indelible scars of the whip and the horrible memories of his life as a slave. Unencumbered by any knowledge of or any desire to imitate the refinements of European culture and thought, he spoke to the blacks directly and clearly. At the end of the civil war, he told his troops they still had two more wars ahead of them, and these wars would be crucial. The one was against the Spanish for possession of the eastern colony, the other against France ". . . who, once she has finished with her enemies, will try to put you back into slavery. And these two wars--we are capable of winning them."⁵

In this sense, it was Dessalines and not Toussaint who embodied the inarticulate, but deep-rooted and persistent drive of the masses toward individual independence and

⁴Ibid., 2:203. Madiou, Histoire d'Haïti, 2:47.

⁵Letter from an émigré colonist to Hédouville, Philadelphia, 15 Dec. 1800. Cited in Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 2:202.

self-determination and who later directed this instinctive impulse, making of it a political platform and an ideology of national independence. Toussaint, going his own way, was no doubt setting the groundwork for eventual independence, but the road he was travelling was taking him farther and farther away, not only from those under his command, but from the greater mass of black laborers upon whom the productive capacities and the future of the colony depended.

With the South now firmly under control and integrated into his administrative system, Toussaint then undertook his expedition into Spanish San Domingo. Just prior to the commissioners' arrival in May, thousands of black workers in the North had risen in armed rebellion, marched on le Cap and forced Roume to authorize Toussaint's expedition to put an end to the ignominious slave trade. His negotiations with the Spanish having failed at that time, Toussaint now ordered Moïse to march into Spanish San Domingo at the head of ten thousand troops to take possession by force. So by January 1801, the Spanish Governor had ceded the territory to Toussaint.

Not only was he the supreme authority, he was now the only authority in the colony, and to render his achievements permanent, he called for the formation of electoral assemblies to choose deputies to a central assembly that should write a constitution for the whole of the island. The constitution was promulgated in July, months before Vincent had even arrived in France with the printed copy given him by Toussaint for Bonaparte's sanction. The abolition of slavery

was, of course, reconfirmed and consecrated in law; and in recognition of his great services to the colony, Toussaint was named Governor for life with the power to name his own successor. All laws would be proposed by the Governor and merely executed by the Assembly; although San Domingo was to remain a part of France's colonial empire, the constitution left no room whatsoever for a French representative in the colony's administrative structure. Thus, while remaining attached to France, the relationship of the colony to the metropolis would be almost as that of two equal powers.⁶

The constitution was not in itself a declaration of independence, but for Bonaparte, it was dangerously close to being one. His immediate reaction upon Vincent's presentation of the constitution was violent: Toussaint was no more than a rebel slave who had to be removed, whatever the cost. First, there was his armed entry into Spanish San Domingo, and now this..

Actually, Toussaint was burning the candle at both ends. He no longer took the time or had the patience to explain his motives to his own people. He allowed them to go on believing that he had occupied Spanish San Domingo to stop the slave trade rather than, primarily, to establish a buffer against France. He had invited the white émigrés back to San Domingo because the colony needed capital

⁶The full text of this constitution is reproduced in Colonel A. Nemours, Histoire militaire de la guerre d'indépendance de Saint-Domingue, ed. Berger-Levrault, 2 vols. (Paris: 1925), 1:98-112.

investment, but the black workers were left bewildered; they had fought the white colonists to abolish slavery. Why should they have to continue to labor for their former masters? Toussaint had passed a law prohibiting the sale of land in lots smaller than fifty carreaux, thus making it nearly impossible for the black workers to become owners of property and of their own labor.⁷ Toward the end of October 1801, they rose up against this system in armed revolt throughout most of the North in the districts of Dondon, Marmelade, Plaisance, Limbé and Port-Margot--the traditional centers of revolutionary activity. The victims were the white colonists, and the leading spokesman for the revolt was Moïse who, as agricultural inspector for the North, had let it be known that he opposed his uncle's regime for its constraints against the aspirations of the workers. It has never been proven that Moïse actually organized the revolt, but as the blacks shouted "Long live Moïse" while they killed white colonists, he was held personally responsible. Toussaint had him shot by the military without a trial.⁸ By executing Moïse, he was not just eliminating a political rival; worse still, he dealt a severe blow to all

⁷Moral, Le paysan haïtien, p. 13. Kenneth Lacerte, "The Evolution of Land and Labor in the Haitian Revolution: 1791-1820," pp. 7-8. (Typewritten.) A carreau equalled one hundred paces of 3 1/2 feet square, or 3.3 acres. See *ibid.* and Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:vi.

⁸For discussions concerning the material and ideological foundations of this revolt and of the further implications of Moïse's execution, see Cabon, Histoire d'Haïti, 4:201ff. James, The Black Jacobins, pp. 276ff. Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 3:25ff.

that Moïse represented for the black masses and for their future as a free people.

Moïse was executed in mid-November; in France, the preparations for the anticipated expedition had been completed. On 31 October, Bonaparte handed to general Leclerc, his brother-in-law, a set of special instructions outlining each stage of the expedition that he would command. The first stage was to last no more than fifteen to twenty days, during which time Leclerc would win over the black generals with assurances of his peaceful intentions and good will. Leclerc would tell them that the twelve thousand European troops--the elite of the French army--had merely come to protect the colony, preserve its peace and tranquillity and suppress any rebel elements that might emerge. This would then enable the expeditionary forces to land and take possession of all major port cities. During the second stage, they would wage an unremitting war against the black army generals, in particular Toussaint, Dessalines and Moïse, then still believed to be alive. This was to break the morale of the blacks and leave them leaderless. By the third stage, the entire black population would be disarmed, forced back onto the plantations and the groundwork laid for the restoration of slavery.⁹ Napoleon's instructions relating to this last phase were explicit: "Do not allow any

⁹V.-E. Leclerc, Lettres du général Leclerc, commandant en chef de l'armée de Saint-Domingue en 1802 (Paris: Leroux, 1937), Appendice I, pp. 265-74. Notes pour servir aux instructions à donner au capitaine-général Leclerc, Paris, 9 brumaire An 10, signé, le Premier Consul: Buonaparte.

blacks having held a rank above that of captain to remain in the island,"¹⁰ The whole operation, barring any unforeseen difficulties, would take roughly three months from the first attack.

What Napoleon could not see was that the blacks of San Domingo were no longer what they were in the days of slavery. For ten bloody and strife-ridden years they had fought to obtain and to preserve their freedom. That revolution that they began in 1791 had transformed them; they were hardened; as soldiers, they were far more experienced and disciplined; above all, they were no longer slaves. Whatever the forces ranged against them, any attempt to restore slavery was doomed to fail.

On 2 February 1802, Leclerc arrived in le Cap harbor with a squadron of five thousand troops, almost a half of the entire expeditionary force. After some hesitation, Christophe, in command of le Cap, refused to allow the troops to land without orders from Toussaint. Christophe requested a forty-eight-hour delay. Leclerc refused, sent back a letter greatly exaggerating the forces at his disposal, charging Christophe with rebellion and holding him personally responsible for whatever would happen. When Leclerc did land, le Cap was little more than a pile of ashes. The city had been evacuated, all of the main government buildings burned out and the gunpowder factory blown up. It was no spontaneous riot, but a strategically

¹⁰Ibid., p. 272.

organized act of military resistance. The most devastating war in the entire history of San Domingo had begun.

Toussaint hastily dispatched instructions to Dessalines in the West, to Laplume and Dommage in the South, and to Paul Louverture in command at Samona, vigorously warning them that the French had come to restore slavery, that they must meet them with open resistance, and burn, annihilate everything if they were forced to retreat. All of these letters were intercepted by enemy troops.¹¹ Laplume, blindly loyal to France and easily influenced, readily succumbed to the solicitations of a number of mulatto officers and of Célestin, a black officer from Port-au-Prince sent by the French general, Boudet, with a copy of Bonaparte's hypocritical proclamation attesting to the inviolability of their freedom and the peace-keeping aims of the expedition.

With the defection of Laplume, the other black commanders of the South followed suit. At Jérémie, Dommage was now completely isolated. He had prepared on his own authority to resist with force if possible, and if necessary by fire; but, betrayed by his European adjutant and two of his brigade leaders, he was forced to allow the French troops to enter Jérémie.¹² By mid-February, the entire province of the South had fallen to the enemy.¹³

¹¹Lacroix, Mémoires, 2:136-40. Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 3:55 and 57-60. See also, Leclerc, Lettres, p. 115; no. 38 (5 mars 1802).

¹²Ardouin, Etudes, 5:livre 6, p. 18.

¹³The general sense of resentment in the South against Toussaint and Dessalines had been further exploited by Bonaparte who made Rigaud, Pétion, Villate and other mulatto

Nearly half of Toussaint's army was now fighting under the French. In one sense, it was his own fault for having eroded the confidence of his own followers. His only hope now was to be able to hold out long enough with his five or six thousand dedicated troops until the coming of the rainy season, not too far off, when the French would fall prey to the sickness and disease occasioned by the climate. While Christophe and Toussaint managed to neutralize the attacks of the French army in the North, the black resistance forces in the West, roughly fifteen hundred, were concentrated at Crête-à-Pierrot. Having taken the fort, they now faced the twelve thousand troops, European and colonial, that Leclerc had sent to recapture the fort, break the resistance in the West, and then proceed with his instructions, already critically behind schedule. It was here that Dessalines spoke to his men as he had done after the civil war, this time making it unequivocally clear that it was a war for independence that they were fighting, for without independence their freedom would always remain endangered:

Take courage, I tell you, take courage. The whites from France cannot hold out against us here in San Domingo. They will fight well at first, but soon they will fall sick and die like flies. Listen well! If Dessalines surrenders to them a hundred times, he will betray them a hundred times. I repeat it, take courage and you will see that when the French are reduced to small, small numbers, we will harass them

leaders accompany the expedition only to reanimate old hostilities by their mere presence. These factors had no doubt contributed to the wave of defections in the South. On this point, see Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 3:48 and 89.

and beat them; we will burn the harvests and then take to the hills. They will be forced to leave. Then I will make you independent. There will be no more whites amongst us . . .

They held out courageously against two successive attacks, after which Dessalines executed a brilliantly manoeuvred evacuation through enemy lines, ten times their own number.¹⁵

The situation remained nonetheless critical, and Leclerc's even more so. Within the first two weeks of his arrival, two thousand European troops were already in hospital, three-quarters of them sick and the rest wounded; within another week, five hundred more had become victims of a devastating climate with an additional thousand wounded. Roughly one third of his original army was incapacitated, without counting those killed in battle.¹⁶ He would need another six thousand troops, independent of those already promised, and a further reinforcement of two thousand per month for the next three months if he were to carry out his instructions.¹⁷

Leclerc's first offer to negotiate with Toussaint had failed. He had already published orders for the arrest and capture of Toussaint and Christophe and had deported Rigaud.

¹⁴Cited in M. E. Descourtiltz, Voyage d'un naturaliste en Haïti: 1779-1803 (Paris: PLON, 1835), p. 212. Descourtiltz was a prisoner in the Crête-à-Pierrot fort during the siege.

¹⁵Lacroix, Mémoires, pp. 149ff. Descourtiltz, Voyage, pp. 211ff. Nemours, Histoire militaire, 1:228ff.

¹⁶Leclerc, Lettres, pp. 102 and 109: nos. 34 and 35 (19 fév.; 27 fév. 1802).

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 109-10: no. 35 (27 fév. 1802).

Both sides had suffered great losses, and now Toussaint was preparing a new offensive. Before launching the attacks, however, Toussaint tried to negotiate a settlement with Leclerc. This was a fatal mistake. He allowed Christophe to confer with Leclerc and find out the latter's intentions. Christophe deserted, and with him went twelve hundred soldiers and a mass of artillery and munitions. Toussaint's position no longer enabled him to sustain the blow. Now Leclerc made an offer whereby Toussaint would retire with his staff to a place of his choosing in the colony. The officers of his army would retain their ranks as well as their functions. Toussaint accepted, leaving Dessalines with no choice but to follow suit. This was in May. The following month, Toussaint was lured into a conference with the French general, Brunet, who had him arrested on the spot, bound as a common criminal and placed aboard a ship ready to leave for France. There, he was incarcerated, isolated and left to die a tragic death in his prison cell high in the French Alps.

All of the major black leaders were now either deported or incorporated into the French army, and it was the masses, against whom the black generals would now be fighting, who led the way out of this treacherous impasse.

Leclerc's next step was to proceed with the general disarmament of the blacks. Yet his own position had greatly deteriorated. One of the worst epidemics of yellow fever the colony had known broke out in May. The European troops were dying in the hospitals at a rate of thirty to fifty

per day; the principal cities that had been burned to the ground offered little or no resources at all. Medical supplies, clothing and shoes for the troops were severely lacking. On 6 June, Leclerc summed up the situation: "Every day the blacks become more audacious . . . I am not strong enough to order a general disarmament nor to implement the necessary measures . . . The government must begin to think about sending out my successor . . ."18

By this time, news had arrived in the colony that the French government had restored slavery in Guadeloupe, causing the blacks in San Domingo to be all the more fearful for their own freedom. If the arrest and deportation of Toussaint had, for the moment, left them disoriented and confused, they were nonetheless apprehensive. They did not rise up immediately and in massive numbers as they had done in 1798 to force Hédouville's departure, or in 1800 to compel Roume to approve of Toussaint's occupation of Spanish San Domingo. But they did begin to form illegal gatherings, at first in small numbers. By July, aggressive, armed maroon bands had emerged throughout the North, from the island of Tortuga to the North Plain region--the center of a new insurrectionary rebellion as it had been during the early days of August 1791. As in those days, these new insurrections were organized through marronage and carried out with the tactics of guerilla warfare. It was not, strictly speaking, the deportation of Toussaint, the ex-Governor and political leader, that they were opposing, but

¹⁸Leclerc, Lettres, p. 157; no. 65 (6 juin 1802).

rather the unequivocal consequences and implications of this treacherous act for them, for their freedom and their future. They had fought for their freedom and had preserved it over the past ten years with arms. For Leclerc to take away their arms now was to take away their freedom. Had there been some initial doubt as to the purpose of Leclerc's mission with its secret instructions, the restoration of slavery in Guadeloupe and now the disarmament of the black troops had rapidly dispelled all doubt and left the masses with one clear objective--the total destruction of the French presence in San Domingo.

While the rapid formation, or re-emergence, of massive maroon bands and strong centers of insurrection characterized the resistance of the blacks in the North, it was often the concerted acts of resistance, carried out by small numbers or groups of individuals, that prompted the formation of similar bands in the South and the creation of a network of resistance whose aim it was to proselitize, to gather additional recruits and supporters, to call meetings and assemblies and to devise plans of action. The reprisals were terrible. Yet the atrocities seemed only to reinforce the determination of the blacks as they made the political situation and the single alternative clearer by the day. The whole burden of resistance now lay squarely upon their shoulders and for resisting, they would be shot dead, hanged, drowned, even gassed to death.¹⁹

¹⁹A not uncommon practice was to burn sulphur in the holds of the ships in which black and mulatto prisoners

Who were these black masses and their leaders in the South who on their own initiative and with the meagre means at their disposal for effective resistance, fought the French army by themselves while Dessalines, Christophe, Laplume and the other black generals were still co-operating with Leclerc? In the first place, there was no single leader or dominant figure around whom the movement united, but hundreds of them throughout the department, mostly unknown individuals. There were urban blacks with a trade; on the plantations, there were domestics, conducteurs and ordinary field workers; there were local black officers of the French army who operated clandestinely to build up a network of resistance or who boldly deserted with arms in hand; and there were former slave leaders of the early insurrections at Platons in 1792-93 who had become hardened, experienced maroons. These individuals did not present petitions to the government nor did they attempt to negotiate a set of demands. The time for that was over.

Around the beginning of July, the first manifest signs of organized armed rebellion appeared in the Corail district near Jérémie, where Dommage had attempted unsuccessfully to resist the arrival of the French expeditionary troops five months earlier. { The military had discovered a co-ordinated

alike were incarcerated. Dead from asphyxiation, the bodies would be dumped into the sea the next morning to make room for more prisoners. Madiou, Histoire d'Haïti, 2:301. Antoine Métral, Histoire de l'expédition des français à Saint-Domingue (Paris: Fanjat aîné, 1825), p. 176.

conspiracy between the town and the plantation workers of Corail to promote a general insurrection on all the plantations in the district and to kill off all the whites. The chief organizer of this insurrectionary movement was an obscure black by the name of Toussaint Jean-Baptiste, familiarly known as Lapaquerie, a butcher by occupation. He had assembled his fellow conspirators and held meetings at his house to discuss the means and methods by which to execute their project.

In addition to Toussaint Jean-Baptiste, the principal ringleaders included his wife, "who fully shared her husband's intentions, had often vociferously manifested her hatred for the whites and desired nothing more than to see them all exterminated."²⁰ Two others, Lazare and Malbrouk, both fishermen, were also singled out as principal accomplices. Another was Claude Chatain, a deserter from Jérémie sent as emissary to talk with the plantation workers, to find out their attitudes and to enjoin them to revolt.. As a cover, Chatain claimed he was operating under instructions from Rigaud. Unfortunately for him, Rigaud had already been deported two months earlier. Nine more were arrested with no other evidence than a letter from one resident to the local commandant stating that they were aware of the preparations and prepared to participate in the execution of

²⁰UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 624, pièce no. 1. Rapport pour servir d'instruction relative aux accusations portées contre les nommés . . . , les Cayes, 23 messidor An 10, signé, B. Madier, capitaine.

the plot. According to the local officer, their past acts and attitudes proved their guilt, and, especially since the arrival of the French, they had manifested "criminal intentions." It was the only evidence the authorities could come by, but it was enough to get them arrested, sent to les Cayes for interrogation and sentenced to the chain gang.²¹ Toussaint Jean-Baptiste, his wife, Lazare and Malbrouk were executed by a firing squad.

At the same time, six plantation workers were arrested in connection with this projected rebellion, among them Pierrot, a worker on the Etienne plantation who was considered to be the most dangerous menace to society since punishments only made him more rebellious. Several times, he had attempted to assassinate the procureur (or resident manager) with a dagger. Pierrot had a history of "bad conduct" and had committed numerous acts under Rigaud's regime warranting severe punishment. When dragoons were sent to arrest him at that time, he had stabbed one of them in the chest, and when Laplume arrived to investigate, Pierrot was whipped with rods, became all the more enraged and incited the workers to revolt.

The full extent of this insurrection was only discovered a few months after the initial arrests, but there were already indications that the revolt was in no way a localized

²¹The group consisted of: two butchers, one officer of the national guard, one carpenter, three fishermen, one domestic, one deserter, one individual listed as "without occupation," two others listed by name only, and Toussaint's wife, listed as "femme Toussaint." Ibid.

affair. Among the five other plantation workers arrested was a black named Cupidon who had brazenly entered a house in Jérémie, sat himself down at the table beside the occupants and demanded something to eat. When the proprietor told him to go out on the porch if he wanted to eat, Cupidon lashed back with a thousand insults and invectives and said that soon all the whites would be finished off and that in three days' time they would all know what he meant.²²

In fact, by this time, insurrectionary activities, far from being local affairs, had spread all over the department from Jérémie at the west to Miragoâne and the two Goâves at the east, the rebels in the latter region having made contact with the established bands of the Léogane plain under the leadership of Lamour Dérance.²³ The increasing desertion of plantation workers, the assassination of a white resident, followed by the burning and total destruction of a sugar plantation in Cavaillon already indicated growing tensions and simmering rebellion in an area up to now relatively tranquil.²⁴

²²UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 624, pièce no. 2. Rapport pour servir d'instructions relative aux plaintes portées contre les nommés . . . , les Cayes, 26 messidor An 10; signé, B. Madier, capitaine.

²³UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 582. Delpech, commandant l'arrondissement au général Rochambeau, commandant les départements du Sud et de l'Ouest, Petit-Goâve, 16 messidor An. 10.

²⁴UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 559. Delpech, chef de bataillon, commandant l'arrondissement au général de division Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, Petit-Goâve, 8 messidor An 10. No. 572. Desbureaux, général de division au général de division Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, quartier général des

By 6 July, all nineteen of the Corail instigators had arrived in les Cayes to be sentenced, and by the 10th a full scale insurrectionary movement had been uncovered in the city.²⁵ The Corail conspirators had sent agents to les Cayes where they began agitating and propagandizing among the black colonial troops to rouse them against the government and incite them to rebel. Their activities had been planned to coincide precisely with the moment when measures were taken to reorganize the troops as part of Leclerc's general program to disarm the blacks. Less than a week before the arrival of the Corail group, two blacks had already attacked and beaten up the les Cayes militia commander.²⁶ The aim, once the revolt began, was to break into the prison, liberate the comrades from Jérémie, as well as others, and set fire to the city. At the same time, the blacks of les Cayes had organized a meeting and were preparing a plan of action that would, coincidentally, converge with the anticipated rebellion of the black troops.

On the night of the 9th, roughly a hundred of them gathered at the house of Cofi where they were all engaged in

Cayes, 13 messidor An 10. No. 617. Desbureaux, général de division au général Rochambeau, quartier général des Cayes, 23 messidor An 10.

²⁵UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 653. Desbureaux, général de division au général Rochambeau, commandant les divisions de l'Ouest et du Sud, quartier général des Cayes, 28 messidor An 10.

²⁶UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 572. Desbureaux, général de division au général de division Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, quartier général des Cayes, 13 messidor An 10.

heated discussion, using most "incendiary" language. Berger, the white military commander of les Cayes, had been spying on them and came back with a contingent to arrest them, whereupon they swiftly dispersed and issued a call to arms. Immediately, a general alarm spread through the city. The black colonial garrison took up arms without orders and began beating its own alarm in the troops' quarters, only to be immobilized, however, by another batallion.²⁷

The plan was a good one and had it fully succeeded, would have dealt a heavy blow to the expeditionary operations in the South. The French were in serious trouble. The effects of the disarmament program were already becoming evident, as many soldiers had deserted with their rifles before their units could be reorganized. Desbureaux, the commander of the southern army, now found it urgently necessary, in order "to discover their hideouts [and] abort the plots they are conceiving," to publish an ordinance forbidding all inhabitants of city and country to house or shelter a soldier without a duly authorized leave, as it would be assumed they were sheltering deserters and would therefore be sentenced accordingly.²⁸ Among the arms confiscated by the authorities during the 10 July insurrec-

²⁷UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 624, pièce no. 3. Copie du rapport fait par le chef de brigade Berger, commandant de la place des Cayes par (sic) le mouvement du 22 messidor An 10.

²⁸UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 652. Desbureaux, général de division au général Rochambeau, commandant en chef les divisions du Sud et de l'Ouest, quartier général des Cayes, 28 messidor An 10.

tionary movement were a good number of rifles belonging to soldiers in the 11th half-brigade which had been slated for disarmament.²⁹

Although the black resistance forces were temporarily defeated at les Cayes, the movement in the Grande-Anse district continued to spread. Desbureaux had gone to Jérémie following the les Cayes affair and toward the end of the month informed general Rochambeau, commander of the expeditionary army for the West and the South: "I am relentlessly pursuing these dangerous individuals; since my arrival here, I have already broken up several gatherings of workers on two or three plantations in the area around this city . . ." ³⁰

The blacks continued to circulate rebellious ideas, threats to kill off the whites, to burn the city and destroy the plains. Among the dozen or so whom Desbureaux managed to arrest, most were conducteurs and were believed to be the leaders and principal accomplices in this movement. Desbureaux had all the conducteurs shot and sent the rest to les Cayes where they perished in the same manner. All of them were well known for the assassinations, thefts and acts of pillage they had committed during the whole course of the revolution.³¹

²⁹UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 624, pièce no. 3.

³⁰UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 710. Desbureaux, général de division au général Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, quartier général de Jérémie, 8 thermidor An 10.

³¹Ibid.

The innocent were thrown in indiscriminately with the guilty. Arrested with no other proof than the circumstantial suspicions of the military commander, they were executed by the dozen, the score and the hundred-fold throughout the colony, the helpless victims of French reprisals whenever the slightest signs of agitation or discontent were discovered.³² The day by day executions were often conducted on the plantations, in front of the assembled blacks, so as to set an example to the others and, through terror, force them into complete submission. In general, however, these executions tended to produce covert solidarity and encouraged the proliferation of the underground resistance movement. The white inhabitants who had welcomed the expedition from the start now began to see gatherings, conspiracies and plots everywhere. However, Desbureaux dismissed these whites as being paranoid.³³ Their fears may have grown out of the general atmosphere of insecurity and were no doubt prompted by the increasing number of executions, but they were well founded.

While Desbureaux was still in Jérémie, an armed rebellion broke out at Aquin and St. Louis. The assassination of a white Aquin resident, Casamajor, had given the signal for

³²Every history of the San Domingo revolution will confirm this assertion. Such atrocities were notoriously commonplace, and they seemed to increase, not only in number, but in degree, becoming ever more garish and heinous as the position of the French army progressively deteriorated, especially after the death of Leclerc, and in spite of the influx of fresh troops from France. See pp. 298 and 309 below.

³³UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 887. Desbureaux, général de division au général Rochambeau, Jérémie, 9 fructidor An 10.

a renewal of agitation.³⁴ Taking advantage of the inadequate supply of European troops in the district, a black militia lieutenant, Charles, and a number of deserters from various other units, had captured the fort during the night and taken the city of St. Louis on 27 August.³⁵ This was the first time a city had successfully been captured by insurgent blacks in the South. Joussaume, the black militia captain at Aquin, was apparently given orders by Laplume to march against St. Louis. He denied having ever received Laplume's orders and had written instead to Rochambeau in the West requesting his instructions, stating in his letter to the general that "there is a conspiracy under way here [in Aquin] that has not yet broken into the open, given the precautions I have taken with the feeble means at my disposal to thwart their projects."³⁶ Whether Joussaume was a covert sympathizer or not is unknown; nevertheless, Laplume arrested him and had him sent to Port-au-Prince for execution.³⁷

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 983. Desbureaux, général de division au général de division Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, quartier général de St. Louis, 21 fructidor An 10.

³⁶UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 897. Joussaume, capitaine de la gendarmerie, commandant provisoire de la place au citoyen Rochambeau, général de division, commandant en chef les départements du Sud et de l'Ouest, place d'Aquin, 10 fructidor An 10. No. 1069. Joussaume, ex-capitaine de gendarmerie d'Aquin au général Rochambeau, commandant en chef les départements du Sud et de l'Ouest, à bord la frégate la Guérier, 2è jour complémentaire An 10. Encl. of 1069. Statements of character reference made by various planters in the district in praise of Jousseaume, 3 Jan. 1802.

³⁷UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1039. Lalance to Rochambeau, Aquin, 14 Sept. 1802.

The St. Louis, and earlier, the les Cayes insurrections clearly indicated the increasing participation of black soldiers and lower ranking officers. Forced to fight for the French by the desertion of their commanders from Toussaint's army, they now began using their positions and their access to arms to aid the insurgent movements of blacks in town and country. By the time Desbureaux arrived in St. Louis on 6 September, the rebels had come under fire. Pursued and shot on sight as wild game, a dozen or so had escaped into the Anse-à-Veau region, up to now relatively quiet.³⁸

While both Laplume and Néret were engaged in pursuing the fugitive insurgents in the mountainous areas around Cavailon, Aquin and St. Louis, new troubles beset les Cayes.³⁹ The troop situation here was far from reassuring. The militia was badly organized, the national guard badly armed and the number of troops sorely insufficient. A handful of blacks initiated an attempt at insurrection on 4 September but were unsuccessful. It was enough, however, to create panic and to spread a general alarm throughout the city. On the 8th, only two days after Desbureaux' arrival in St. Louis, nearly four hundred blacks, armed as best they could be, some not at all, some with rifles, had gathered near Fort Islet, located behind the house of Joseph Darmagnac, the

³⁸UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 983, Desbureaux to Rochambeau, 7 Sept. 1802. No. 1039, Lalance to Rochambeau, 14 Sept. 1802.

³⁹UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 978. Pellissier to Rochambeau, les Cayes, 6 Sept. 1802. No. 979. Pellissier to Rochambeau, les Cayes, 6 Sept. 1802.

black leader of the movement.⁴⁰ Having fought off the first patrol sent to attack them, they made their way across a nearby plantation and began attacking the post protecting the city in order to make an inroad into the Plaine-des-Cayes and possibly spread the revolt to the plantations.⁴¹ Twenty-five or thirty were captured immediately, most of them wounded. That they should be executed went without saying, yet Berger insidiously posed the question to his superior, Desbureaux: "Should I hang them or shoot them?"⁴² A week later, as the incessant but unavailing pursuit of insurgent forces continued, Desbureaux informed Rochambeau: "Everything [sic] that is captured is hanged on the spot."⁴³ The authorities exploited this incident to "empty" the prisons of les Cayes. A week after the Darnagnac revolt, Lalance, a local European commander, wrote of the affair: "The insurrection at les Cayes has served to rid the colony of 310 villains. Finally, all is quiet today."⁴⁴

The French had no qualms when they spoke of exterminating

⁴⁰UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 997, pièce no. 5. Copie d'une lettre adressée au général de division Desbureaux à son quartier général de St. Louis, par le chef de brigade Berger, commandant de la place des Cayes, 23 fructidor An 10.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 997, pièce no. 5.

⁴³UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1043. Desbureaux, général de division au général Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, quartier général des Cayes, 29 fructidor An 10.

⁴⁴UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1039, Lalance to Rochambeau, 14 Sept. 1802.

blacks who fought back and of making countless more innocent victims pay the same price. They had even developed a terminology of extermination: "to drown two or three hundred individuals at one shot was called a coup de filet; for a person to die on a tree cross, the French invented the sarcastic expression monter en dignité; when someone was devoured by the bulldogs that Rochambeau later introduced into the colony, the term used was descendre dans l'arène.⁴⁵ What frustrated the French even more was that the blacks did mount the scaffold with stoic dignity. They encouraged each other to face their execution bravely.⁴⁶ Leclerc wrote of them: "These men die with incredible fanaticism; they laugh at death, and the same is true of the women." On the battlefields, they could be attacked, killed in great numbers, forced into retreat, but they refused to surrender. At Jacmel, 176 deserters were taken prisoner and sent to Port-

⁴⁵ Métral, Histoire de l'expédition, p. 184. See p. below.

⁴⁶ One woman turned to her husband who seemed hesitant as they were about to die, and said: "Do you not know how sublime it is to die for liberty?", whereupon she took hold of the rope and hung herself rather than die at the hands of the hangman. Another consoled her weeping daughters who marched toward the place of execution: "Rejoice that your wombs will not have to bear slave children." Ibid., pp. 180-81. In le Cap, three blacks were burned alive in an autodafé. As two of them began writhing in pain, the third, exalted, said to his comrades: "You do not know how to die! Watch me, I will show you how to die." He turned his neck around in the iron collar and, facing the post to which he was tied, sat down in the flames and without muttering a single moan was burned to death. M. Lemonnier-Delafosse, Seconde campagne de Saint-Domingue (Havre: Imprimerie Brindeau, 1846), pp. 70-71. Delafosse witnessed this spectacle with his own eyes and wrote, as did Leclerc: "These are the men we have to fight!"

au-Prince: "Of this number, 173 strangled themselves along the way, their leader setting the example. These are the men we have to fight."⁴⁷

After the Darmagnac revolt in les Cayes, harsher measures of repression accompanied the wholesale murder of hundreds whose only crime was to be colored. Aimed at breaking the resistance of the blacks, the measures indicated, at the same time, that the French were now on the defensive. On 12 September, Desbureaux ordered that in the event of an alert, anyone found on the streets who was not in the military, i.e., "domestics, workers, or other individuals," would be exposed indiscriminately to military fire.⁴⁸ The following day, he published another order whereby the plantation conducteurs were held personally responsible should disturbances occur among the workers. Their hierarchical position and the influence over the workers which that position afforded them, rendered the conducteurs "infinitely more guilty than the laborers, [since] it would be impossible for them to be unaware of conspiracies in the making." Therefore, by not reporting them they automatically became criminals, were singled out as insurrectionary leaders and hanged.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Leclerc, Lettres, pp. 202, 206 and 256: nos. 109, 112 and 145 (6, 9 août; 7 oct. 1802).

⁴⁸UFL, Rochambeau Papers, Encl. of 1011. Au quartier général des Cayes, Ordre du jour, 26 fructidor An 10, signé, le général de division Desbureaux.

⁴⁹UFL, Rochambeau Papers, Encl. of 1011. Au quartier général des Cayes, Ordre du jour, 27 fructidor An 10, signé, Desbureaux. The same ordinance was rendered at Aquin

The Darmagnac revolt did not succeed in this second attempt to destroy the city and propagate the insurrection in the plain. Yet it was impossible for the French to crush the network of resistance. What they could not see was that to re-establish slavery they would have to exterminate nearly the entire black population. Those blacks who seemed docile and submissive one day, could, after witnessing the ruthless execution of friends and family members on their own plantation or on the town square, become hardened rebels the next.

Liberty or death. It is a great revolutionary ideal, a watchword of the great revolutions in history. In the hands of prominent leaders, it can often be tinged with emotionalism and used as an effective propaganda piece. The black masses, however, had little need for lofty principles. They were living and experiencing the horrible realities of this life and death struggle. When Desbureaux wrote after the les Cayes events of September that "they will see that there is no middle ground between death and obedience to the laws of the government," he was merely rephrasing what the masses already knew and had accepted.⁵⁰ He had also unknowingly spelled out the ultimate defeat of the French in San Domingo.

Toward the end of September, the Grande-Anse movement

on 8 September, the day of the Darmagnac revolt at les Cayes. Encl. of 1043. Au quartier général d'Aquin, Ordre du jour, 22 fructidor An 10, signé, Desbureaux.

⁵⁰UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1118. Desbureaux, général de division au général Rochambeau, quartier général des Cayes, 7 vendémiaire An 11.

had resurfaced. It was discovered that the Corail rebel leaders who were executed in July had been collaborating not only with agitators in les Cayes, but with others in the region of Plymouth to the south of Jérémie, as well. Five of these insurgent blacks, having already committed a number of assassinations in the area some time ago were captured on the 25th and sent to Jérémie.⁵¹ A general insurrection throughout the entire Grande-Anse district--the greater part of the northwestern section of the South--was indeed afoot.

During a period of superficial calm, the projected insurrection began the next night, the 26th, in the Fond Rouge quarter of Jérémie. A band of maroons descended from their mountain retreat and succeeded in setting fire to five plantations where they slaughtered six white managers. For the most part badly armed, they were forced to flee when a military detachment arrived to capture them. It was only after subsequent investigation and interrogations were conducted that the authorities realized the full extent of the movement. Those who had escaped that night were in fact leaders of the recent conspiracies that had plagued the area. Having taken to the hills, they had organized themselves as maroons and maintained contacts with their friends on the same plantations that they burned on the 26th.⁵² The

⁵¹UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1104. Le commandant de la place et de la paroisse au général de division Rochambeau, commandant les divisions de l'Ouest et du Sud, Jérémie, 5 vendémiaire An 11, signé, Bernard.

⁵²UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1112. Le chef de brigade, Bernard, commandant de la place au général divisionnaire Rochambeau, commandant les divisions de l'Ouest et du Sud,

principal leader of these maroon rebels was Jean Panier, whose band extended from Irois along the peninsular coast into the Hotte mountain range as far as Macaya.⁵³

While the military pursued the incendiary rebels in a rabid man-hunt, Bernard, the white commander at Jérémie, went to the plantations that had been burned and, in accordance with Desbureaux' recent ordinance, arrested the conducteurs of these plantations along with all workers suspected of complicity and had them hanged on their plantations.⁵⁴

Panier was shot down while defending himself. Critically wounded, the authorities put him through an immediate interrogation and found that behind all these incidents was Dommage who had been secretly working with the insurgents ever since his first unsuccessful attempt to resist the arrival of the expeditionary forces at Jérémie.⁵⁵ Upon further investigation of the plantation workers in the area, for whom the only choice was to tell what they knew or be hanged, Panier's statements were confirmed. Dommage had established a whole

Jérémie, 6 vendémiaire An 11. The five plantations were: Carin, Paroty, Farouilh, Tauzias and Lafresnay. Ibid.

⁵³C. Ardouin, Essais, p. 107. In his Etudes sur l'histoire d'Haiti, B. Ardouin states that Panier had become a maroon as early as May 1802 (5:livre 6, p. 36).

⁵⁴UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1112. Bernard to Rochambeau, 27 Sept. 1802. No. 1117. Le commandant de la place et de l'arrondissement au général de division Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, Jérémie, 7 vendémiaire An 11.

⁵⁵UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1123. Le commandant de la place et de l'arrondissement au général Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, signé, Bernard, Jérémie, 8 vendémiaire An 11.

network of spies and agents who carried out his instructions to visit the plantations of the area, to convince the workers that the French had arrived to put them back into slavery, that they must rise in revolt against the French government, and that at a given time they should assemble at Fond Rouge to receive orders and munitions from Dommage.⁵⁶

Panier, Dommage and his entire half-brigade were shipped to Port-au-Prince to meet their fate at the hands of Rochambeau.⁵⁷ Sixteen other prisoners, arrested on suspicion, were also sent for execution, most of them ex-officers of various companies.⁵⁸

To read the daily reports of the French military, one would get the impression that they had the situation well in hand: constant pursuit of fugitive rebels; workers terrorized to the point where some were co-operating with the army and denouncing additional individuals; the awakening of the white inhabitants who had placed their confidence in

⁵⁶The author was able to find only a few of these declarations. They are presented in Appendix D, pp. 346-47 below.

⁵⁷UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1142. Desbureaux, général de division au chef de brigade Dommage à Jérémie, quartier général des Cayes, 11 vendémiaire An 11. No. 1147. Le commandant de la place et de l'arrondissement au général de division Rochambeau, Jérémie, 12 vendémiaire An 11. To block any possible communication between Panier and Dommage, the former was sent on a separate ship. Ibid. and No. 1123. Bernard to Rochambeau, 29 Sept. 1802.

⁵⁸UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1134. Le commandant de la place et de l'arrondissement par interim au général de division Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, Jérémie, 10 vendémiaire An 11. A list of the sixteen, giving their names and positions, is provided in Appendix D, pp. 347-48 below.

Domage, etc. Yet other maroon bands, equally as numerous as Panier's, had already emerged and had been operating in this western region of the South. At the head of these bands were three ex-slave leaders, of the Platons insurrections of 1792-93: Goman, Nicolas Régnier and our old friend Gilles Bénech. Like Bénech, Goman and Régnier were made company captains in the 3rd regiment of the Legion, Goman being a chronic deserter. During the purges of the southern army that followed the civil war, both Gilles and Régnier were arrested, imprisoned at Port-au-Prince and later sent to St. Marc, whence they escaped to the South upon the arrival of the expeditionary forces. To avoid similar imprisonment, Goman took to the woods after the civil war, later returned to the plantation of his former master, and when the French arrived, became a maroon once again. It was then that he met with Jean Panier, took over the leadership of the band upon the latter's death, and by the end of the year had joined forces with Gilles and Nicolas.⁵⁹

Concentrated maroon activity continued in the Miragoâne-Goâves area throughout this period as the insurgents, working closely with the bands from Léogane and Jacmel, repeatedly attacked enemy posts and swiftly retreated into the mountains, only to reorganize their forces, by now five thousand strong, conduct expeditions on the plantations to gather additional recruits, and return to attack again with greater

⁵⁹See the short biographies of the major maroon leaders of the South in C. Ardouin, Essais, pp. 101ff.

force. In October, when Délpech, the mulatto commander of Petit-Goâve, made his rounds in the area, he could not find even one plantation where the workers had not deserted to take up arms.⁶⁰ The same day, over a hundred black soldiers and officers that had been enlisted by the French into companies to protect Aquin, where insurrection had been brewing since August, deserted with their arms and military equipment. Now openly supporting the rebel movement, they assembled additional forces and attacked the city with a vigor that left the French incredulous. The organizer of this mass desertion was a black by the name of Jean-Louis Louiseau, called Jeudy, a former batallion leader of the 11th half-brigade, and it was from this half-brigade that rifles had been confiscated from the fugitive insurgents of the first les Cayes revolt early in July.⁶¹

In less than a week, a new maroon band emerged in the Torbeck plain not far from les Cayes. Here, a group of workers on the Smith and Laplace plantations had revolted and assassinated their masters after they had dealt them one

⁶⁰UFL, Rochambeau Papers, Nos. 1191 and 1210. Delpech, chef de bataillon, commandant l'arrondissement du Petit-Goâve, Grand-Goâve et Miragoâne au général de division Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, Petit-Goâve, 25, 28 vendémiaire An 11. Leclerc, Lettres, p. 255; no. 145 (7 oct. 1802).

⁶¹UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1236. Berger, chef de brigade, commandant de la place au général divisionnaire Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Artibonite et du Sud, les Cayes, 2 brumaire An 11. No. 1278. Desbureaux, général de division au général Rochambeau, commandant les divisions de l'Ouest et du Sud, quartier général des Cayes, 10 brumaire An 11.

punishment too many. Those who led the revolt were the domestics and a veteran conducteur, Samedi Smith. Born a slave, Samedi had displayed qualities of leadership early in life, and at the age of twenty was already given the job of commandeur (it was only after the abolition of slavery that the term was changed to the less offensive one of conducteur). Samedi, along with scarcely thirty other rebel workers, armed with little more than sticks and knives, fled to safety in the woods and later participated with Gilles and the others in a widespread operation that marked the decisive turning point of the war in the South. The reprisals following Samedi's rebellion claimed the lives of fifteen men and three women on the two plantations.⁶²

These, then, were the black masses who, alone for the past eight months, had sustained the war against the French army in the South. There was no single leader, but hundreds of them throughout the department (and hundreds more throughout the colony), for the most part obscure individuals. There were the urban blacks with a trade, carpenters, fishermen, butchers and others without an occupation at all. Among the plantation workers, there were domestics, conducteurs and ordinary field laborers who acted as spies or agents. Some of these had become active maroon leaders, at

⁶²UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1276. Berger, chef de brigade et commandant de la place au général de division Rochambeau, les Cayes, 10 brumaire An 11. No. 1278, Desbureaux to Rochambeau, 31 Oct. 1802. No. 1344. Berger, chef de brigade, commandant de la place au général Rochambeau, commandant en chef de l'armée de Saint-Domingue, les Cayes, 29 brumaire An 11.

the head of insurrectionary bands. There were black officers of the French army who, like Dommage, operated clandestinely with the maroons and the urban blacks to establish points of contact in the cities and on the plantations in order to develop a network of resistance. There were others, like Charles or Jeudy, who deserted with an entire battalion in armed revolt and took to the hills. In addition, there were former slave leaders of the first struggles against slavery, ex-officers of the Legion, and now hardened warriors and active maroon chiefs.

Pamphile Lacroix, a general in the French expeditionary army, observed what no one else seemed to realize at this time:

. . . in this new insurrection of San Domingo, as in all insurrections that attack constituted authority, it was not the avowed leaders who gave the signal for revolt, but rather, obscure individuals, for the most part personal enemies of the colored generals.⁶³

The initial attempts of these individuals in the South did not always meet with much success. Yet it would be wrong to place too much importance upon whether or not they succeeded in realizing the immediate aim of a given plan for revolt. The significance of these first attempts lies in the very nature of the war they were fighting. The blacks began by building networks of resistance, organized through marronage and sustained by guerilla warfare. It was a strategy dictated by the particular political and military conditions

⁶³Lacroix, Mémoires, 2:225.

that the war had created, and it was basically this strategy that would break the French army. Christophe realized it, too, and said so to Leclerc before he finally deserted the French and rejoined the black revolution. In fact, Dessalines had been preparing to defect with the black and mulatto generals for some time and had forged a pact with Pétion, the most prominent mulatto military leader since Rigaud's deportation. Around mid-October, Pétion and Clerveaux, an outstanding mulatto officer from Toussaint's army, opened fire on le Cap. Dessalines received word of the revolt while in the West, made a spectacular escape and issued a general call to arms. The le Cap rebellion also brought forth another talented mulatto leader, Nicolas Geffrard, who would later play an important role in the South.

The force of circumstances, the assured knowledge that the French expedition aimed at restoring slavery, the brutal acts of extermination from which mulattoes and blacks now suffered alike, had buried the old rivalries that led to the civil war and the racial animosities that accompanied it. Dessalines now became the recognized commander-in-chief of the indigenous army. Leclerc had become one more victim of yellow fever and died during the night of 2 November. Command of the French forces thus fell to Rochambeau, in whose name and by whose orders so many atrocities and mass murders, ghastly acts unparalleled since the days of slavery, had already been committed in the South and the West. As early as May, Leclerc had written to Bonaparte, suggesting Rochambeau as his successor: "He is a person of integrity,

a good military man, and he hates the blacks."⁶⁴ Scarcely a month before he died, Leclerc summed up the situation:

. . . if my position has turned from good to critical, it is not just because of the yellow fever, but, as well, the premature re-establishment of slavery in Guadeloupe and the newspapers and letters from France that speak of nothing but slavery. Here is my opinion on this country: We must destroy all of the blacks in the mountains--men and women--and spare only the children under 12 years of age. We must destroy half of those in the plains and must not leave a single colored person in the colony who has worn an épaulette.⁶⁵

Now in command, Rochambeau extended his barbaric policies throughout the entire colony. He purchased a special breed of bulldogs from Cuba that had apparently been carefully trained to attack and devour humans. For entertainment in le Cap, he set up an arena into which he threw the blacks to be torn to pieces by these dogs.⁶⁶ Upon

⁶⁴Leclerc, Lettres, p. 148: no. 56 (7 mai 1802).

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 256: no. 145 (7 oct. 1802). In general, historians of the San Domingo revolution have tended to over-emphasize the very real and destructive effects of yellow fever on the French army, and some have considered them an important cause of the defeat of the French in San Domingo. David Geggus, a British historian, has recently written an article dealing with the effects of yellow fever on the British army in San Domingo from 1793-98 ("Yellow fever in the 1790's: The British Army in occupied Saint-Domingue," a reprint from Medical History 23 [January 1979]:38-58). The undiscerning reader may be led to conclude that were it not for the epidemics that broke out during this period, combined with the war against France in Europe, the British probably would have been able to defeat the blacks. Geggus does not venture to make this conclusion himself. The weight of the article, however, leaves the reader to suppose it and, by extension, perhaps even to apply it to the position of the French army in 1802, thereby obscuring the very nature of the black struggles against the social and economic forces of imperialism that impelled them toward freedom and, finally, independence.

⁶⁶Usually the dogs did not attack and had to be goaded into fury by slitting open the body of the victim so that the

assuming command of the expedition, he wrote to the Minister of the Marine that he would need an additional thirty-five thousand troops to defeat the rebel forces, disarm the population and drive the blacks back onto the plantations. In January 1803, he requested special permission to proclaim immediately the restoration of slavery in San Domingo.⁶⁷

The French now held only le Cap, Môle and Tortuga island in the North. In the West, the rebel army held Archaye and the entire Artibonite, with the exception of St. Marc. The South, however, was still dominated by French troops. So, to clear a passage for Geffrard into the South, Dessalines entrusted Pétion with the mission of winning over the independent masses under Lamour Dérance and his chief lieutenant, Cangé, both of them former enemies of Dessalines.⁶⁸

In December 1802, Cangé had written a letter to Delpech, the mulatto commander for the French at Petit-Goâve, trying to make him understand that it was only a matter of

smell of blood would incite them to attack, after which they curiously began to howl. A shipment of these dogs was sent to Petit-Goâve. When the French soldiers landed, they were attacked by rebel forces. During the fighting, the dogs were let loose and then began attacking the French. See B. Ardouin, Etudes, 5:livre 6, pp. 84-86.

⁶⁷ Reports from Rochambeau to the Minister of the Marine, cited in Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 3:133.

⁶⁸ A former free mulatto, Cangé had taken part in the early struggles of the affranchis for political equality, became a captain of the Legion in the West and, after the civil war, was demoted to ordinary soldier. Upon the arrival of the French, he fled the South to join with Dérance once the African leader had deserted the French. Ibid., p. 138, n. 1.

time before the French would exterminate all the black and mulatto officers, that the French sought only to restore slavery, that they had allowed themselves to become divided and to become the executioners of their own people--black and mulatto alike. Cangé knew what was at stake, but Delpech stupidly stuck to the French. He was proud to be a Frenchman and he would die one.⁶⁹ His defection would have been pivotal; be that as it may, the insurgent bands continued to attack, increased their numbers daily, and with each attack gained additional munitions and military equipment.⁷⁰ Lemonnier-Delafosse, a French general in the expeditionary army, spoke of these revolutionary masses as follows:

Their invisible, imperceptible and elusive army kept to the hills and the brush and fired squarely into our compact striking forces. The best we could do was to occupy the cities after having expelled the enemy.⁷¹

⁶⁹UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1345. Cangé, général de brigade commandant provisoire des arrondissements de Léogane et Petit-Goâve au citoyen Delpech, commandant de l'arrondissement du Petit-Goâve n.d. (? brumaire An 11). No. 1345. Delpech, chef de bataillon, commandant de l'arrondissement du Petit-Goâve, Grand-Goâve et Miragoâne au général de brigade Cangé, 29 brumaire An 11. Also, No. 1345. Cangé, général de brigade, commandant en chef les forces armées en activité dans les arrondissements de Léogane et Petit-Goâve contre les ennemis de la liberté aux citoyens composant la garnison de la ville de Léogane, sans distinction de grades ni de couleurs, Léogane, 22 brumaire An 11.

⁷⁰UFL, Rochambeau Papers, Nos. 1228, 1243, 1269, 1306 and 1413. Letters from Delpech to Rochambeau, Petit-Goâve, 21, 24, 30 Oct.; 5 Nov.; 5 Dec. 1802. No. 1406. Pageot, général de brigade au général en chef Rochambeau, capitaine-général de la colonie, quartier général de Jacmel, 13 frimaire An 11.

⁷¹Lemonnier-Delafosse, Seconde campagne, p. 36

Such was the situation throughout the colony. Finally, by the end of December, the independent insurgent bands had cleared the way for Geffrard's entry into the South, and on 16 January his troops had temporarily captured Anse-à-Veau but were forced to retreat to the West.⁷²

No sooner had Laplume returned to les Cayes when a massive, and decisive, popular insurrection broke out at Tiburon. Unaware of Dessalines' alliance with Geffrard, the independent rebels, encamped in the Hotte and Macaya mountains and led by Gilles Bénech, Nicolas Régnier and Goman, had devised a collective plan to attack Tiburon. Plantation workers had been deserting in masses to join the insurgent bands, and they were now two thousand strong. Bénech and his two comrades were secretly aided by two mulatto officers, the one, Desravines, in charge of Tiburon, the other, Férou, in command at Cotteaux. Desravines had been covertly supplying them with munitions and "against orders, had diverted into rebel hands two ships carrying abundant food supplies."⁷³ Under the direction of Bénech, an old, experienced veteran in these kinds of operations and a

⁷²UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1554. Berger, chef de brigade, commandant de la place et du quartier au général Rochambeau, les Cayes, 2 pluviôse An 11. Before setting out, Dessalines had given Geffrard a sealed envelope, to be opened only when he had taken a southern port city of some importance. Having taken Anse-à-Veau, Geffrard opened the letter. Dessalines had promoted him to division general and chief commander of the forces in the South.

⁷³UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1525. Lecharpentier, adjutant à l'état major . . . au général en chef Rochambeau, capitaine-général, les Cayes, 27 nivôse An 11.

trained soldier, they had captured the city and held out until mid-February, then swiftly evacuated and made off with huge quantities of munitions as they forged their retreat.⁷⁴ For the time being, Férou dissimulated his defection and, from Cotteaux, agreed to march against them.⁷⁵

Instead of setting out immediately for Tiburon, Berger waited--one day too long. While on his way to Port-Salut to join with the national guard in an expedition against the rebel forces at Tiburon, a mass insurrection of plantation workers and national guard broke out right under his nose. They had prepared one ambush after another, pelleting his troops with bullets, falling rock and debris, forcing them back to les Cayes.⁷⁶ At this point, Férou made his position unequivocally clear and led the revolt at Cotteaux. On 1 February, Berger, renowned for his cruelties in the South, wrote to Rochambeau from les Cayes, stupidly amazed at what was happening:

These men who have risen today in insurrection have always conducted themselves in a manner deserving of praise for their leaders and the confidence of the government.⁷⁷

⁷⁴UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1577. Berger, chef de brigade, commandant du quartier au général en chef Rochambeau, les Cayes, 11 pluviôse An 11. B. Ardouin, Etudes, 5:livre 6, p. 83.

⁷⁵UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1486. Berger, chef de brigade, commandant de la place et du quartier au capitaine-général Rochambeau, les Cayes, 12 nivôse An 11.

⁷⁶UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1578. Berger, chef de brigade, commandant de quartier au capitaine-général Rochambeau, les Cayes, 12 pluviôse An 11.

⁷⁷Ibid.

What else did he expect? He went on to write in the same letter: "I am without forces, and I fear that this little insurrection at Port-Salut might spread." Indeed, it did. The insurgent blacks and their mulatto allies were now in armed revolt and striking at all points throughout the interior, from Tiburon as far as Port-Salut. At the same time, Armand Bérault, the central leader of the slave revolts at Platons in 1792-93, and Bazile, another popular leader of these early struggles and ex-officer of the Legion, had been agitating amongst the plantation workers of the Plaine-des-Cayes, inciting them to revolt.⁷⁸ So by now, the entire plain was in a state of insurrection as the black laborers began burning the plantations and utterly devastating the cane fields.⁷⁹ In the foothills outside the plain, Samedi Smith held Camp Périn along with another black leader, Guillaume Lafleur and one Lafredinière, a European white and ex-commander of the national guard who deserted during this period and now fought for the black revolution.⁸⁰

⁷⁸B. Ardouin, Etudes, 5:livre 6, p. 83. Madiou, Histoire d'Haiti, 2:404. Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 3:145. Sannon mistakenly includes Jacques Formon among these leaders in the Plaine-des-Cayes. It should be remembered that Formon was court-martialled and shot by Polverel's orders in November 1793 for refusing to submit to Rigaud's authority. See Ch. 7, p. 209 above.

⁷⁹UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1665. Berger, chef de brigade, commandant du quartier au capitaine-général Rochambeau, les Cayes, 10 ventôse An 11.

⁸⁰B. Ardouin, Etudes, 5:livre 6, p. 83. Madiou, Histoire d'Haiti, 2:406. Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 3:145. C. Ardouin, Essais, pp. 101-02.

This was the situation at the beginning of March when Geffrard made a second entry into the South, and it was the widespread insurrection of these black masses that made his entry possible. Independently mobilized and organized through marronage, this latest insurrection had effectively begun with the attack of Goman and Bénech at Tiburon; coordinated with the local mulatto and black officers, it rapidly became a general insurrection throughout the whole interior. On 5 March, Geffrard arrived in the Plaine-des-Cayes where he met with Férou, urging that they support and recognize Dessalines as commander-in-chief. The two military leaders immediately combined their forces, completely encircled les Cayes and kept the French immobilized.

At this point, it becomes difficult to determine exactly when and where the popular insurrectionary movement comes to an end as an autonomous force. The war was not yet over, nor was the popular army yet officially regimented and incorporated under the high command of Dessalines. Goman, Bénech and Régnier were still independently organized in the mountains around Tiburon and, for the time being, did not totally submit to any authority other than their own. This was a war unlike anything the French had ever experienced in Europe, or anywhere else, and by now almost the entire black population was in arms, fighting ferociously at every point along with their mulatto allies.

When Rochambeau received news of the critical state in which the French army in the South now found itself, he

sent twelve hundred of the freshly arrived European troops to Jérémie under the command of Sarrazin who was to take them directly to les Cayes by sea. Overly confident, he landed at Tiburon instead, expecting to wipe out the insurrectionary rebels who literally infested the area. Some three thousand plantation workers armed with sticks and stones for the most part, and perhaps only a hundred with rifles, vigorously attacked Sarrazin's troops every inch of the way in a torrent of falling rocks. Already, he had lost nearly three hundred of his men when the independent rebels were seconded by Bazile, sent out from the Plaine-des-Cayes by Férou and Geffrard.⁸¹ Losing time and men, Sarrazin requested a temporary ceasefire and desperately proposed to Bazile a mutual agreement whereby the winning party would arrange to care for the wounded and dying soldiers of the losing party. The blacks had nothing to gain from this proposal. Yet Bazile accepted the offer and, as Sarrazin pushed on, he and his troops began to gather the bodies that lay dying, administering treatment to the Europeans as to their own. One of them exclaimed: "By god, these blacks aren't the cannibals that we were made to believe!"⁸²

Out of the horrors of this war, the blacks made the distinction between the ordinary soldiers who were merely

⁸¹UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1835. Berger, chef de brigade, commandant de la place au général en chef Rochambeau, les Cayes, 11 floréal An 11. Madiou, Histoire d'Haïti, 3:11ff.

⁸²Ibid., 3:11-12 and B. Ardouin, Etudes, 5:livre 6, p. 83.

pawns in the hands of Bonaparte, fighting for the interests of an alien bourgeoisie with whom they had no kinship, and those who used their authority to commit countless acts of sadistic and wholesale murder against the black and mulatto population. These were treated in a manner befitting their crimes. Kerpoisson, Berger's chief executioner in the South, was one of them. While on his way back to les Cayes with armaments from Jérémie, his ship was intercepted by rebel barges awaiting him in the Anglais bay. The two captains who directed the siege, Bégon, a mulatto, and Aoua, a black, captured Kerpoisson, bound him up and sent him to the post commander at Anglais. Here they drowned him first, then literally butchered his body. With scarcely a breath of life left in him, they sent this monster to the Quatre Chemins crossroads just outside les Cayes, there to atone for his atrocities with the inscription on his back: "There are certain crimes that the wrath of the gods never pardons."⁸³

The next three months spelled utter defeat for the French. In April, they made an all-out but futile effort to smash the rebel forces. The yellow fever that had subsided somewhat, resurged. Famine began to take its toll in les Cayes where the French were without money, without medical supplies, without food. When Geffrard agreed to open the doors of the city for the entry of food supplies, the black market women from the plantations swarmed the streets, clandestinely exchanged their fruits and vegetables

⁸³Sannon, La guerre de l'indépendance, p. 39.

for gunpowder and carried it back under their dresses to the rebel camps.⁸⁴ By mid-June, general Brunet, now in charge of the French army in the South, began evacuating the sick with great difficulty. On the 28th, he wrote: "The rebels become more insolent by the day. I pursue them from time to time, but is useless . . ."85

The last French stronghold in the department was Grande-Anse, which now became the scene of a new insurrection. The black plantation laborers around Abricots and Cap Dame-Marie had risen in rebellion with a few local officers. The mass of them burned and completely devastated the region between these two towns and carried their insurrection as far as a quarter of a league from Jérémie. The worst of it all, wrote Brunet, "is that Grande-Anse affords these rebels twenty-five to thirty thousand black laborers, one quarter of whom have already waged war against Rigaud during the British occupation."⁸⁶ One of the rebel leaders, a hitherto unknown black by the name of Atlas, had taken over an old fortress along with over a hundred others, just below Cap Dame-Marie. When Berger arrived in the area, instead of finding the scouts from Jérémie that he was supposed to meet, he was relentlessly attacked for over a day and a half by the rebels under Atlas' command. Later he

⁸⁴Madiou, Histoire d'Haïti, 3:18.

⁸⁵UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1959. Le général Brunet au général en chef Rochambeau, les Cayes, 9 messidor An 11.

⁸⁶Ibid.

claimed to have slaughtered all 120 of them, leaving only three to escape, badly wounded. Actually, he had had no such chance. In his confusing report, he went on to state that, after twenty-four hours of fierce battle and no food, he set fire to the fortress during the night, forcing the rebels to evacuate. It was only then that he found the remainder of their munitions--116 rifles, a quantity of sabres and pistols, eleven packets of cartridges, enough ammunition for two hundred shots, and a full sack of cannon powder.⁸⁷ It was this popular initiative and the determination of the black population in the area of Grande-Anse, a center of revolutionary activity since the arrival of the French expedition in 1802, that had immobilized the French here until Dessalines could come to the South, reorganize the army and order a full-scale attack against Jérémie.

Arriving in the Plaine-des-Cayes on 5 July, Dessalines met the black and mulatto leaders of the South, some of them for the first time, and made a number of promotions. Gilles Bénech, Nicolas Régnier and Goman, the intrepid maroon chiefs who had in fact been responsible for the turning point of the war in the South, were still not officially incorporated into the regular ranks. Up to now, both Régnier and Goman had considered themselves colonels, and each wore a set of corresponding épaulettes. Bénech, the oldest and

⁸⁷UFL, Richambeau Papers, No. 1954. Rapport de la mission exécutée d'après des ordres du général de brigade Sarrazin, commandant l'arrondissement de Jérémie en date du 2 messidor An 11, certifié par Berger, 7 messidor An 11.

most experienced of the three, had none. To settle the issue, Dessalines rather crudely took from Régnier and Goman one épaulette each and gave them both to Gilles with these words: "You are [brigade] colonel, and Goman and Nicolas are battallion leaders." Disillusioned and hurt, Goman kept repeating over and over to his friends after Dessalines left for the West: "Nègre-là dimini moin," meaning in English, "That black has demoted me."

Goman continued his own struggle for independence long after the revolution. It was at the head of an armed community of blacks in the mountains of Grande-Anse that he died in 1820, as he had always lived--a maroon defending his own freedom against the onslaughts of established regimes.⁸⁸

After Dessalines' arrival in the South, the defeat of the French was but a foregone conclusion. Jérémie was evacuated in August, and on 17 October Geffrard took possession of les Cayes. In November, when Rochambeau finally capitulated at le Cap, the ill-fated expedition that had cost France the lives of over fifty thousand troops came to an end. In the name of slavery, she lost what had been the wealthiest and most flourishing colony in the Caribbean. On 1 January 1804, Dessalines published a declaration of independence. It was a formal acknowledgement of the compelling desire for freedom and self-determination inherent in those ordinary individuals of whom the black masses were composed. In their own way, they not only contributed to, but were the very foundation of Haiti's independence.

⁸⁸C. Ardouin, Essais sur l'histoire d'Haiti, pp. 108-09.

CONCLUSION

The revolution that had unleashed the pent-up energies of the slaves and that enabled their instinctive drive toward freedom to explode so fully had produced a profound transformation in the slaves themselves as they became the conscious agents of their own emancipation.

During the colonial period, the slaves had resisted their oppression in many ways. Certainly the most characteristic aspect of slave resistance was its aggressive, and sometimes armed, manifestation. But, whereas the few organized revolts that occurred had all been quickly crushed, marronage proved to be the most effective means of resistance. In itself a form of rebellion, marronage also provided the framework within which other types of resistance, namely voodoo and poisoning, could develop and proliferate. Herein lies the significance of the Macandal revolt of 1757-58. No other revolt of similar magnitude occurred until 1791. Once again, marronage and voodoo were used as organizational vehicles for revolt, while poisoning had lost its relevance as a means for the potential destruction of slavery.

By 1791, marronage had evolved. Though the term had gradually fallen into disuse, marronage as a practical reality had not suddenly disappeared. Influenced by the revolutionary situation in the colony, it necessarily became a distinctively

collective and highly political, but above all, aggressively armed movement engaged in guerilla warfare. That the colonists now called these maroons "rebels," "insurgents" or "brigands" merely underscores the revolutionary stage that marronage had reached. In the South, the Platons revolt had culminated in the formation of a vast maroon community numbering ten to twelve thousand men, women and children who were there because they wanted to be free. They called the territory they occupied the Kingdom of Platons, built homes for their families and chose their own ruler. More than that, at one point they even claimed full territorial rights for the land they had conquered. While some historians might prefer to consider the Platons community as an example of grand marronage--a maroon society seeking independence for itself as an isolated unit--the evidence has shown that it was in fact a constituent part of the developing revolutionary struggle toward general emancipation. In its new form, marronage continued to be a vital means of resistance throughout the revolution and, in the South, proved to be the decisive factor in defeating the French expeditionary forces that had come to restore slavery. Voodoo, on the other hand, had become a liability in a purely political sense, while it remained a powerful psychological and cultural force that contributed to and reinforced the determination of the blacks in their armed struggles for freedom.

Other elements in the revolution had changed as well. Not only had the slaves gained valuable military experience,

but they were also acquiring political education. The principal leaders of the Platons movement had originally demanded, as did Jean-François and Biassou in the North, the freedom of three to four hundred of their chief officers and secondary leaders. They did not demand the outright abolition of slavery; for this was not something that could be negotiated, as they knew as well as the colonists. But by demanding three free days per week for every slave (also the motive of the 1791 Port-Salut conspirators), they were aiming at an eventual general emancipation. To claim that the slave was no longer to be entirely the property of others, but a legal person with certain rights, was something entirely new within the context of colonial society. It would have created a contradictory situation that the slaves would have to resolve one way or another. The demand was not granted, but it marked an initial stage in the developing struggles of the slaves for total freedom. Negotiation thus served a purely tactical purpose, as in their demand for the emancipation of a limited number of their leaders and officers. In the midst of changing political conditions, the granting of freedom in small numbers even became a standard practice and had been used by Governor Blanchelande in the West in order to effect the general disarmament of the slaves that had fought with Rigaud and Beauvais. Polverel also used this method before finally establishing general emancipation.

In this sense, the early stages of the slave struggles throughout the colony were similar. However, the rebellions

in the North were led and directed entirely by the black leaders who commanded a solidly black army from the very beginning. In the other two provinces, the situation was dominated by the armed revolts of the mulattoes for political equality, and it was from these struggles, in which the black slaves participated with motives of their own, that the autonomous black movement emerged and strove continually to realize its aspirations within the overall context of mulatto authority in the West and virtual hegemony in the South. During the period of British occupation (1793-98), the blacks in the South were further isolated from the course of the revolution in the rest of the colony. Whereas in the North the blacks under Toussaint had rapidly mobilized themselves to defeat Villate and his followers in their bid for full control, in the South, believing their freedom was jeopardized, they had come forward to support Rigaud against the intrusions and usurpations of Sonthonax' delegation.

Other differing aspects of the black struggles in the three provinces lay in the matter of alliances. At the outset of the black revolt in the North, the forces under Jean-François and Biassou were closely allied with the counter-revolutionary French and with the Spanish, fighting in the name of freedom, but at the same time upholding the principles of monarchy and royalism. For Toussaint, this unholy alliance was merely one of convenience, and as soon as the National Convention sanctioned the abolition of slavery in San Domingo, he immediately abandoned his Spanish protectors,

left Jean-François and Biassou behind, and fought under the banner of the French republic. But because of the predominant authority of the mulattoes in the West, the independent black maroon leaders like Alaou and Dieudonné found it difficult to fully embrace the side Toussaint had chosen since, in their case, they would be subject to the high command of Beauvais and Rigaud who, they felt, opposed the extension of liberty and equality to the blacks. It is perhaps not so surprising, then, that both Hyacinthe and Dieudonné were suspected of looking to the British for arms, while Alaou accepted military aid from the Spanish as well as the French, but remained highly ambivalent and distrusted the mulatto generals.

In the South, as in the West, the slaves were originally allied with the mulattoes and free blacks in the confederate army. In some cases, the slaves may have been forced to follow the mulattoes, while in others they were swept into the revolt by promises of freedom, three free days per week, etc. The Port-Salut affair of 1791 indicated, however, that their alliance with the mulattoes later that year was in their own interest, and the Platons revolt of 1792-93 confirmed it. Here, they could rightly say (in words similar to those of Bauvais regarding his alliance with the royalists): we were never really the dupes of the mulattoes, but we had to conquer our rights and needed aid. These gentlemen offered us guns and freedom, and we used their guns to win our freedom while they thought they were

using us.

During the first struggles of the slaves in all parts of the colony, the popular leaders thoroughly embodied the aspirations of their followers, as the masses and their leaders were united around the single objective of freedom. It was during the periods of negotiation, however, that conflicts arose in the relations between rank and file and popular leaders; these the masses followed so long as they continued to represent commonly shared goals. And when the slaves saw that their leaders began to diverge from those goals, they reacted with violence. Such was the case in the North when Jean-François and Biassou entered into negotiations with the civil commissioners and in the South, at Macaya, when Armand, Martial and Gilles Bénech accepted Polverel's offer of freedom (transmitted by Rigaud) provided they join the Legion, police the countryside and send their comrades back to their plantations; and this was at a time when general emancipation had not yet been proclaimed in the South.

Only Toussaint was able to maintain the undivided confidence and support of the black masses, even after he had become commander-in-chief of the San Domingo army. But when he began to invite the émigré colonists back to the colony and farmed out the sequestered plantations among the black generals, insisting upon the preservation of large estates, it was to Moïse that the blacks turned for leadership and a guarantee that the future provide them with the means to

realize their individual aspirations. Having eroded their confidence, Toussaint also opened the way for his own downfall. So it was Dessalines who emerged as the one to channel the desire of the masses for self-determination into a program for national independence.

The war for independence was in itself a product of developing political conflicts and the changing nature of the San Domingo revolution. Until the arrival of general Hédouville, there had been no hostility between Toussaint and Rigaud. But through a careful use of deceit and political manipulation, Hédouville played one off against the other and managed to drive a wedge between the two to the point where their aims and interests finally became irreconcilable. When the French agent left, the damage had been done, and civil war became unavoidable. Toussaint's victory over Rigaud thus placed the black general in a position of supreme command that was reinforced by his occupation of the Spanish colony and by his constitution. While Toussaint aimed to arrive at a new entente, based on a more solid relationship with France, the French revolution was moving continually to the right. For Bonaparte, it was now a question of setting the stage for the restoration of slavery. The arrival of his armed expedition, followed by Toussaint's deportation, the news that slavery had been restored in Guadeloupe and the beginning of a general disarmament of the black troops had made it clear to the masses that the French had come to take away their freedom. Independence thus

became a political imperative, and it was the former slaves that provided the very foundation of that goal and the driving force that led to its achievement.

Permanent freedom from colonial slavery had been won through independence. But the masses had not yet won the freedom to till their own soil. In the North, both Dessalines and Christophe had generally favored the preservation of the large estates that had formed the base of the colonial economy. The task of land distribution was never seriously undertaken until the presidency of Alexander Pétion (1807-1818) when the persistent demands of the Haitian peasantry for small property ownership and family enterprise were only partially realized. They were still left to struggle for economic survival against the dominant interests of the black and mulatto élites in whose hands the large coffee estates remained intact and who then held a monopoly of the country's single export crop. Today, the Haitian peasantry that forms 90 percent of the population continues to subsist in a country fallen prey to new forms of imperialist exploitation and whose internal social structure still suffers from a persistent colonial legacy. Technology and foreign capital alone cannot provide the answers to the pressing problems of Haiti's rural population. These answers must come from the creative energies and the particular social relations and productive capacities of the peasant masses, or they will not come at all.

APPENDIX A¹

INTERROGATION OF THE NEGRESS ASSAIM

Extract of the minutes from the register
of the Tribunal of le Cap

27 September 1757

ASKED about her name, age, status and residence.

She said her name is Assaim, negress slave of Sieur Valette, planter at la Souffrière; does not know her age and is of Poulard nation.

ASKED why she was arrested and has appeared before us.

She said that her master, having lost many slaves whose bodies had become swollen² ([this] having ceased for about a year) and that a slave named François and a small negress named Victoire were smitten with the same illness, which caused her master much chagrin, she, the interrogated, said to him that if he wanted to give her a pass, she would go get some remedies from a slave of Sieur Lamanay whose name she does not know, but who is still alive, and who her master knows, because he had been brought to him a year ago by a free black, Diola, of la Souffrière who said that this slave could tell him what it was that was making his slaves die. Her master gave her a pass for one day to go and find that slave and, while leaving her master's plantation, she met at the gate the free black, Pompée, a farmer of Sieur Deseuttres and who is her friend, because his wife had mentioned one of [Assaim's] children by name. He said to her, "Hello my friend, where are you going like that?" She said that she was going to the Lamanaie [sic] plantation to find a slave who would give her some remedies to cure her master's slaves. Pompée told her that that slave had died, that it was no longer necessary for her to go to the Lamanay

¹AN, Arch. Col. C9^A 102. (Edited and translated by author. All future translations of documents presented in the following appendices are mine.) See Ch. 2, pp. 62-63 above.

²A state resembling dropsy perhaps.

plantation, but that he knew of a slave named Jean on the Laplaine plantation at Limbé who was a good doctor and who would give her the drugs she needed. She replied that she did not know the way. Pompée told her he was going to show her the way, and they went together . . . , and Pompée led her as near as the guava trees in the savanna of the Laplaine plantation, and then he told her to address herself on his behalf to the guard at the gate and to ask him to show her the quarters of the slave Jean. She found an old slave at the gate whose name she does not know but who is of the Bambara nation, who limps and who has big cuts on his face,³ and whom she saw yesterday in prison. She addressed herself to him on Pompée's behalf and asked him to show her Jean's quarters, but she did not tell him why. The slave led her into the savanna and showed her Jean's quarters from afar and then went back. She found the slave Jean at the door of his quarters, entered with Jean and found three negresses from le Cap who are merchants and who sell poultry and salted meat. She knows the three negresses by sight, but does not know their names.

FINALLY Assaim was reprimanded and told that she [could] undoubtedly name them since she stayed with them for a few days.

She said that one was called Marie-Jeanne and the other Madeleine, that the negress Marie-Jean was of the Niamba nation and the negress Madeleine of the Nago nation; that they belong to le Cap merchants whose names she does not know. When she entered, the slave Jean said to her, "There is someone who sent you here"; she said to him, "You must be a sorcerer to know that I was sent here"; he replied that he knew for a long time that she would be coming. She asked him how he could know that, and he told her that two or three days ago he had seen Pompée, who told him that there were two sick slaves on her plantation, and that when he would see her, he would tell her to address herself to him. She told him that it was true that Pompée had addressed himself to her to help her find some remedies for her master's slaves. Jean said to her that he would give her some, provided she stay four or five days in his quarters, so that he could go and find the herbs that he needed. She said to him that she would stay four days since that was what he wanted, provided that he give her good remedies, which he promised. During this time the two negresses Marie-Jeanne and Madeleine remained in Jean's quarters . . . , but the negress who she believed belonged to Sieur Armand left the same day and did not know that she was carrying out drugs; but the negress Madeleine told her that a slave of the Laplaine plantation named Coffi, who is always running away,

³In all likelihood tribal scars.

had given her some herbs to give to two of her master's slaves, a man and a woman, who were sick. But she learned since then that these two slaves died after taking this drug; that the slave Jean, at whose quarters she arrived on Friday, went to find some herbs on Sunday, and he brought the herbs into his quarters; that they were blue verbena, wild raspberry and pois puants with their roots, which he piled into a wooden container in front of Assaim, the interrogated; that he mixed an egg yolk into them along with boiler scrapings, and made it all into a ball as fat as his finger was black, and that he gave it to her telling her to administer it to her master's slaves. In fact, she said that this ball was about as fat as half a wrist and that he told her to administer a potion--as big as the tip of a finger--to the sick slaves . . . and that that would cure them. On the Monday morning, she left with this drug and returned to her master's plantation after dinner-time. As soon as she arrived, she gave the drug to the sick slaves, [and] it caused the slaves to have a heavy stomach and made the little negress constipated and made her swell up; that five or six days later, while going to the butcher shop of a mulatto named Aisson she met Pompée who carried her meat. He asked her how it went. She told him that it was not going very well; that since she had given Jean's drug to the two sick slaves, it was going worse. Pompée told her to continue, which is what she did and, having given the little negress Victoire an enema that night, and wanting to put her on the chamber pot, she became stiff, and having put her back on her [bed], she began frothing at the nose and she suddenly died. She did not give any at all to the other slave because, at any moment, he was going to stool, having a continual heavy stomach, and that he became less swollen and dehydrated, and thus he died two or three days after the little negress. Her master did not know that she had given drugs to the slaves, because the slave Jean had forbidden her to say anything about it to anyone. But suspecting that she had given them something, he said he wanted to know what it was and had her arrested, and when she saw that she was going to be arrested, she threw what Jean had given her, which was wrapped up in a sack, on the other side of the fence into the coffee grove. Her master said to her that she had something in her pocket, and she said she had thrown it away and she would show him the next day; that they looked everywhere, but did not find it, because it was dark; and the next morning, all the slaves and she, as well, looked for it and found a sack which was lodged in a coffee tree; and under the coffee tree they found the big packet dangling from its string; and against a lemon tree they found the rest of the drug which Jean had given her; and on the other side of the fence [another packet] which Jean had also given her. Her master asked her to tell the whole truth, and she told him the above mentioned.

She said that one day while walking with Pompée to his place, he told her that all the whites of la Souffrière were

scoundrels, that they inflicted cruelties on their slaves without any legal authority when they suspected them of poisoning their slaves, and that one day her master would do as much to her; that it was necessary for her to find justice. She said that she did not know justice; that on another day, about a year ago, when she went to see Pompée during the [absence] of his wife who went to visit her mother who lives in le Cap, Pompée told her that she was a fool, that she had nursed three of her master's children and that he should grant her freedom. She told him that she got along well with her master; and Pompée told her there were black doctors who gave drugs to stupefy the minds of whites to make them grant liberty; that all the free blacks--men and women--used [this drug] to procure their liberty. She told him she did not want to use those drugs.

She said that it is the free blacks who spoil the slaves and give them bad advice against the whites.

ASKED about what happened after she was arrested.

She said that two or three days later, Sieur Deseuttres had come to her plantation. Her master had her taken to his plantation and, upon arriving, she found the said Sieur Deseuttres and told him that it was Pompée who was the cause of her misfortune. . . . The next day he came to her master's plantation with Sieur Dufau, and they wrote down all that she told them. And there they read to her the declaration which is submitted in [this] trial, and she said that the declaration was authentic and that it was the same she had given to her master.

ASKED how she knew that the two slaves to whom the negress Madeleine, Nago, had given the drug that Coffi gave her were dead.

She said that when she was arrested by her master after the death of the two slaves, her master, wanting to know if it was true that she had been to the quarters on the Laplaine plantation to obtain the drugs she had given to the slaves, sent her to the [said] plantation, accompanied by a slave named Perrot; that while passing in front of the church on the way, she met the said negress Madeleine, Nago, who was at the market selling salted meat; that Madeleine asked her how the drug that Jean had given her was working; and she told her that it went badly and that the two slaves were dead. Madeleine, Nago, told her that the drug which Coffi had given her had caused her master's slaves to die; that she continued along her way to the quarters on the Laplaine plantation with Perrot; that they went to Jean's quarters; and that she did not tell him at first that the two slaves had died; that she asked him for other remedies; and that he gave her a small calabash and a big calabash, which are the same as those used in making syrup; that he told her to put them in hot ashes, then to extract the juice and have [them]

drink it; and that she then returned with the slave Perrot; and that she did not tell the slave Jean that the two slaves were dead, because her master had forbidden her so as not to scare the slave Jean.

ASKED why she did not tell her master when she got back the first time from Jean's quarters that she was bringing some remedies.

She said that the slave Jean had forbidden her by telling her that the whites must not have knowledge of those drugs.

POINTED OUT to her that she should have thought that these were bad drugs that the slave Jean had given her since he did not want them to be discovered, and that she should not have administered them without her master's knowledge.

She said that when she left Jean's quarters she felt dizzy and did not know what she was doing, and that he had assured her that they were good drugs, which made her decide to administer them.

POINTED OUT to her that she knew the bad effects of the drugs after having tested them the first time.

She said that it was Pompee's advice that convinced her to continue their usage, all the more so since the slave François--who was badly swollen before having taken them--became less swollen all of a sudden . . . ; that he could scarcely walk before, and that he began to walk afterwards.

ASKED why she told Pompée that the slaves were getting worse, since she had just said that the slave François was getting better.

She said that she told Pompée that as far as she could see, François was getting better, but that the negress was getting worse; and that Pompée told her to continue.

ASKED why she kept continuing to give it to the little negress since she saw that it was making her more ill.

She said that, as the little negress was vomiting worms, she thought, finally, that it would help her.

ASKED why, when she was arrested, she threw away the packet of drugs.

She said that Jean had told her to throw the packet away when her master would have her arrested.

ASKED why the slave Jean had told her that her master would have her arrested.

She said that the slave Jean told her that her master would have her arrested.

ASKED why the slave Jean had told her that her master would have her arrested, since he assured her that he only gave good remedies. . . .

She said that the slave Jean told her that, supposing her master had her arrested, to throw the packet away.

POINTED OUT to her that since this slave suspected or had her understand that she could be arrested, that she should have thought that he was not giving her good drugs.

She said that this slave swore and affirmed that he was giving her good drugs, and that if they did not produce a good effect, it would only be then that she could be arrested.

POINTED OUT to her that her answer is contradictory; that it is not possible that this slave could attest with such assurance to the benignacy of this drug and at the same time forbid her to speak of it to her master.

She said that Jean had forbidden her because he said that it was not advisable that her master have knowledge of it.

ASKED if she did not see any other slaves in Jean's quarters while she stayed there; and who were the slaves in front of whom he prepared the drugs.

She said she only saw one slave in Jean's quarters on the Laplaine plantation, whose name she does not know and who is a big, stout caretaker, whose legs pain him and who walks with a stick; and in front of whom the slave Jean prepared his drugs; and that he put all his drugs in a small box which was at the bottom of his cabin.

WAS PRESENTED to her the sack containing the four packets placed in the clerk's office, and she was asked to identify them.

She said she recognized the small sack made of fine cloth as being the same in which the three packets that Jean had given her were placed; that the largest packet . . . was entirely composed in Jean's quarters and that he gave her the packet in order to recognize the herbs . . . ; that the second packet, which is the size of an almond, had to be placed in the same sack with the big packet; that when she would go to look for herbs, it would indicate to her whether or not they were the appropriate ones; that the slave Jean carries them with him every time he goes to pick herbs; that as to the third packet containing a brown powder, it is the

remainder of the drug which he had given her to give to the two slaves, and which he composed in front of her with an herb that he calls sage and which is milky and has white flowers; pois puants; verbena; and wheat herb; that the fourth packet which is fully as big as a finger was made by her, under orders from her master when she was arrested; and that she told him she knew the composition of the drug which she had given to the slaves.

She said that the black powder that Jean gave her, as well as that which she made, is composed solely of the milky herb that she calls sage, mixed with an egg yolk and boiler scrapings; but that to use it, one mixes it with pois puants, blue verbena and wheat herb--all boiled together. Into this concoction, one mixes the black powder, and is taken either as a drink or an enema.

2 HOUR RECESS

ASKED what the slave Jean told her when he caused her shoulder to bleed.

She said that he said it was for her well being, and that she was not hurt.

ASKED if he drew a lot of blood, and what instrument he used.

She said that he used a piece of a glass bottle, that he drew a few drops of blood and that he then rubbed her shoulder with a black powder like gunpowder, which made her bleed a little more; that he scratched the powder with his knife and placed the blood into a small piece of ram's horn the length of a finger; that he closed the end with a stopper . . . and put it in his pocket.

ASKED if, upon Pompée's sollicitation, or for any other reason, she did not give the drugs to her master's slaves to poison them.

She said no; that she only knew Pompée for one year and that she does not know in the least if the first slaves died by poison or not; and that she only gave drugs to the slave François and the small negress Victoire.

ASKED if she did not follow the advice of Pompée, if she did not give drugs to her master in order to induce him to grant her freedom.

She said that she never gave any drugs to her master, that it is true that a year ago Pompée told her that when the whites live too long, the slaves who were waiting for their freedom gave them drugs to make them die sooner; that since she had nursed three of her master's children, she had to make him take some drugs, because surely he would grant her freedom; that the whites only granted it when they were ready

to die; that Pompée, seeing that she did not want to consent to what he proposed, said to her: "Well! So much the worse for you since you do not want to become free"; that some time later, Pompée, seeing that she still felt the same way, told her that she must propose to her master that he sell her and that he would lend her the money to buy her freedom; but that she did not want to consent to this proposition, because she got along well with her master.

ASKED if Pompée did not advise her to poison her master's slaves ~~to force~~ him to abandon his plantation at la Souffrière and to sell her.

She said no.

ASKED why she continued to see Pompée, since he gave her the bad advice of poisoning her master.

She said that for one year she no longer went to Pompée's quarters and that, having established himself at another place near Sieur Lamanay, she met Pompée at the gate when she was going to look for some remedies, and that Pompée mentioned the slave Jean.

ASKED why she did not warn her master of the bad advice that Pompée had given her, and did not warn him that he should distrust that black.

She said that she considered what Pompée had told her to be like the ramblings of a drunk man and that, of all he told her, she did not take any of it into account.

APPENDIX B¹

BOIS-CAIMAN AND THE AUGUST REVOLT

The following is an extract of an address of the Colonial Assembly of San Domingo, dated 3 November 1791, signed by its commissioners, to the National Assembly in France:

The General Assembly of San Domingo, after having established itself at Léogane, had designated the city of le Cap to hold its sessions. The deputies made their way there to fulfill their mission.

Some of them arrived on the 16th in the district of Limbé, six leagues from le Cap. There they witnessed a fire that broke out in the case à bagasse on the Chabaud plantation.² The arsonist was a commandeur (the head slave or foreman of the field workers) from the Desgrieux plantation. The slave, armed with a sabre, fled. M. Chabaud opened pursuit and reached him. A combat ensued between them, and the slave was wounded. He was captured and put in irons.

Interrogated . . . , he stated that all the commandeurs, coachmen, domestics and other slaves of the neighboring plantations in whom was placed the utmost confidence, have formed a conspiracy to set fire to the plantations and to slaughter all the whites. He designated as leaders certain slaves from his master's plantation [Desgrieux], four from the Flaville plantation located in Acul, three leagues from le Cap, and the slave Paul, commandeur of the Blin plantation, at Limbé.

Some members of the municipal government of Limbé went to M. Chabaud's place. The same questions were put to the slave who set the fire and the same answers were given. The municipal officials drew up a written

¹See Ch. 4, pp. 105-09 above.

²Bagasse is the remaining straw of the sugar cane after it has been processed through the mill. This straw was commonly used for fuel. Debien, Les colons, p. 332, n. 3. The case à bagasse is therefore the cabin or shed in which the straw of the sugar cane was stored.

statement, sent it to the Provincial Assembly of the North, warned the planters of the district and gave the manager of the Flaville plantation the names of the slave conspirators who were at his place, suggesting that he apprehend them and send them to the le Cap prison.

The manager, a sensitive and mild mannered person, more confident than suspicious, assembled the slaves under his authority, conveyed to them the information received from the municipality, told them that he could not believe such an atrocious conspiracy to be possible and offered them his own head if they so desired it. All the slaves replied that the statement made by the Desgrieux commandeur was false and swore an inviolable loyalty to him. He had the weakness, [however], of believing them. This excess of confidence has ruined us.

The municipal government of Limbé requested that M. Planteau, manager of the Blin plantation, present his slave commandeur for questioning. Under interrogation, [Paul] replied that the accusation brought against him was false and slanderous, that, filled with gratitude for the goodness of his master who extended him renewed acts of kindness every day, one would never see him involved in plots hatched against the existence of whites and their property.

Under cover of this perfidious declaration and upon the assurance M. Planteau gave that this slave merited confidence, he was released.

Things remained in this state until the 21st, when the public authorities of Limbé, upon the request of the municipality, went to the Desgrieux plantation to arrest the cook who was denounced as one of the principal leaders.

The slave fled, went off to find Paul from the Blin plantation and, in agreement with the other conspirators, they prepared the iron and the torch destined for the execution of their horrible projects . . . 3

In his Rapport sur les troubles de Saint-Domingue, Garran-Coulon quotes the declaration made before the municipality of Limbé by François, a slave from the Chapotin plantation who was among those setting fire to part of the Chaubaud plantation and who was arrested on the night of the 20th.

³A rough draft of the beginning of this address, with corrections and marginal insertions, is found in AN DXXV 66, 666. The completed address, in proper handwritten form, is in DXXV 66, 667. It was delivered to the National Assembly in France on 30 November 1791 and exists in printed form in DXXV 56, 550. All future references to this document will use the latter archival reference.

In his declaration, François states:

'On Sunday, 14 August, on the Lenormand [de Mézy] plantation at Morne-Rouge, a large assembly of slaves was held, comprised of two delegates from all of the plantations of Port-Margot, Limbé, Acul, Petite-Anse, Limonade, the North Plain, Quartier-Morin, Morne-Rouge, etc., etc. The purpose of this assembly was to fix the date for the insurrection that had been planned for a long time. They nearly agreed that the conspiracy should take place that very night; but the slaves went back on this decision, because, upon reflecting, they reasoned that a project conceived in one evening would be difficult to execute that very night.'

Garran-Coulon states, as well, that in the declaration

François adds that public papers were read to the assembled slaves by a mulatto or quarteroon who was unknown to him and who announced that the King and the National Assembly had accorded them three days of freedom per week; that the white planters were opposed to this and that they must await the arrival of troops who would come to enforce the execution of this decree; that this was the opinion of the majority, but that the slaves from some of the plantations in Acul and Limbé wanted, at any cost, to begin the war against the whites before the arrival of the troops.

Garran-Coulon also refers to memoirs written by colonists at this time which indicate that the number of slave delegates to the assembly was two hundred, all of them commandeurs.

It seems clear that this incident constituted the beginning of the insurrection, planned for the following week. Moreover, the slave François does mention in his declaration cited by Garran-Coulon that some of the slaves from Limbé and Acul wanted to begin the war immediately. Fire was set to the Chabaud plantation two nights later. The French historian, Gabriel Debien, raises some doubt, however, as to whether the Bois Caïman conspiracy organized on the night of 14-15 August was in fact that which was denounced by the slaves captured in the Chabaud incident. He erroneously situates the Chabaud affair on the night of the 11th (as does Garran-Coulon who, in this particular case, does not document the date with any reference to a primary source) and confuses the sequence of events:

⁴Garran-Coulon, Rapport, 2:211-12.

⁵Ibid., 2:212.

The affair on the Chabaud plantation revealed a conspiracy. To be sure! But there had been talk here and there of a conspiracy since 1789. This time again, no one believed in the danger.

However, during the night of 14-15 August on the le Normand plantation at Morne-Rouge, the commandeurs of the plantations formed an assembly. Who were they? How many were they? Was this assembly one of those denounced by the Chabaud slaves, or was it organized as a reprisal against the descent of the le Cap, maréchaussée on the Chabaud estate? One does not know what to answer. There is no evidence permitting one to believe that it was a very big conspiracy. . . .⁶

All of these are legitimate questions if one accepts 11 August as the date of the Chabaud incident. However, at least three archival sources refer to the occurrence of this incident during the week prior to the outbreak of the insurrection of 22-23 August. One document begins by stating that

It was in Limbé, on the Chabaud plantation, that the first signal for the incendiary revolt was given on the night of 17-18 August. A slave commandeur from the Desgrieux plantation, a mulatto slave of M. Chapôtin and one other had set fire to the case à bagasse which was soon reduced to ashes. But the commandeur of the Desgrieux plantation was immediately arrested, and his declarations warned numerous planters of the district of horrible plots ready to be executed, saving them from betrayal and death.

A letter written from le Cap and dated 27 September 1791 also refers to a prelude to the insurrection during the one week prior to the 22-23 August outbreak:

It was on 23 August, at midnight, that the carnage began. We had already unmistakably seen the prelude to this bloody scene eight days earlier with the burning of a sugar plantation at Port-Margot; we had even learned, through the statements made by the guilty ones, that a massive attack was being prepared. . . .

⁶Debien, Les colons, p. 333.

⁷AN DXXV 78, 772, KK 178. Renseignements sur la position actuelle du Limbé depuis le commencement de la révolte, le Cap, 1 oct. 1791.

⁸AN DXXV 78, 772. Letter from le Cap, 27 September 1791.

Probably, the fire to which the author refers at Port-Margot was in fact the one which broke out at the Chabaud plantation, given the proximity of Limbé to Port-Margot and the date--eight days prior to the night of the 23rd, or 15 August.

The report of the Civil Commissioner, Roume, also refers to this incident placing its occurrence on the night of 16-17 August on the Chabaud plantation in Limbé. When the arsonists were brought before the municipal government, they confessed to a conspiracy which was to be executed on the night of 24-25 August. Roume also states that for several weeks, slave delegations had assembled on Sundays to work out together the plans for this destructive project.⁹

In addition to these documents, numerous accounts published after the revolution corroborate the date as well as the identity of the participants.¹⁰ Pamphile Lacroix states that a fire broke out at the Chabaud plantation at mid-August; at the same time, the slaves of the Lagoscette plantation in a neighboring district attempted to kill the manager. Léon Deschamps states that the incident occurred on the 16th, and named Paul Blin, as well as the cook on the Desgrieux plantation, as the leaders denounced by the slave captured on the Chabaud plantation. Pauléus Sannon cites the 3 November address of the Colonial Assembly, situating the event on the 16th.

In light of the information provided in these documents, Debien's questions can be answered and the sequence of events clearly established. The plans for the insurrection had been underway several weeks before the actual outbreak, as mentioned in Roume's report. The final plans were confirmed at the mass assembly of 14-15 August on the Lenormand plantation, and the date was fixed, at the earliest, for 22-23 August. The agreement reached was sanctified by the famous and awesomely impressive voodoo ceremony in Bois-Caïman. Those who set fire to a part of the Chabaud plantation either misunderstood the instructions or insisted upon executing their part of the plans for the revolt at the first possible moment. In either case, the event occurred somewhere between the 15th at the earliest and the 17th at the latest, only a few days subsequent to the 14 August assembly where the plans were set.

⁹AN DXXV 3, 31. Précis historique de la révolution de Saint-Domingue, 3 brumaire, 3^e année française, p. 9.

¹⁰Lacroix, Mémoires, 1:89. Léon Deschamps, La Constituante, p. 247. Sannon, Histoire de Toussaint, 1:89-90.

Nor was this the only incident to occur prematurely. A letter written from le Cap by M. Testard to M. Cormier in le Havre contains extracts of two letters which he had received from le Havre. The author of the first letter quoted by M. Testard refers to correspondence from le Cap all just prior to 25 August, the day on which the insurrection broke out in the North Plain district. This correspondence revealed an incident occurring on the Vaudreuil plantation in the North Plain:

The commandeur . . . was taken by surprise by the manager while setting fire to part of the cane fields; the other slaves, upon seeing the manager struggling with the commandeur, caught the latter who confessed having been influenced by a free mulatto.

The second letter contained in that written by M. Testard reveals that twenty-eight slaves had deserted the Vaudreuil plantation and had entered marronage. Three of them were captured and had revealed the conspiracy.¹¹

The information contained in the latter letter deserves special attention insofar as it provides one more piece of evidence to substantiate the argument that marronage not only contributed to the massive slave revolt of August but also constituted the very framework within which that revolt was conceived and organized.

¹¹AN, DXXV 46, 432. Lettre écrite par M. Testard à M. Cormier, contenant l'extrait de deux lettres qu'il a reçues du Havre, le Cap, 26 oct. 1791. The reference which the slave makes to a free mulatto in the first letter quoted by M. Testard, as well as the reference to a mulatto or quarteron in the declaration of the slave François, must be considered in the context of the methods used to interrogate slaves. The easiest thing to do under these circumstances would be to blame it all on the mulattoes. No evidence exists, however, to indicate that the free mulattoes had any part in the original planning and organization of the revolt. The coalition that was formed later between themselves and the blacks under Jean-François was one of mutual convenience only.

APPENDIX C¹

DECLARATIONS OF THE SLAVE ANTOINE
AND SIEUR FABVRE

Extract of the minutes from the register of
the Provincial Assembly of the South

25 January 1791

On this day, a special session of the municipal government was convened to discuss a declaration made by Sieur Fabvre, planter of the district of March-à-terre, before Sieur Dumont, district attorney of the said municipality of Port-Salut, at whose office he arrived at 7:00 a.m., where an official statement was prepared. This statement will remain in the archives.

At 11:00 a.m., a slave named Antoine, belonging to M. Masson Duhard, was brought forward. The said slave, creole, was caught on the road vis-à-vis the gate of Sieur Alabré, senior, by Joseph Alabré, one of his legitimate children.

Interrogated on the purpose of the slave gathering mentioned in Sieur Fabvre's declaration, the said slave answered in conformity with what he declared before M. Montier, M. Richard and M. Alabré. Hereafter, we have copied his declaration verbatim.

Declaration made by the said Antoine, belonging to M. Masson Duhard, arrested on the said road by the children of M. Alabré.

DISTRICT LEADERS

On the plantation of:

M. Masson Duhard
M. Fabvre
M. Lafosse
Mme. Merlet

Dominique
Zamoré
Félix
la Saint-Jean

¹AN, DXXV 63, 638. See Ch. 6, pp. 155-56 above.

M. Balix (from les Ravines)
M. Fournier

Paris; Jean-Louis
Jean-Philippe;
Jean-François

In the name of the slaves on the plantations of each district, the said leaders were to demand of their masters three free days per week. This demand was to be made at some point this week. He could not give the precise date, and stated that during last night's assembly, the slaves were to fix the date, the hour and the moment, and that each district was to do likewise. The declarant stated that Jean-Claude Lateste is supposed to have said on Sunday at M. Masson, Duhard's place that the King had granted the slaves three free days per week, and that the said Jean-Claude is supposed to have said that the mulattoes were saying that the whites were the only obstacle preventing the application of this decree. The declarant stated, as well, that the slaves of the Plaine-du-Fond were armed with rifles and pistols in the region of Savanettes. He also declared that the ringleaders were on the plantations of M. Lafosse and the widow, Mme. Merlet.

Declaration certified in conformity with the statement of the said slave Antoine in the presence of the undersigned witnesses.

Signed upon presentation: Alabr ; Richard; Montier;
Domont, district attorney.

25 January 1791

The said slave Antoine, while making his declaration, had one of the members of the municipality called to the bar, and declared before him that prior to reaching their camp, the mulattoes had assured the blacks that they were going to fight the whites to obtain three free days per week; that the blacks of the Plaine-du-Fond had offered to join their camp; and that they had refused this offer for fear that some harm might befall them.

He also declared that when the mulattoes had abandoned their camp, they had told the blacks that if the whites accorded them three free days per week, they would also accord three free days per week to the blacks; but that it was their concern to act on their own behalf; and he declared that the black slaves of each plantation in particular had thereafter resolved to present their demand on one day this week and that if the whites refused to grant their demand, they would attack and slaughter them.

Signed upon presentation: Dumont, district attorney;
Delamotte Flammant, secretary.

Signed: Collet, interim president
Berrel, mayor
Reffurville, district attorney
Beaudequien, notary

On this day, 25 January 1791, at 7:00 a.m., Sieur Fabvre appeared before the district attorney of the municipality of Port-Salut. He declared in the presence of M. Buisson, planter of this district, that a considerable number of slaves not belonging to him came to his place last night around 2:00 a.m.; that he estimated the number of slaves to be two hundred; that they encircled the slave quarters of the commandeur and carried him off by force, along with three other slaves; that they wanted to take the rest of the slaves with them, but these slaves escaped into the brush where they hid.

The commandeur and the three other slaves carried off by force had the good fortune to escape and arrived back at the plantation all out of breath: the above-mentioned band of slaves proposed going to round up the slaves on the plantations of the widow, Mme. Merlet, M. Lafosse, M. Dumont, etc. and were armed with machetes, sticks, lances and, a few of them, with pistols.

The slaves of the said declarant, Sieur Fabvre, recognized in this band of insurgents several slaves whose names were as follows:

Dominique, Jean-Philippe, Hiacinte, Quiouquiou, Samedy; all belonging to Sieur Masson Duhard, residing in France and who upon his departure named Sieurs Comneau and D'Arboust, uncle, as his agents and Sieur Jadouin as his manager-overseer.

Jupiter and Etienne, belonging to Sieur Fournier, resident planter at the place called les Ravines.

Jean-Louis and Charles, belonging to Sieur Michel Balix, residing in France.

La Bonté, belonging to M. Lafosse.

The case appearing to be very serious and clearly suggesting an insurrection, we have considered it appropriate to call for public assistance and to send out well armed troops.

Signed upon presentation: Fabvre; Buisson; Dumont, district attorney.

Verified in conformity with presentation. Signed: Dumont, district attorney; Delmotte Flammant, secretary.

Signed: Collet, interim president
Berrel, mayor
Reffurville, district attorney
Beaudequien, notary

APPENDIX D¹

GRANDE-ANSE MOVEMENT DOCUMENTS

Declaration of citizeness Magdelon

Citizeness Magdelon, a plantation worker on the Parouty plantation in the Fond Rouge quarter, wife of the said Jean-Louis, conducteur on the same plantation, declares that the said Izidor, conducteur on the Petit Gas [sic] plantation² in the same quarter and who has already been executed, came to the Parouty plantation to tell her husband [son homme], Jean-Louis, that the commander Dommage had sent him to engage him to revolt against French government. At the time, Jean-Louis replied that he was not accustomed to revolting and that he strove to respect and obey those persons in a position to give him good advice; this occurred around mid-July 1802.³

¹UFL, Rochambeau Papers, Encls. of 1147 and 1134. See Ch. 9, pp. 302-03 and nn. 56 and 58 above.

²Citizen Petitgo was arrested and sent to Rochambeau as a person detrimental to the public interest by virtue of his conduct and the laxity of surveillance on his plantation, considered to be "a refuge and a retreat for assassins and vagabonds." UFL, Rochambeau Papers, No. 1124. Le chef de brigade, commandant de la place par interim l'arrondissement au général divisionnaire Rochambeau, commandant les départements de l'Ouest et du Sud, Jérémie, 8 vendémiaire An 11.

³It is possible that Jean-Louis was lying under the pressures of the interrogation. His reply is typical of that given by slaves under similar circumstances in the pre-abolition days and by black workers after abolition. If he did not cover for himself, he would have been shot or hanged. Assaim, the slave woman accused of poisoning in the Macandal affair of 1757-58, also claimed that she only listened to persons giving "good advice." See Appendix A, pp. 329-36 above. In the case of Jean-Louis, it should be remembered that the Parouty plantation to which he belonged was among the five burned by the maroons of Jean Panier's band, who had "friends" on the same plantations they burned. See Ch. 9, pp. 301-02 and n. 52 above.

Written in the presence of the undersigned: Parouty; Callard; Jn. Thevenard; Fourrault; Montégu; Sarrebourg; Bernard, commander.

Certified true signatures.

Bernard, commander at Jérémie.

2 October 1802

Declaration of Corus

The said Corus declared that at the time of the current insurrection, the said Jean-Jacques, of the Trippin plantation, [was] sent to the Leroux plantation to raise the workers to rebellion by telling them that commander Dommage had entrusted him with this; that all the men should meet at Fond Rouge to await orders and arms from the latter. Citizen Thomas, of the Trippin plantation, was charged by the said Jean-Jacques with spreading the word; upon this denunciation, we went to the Trippin plantation and arrested the said Jean-Jacques.

Signed: Bantes, squadron leader; Poussinon, fils; Praderes.

Grande-Rivière
2 October 1802

Following our investigation, we questioned the last two persons arrested. They told us that commander Dommage had arms offered to them by a third party to distribute to the blacks who would be willing to encamp at Fond Rouge where he had already arrived and was awaiting them; that the French had arrived to put them back into slavery and that they absolutely had to fight to maintain their freedom. They also declared that the said Jean-René and Pierre, who had already been executed, had received an order to make the rounds of the plantations to win over the workers.

Signed: Lamnot; Bantes, squadron leader; Praderes, fils; Duhulque; Larue; Praderes.

1 October 1802

* * *

Nominative list of prisoners put on board ship for Port-Républicain in conformity with the orders of division general Rochambeau.

Hugo

arrested by order of general Darbois for having taken the liberty of expressing observations detrimental to the public order.

Captain Allard
 François Beauvert
 Cholet
 Lajeunesse

Ciprien
 Savary
 Michel
 Azor

Jean-François

Michel-Jérôme

Casimir

Augustin Parouty

Gillot Berquier

Lamadieu

gendarme sent from Tiburon.

sent from Abricots.

gendarme sent from Corail.

deserter from the former 12th (half-
 brigade).

former officer sent from Abricots.

secretary to Dommage.

former justice of the peace.

captain of the 2nd batallion of the
 90th half-brigade.

deserter from the former 12th (half-
 brigade).

former reformed captain of the 4th
 half-brigade.

reformed soldier of the 4th half-
 brigade.

reformed officer of the national
 guard

reformed officer of the national
 guard.

dismissed officer of the 4th half-
 brigade.

Signed: Bernard, commander at Jérémie.

1 October 1802

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Series RC-2, 175	<u>Observateur Colonial</u>

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CARTE DE LA PARTIE FRANÇAISE DE S. D. C.

des Paroisses

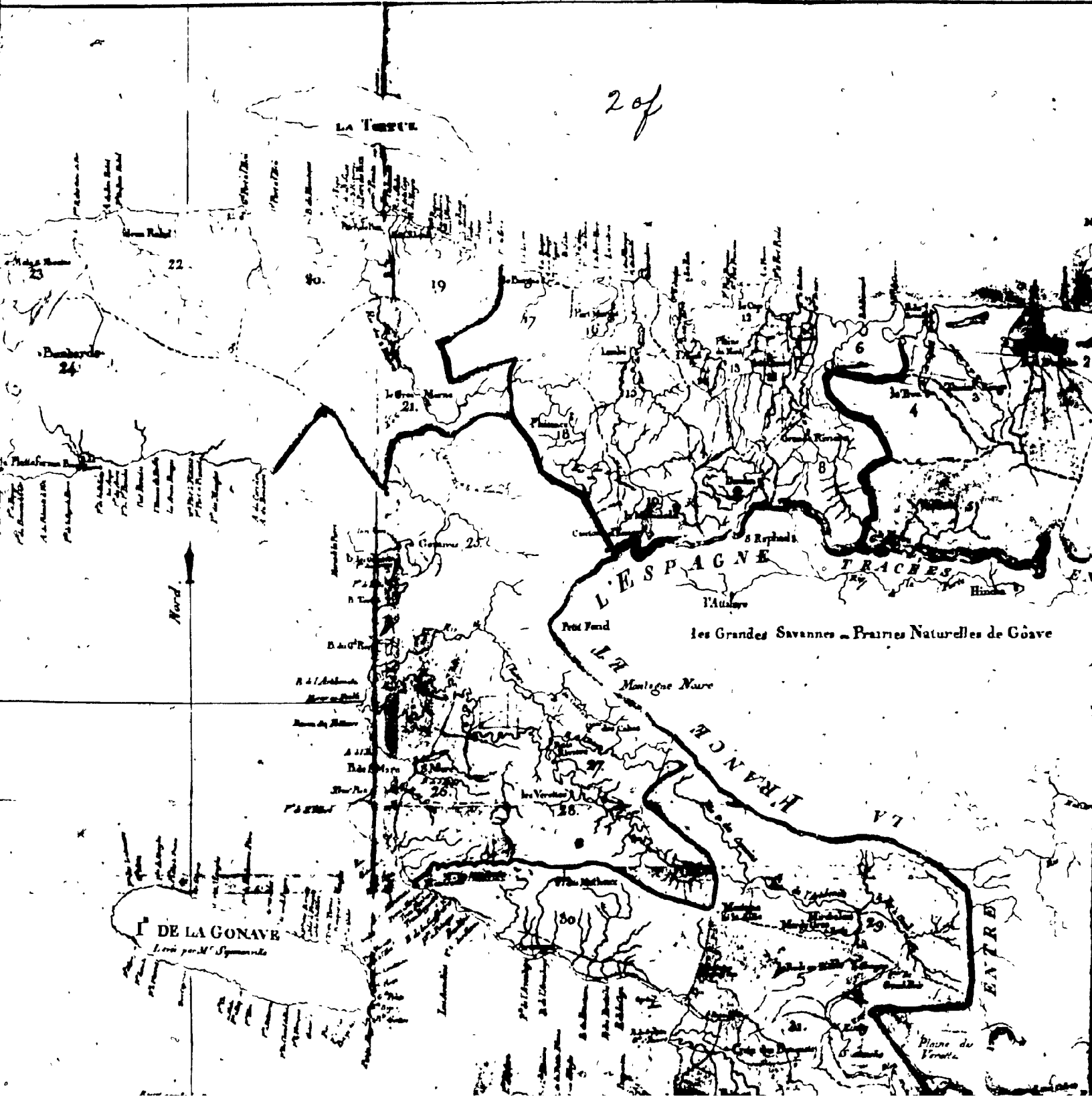
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Ressort du Conseil Supérieur du Cap.	Du Fort Dauphin	Établi en 1674 à 1788	1. Fort Dauphin	Le Fort Dauphin
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Ressort du Conseil Supérieur du Cap.	Du Port de France	Établi en 1685	21. ...	Le Port de France
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Ressort du Conseil Supérieur du Cap.	Du Port Gouave	Établi en 1685	41. ...	Le Port Gouave
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Ressort du Conseil Supérieur du Cap.	De la Grande Anse	Établi en 1685	51. ...	La Grande Anse
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			54. ...	
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			57. ...	
			58. ...	
			59. ...	
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Ressort du Conseil Supérieur du Cap.	De la Caye	Établi en 1685	61. ...	La Caye
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			63. ...	
			64. ...	
			65. ...	
			66. ...	
			67. ...	
			68. ...	
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Ressort du Conseil Supérieur du Cap.	De St. Louis	Établi en 1685	71. ...	St. Louis
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Ressort du Conseil Supérieur du Cap.	De la Caye	Établi en 1685	81. ...	La Caye
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Ressort du Conseil Supérieur du Cap.	De la Caye	Établi en 1685	91. ...	La Caye
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Nota. Les parishes du Nord ont été commandées de la même manière que les parishes du Sud, et ont été créées par le même Conseil Supérieur de St. Louis, le 17 Mars 1779. Les parishes du Sud ont été créées par le même Conseil Supérieur de St. Louis, le 17 Mars 1779. Les parishes du Nord ont été créées par le même Conseil Supérieur de St. Louis, le 17 Mars 1779.

S. DOMINGUE ou sont marqués par diverses Couleurs, Signes, et N
s Paroisses, Quartiers, Jurisdictions et Commandemens.

2 of

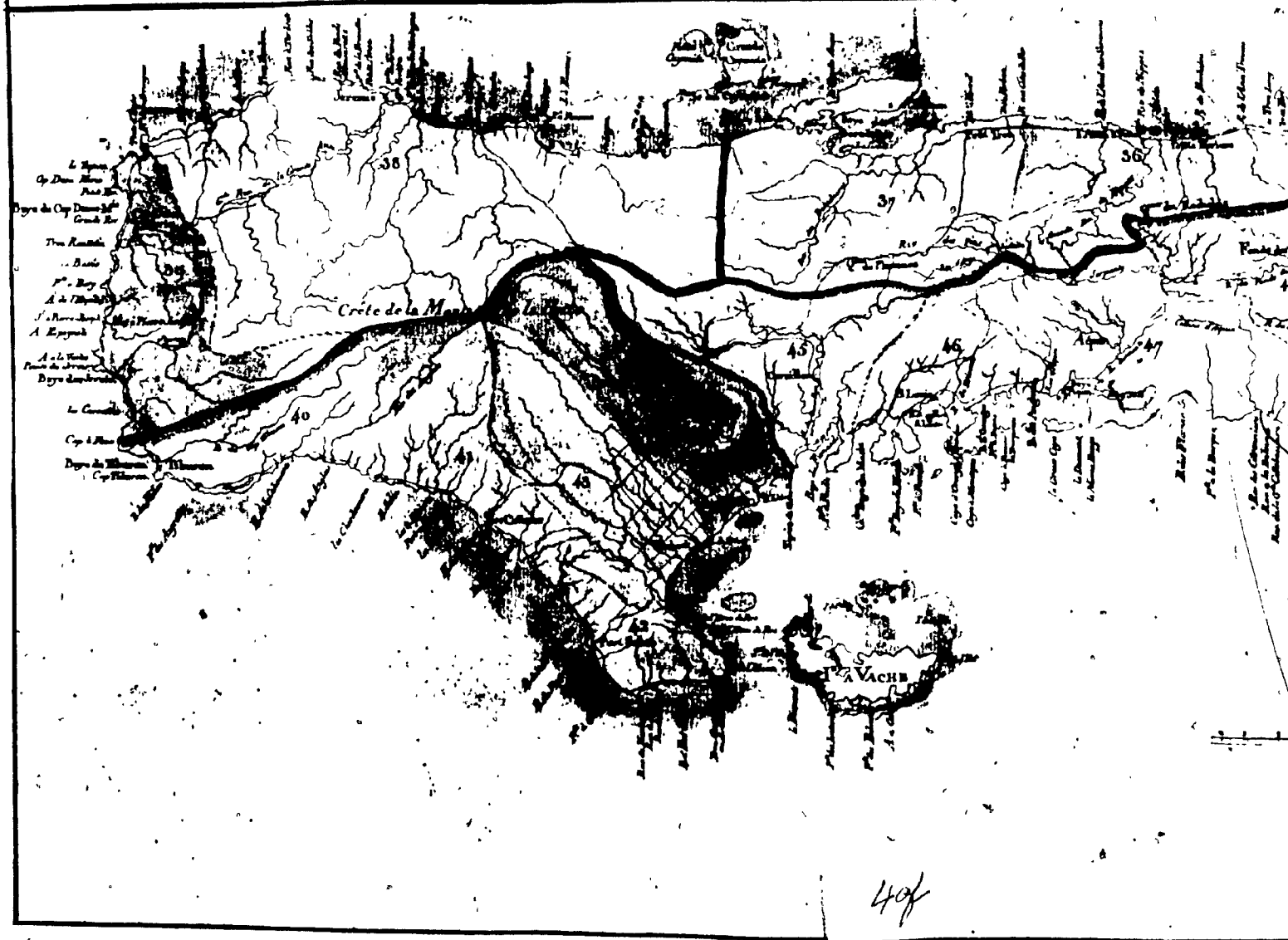


Ressort du Conseil Supérieur du Port au Prince.

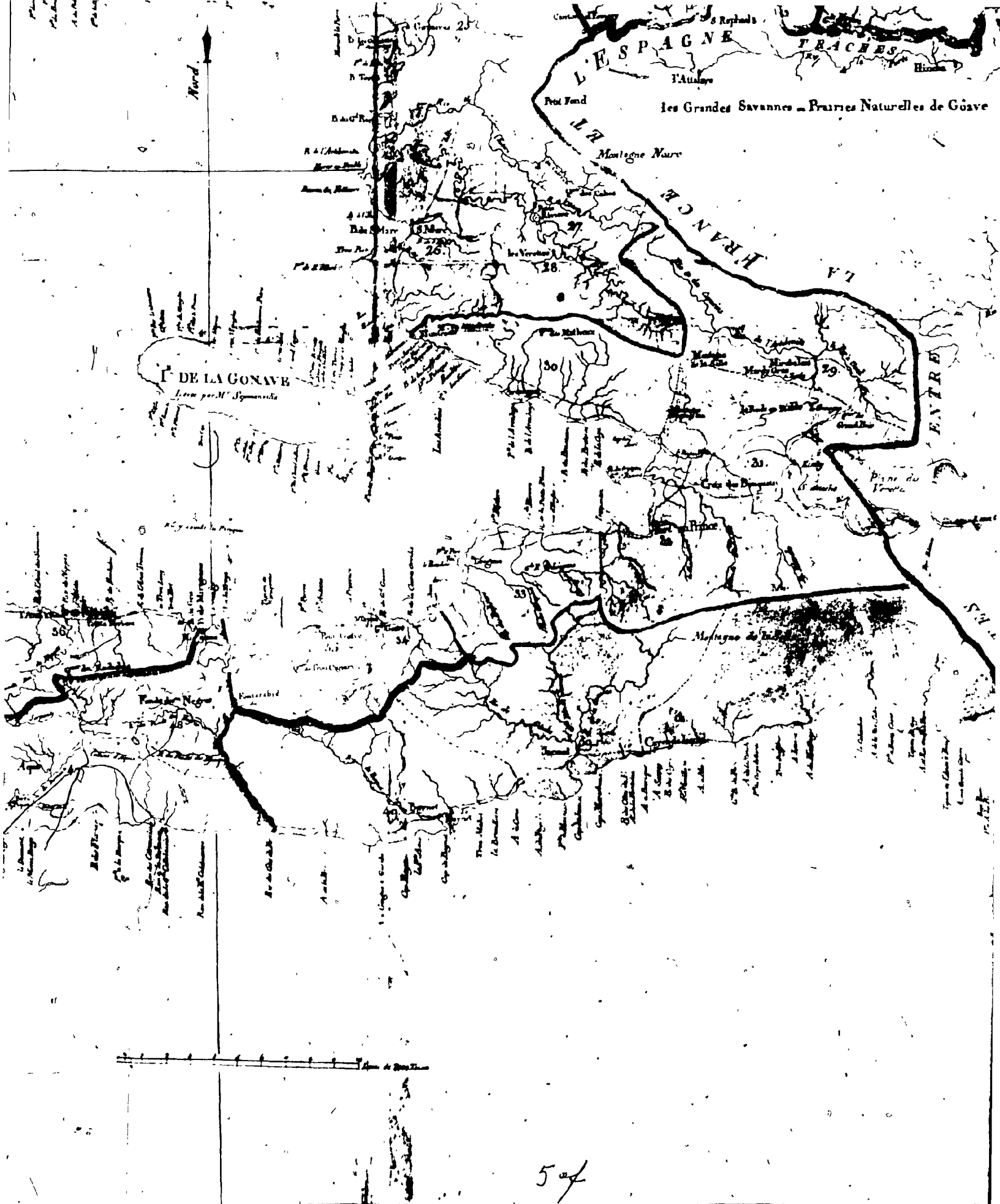
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De Port au Prince	ans 1725	28	Le Mirabalis	
		29	De Port au Prince	
		30	Logane	
De Port Gouave	ans 1725	31	De Port Gouave	
		32	La Grande Anse	
De L'Anse	ans 1725	33	Cape Tiburon	
		34	La Cayes	
		35	St. Louis	
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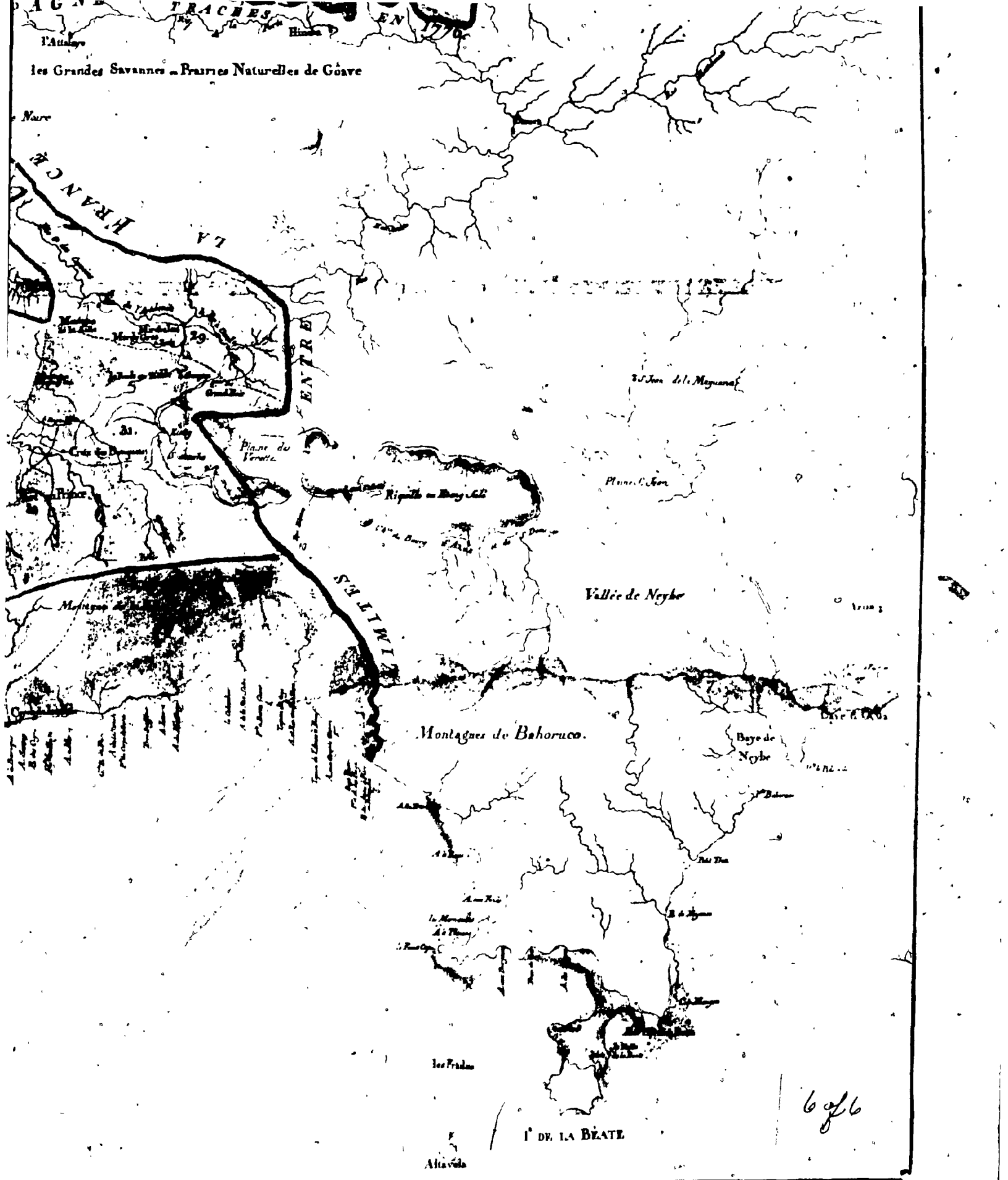
Nota La partie de l'île de Saint-Domingue qui est comprise entre le Cap de la Pointe à la Croix et le Cap de la Pointe à la Plume, est sous le ressort du Conseil Supérieur du Port au Prince. La partie de l'île qui est comprise entre le Cap de la Pointe à la Plume et le Cap de la Pointe à la Croix, est sous le ressort du Conseil Supérieur de la Cayes. La partie de l'île qui est comprise entre le Cap de la Pointe à la Croix et le Cap de la Pointe à la Plume, est sous le ressort du Conseil Supérieur de la Cayes. La partie de l'île qui est comprise entre le Cap de la Pointe à la Plume et le Cap de la Pointe à la Croix, est sous le ressort du Conseil Supérieur de la Cayes.

Copia Jura Cap. ...



40f





AG...
TRACHES EN 1770
l'Atalaye
les Grandes Savannes - Prairies Naturelles de Goave

Mare

LA GRANDE RIVIERE

ENTRE

Plaine de Verette

Rivière de la Néybe

Vallée de Néybe

Montagnes de Bahoruco

Baye de Néybe

les Prades

DE LA BEATE

Altavala

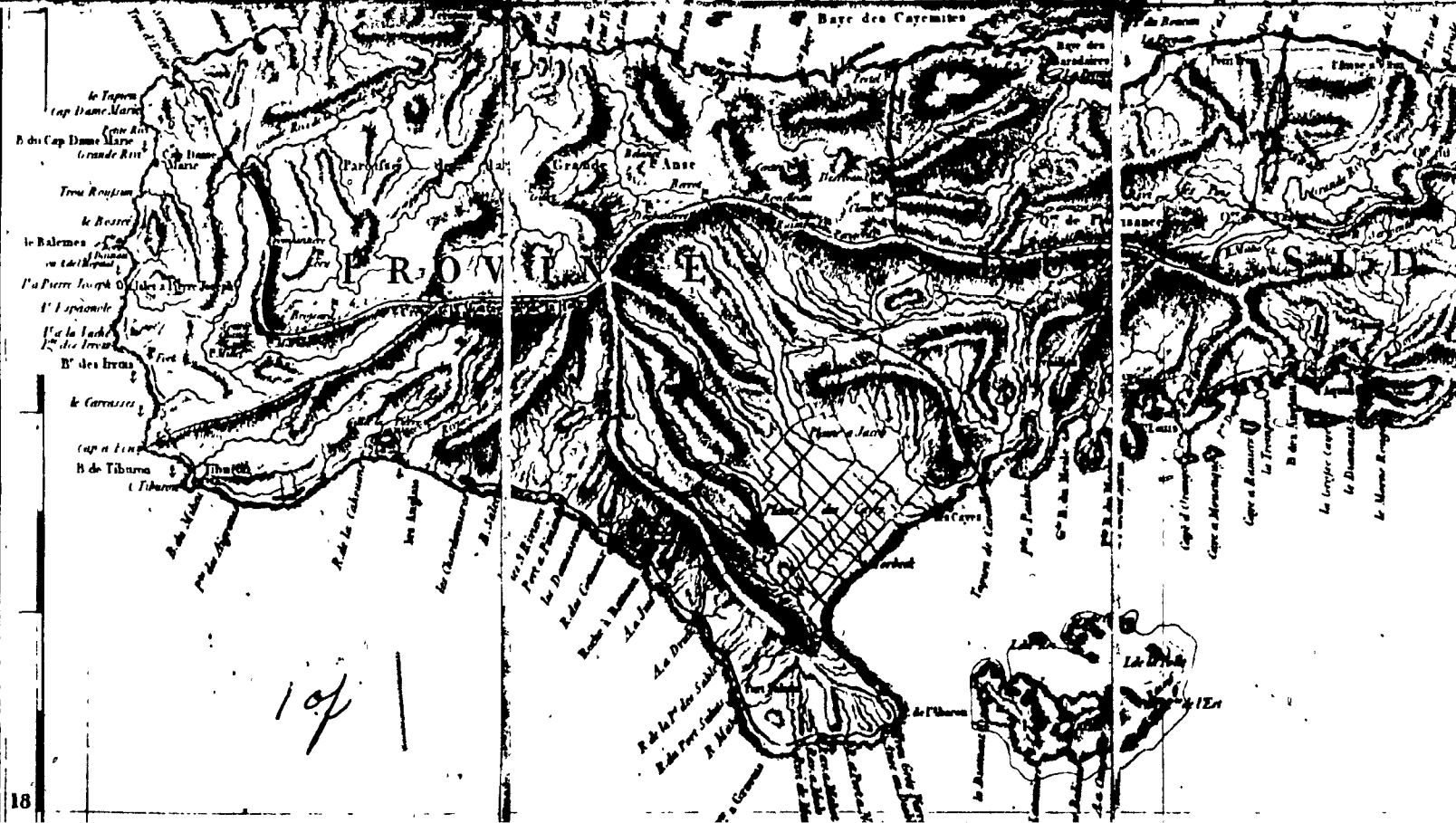
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Echelle de la Figure de trois Toises

British Statute Miles 69 to a Degree

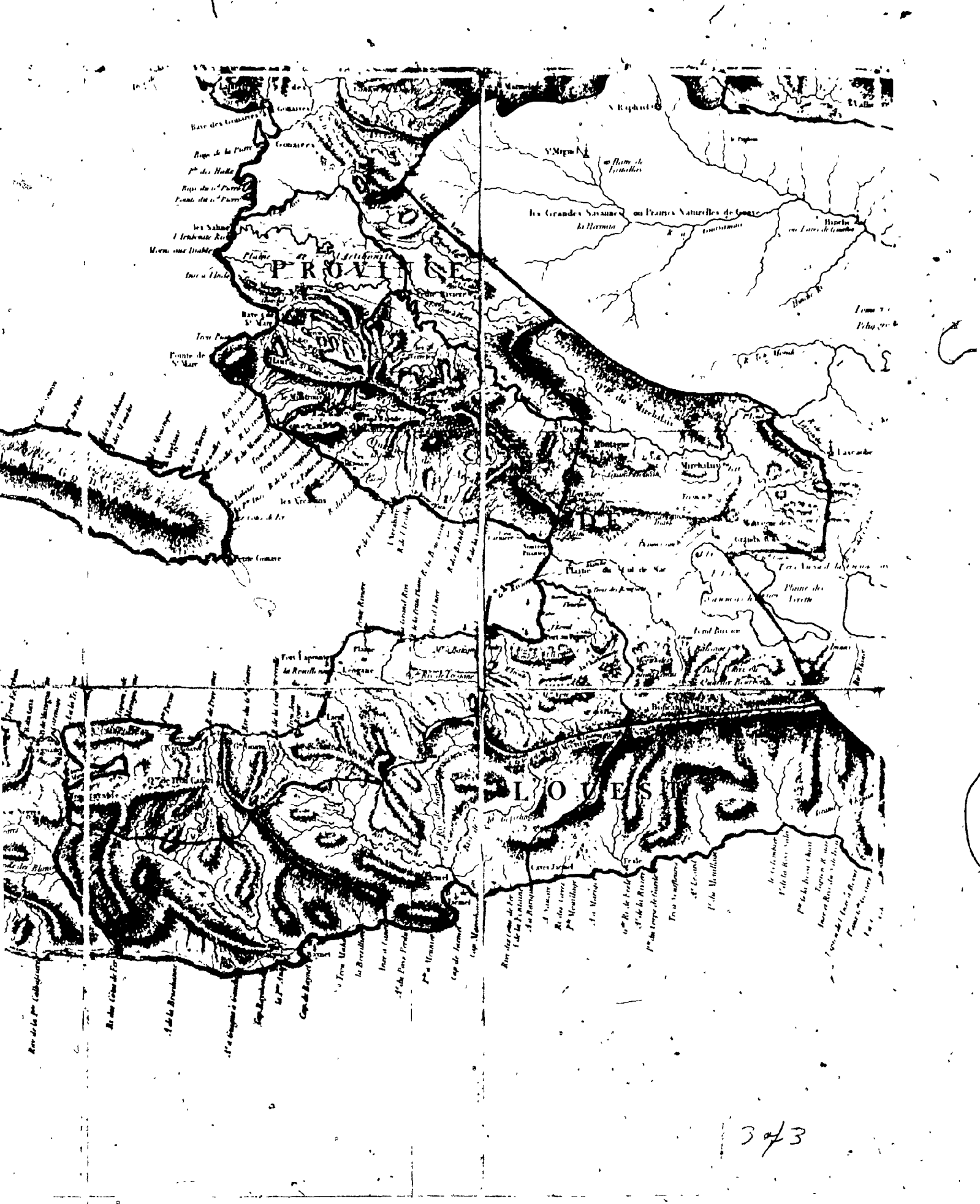
Published 2 Sept' 1799

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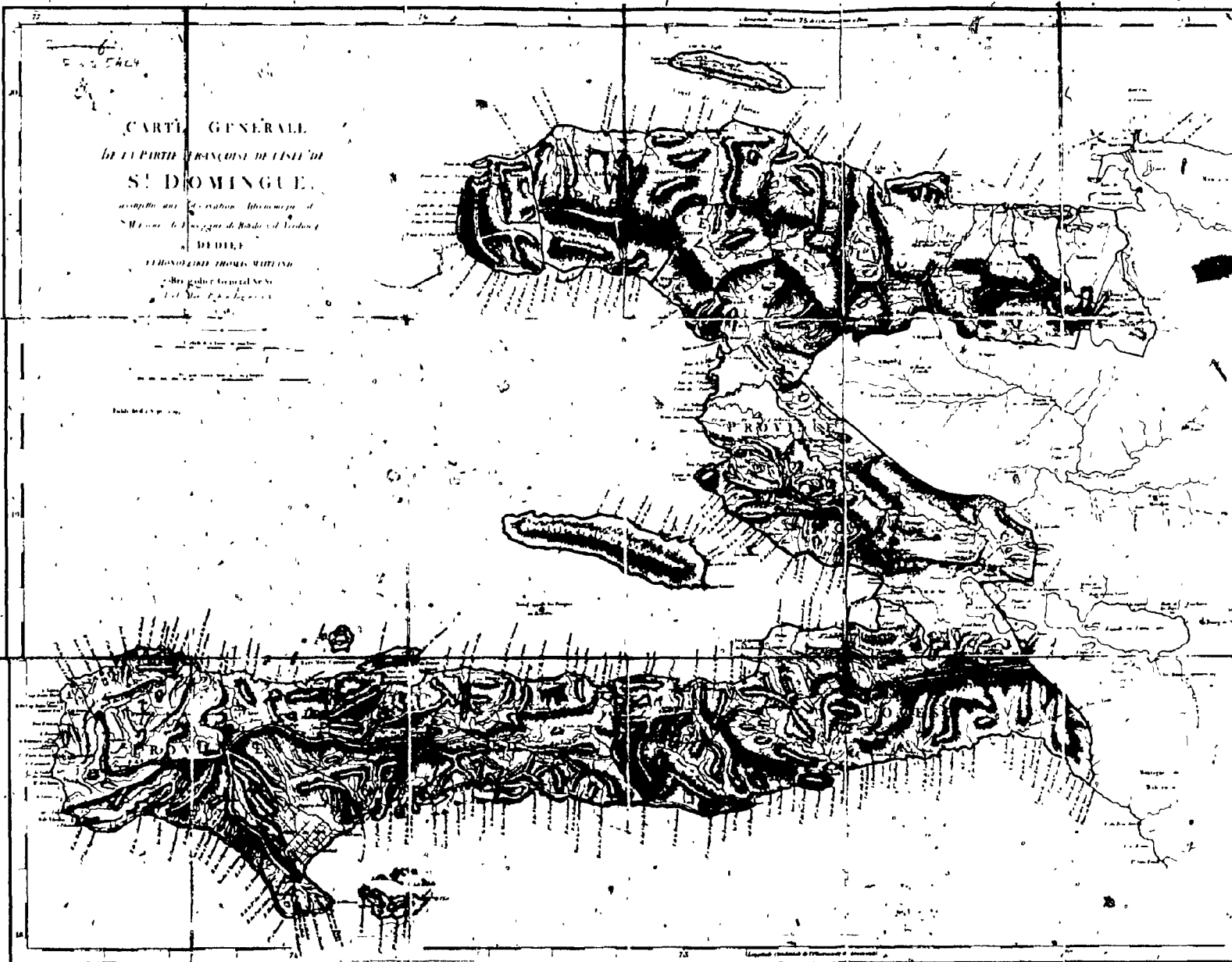




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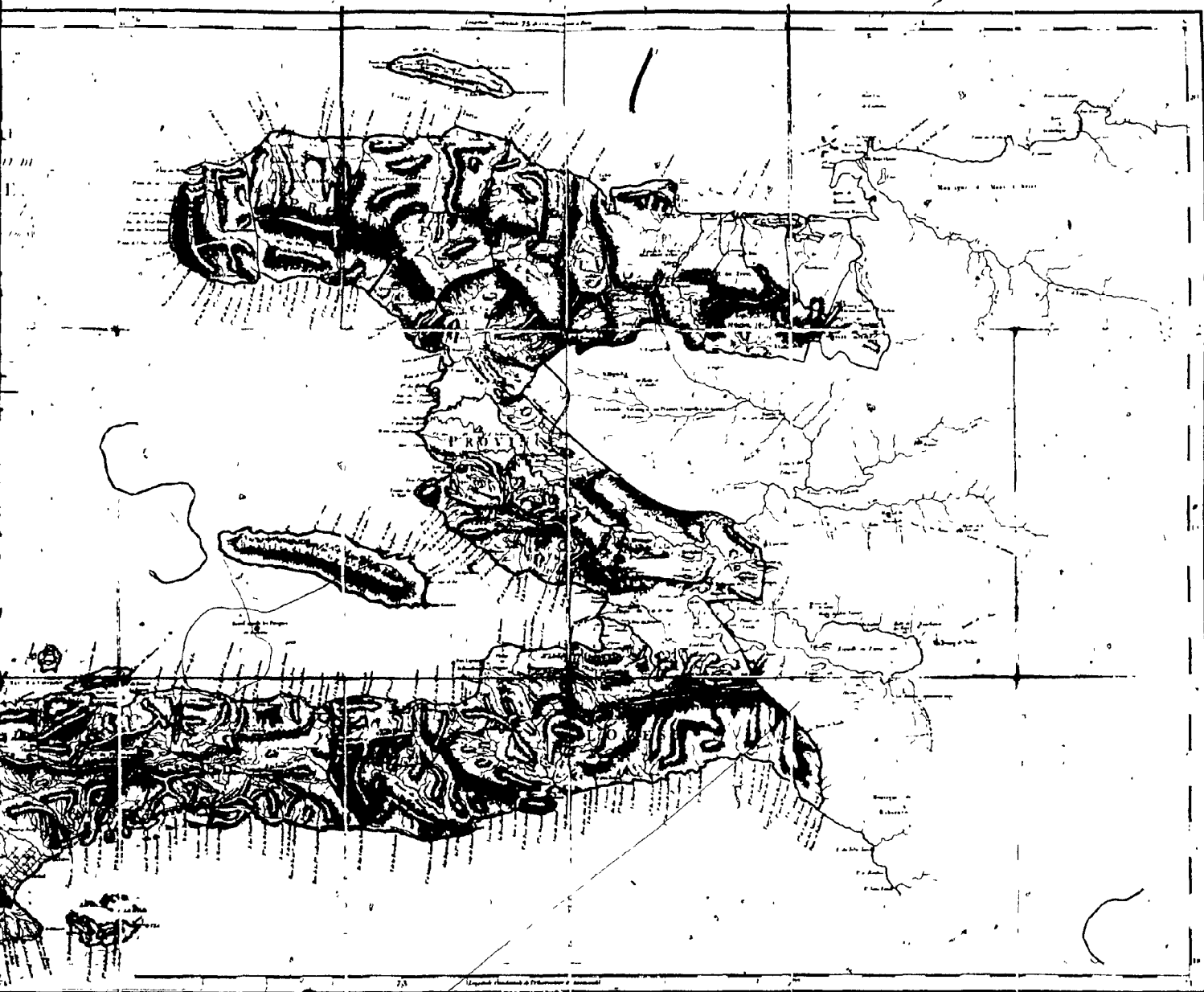


CARTE GENERALE
DE LA PARTIE FRANCOISE DE L'ISLE DE
S. DOMINGUE.

Assemblee aux Cartes de l'Academie de
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